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SITTING DAYS—2011

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FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—THIRD PERIOD

Governor-General
Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Companion of the Order of Australia

House of Representatives Officeholders
Speaker—Mr Harry Alfred Jenkins MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Peter Neil Slipper MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP, Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams MP, Ms Sharon Leah Bird MP, Mrs Yvette Maree D’Ath MP, Mr Steven Georgean MP, Mrs Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP, Mr John Paul Murphy MP, Mr Peter Sid Sidebottom MP, Mr Kelvin John Thomson MP, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Anthony Norman Albanese MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Stephen Francis Smith MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

Party Leaders and Whips
Australian Labor Party
Leader—Hon. Julia Eileen Gillard MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Wayne Maxwell Swan MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP
Government Whips—Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP and Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP

Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Opposition Whip—Hon. Warren George Entsch MP
Opposition Whips—Mr Patrick Damien Secker MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Chief Whip—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP
Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

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<td>Wentworth, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vamvakinou, Maria</td>
<td>Calwell, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Van Manen, Albertus Johannes</td>
<td>Forde, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vasta, Ross Xavier</td>
<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washer, Malcom James</td>
<td>Moore, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Denison, TAS</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor, Anthony Harold Curties</td>
<td>New England, NSW</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Kenneth George</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Tony</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; LNP—Liberal National Party;
CLP—Country Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals; NWA—The Nationals WA; Ind—Independent;
AG—Australian Greens

Heads of Parliamentary Departments
Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—B Wright
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—A Thompson
## GILLARD MINISTRY

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<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister, Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon. Wayne Swan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government</td>
<td>Hon. Simon Crean MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations and Leader of the Government in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Chris Evans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth</td>
<td>Hon. Peter Garrett AM, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Kevin Rudd MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade</td>
<td>Hon. Dr Craig Emerson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence and Deputy Leader of the House</td>
<td>Hon. Stephen Smith MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
<td>Hon. Chris Bowen MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and Leader of the House</td>
<td>Hon. Anthony Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>Hon. Nicola Roxon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Jenny Macklin MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities</td>
<td>Hon. Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance and Deregulation</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney-General and Vice President of the Executive Council</td>
<td>Hon. Robert McClelland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Manager of Government Business in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Joe Ludwig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism</td>
<td>Hon. Martin Ferguson AM, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency</td>
<td>Hon. Greg Combet AM, MP</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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GILLARD MINISTRY—continued

Minister for the Arts
Minister for Social Inclusion
Minister for Privacy and Freedom of Information
Minister for Sport
Special Minister of State for the Public Service and Integrity
Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation
Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare
Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development
Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister for Defence Science and Personnel
Minister for Defence Materiel
Minister for Indigenous Health
Minister for Mental Health and Ageing
Minister for the Status of Women
Minister for Social Housing and Homelessness
Special Minister of State
Minister for Small Business
Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Justice
Minister for Human Services
Cabinet Secretary
Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer
Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Digital Productivity
Parliamentary Secretary for Trade
Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs
Parliamentary Secretary for Defence
Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing
Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers
Parliamentary Secretary for Community Services
Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water
Minister Assisting on Deregulation and Public Sector Superannuation
Minister Assisting the Attorney-General on Queensland Floods Recovery
Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Minister Assisting the Minister for Tourism
Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency

Hon. Simon Crean MP
Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Hon. Brendan O’Connor MP
Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP
Hon. Bill Shorten MP
Hon. Kate Ellis MP
Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Hon. Warren Snowdon MP
Hon. Jason Clare MP
Hon. Warren Snowdon MP
Hon. Mark Butler MP
Hon. Kate Ellis MP
Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP
Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Hon. Brendan O’Connor MP
Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP
Senator Hon. Kate Lundy
Hon. David Bradbury MP
Senator Hon. Jacinta Collins
Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Hon. Justine Elliot MP
Hon. Richard Marles MP
Senator Hon. David Feeney
Senator Hon. Kate Lundy
Hon. Catherine King MP
Senator Hon. Jan McLucas
Hon. Julie Collins MP
Senator Hon. Don Farrell
Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Senator Hon. Joe Ludwig
Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM, MP
Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP
## SHADOW MINISTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Member</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon. Tony Abbott MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Shadow Minister for Trade</td>
<td>Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Nationals and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</td>
<td>Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
<td>Senator Hon. George Brandis SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training and Manager of Opposition Business in the House</td>
<td>Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Deputy Leader of the Nationals</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Water and Leader of the Nationals in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Barnaby Joyce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Finance, Deregulation and Debt Reduction and Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee</td>
<td>Hon. Andrew Robb AO, MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Energy and Resources</td>
<td>Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Senator Hon. David Johnston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communications and Broadband</td>
<td>Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families, Housing and Human Services</td>
<td>Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Climate Action, Environment and Heritage</td>
<td>Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Productivity and Population and Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
<td>Mr Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry and Science</td>
<td>Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food Security</td>
<td>Hon. John Cobb MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Small Business, Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
</tr>
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[The above constitute the shadow cabinet]
**SHADOW MINISTRY—continued**

| Shadow Minister for Employment Participation | Hon. Sussan Ley MP |
| Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Border Protection | Mr Michael Keenan MP |
| Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation | Senator Mathias Cormann |
| Shadow Minister for Childcare and Early Childhood Learning | Hon. Sussan Ley MP |
| Shadow Minister for Universities and Research | Senator Hon. Brett Mason |
| Shadow Minister for Youth and Sport and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House | Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP |
| Shadow Minister for Indigenous Development and Employment | Senator Marise Payne |
| Shadow Minister for Regional Development | Hon. Bob Baldwin MP |
| Shadow Special Minister of State | Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP |
| Shadow Minister for COAG | Senator Marise Payne |
| Shadow Minister for Tourism | Hon. Bob Baldwin MP |
| Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel | Mr Stuart Robert MP |
| Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader of the Opposition on the Centenary of ANZAC | Senator Hon. Michael Ronaldson |
| Shadow Minister for Regional Communications | Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP |
| Shadow Minister for Ageing and Shadow Minister for Mental Health | Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells |
| Shadow Minister for Seniors | Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP |
| Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate | Senator Mitch Fifield |
| Shadow Minister for Housing | Senator Marise Payne |
| Chairman, Scrutiny of Government Waste Committee | Mr Jamie Briggs MP |
| Shadow Cabinet Secretary | Hon. Philip Ruddock MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition | Senator Cory Bernardi |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance | Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Regional Transport | Mr Darren Chester MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney-General | Senator Gary Humphries |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Tax Reform and Deputy Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee | Hon. Tony Smith MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Education | Senator Fiona Nash |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern and Remote Australia | Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government | Mr Don Randall MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Murray-Darling Basin | Senator Simon Birmingham |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Materiel | Senator Gary Humphries |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Defence Force and Defence Support | Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Primary Healthcare | Dr Andrew Southcott MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health Services and Indigenous Health | Mr Andrew Laming MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Supporting Families | Senator Cory Bernardi |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women | Senator Michaelia Cash |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment | Senator Simon Birmingham |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Settlement | Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration | Senator Michaelia Cash |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation, Industry, and Science | Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry | Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck |
| Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Fair Competition | Senator Scott Ryan |
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Monday, 20 June 2011

The SPEAKER (Mr Harry Jenkins) took the chair at 14:38, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

The SPEAKER: On behalf of the House, I welcome as guests the President of the Senate and honourable senators to this sitting of the House of Representatives to hear an address by the Rt Hon. John Key, Prime Minister of New Zealand.

The Rt Hon. John Key having been announced and escorted into the chamber—

The SPEAKER: Mr Prime Minister, I welcome you to the House of Representatives chamber. Your address today is a very significant occasion in the history of the House.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Prime Minister) (14:40): To the Rt Hon. John Key: you are very welcome here. It was in February this year that I became the first Australian Prime Minister to address the members of the New Zealand parliament, a profound and moving honour for me and for this nation. In turn, today John Key stands among us as the first New Zealand Prime Minister to address the Australian parliament—testament to the profound, unique and enduring friendship between our two countries. We share a common history, a common outlook and a common set of values. Our people love peace and love freedom, and they freely paid a dreadful price for both. It is the story, of course, we call Anzac—and I am always conscious of the ‘NZ’ in that word.

So today I pledge the friendly cooperation of our two nations as we prepare for the centenary of Gallipoli and those other epic anniversaries of 1914 to 1918—great moments in our national history, great moments in our shared history. Of course, as I said in the parliament in New Zealand in February, the Anzac story is a living story. It lives on today in Afghanistan, where Australian and New Zealand forces are making a vital contribution to security. It was poignantly illustrated when Australian rescue workers forged a cross of timber, salvaged from the ruins of Christchurch Cathedral, a cross that became the centrepiece for this year’s Anzac Day service in that quake shattered city. And it was evident when Australians and New Zealanders were among the first teams on the ground after the Japanese earthquake and tsunami.

Prime Minister, we would have always felt deeply for the people of Christchurch when that dreadful earthquake struck, but our empathy was only heightened by the rawness of our own wounds from the summer of disaster here. As New Zealand mourned, we mourned with you. As New Zealand held out hope for a miraculous rescue, we kept vigil with you. And as New Zealand recovers, we will stand by you. If I may borrow a saying from your country’s rich Maori culture: turn your face to the sun and the shadows fall behind you. Prime Minister, we will be turning our face with you to the sun, and for you we certainly hope that the shadows of recent days now fall behind you, fall behind our New Zealand friends, our New Zealand family. We know that you will recover. We know that you will rebuild. We know this not only because of our shared past but also because of our shared sense of anticipation about the future, a future in which our interests will only become more closely linked.

But, Prime Minister, this is about more than our two nations, though it is so much about our two nations. We cannot just look to ourselves. As vibrant and longstanding
democracies, it is our responsibility to nurture younger democracies throughout the Asia-Pacific, to help strengthen their institutions and to promote fairness and opportunity. Above all we must pool our strengths to meet the challenges facing our region at this time, a time of enormous global change as we face the impact of China’s rise, climate change, resource security, natural disaster management, people-smuggling—challenges that require innovative and collective responses, challenges that demand the courage to govern for tomorrow as well as for today. Prime Minister, underlying all of the strands of our relationship is one simple truth. What geography began, history has confirmed: our two nations are family, so here in this chamber and in this country you can never be a stranger. By honouring you in this gathering place of deliberation, we honour the nation you represent and we honour the people you serve. And so I say from my heart: kia ora, welcome; the House is yours today.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (14:45): I am delighted to support the remarks of the Prime Minister in welcoming the Rt Hon. John Key to this parliament. I say, John, that as a former resident of Sydney you are just about a constituent of mine, and it is good to have you in this parliament. Of course, as a mark of respect to Australia, the New Zealand parliament earlier this year welcomed our Prime Minister. It is fitting that as a mark of respect to New Zealand we likewise welcome you here today. It is a rare honour to address a joint sitting of the Australian parliament, and we are very happy to extend it to you as Prime Minister of our nearest neighbour and closest friend. We are not welcoming a foreign leader; we are welcoming a friend. Indeed, we are welcoming the leader of a country that even now, under our Constitution, could yet accede to the Australian Federation, should you wish to do so!

Our countries have been indissolubly linked and bonded ever since the voyages of Captain Cook. Those bonds have been strengthened in war and in peace, in good times and in bad. Late last year, when 29 miners died at Pike River, we did not mourn for the two Australians who were amongst them; we mourned for every single one of them. When Christchurch was hit by a devastating earthquake, we were only too happy to send the best of our emergency services personnel to help. And in the aftermath of the tragedy, when the Governor-General, the Prime Minister and I went to Christchurch, we mourned not as foreigners but as your kith and kin.

Mr Prime Minister, I wish to particularly congratulate you on two initiatives of your government. First, I congratulate you for formally re-establishing military ties with the United States. This has once more made the ANZUS alliance a fully functioning, working alliance. We as Australians very much value New Zealand's military commitments, not only to East Timor and to the Solomon Islands but also, of course, to Afghanistan. We are ANZAC brothers in arms once more.

I also congratulate you, Prime Minister, for dramatically watering down the emissions trading scheme that you inherited. In this country, your sister party will go further and do better. Should we inherit any carbon tax, we will not just reduce it; we will rescind it.

Mr Prime Minister, we welcome very much your presence amongst us and we look forward very much to listening to your words of wisdom.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!
The SPEAKER: Prime Minister Key, it gives me great pleasure to invite you to address the House.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Rt Hon. JOHN KEY (Prime Minister of New Zealand) (14:48): Mr Harry Jenkins, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Senator the Hon. John Hogg, President of the Senate; the Hon. Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia; the Hon. Tony Abbott, Leader of the Opposition; honourable members of the Australian parliament; and distinguished guests, it gives me a great privilege to address you here in this esteemed chamber. I address you as Prime Minister of New Zealand, as a proud member of the trans-Tasman family and as a former resident of this great country. I bring with me the best wishes of 4.4 million New Zealanders. They value the deep bonds we share, and they would want Australia to hear this message: New Zealand is committed to your country above all others and for all time.

In recent times you have shown New Zealand a degree of loyalty and support that only family can, and for that we are truly grateful. When an explosion ripped through the Pike River mine in November last year, you sent your specialists, your experts, your machinery and your hope. You did all you could to help us bring those 29 brave men home alive. And, when they died, you grieved with us, not only for the two Australians but for all of them.

When 300 members of the Australian police arrived at Christchurch Airport, they were met by a spontaneous standing ovation. New Zealanders clapped for the Australian presence because it was such a moving and visible demonstration that we were not on our own; you had our back. Let me tell you that that sense of unity and support mattered more than you might imagine. We felt also the incredible support of this parliament, whose expression of condolence and commitment meant so much. The depth and breadth of Australia's support for Christchurch will never be forgotten. In a time of tragedy, your extraordinary assistance strengthened our resolve and has aided Christchurch's recovery immeasurably.

While the aftershocks in Christchurch have continued, our recovery is ongoing and assured. Today, on behalf of Kiwis, I thank you. Your acts were living testament to the perpetual Anzac spirit.

Members and senators of this parliament should know that New Zealand will never hesitate to reciprocate this support. When we saw the devastation caused by the Victorian bushfires and we saw the carnage wreaked by the Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi, our people felt your pain as only family can. We came to you then and we will come to you whenever we may be needed again. The relationship shared by our two nations is like no other. The men and women in this chamber represent a country whose fortunes, values and people are deeply entwined with New Zealand's. We share with you not only a corner of the world but a similar path in history. It is a history not only of shared sporting passions and rivalry, though they must not be overlooked. More than that, it is a shared history of indigenous peoples, British colonisation, increasing independence and successive waves of immigration; a history of flourishing democracy, of free markets and of prosperous economies; a
history of innovation, enterprise and ambition. Today our two countries walk a very similar path in pursuit of shared aspirations. We pursue increased security, prosperity and opportunity for our citizens. We share a confidence about our place in the world and the stake our people should have in it.

There is also strength in our differences. It is well understood that the Australian Constitution graciously provides for New Zealand to join the Federation. Suffice to say that is an invitation for which an RSVP has never been sought nor offered. It is a mark of our joint progress that we have found other, more effective means of combining our strengths. We both recognise the benefits to be gained from being two countries under two flags and with our own approaches. Beneath our distinct identities lie indelible common values: an easy understanding that Jack is as good as his neighbour, that democracy, freedom and the rule of law should be cherished and fostered, that every citizen should have the opportunity to shape their own future. These are values we are proud to voice on the world stage consistently and without compromise. These are the values we have fought for together as joint forces in Gallipoli and as fellow soldiers in other theatres of war. From the First and Second World Wars through to Korea and Vietnam, the experiences we shared in these battles shaped our national characters. They joined us ever unto each other.

I had the privilege of visiting Gallipoli for the Anzac Day commemorations last year. It was, I have to say to you, a hugely moving experience. Gathered together were Australians and New Zealanders from all over the world. They came together as proud brothers and sisters of the Anzac tradition. It felt as natural for me to share in the memorial of Australians who gathered together at Lone Pine as it did to gather with New Zealanders at Chunuk Bair. Together we paid our respects to all those who fought, fell injured and in so many cases died for us so very far from home. It is right that throughout the world, from London to Gallipoli, from Canberra to Christchurch, to our local RSAs and RSLs, we continue to remember our Anzacs together. It is right too that the brave men and women of our armed services continue to work together today. The Anzac centenary in 2015 will be a deeply significant occasion for New Zealand and Australia. We look forward to close cooperation in the lead-up to these commemorations.

Today we face new challenges in peacekeeping and peacemaking, new conflicts and a rapidly changing strategic environment with threats, from terrorism to people-smuggling, that know no borders. Amid this change Australia's and New Zealand's alliance endures. Members and senators of this parliament should know that, while our numbers and resources are smaller than yours, New Zealand's commitment to our defence and security relationship with Australia is absolute. We place priority on fulfilling our alliance obligations to you above all other defence priorities save for defending ourselves. We have no better friend and no closer ally than Australia.

Our two countries have distinct contributions to make in meeting the security challenges of our modern world. Each of us will rightly seek to serve our distinct national interests and to maximise our distinct capabilities. But we are stronger for each other. In particular, New Zealand appreciates Australia's enormous contribution to creating stability in Afghanistan and your hard-fought achievements in Oruzgan Province. New Zealand too is committed to stabilising Afghanistan through the contribution of our SAS in Kabul and the provincial
reconstruction team which will work through to 2014 to provide an effective transition in Bamiyan. Nine of our soldiers have also served with yours in Oruzgan. I wish today to acknowledge the 27 Australian soldiers who have lost their lives in Afghanistan. New Zealand joins with you to honour them as we honour our own two soldiers who have died there, as we honour all of our service men and women who make the ultimate sacrifice for our countries.

Our two countries have a particular responsibility to ensure the stability of our immediate region. New Zealand values Australia's deep engagement in the Pacific and the cooperation we have with you. We see that with our joint police and defence operations on the ground in Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands. In future our combined Ready Response Force will see our service men and women being jointly deployed, whether it be for disaster relief, humanitarian assistance or other challenges that may emerge in the Pacific region. We are also making great strides in harmonising our aid and development efforts. New Zealand has in recent times sought to elevate our role in the Pacific. It is right that we do so. Almost one in 10 New Zealanders come from a Pacific background and our complex web of family connections uniquely positions us as a regional facilitator. In September this year New Zealand will host the Pacific Islands Forum. We look forward to the presence of your Prime Minister at this event.

New Zealand and Australia's military, diplomatic and political ties are deep and strong. New Zealand values the formal and informal political structures that underpin this, from the personal contact I share with your Prime Minister to the regular contacts between our ministers and members of parliament through to important annual event like the Australia New Zealand Leadership Forum. These contacts have enriched our relationship and have endured no matter the political stripes on either side of the Tasman. But, ultimately, the story of Australia and New Zealand is not one that has been written by politicians calling the shots from on high; instead, our deeds have reflected the ever-closer ties between the voters who elect us. Our nations each have a vested interest in the other's success. That vested interest is the people we share. New Zealanders and Australians conduct their family and business affairs with very little regard for the sea that divides us. Trans-Tasman families abound. More than 560,000 Kiwis call Australia home. Many thousands of Australians live in New Zealand. Millions fly back and forth across the Tasman each year.

Large numbers of us have worked, studied or holidayed in the other's country. My own experience bears testament to this. In 2001, after a period of time living in London and Singapore, I came to work and live in Sydney, with my wife, Bronagh, and our two children. We remember our time and the friends we made in Sydney fondly and have returned not only on official engagements but also for family holidays. My story is not unlike that of hundreds of thousands of Aussies who have lived in New Zealand and hundreds of thousands of Kiwis who have lived in Australia. We are enriched by the valuable contribution our people make to each other's societies and economies.

It is only right that politicians on both sides of the Tasman have sought to reflect this reality as we developed our trading, economic and legal frameworks. In 2013 we will look back on 30 years since the birth of CER between Australia and New Zealand. As we approach that milestone it is appropriate that we reflect on where we have been and where we might go next. Much has already been achieved. CER represents a global gold standard in trade agreements. Australia and New Zealand boast free trade
in goods and nearly all services and, thanks
to recent progress, investment is now part of
CER. We have mutual recognition arrange-
ments for goods and services and we con-
tinue to pursue a single economic market
agenda to harmonise our business laws.
Despite the challenges of integration, and, it
must be said, despite New Zealand’s initial
anxiety, CER has served both our countries
very well. It has benefited our economies,
our businesses and the families and
communities we all serve.

Australia is New Zealand’s largest export
market. More than half of foreign direct
investment in New Zealand, at around $50
billion, comes from Australia. Last year total
Australian exports to New Zealand were a
little over A$8 billion, not far behind the $9
billion you exported to the United States.
Interestingly, more Australian businesses
export to New Zealand than to any other
country. Your small and medium enterprises,
your innovative companies and your value-
added producers often cut their teeth in
exporting first to New Zealand before
expanding to larger markets. The same
applies for New Zealanders exporting to
Australia. Our businesses also work together
to pool resources, share ideas, share
expertise and expand offshore. These facts
underscore what we already know. New
Zealand’s economic fortunes matter to
Australia and vice versa. We share in each
other’s economic success and we will
continue to do so.

As political leaders, we have a respon-
sibility to keep up the momentum that has
made CER such a success. Our history has
proven that open trade and economic
integration can be forces for growth and
prosperity. The question now is: can we take
our relationship to the next level? We have
more to gain from closer integration with
each other. Prime Minister Gillard and I are
both personally committed to progressing the
single-economic-market agenda. New
Zealand appreciates the focus Australian
ministers have brought to the detail of these
issues. My view is that, increasingly, we can
also play our integration out on a bigger
scale because, as important as it is to both
our economies, the thriving bilateral business
relationship is not an end in itself. We are
both operating in the global economy. From
the outset, our economic integration process
has been designed to help us compete more
effectively in the international marketplace.
Australia has long recognised the economic
potential of our region, as demonstrated by
your foresight in laying the foundations for
APEC. It is now the region to which all the
world’s eyes are turning.

The extraordinary economic growth of
Asia will compel the next steps in the
relationship between Australia and New
Zealand. I believe our trans-Tasman
partnership can set the standard for ever
more closely integrated regional economic
communities. CER has already provided the
launching pad for regional integration. We
saw that with the 2009 signing of the
ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand free trade
agreement. That was a groundbreaking and
ambitious regional trade agreement that
opened up significant opportunities for our
economies. It was the first agreement with
Australia and New Zealand that we jointly
negotiated, and it will certainly not be the
last.

We must now raise our sights to the trans-
Pacific partnership, the TPP. Together we
can drive to make this trade agreement as
high quality and comprehensive as possible.
Australia and New Zealand know well the
mechanics of how effective trading
relationships are forged. As negotiating
partners, we strengthen each other’s case and
set a high standard. Together we can ensure
that the TPP is the basis of a powerful
integrated regional trading bloc linking Asia,
Australasia and the Americas. The obvious next step is a deal extending across the full APEC membership. As we join forces at the trade negotiating table so too can we join forces to leverage these trade agreements for maximum benefit. Together we can work to penetrate untapped parts of the Asian market, introduce new industries to those markets and help our exporters scale up their operations. New Zealand is interested in how our joint objectives with Australia in these areas can find practical expression in the future. Progress in meeting these goals will bring success for each of our economies: more jobs for our people, better incomes and a more diverse and secure base for ongoing growth. As we take on the world, Australia and New Zealand must work to identify other areas where the sum of our distinct expertise and resource is greater than the parts. Our science and innovation partnership is one such area. Our work to host the Square Kilometre Array radio telescope is a great first step. Ultimately, we should aim to showcase Australasia as an agile, nimble and creative hub of science and innovation.

Climate change is another global challenge our two countries are facing. It is of course up to each country to adopt its own policies to address this challenge. After all, we each have different emissions profiles and different economies. In New Zealand, climate change has been the subject of vigorous debate and at times political division. So I come to this parliament with at least a little understanding of the debate you are having in your country. While our domestic policies are matters for each country's government and parliament to debate, we can and should work together on the international aspects of climate change.

We can work together on research and innovation to reduce emissions. In fact, we already are, with New Zealand contributing to the Australian led Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute and with Australia contributing to the New Zealand led Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases. We can also share our growing knowledge about what works and what does not as we seek to reduce emissions across our economies. I am pleased that Prime Minister Gillard and I have today agreed to further the work of our senior officials as they join up our respective efforts to combat global climate change.

New Zealand feels lucky to have Australia as our neighbour. We enjoy our competitive rivalry, but when faced with challenge or opportunity we could wish for no better partner. You are a dynamic, democratic and multicultural society. You are a vibrant, open and prosperous market economy. You are a force for good in the Asia-Pacific region and an important global player. These attributes bring strength to New Zealand as we seek to further our interests on the world stage. New Zealand too brings increased strengths to Australia, economically and strategically. When facing the world, our two countries' voices are closely aligned and all the more influential for it.

Australia and New Zealand have a proud and unbroken history of partnership. We have stood shoulder to shoulder in the face of challenges on the battlefield, at the negotiating table and amid the debris of natural disaster. In all that we face and in all that we gain, our two countries can never lose sight of each other. The reason for that is simple and is summed up by a Maori proverb:

He aha te mea nui o te ao?
He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!

What is the most important thing? It is people, it is people, it is people. The people of Australia and New Zealand are forever joined. The future holds much for our two great countries. Increased prosperity,
opportunity and security are ours to grasp. In all that we strive for, we are stronger together.

The SPEAKER: Prime Minister Key, on behalf of the House I thank you for your address and your aspirations for a continuing Australia-New Zealand partnership. I wish you a successful and enjoyable stay in Australia. I thank the President of the Senate and senators for their attendance and exemplary behaviour, which has influenced the members to their quietest yet at this time on a day of sitting. I thank you.

Sitting suspended from 15:11 to 16:30

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr ALBANESE: Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings and I move:

That the House take note of the following documents:


Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority—Report for 2008-09.

Debate adjourned.

MOTIONS

Live Animal Exports

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (16:36): I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Kennedy from moving the following motion—That this House:

(1) note the impact of the live animal export suspension on Northern Australia, the whole cattle industry and all those associated with it and directs the Government within two weeks to:

(a) deploy 10 Australian officials to Indonesia;

(b) direct these officials, along with Indonesia Government appointees, to immediately implement an upgrading of Indonesian abattoirs to meet humane standards currently met in Australia; and

(c) instruct Indonesian meatworkers on how to process to humane standards currently met in Australia;

(2) directs the Government to ship to Indonesia 60 stun guns with knocking boxes and video cameras within seven days, and to provide appropriate training;

(3) directs the Government as a matter of urgency to:

(a) immediately accredit Indonesia abattoirs that already meet Australian standards;

(b) begin accrediting Indonesian abattoirs that have been newly upgraded to meet humane standards currently met in Australia;

(c) implement supply chain traceability and auditing systems; and

(d) implement independent monitoring of conditions in Indonesian abattoirs;

(4) once the conditions in clause 3 are satisfied, calls on the Government to immediately ensure the resumption of trade with accredited Indonesian abattoirs that meet humane standards currently met in Australia; and

(5) directs the Federal Government to immediately commence an inquiry into the circumstances leading up to the Minister for Agriculture’s decision to suspend the live cattle export trade to Indonesia and that this inquiry include Meat and Livestock Australia and all other related instrumentalities and departmental division.

The government keeps assuring me that it is addressing this problem and acting to overcome it and ensure that we get a positive outcome. The government is saying, 'Trust me.' It appears that people have been told
that now for nine years. I am sorry, we are not prepared to trust anyone. If you really want us to trust you, then you should be voting for this motion. Is there a single person in this parliament that believes that 60 stun-guns should not be on their way to Indonesia now? They should have been sent a week ago. On this side of the House, everyone would agree with that. Why won't the government support the motion? If you have got something to fear, then the people of Australia have something to fear. But, if you do not have anything to fear, then why not do this? It is very simple.

I must stress the urgency of the motion because, from Thursday of last week when we lost this motion until now, thousands of cattle have been cruelly killed. It is not the fault of the people that voted for this—the people on this side of the House. This side of the House, and I refer to the opposition, have got plenty to answer for. They knew about this for six years and did nothing about it. But give them their due: they are doing something about it now. We applaud them for doing that. I cannot see any reason why the government would not agree to this. They are being told stories by the MLA, but the real story here is that the MLA and the departmental officials that are responsible for this are doing a big con act. 'Oh, this is very complicated,' they say. It ain't complicated—you send the cattle up there to Jakarta, you put them in the back of a hired utility and you say, 'Hey fellas, we've got some ratbags back in Australia we've got to make happy; would you please do it this way?' You have to put it that way. Since it is a hell of a lot easier to do it with a stun-gun than the way they are doing it at present, I am sure they would be more than happy to agree. But do not let anyone stand up and have the hypocrisy to say that they are against cruelty when they are defending the continuation of the killing of cattle in this inhumane manner.

That is the situation. If you are seriously worried about animal welfare, then stop it—this motion stops it. It forces the government to do something, instead of listening to the people who are responsible for this situation and are now advising the government that they have it all under control. The government is accepting that. The government has got to realise that, while it might be accepting it, the voting public are not accepting it. The voting public are listening to the things that I am saying in here because they know that they are true. They know that nothing has been done by this government to ensure that a single ox is killed humanely in Indonesia—nothing. The same people are giving out the same stories that they have given out for nine years. If the stun-guns do not get up there in the next two or three weeks, then if I was a betting man I would bet that Indonesia will bring in cattle from Brazil. The minute they start to do that we will be finished—we will never get back in there again.

Someone mentioned foot-and-mouth disease. Indonesia is provisionally a free country and most of Brazil is provisionally free, so they do not run into that problem. There are those of us who argue that there are parts of Indonesia—with its 1,000 islands—that are not provisionally free, but we will not go into that today. My colleague the honourable member for Denison does not have the same view as I do about the foreseeable future, but he absolutely believes that cattle should not be cruelly killed and every day that goes by more and more of them will be killed.

The government is saying, 'Trust me.' It is listening to people working for the MLA and people working for the government that are saying, 'We have got it under control; we are addressing it.' That is the story we have been told for the last nine years. The honourable member for Denison and I thank very much
the opposition, and particularly the Leader of the Opposition, for taking a strong stand on this in spite of the fact that there is a downside for them insofar as criticism for the past will be sheeted home to them. But forget about the past. Let us look to the future; let us do something about it.

We cannot get any information, so we do not know how many cattle are in the pipeline. I am told it is in the tens of thousands. Someone told me 30,000; another person told me it might be nearer 100,000. One of the mayors in my own area said that a number of cattlemen are now on suicide-watch. This place just does not seem to care how many farmers commit suicide in this country. I have said again and again no-one cares about a farmer committing suicide every four days in this country. Not one single thing that I can think of has been done to allay that figure, except sending counsellors out. My experience with counsellors—God bless them; I love them—is that I really appreciate the work that they are doing but they are almost irrelevant to the problem. That has been my experience with counselling, and I do not mean to speak badly about counsellors. But I am told by one of my mayors, who is down here for the conference today and who came to see me, that the police have rung up to officially inform him that we have a number of graziers on suicide watch at this moment.

So the government says, 'Trust me.' That is what is being said here: 'Trust me.' That is the answer to the problem! Has one single stun-gun, video camera or knocking box left Australia? No. We know that for an absolute fact and we are into the first fortnight. If they say they care about the ox, I am sorry but you have lost that argument. We already know you do not care because you have not sent a single stun-gun up there. If you cared, you would have been sending stun-guns up there the next day. But you do not care, as evidenced here again today. So we are giving very specific directions. From the point of view of the member for Denison, this will hold the line until he goes to what he believes is the right thing to do, which is cutting off the export trade. I would disagree with that, of course—(Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper): Is the motion seconded?

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (16:46): I second the motion moved by the member for Kennedy, which is entirely consistent with that part of my private member's bill which calls for the immediate and urgent implementation of safeguards in Indonesia so the resumption of our live animal export and trade with that country can occur straightaway. I will speak more to this issue tonight when I table that bill.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (16:47): I rise to speak against this suspension of standing orders, as occurred last Thursday. The member for Kennedy and the member for Denison are two members of this chamber I have a great deal of respect for. I respectfully submit to the member for Kennedy that the clear procedures set out by this parliament to facilitate private members' business being dealt with are greater than any that have ever been made in the history of this parliament. The fact of the matter is that, in doing this, the government want to be consistent. We are ensuring that everyone knows what the procedures are. You put a motion on notice
or you give notice of an intention to present a bill. It is then considered by the Selection Committee and it is dealt with on the next occasion. In the normal proceedings that would be on the following Monday evening. We then have a debate. If there is a need for further discussion then that occurs. It is then listed for a vote in accordance with the procedures of the Selection Committee in a way in which everyone knows the outcome. We have, since 2007, operated in a way that has facilitated business before this parliament being dealt with. When the government introduces legislation, it comes into this parliament and gives notice. We then have a second reading speech. Debate is then suspended after the second reading speech and the legislation is then able to be considered by the parliament in the next week.

If it is the case that people can come into this parliament and move a suspension of standing orders or something that they have not given notice of, then we will simply not be able to facilitate the proper consideration of either legislation or motions which are moved by members of this parliament. The fact is that we have had a range of suspensions moved. We barely get through a day of this parliament without a suspension of standing orders being moved by those opposite.

Dr Southcott: You've got your priorities wrong.

Mr ALBANESE: Some of the members opposite speak about our priorities. We heard that from the shadow finance minister, who could not actually call a division on the budget bills he was opposing. We heard from the shadow finance minister that he wants to change the determinations on the processes for the consideration of budget bills.

Opposition members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members on my left will display a modicum of discipline.

Mr ALBANESE: Those processes were determined unanimously by this House. It is quite extraordinary. The suspensions of standing orders have already cost this parliament the consideration of 124 questions. The fact is that the suspensions moved by those opposite, when the Leader of the Opposition has suspended 46 per cent of question times, and at the end of last week the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Kennedy moved suspensions of standing orders—

Mr Pyne: That's five minutes.

Mr ALBANESE: If you were here for more than five minutes, you might know that I am speaking to the suspension of standing orders. I am actually speaking to the motion, which is about the procedures of this House. The motion is not about the substance of the motion that the member for Kennedy is seeking to move; the motion is about the suspension of standing orders. I read in today's paper that we were going to have a bill considered in this House at 10 am this morning. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition came into the chamber at 10 am, but if he did he would have been the only one who was here. He shows no attention to the detail. That is the problem of those opposite: no attention to detail. All they want to do is come before this parliament and complain, say what they oppose but not say what they are for, like the walking vuvuzelas that they are. Once again we see their opportunism on show for all to see. They have had a different position on live cattle exports every single day throughout the past two weeks. With regard to the issue of plebiscites, I just wonder how a plebiscite would go before the Australian public of all those who support exporting live cattle to
Indonesia. I just wonder how that would go, if we are going to go down that sort of road.

Of course, those opposite have never got over their loss in August last year. What we are seeing played out before the Australian public is the longest dummy spit in the history of Australian politics. The fact of the matter is they want to disrupt the parliament at each and every opportunity. It does not matter whether it is Greens motions about asylum seekers or motions from the member for Kennedy or anything else; their one priority is disruption. Do you know who said, 'Disrupting the House is not a sign of a disciplined opposition; disrupting the House is a sign of a desperate opposition'? It was the Leader of the Opposition on 21 June 2006.

Mr Christensen: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: for the last two minutes, the Leader of the House has been talking about the opposition, our policies and everything but the substance of the motion. I ask you to draw him to speak to the motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper): The member will resume his seat. We are debating whether standing orders will be suspended and I encourage the Leader of the House to observe closely the terms of the motion before the chair.

Mr ALBANESE: I am, Mr Deputy Speaker, because what I am speaking in favour of is orderly proceedings in this House of Representatives, not this disruptive behaviour which the Leader of the Opposition himself said on 21 June 2006 is a sign of a desperate opposition. He went on to say this:

What we have seen from members opposite consistently in the course of this year but particularly over the last few weeks is consistent, deliberate, planned and premeditated conduct to disrupt this House.

That is what the Leader of the Opposition said on 21 June 2006 and there were never wiser words said by the Leader of the Opposition. That is why the government will be opposing this and why the member for Corio will be adding to comments opposing this legislation. The fact of the matter is—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE: We have had two speakers in favour. Now they want to stop two speakers in favour and two speakers against, so determined are the great democrats opposite, so desperate are they. The fact of the matter is that this should not be supported. This should be debated next week. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I now call the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Albanese: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: we had a mover of this proposition. We then had a seconder of the proposition. It is normally the case in procedures before this House that we have two speakers in favour and it is important that we have two speakers against.

Opposition members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Honorable members on my left will remain silent while I am listening to the point of order put forward by the Leader of the House.

Mr Albanese: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. House of Representatives practice clearly allows for speakers from either side to be equal. That is the way that we deal with things in this chamber. We had the member for Kennedy put his position. We then had the seconder, the member for Denison, contribute to the debate. We then had me, as the Leader of the House, outline why there should be opposition and now it is important that—
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House will resume his seat, as will the Leader of the Opposition. My understanding is that debate alternates from one side to the other. I have already given the call to the Leader of the Opposition, who now has the call.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (16:58): It is absolutely necessary that standing orders be suspended because cattle are dying and farmers are losing their livelihoods—

Mr Fitzgibbon: Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: I did try to seek the call before the Leader of the Opposition got to his feet, for good reason: I did not want to interrupt his contribution—

Opposition members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I do thank the Chief Government Whip for raising that point of order. If I did not see him, I apologise. However, I have already given the call to the Leader of the Opposition, who has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: Thank you very much. This is—

Mr Fitzgibbon: Mr Deputy Speaker, on a further point of order: in response to the intervention from the member for Dawson, I hoped that before the opposition leader commenced his address you might invite the members of the opposition to remain quiet while we hear his feigned indignation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do admire the, shall we say, original approach of the Chief Government Whip. He has now resumed his seat, which is a good thing because I have given the call to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Albanese: Mr Deputy Speaker, a point of order relating to standing order 62: I was concerned that the member for Paterson was blocking the view of the Leader of the Opposition. According to standing order 62 'Members moving in the chamber':

A Member in the Chamber must:
(a) take his or her seat promptly;

... ... ... 

I ask you to enforce that, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do thank the Leader of the House for raising that point of order. I have given the call to the Leader of the Opposition. Let me say: if I hear any other points of order which are taken frivolously the members who take those points of order will have an hour in the sin bin.

Mr ABBOTT: There are currently 1,900 cattle at Port Hedland in Western Australia. Those cattle are owned by an Australian company and they are going to be exported to an Australian owned and operated abattoir in Indonesia. That abattoir—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The time for this debate has expired.

The question is that the motion for suspension of standing orders moved by the honourable member for Kennedy be agreed to. I put that question: all those in favour say aye, to the contrary no. I think the noes have it.

Opposition members: The ayes have it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! A division is required. Ring the bells.

The bells being rung—

Opposition members: There was only one no!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I heard more than one no.

Question put:
That the motion (Mr Katter’s) be agreed to.
The House divided. [17:06]
(The Speaker—Mr Harry Jenkins)
House of Representatives
Monday, 20 June 2011

Ayes ....................... 75
Noes ....................... 74
Majority ............... 1

AYES
Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KL
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, BK
Briggs, JE
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Cobb, JK
Crook, AJ
Entsch, WG
Forrest, JA
Gambbaro, T
Griggs, NL
Hart推yke, L
Hockey, JB
Irons, SJ
Jones, ET
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
Neville, PC
O'Dwyer, KM
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Smith, ADH
Southcott, AJ
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Washer, MJ
Wyatt, KG

AYES
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Billson, BF
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M (teller)
Dutton, PC
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gash, J
Haase, BW
Hawke, AG
Hunt, GA
Jensen, DG
Katter, RC
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
Mirabella, S
Moylan, JE
O'Dowd, KD
Prentice, J
Ramsey, RE
Robb, AJ
Roy, WB
Schultz, AJ
Secker, PD (teller)
Slipper, PN
Somlyay, AM
Stone, SN
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Vasta, RX
Wilkie, AD

NOES

D'Ath, YM
Elliot, MJ
Emerson, CA
Ferguson, MJ
Garrett, PR
Gibbons, SW
Gray, G
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP (teller)
Jones, SP
King, CF
Livermore, KF
Macklin, JL
McClelland, RB
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Rudd, KM
Shorten, WR
Smith, SF
Snowdon, WE
Symon, MS
Thomson, KJ
Windsor, AHC

NOES
Adams, DGH
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Brodmann, G
Burke, AS
Byrne, AM
Cheeseman, DL
Collins, JM
Crean, SF

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Bradbury, DJ
Burke, AE
Butler, MC
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Combet, GI
Danby, M

The requirements for an absolute majority not having been satisfied, the motion was not carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Reference to Main Committee

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 41(g), and the determinations of the Selection Committee, I present copies of the terms of motions for which notice has been given by the members for Calare, Fremantle, Sturt and Petrie. These matters will be considered in the Main Committee later today.
BILLS
Product Stewardship Bill 2011
First Reading
Bill received from the Senate and read a first time.
Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting day.

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Bill 2011
First Reading
Bill received from the Senate and read a first time.
Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting day.

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2011
First Reading
Bill received from the Senate and read a first time.
Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

COMMITTEES
Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network Appointment
The SPEAKER: I have received a message from the Senate informing the House that (a) the Senate concurs with the resolution of the House relating to the resolution of appointment of the Joint Select Committee on Australia's Immigration Detention Network, and (b) Senator Hanson-Young has been appointed a member of that committee.
Public Works, I present the third report of the committee for 2011, entitled *Referrals made February to March 2011*. I ask leave of the House to make a short statement in connection with the report.

Leave granted.

Ms SAFFIN: I thank the House. On behalf of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, I present the third report of 2011, addressing referrals made from February to March 2011. This report deals with three inquiries with a total estimated cost of $551.9 million. In each case the committee has recommended the House of Representatives agree to the works proceeding. The report also includes the committee's findings relating to a budget overrun in a previously approved work.

The new works are the proposed development and construction of housing for Defence in Muirhead, Northern Territory, the proposed upgrade of the electrical reticulation system at Robertson Barracks, also in the Northern Territory, and the proposed redevelopment of the Australian Defence Force Academy in the Australian Capital Territory. The previously approved work is the construction and renovation of housing at Larrakeyah Barracks in Darwin, Northern Territory, approved by this House in 2009.

I will deal first with the Muirhead housing proposal. This is a very large project which would essentially develop an entirely new suburb in the northern suburbs of Darwin. The committee toured the site and visited a house that is similar to the kind of housing that Defence Housing Australia will build in the suburb. Defence Housing Australia intends to build on 279 lots and sell the other 651 developed but vacant lots.

The committee's major concern with this project is the lack of social and cultural planning. Witnesses at the hearing raised questions about the way in which the new suburb would integrate with existing suburbs and how the design and layout of Muirhead would anticipate the social and cultural needs of its future residents. DHA has not undertaken its own planning to address these issues, and the committee has recommended that it do so for this project. The committee has also recommended that DHA do this from now on for all developments of more than 50 lots.

The committee was able to visit a house that incorporates the design principles that DHA will be employing at Muirhead. In particular, the house was designed to be passively cooled by the prevailing breezes in the area, especially in the dry season. The committee is pleased that DHA is making an effort to utilise cost-effective and cost-neutral design options that make houses both more comfortable and cheaper to cool. At the house we inspected it really made a significant difference to the temperature, as it should to the energy use in that house. DHA told us that it will be the standard it will build from now on. It is something that is worthy of being incorporated in other developments. Moving to the Defence works in the report, the committee considered the electrical reticulation system upgrade at Robertson Barracks in Darwin and the redevelopment of the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra. The Robertson Barracks project will ensure there is reliable power to the base, even if the external power supply is interrupted. The project will also provide for additional capacity for future base developments, being aware that there are people who also reside on base. The Australian Defence Force Academy redevelopment proposes new and refurbished facilities that will enable contemporary pedagogy—it is not just about pedagogy, but it is partly about that—as well as providing additional teaching space and improved
administrative areas. A major part of the proposal involves the demolition of Adams Hall—that is the large hall where a quite a significant number of public events take place each year—and the construction of a new multi-venue auditorium in its place. The committee sought Defence's assurances that there was no way to reuse the existing hall, and the committee is satisfied that the demolition is based on sound consideration of all possible options. The committee is particularly keen to see the chaplains' space redeveloped, as it is woefully inadequate at the moment. This is very important, given the substantial pastoral care provided by ADFA's chaplains.

The final chapter in this report deals with a project approved by this House on 26 November 2009, the Larrakeyah housing project in Darwin. In early 2011 Defence Housing Australia wrote to the committee to inform it that the budget for the project was insufficient to complete the full scope of works. The committee held a public hearing with DHA on 21 March 2011 to seek further information about how this situation arose. As outlined in its report, the committee is not satisfied with the reasons given by DHA for the budget overrun. In particular, the Darwin market conditions and the project's complexity, cited by DHA as reasons for the budget shortfall, were entirely foreseeable by DHA. The original budget process was not sufficiently rigorous and the committee expects DHA to ensure that this situation does not arise again.

I would like to thank members and senators for their work in relation to these inquiries. And I would like to thank the secretariat, who are in the chamber today. In particular, I would like to thank Senators Troeth and Forshaw for their long service to the committee, as they will both be leaving the Senate—and, therefore, the committee—at the end of this month. I particularly drew attention to Senator Troeth's role as my deputy and acknowledge her counsel and common sense, her fairness and her understanding of the processes, policies and procedures of the committee. I found her input invaluable and I shall certainly miss her. And Senator Forshaw's experience, which is wide-ranging, including of the Senate and a whole range of matters that came before the committee, I also found invaluable, and I will miss him. I commend the report to the House.

**BILLs**

**Veterans' Entitlements Amendment Bill 2011**

Second Reading

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (17:26): I welcome the opportunity to speak for a while longer on the Veterans' Entitlements Amendment Bill 2011. I will not delay the House too much. When my contribution was suspended last week, I had spoken for some time about the privations and the adversity that our former prisoners of war had endured in the Second World War, with particular emphasis on the prisoners of the Japanese Imperial Army. I also spoke, as everyone has in this debate, about the need to acknowledge and express our appreciation of those veterans, those prisoners of war. The privations and the suffering that they have endured make them noteworthy of such considerations, as we have provided in the past as a coalition government and as the parliament should see passed today.

When we look upon the contributions made to this country, it is right that we have a special regard for all those who have served in uniform. Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for his country. And it is perfectly true of those who have served and those who continue to serve in uniform for our nation that they were prepared, and our current soldiers are prepared, to lay
down their lives for our nation. It is therefore right that they should get appropriate consideration for the commitment that they have made. Serving in the Navy, the Army and the Air Force is not a normal job; it is taking up a life where the risks are greater than in other sectors within our community.

It is therefore important as well that, when we speak of the entitlements of our veterans, we must also have regard for everyone who has served our country. What last week revealed was that, although we may have bipartisan support for measures such as those that apply for prisoners of war, when it actually comes to the need for fairer indexation of military superannuation pensions, the comparison is very stark indeed. There are some that oppose fair indexation. The government, the Greens and Independent Senator Xenophon oppose fair indexation. Unfortunately, the Greens live in a fool’s paradise where you can get by in the modern world without a defence force, when the reality is that sometimes you just have to fight, like those diggers, sailors and airmen did in past wars, because there is just no other option. So there are those who are opponents of a fair and just military superannuation system. Again, unfortunately it seems as though the government has failed to deliver what it promised in 2007 in the time since. It is really about time that fair indexation is introduced. We have learnt. We are committed to the course. I am committed to fair indexation.

I thank my constituents for their advice and their feedback on these sorts of matters. I thank particularly a regular email contributor to my knowledge, Mr Terry 'Maddog' Malligan, from Madeley. I thank the members of the Ballajura RSL, who are holding their annual quiz night this coming Saturday night. I wish them all the best for that event and I will see them there. I thank the members of the Wanneroo-Joondalup RSL. In fact, I thank all the veterans and the ex-service men and women who have contacted me to tell me of their views on this matter.

I have looked through this bill and I have looked at what it aims to achieve. I say that we certainly owe a debt of gratitude to those who have served under the most hideous of conditions as prisoners of war. I also acknowledge all those who have worn the uniform and have been prepared to do what needs to be done for this nation’s best interests. When I look at what has happened in the past and at the debt of gratitude that we really owe to all those who have served in uniform, not just prisoners of war, I look forward to fair indexation of superannuation being addressed. Unfortunately, it would appear that it will not be addressed until we are returned to government. I look forward to that at the earliest opportunity so that the coalition can provide full and fair indexation, in accordance with our last policy and in accordance with the wishes of the uniformed community, past and present, within our great country. This is what we owe them. This is what we need to come through with. We look forward to delivering that in the future.

**Mrs ELLIOT** (Richmond—Parliamentary Secretary for Trade) (17:31): I am very pleased to be speaking on this bill before the House today, the Veterans' Entitlements Amendment Bill 2011, which gives effect to the government's budget commitments to the veterans community through three measures. The first measure is the new $27.2 million prisoner-of-war recognition supplement, which provides former POWs with an extra $500 per fortnight in recognition of their very special sacrifice and service. The second measure consists of amendments to compensation-offsetting provisions in the Veterans' Entitlements Act. This measure will help
ensure equity for a claimant who is entitled to compensation for a level of incapacity under two schemes. The third measure will rationalise the temporary incapacity allowance and loss of earnings allowance to improve targeting of allowances for veterans and members who lose wages during periods of short-term incapacity.

I am very proud to speak in relation to this bill, to speak about this government's record in honouring our veterans and also to speak today about honouring all of those service men and women for the sacrifices they have made for our country. I particularly commend the measure to provide the prisoner-of-war recognition supplement. This measure is an acknowledgment of the commitment and obligation we owe to former Australian POWs for the sacrifices experienced by them in the service of our country. The POW recognition supplement is a $500 fortnightly payment made to all surviving Australian POWs of Japan and Europe from the Second World War and from the Korean War. It is estimated that approximately 900 former POWs will benefit from the payments.

The Australian experience of imprisonment during times of war dates back over 110 years to the time of the Boer War. Whilst individual stories vary greatly in the level of hardship and deprivation faced during times of internment across all conflicts, all of our POWs have some shared common experiences from their imprisonment, particularly including isolation from family and friends, the constant struggle for life, and the need to depend on their mates and comrades for daily survival and to maintain hope in such horrendous circumstances.

I turn first to the First World War. For Australia, as for many nations, the First World War remains the most costly conflict in terms of deaths and casualties. From a population of fewer than five million, 416,809 men enlisted, of whom over 60,000 were killed and 156,000 wounded. More than 4,070 Australians spent the war as prisoners. The Gallipoli campaign saw the first of 217 Australians captured by Ottoman forces. On the battlefields of the Western Front, 3,853 Australian troops were taken prisoner by German forces, most of them held in Germany. A third of these Australian prisoners were captured on 11 April 1917 at the First Battle of Bullecourt in northern France. A number of Australian airmen were also shot down and captured by the Germans. By the time of the armistice, signed in November 1918, a total of 395 Australians had died during their imprisonment in the First World War.

In the Second World War, from 3 September 1939 almost a million Australians, both men and women, served in campaigns against Germany and Italy in Europe, the Mediterranean and North Africa, as well as against the Japanese in South-East Asia and other parts of the Pacific. Over 30,000 would never return home. More than 30,000 were taken as prisoners of war. One of the most significant differences between this war and the First World War was the number of Australian troops captured. Almost eight times the number captured in the First World War were captured in the Second World War, the majority of these as prisoners of the Japanese. The Japanese treatment of its POWs is one of the darkest chapters in Australia's wartime history. In fact, it is difficult for many of us to comprehend how incredibly tragic an experience it was. Of the almost 9,000 Australians who were held in Italian and German camps and experienced varying degrees of mistreatment and brutality, some 250 men died during the war. Over 22,000 Australians became prisoners of war of the
Japanese in South-East Asia. Almost 15,000 of the Australians were captured in Singapore, while the other principal Australian prisoner-of-war groups were captured in Java, Timor and Ambon. The most notorious and well-known names in the Australia's World War II experience are Changi, Borneo and the Thai-Burma Railroad. In fact, the name Changi is synonymous with the suffering of Australian prisoners of the Japanese during the Second World War. More than 100,000 Allied POWs were crammed into the Changi camp after the fall of Singapore. From May 1942, large work parties began to be sent out of Changi to work on projects such as the Thai-Burma Railway and in other work camps throughout Asia. In February 1942 there were around 15,000 Australians in Changi. By mid-1943 fewer than 2,500 remained.

Australian POWs in Borneo were held in four main camps: Sandakan, Kuching, Labuan and Jesselton. Of these, Sandakan in North Borneo contained the majority of Australians. In January 1945, when the Japanese feared an Allied invasion of Borneo, they began a series of forced marches from Sandakan to Ranau—a distance of 260 kilometres along jungle tracks. Weak and sick mistreated prisoners starved to death on the way as food became scarcer and scarcer. They had no medical supplies and the terrain was muddy and treacherous. If a prisoner collapsed and could not get up, he was usually shot dead by the Japanese. More marches followed until all POWs had left Sandakan. By the end of the war only six Australians of the 2,500 Allied POWs held at Sandakan had survived this horrific ordeal.

Whilst Allied POWs were held across Asia, it is those camps along the Thai-Burma Railway during 1943 which remain most resonant for Australians in the Second World War POW experience; largely due to the fact that 9,500 Australians worked on the railway and nearly 7,000 survived to tell the story. The railway stretched 421 kilometres from Thailand to Burma, the aim being to provide the Japanese with a land access route from South-East Asia to supply their large army in Burma. Some 62,000 Australian, British and Dutch POWs, as well as a smaller group of American POWs and estimates of 270,000 Asian indentured labourers, occupied camps along the length of the line, moving from one site to the next as work progressed. The daily deprivations, misery and humiliation of this work are indeed impossible to comprehend. Some 12,000 Allied POWs died on the railway, including 2,646 Australians. The building of the railway exacted such a brutal toll due to the harsh treatment of the prisoners of war, the prevalence of disease, the terrible state of their health, the terrain through which they had to build, the climate of torrential monsoon rain, the extreme heat and the lack of adequate engineering tools and supplies. Though the railway was completed in mid-October 1943, it was never used. Almost as soon as it was completed it was damaged by Allied bombing. Today only sections of it survive.

My great-uncle Harry Staples, of the 8th Division, died as a prisoner of war on the Thai-Burma Railway. A number of years ago I went to Kanchanburi in Thailand to the railway and walked through Hellfire Pass to see the site where he and so many of our POWs suffered and died. Visiting the war graves highlighted for me how important it is as individuals, families, communities and a nation that we never forget the sacrifices that so many have made, and how important it is that we come together not just on days like Remembrance Day and Anzac Day but at all times to remember their sacrifice.

When we turn to civilian POWs, almost 1,500 Australian civilians spent the war in captivity, out of about 130,000 civilians...
interned by the Japanese. Australian army nurses were another group imprisoned. On 14 February 1942, following the fall of Singapore, 65 nurses were attempting to return to Australia on the ship *Vyner Brooke*. Twelve drowned when the vessel was torpedoed and 21 were massacred after reaching Bangka Island. The sole survivor from that was Nurse Vivian Bullwinkel. The other surviving nurses from the *Vyner Brooke* were imprisoned in a civilian camp in Sumatra. Eight of the 32 died in captivity. Although they were not made to work as the male POWs were, they were subject to many of the same deprivations and humiliations at the hands of the Japanese. Six Australian military nurses captured at Rabaul in January 1942 were sent to Japan and all survived the war.

The Korean War began on 25 June 1950 and came to an end with the signing of an armistice on 27 July 1953. Australian casualties numbered more than 1,500, of whom 339 were killed. During the Korean War, 30 Australian servicemen were captured by North Korean or Chinese forces. Twenty-four of those taken prisoner were serving with the Australian Army, and six members of the Royal Australian Air Force were also captured. Of the 30 Australians, only one, Private HW Madden, died whilst imprisoned. Madden was posthumously awarded the George Cross. Prisoners in Korea suffered many of the same trials as those of the Japanese—neglect, hunger and brutality—but also the biting cold of a Korean winter, where temperatures could go as low as minus 60 degrees Celsius.

By introducing this new payment for surviving Australian prisoners of war, the government's bill recognises the hardships these people endured and recognises the massive sacrifice they made in their service to our country. It is important that we always continue to remember that service and the sacrifices made by our past and also our serving defence forces, who paid the ultimate price. I would like to take the opportunity to commend all of the wonderful veterans groups in my electorate who work so tirelessly to ensure that we as communities continue to remember the great commitment of all of our veterans. I am fortunate to have a very large veterans community and wonderful individuals who do great work with veterans and in many other groups as well.

I say in conclusion that whilst we reflect upon service in previous conflicts we must of course also remember those serving our nation currently. It is very important to remember the commitment that they have made. I would like to finish by remarking on the event last Friday in my electorate at Kingscliff where the funeral was held for Sapper Rowan Robinson, who died on 6 June while serving in Afghanistan. Sapper Robinson grew up in Kingscliff and around the North Coast, and his funeral was attended by many family and friends who recalled wonderful fond memories of him. I would like to say that our thoughts and prayers are with his family as we remember his sacrifice and his service to our nation.

**Mrs GRIGGS** (Solomon) (17:44): I rise to speak on the Veterans' Entitlements Amendment Bill 2011. This bill gives effect to a number of veterans' affairs 2011 budget measures: firstly, it will create a prisoner-of-war recognition supplement, providing a $500 fortnightly payment to former Australian prisoners of war; secondly, it will clarify and affirm the original intention of the compensation-offsetting policy in respect of pensions payable under parts 2 and 4 of the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986; and, thirdly, schedule 3 rationalises temporary incapacity allowances for veterans.
Reviewing the measures in more detail, specifically schedule 1, the prisoner-of-war recognition supplement, under this measure from 20 September this year former Australian prisoners of war will receive a $500 payment each fortnight from the Australian government. This payment will be made to former military personnel and civilians alike who were interned as prisoners of war during either World War II or the Korean War. These supplement payments will not be taxable and will not affect a former prisoner of war's present access to income support via the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 and the Social Security Act, or compensation payments under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986.

There are over 900 Australians known to the Department of Veterans' Affairs as ex-prisoners of war. All of them will automatically receive the payment from 6 October.

The coalition has a strong record of providing assistance to Australia's ex-prisoners of war. In 2001, all former Japanese POWs received a $25,000 tax-free ex gratia payment from the Australian government. In 2003, former Korean POWs received similar payments, as did former German and Italian POWs in 2007.

This additional supplement payment is welcomed by the 900 Australian ex-POWs and their families who are eligible. As I indicated earlier, schedule 2 of this bill seeks to clarify the operation of compensation provisions under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986. Compensation offsetting is a longstanding principle under Australia's repatriation system. The fundamental principle to this system is that payments of compensation are for incapacity. The coalition believes that the changes proposed by this schedule should be investigated by a Senate committee. We will seek to refer the bill so that the ex-service community will have the opportunity to have a say and provide input into the proposed changes.

Finally, schedule 3 of the bill rationalises the manner in which incapacity payments are to be paid in accordance with the act.

The changes provided by this bill remove the temporary incapacity allowance. In place of receiving this payment, a veteran will be entitled to seek access to the loss-of-earnings allowance or LOE, an allowance paid where the veteran accrues an actual loss of earnings as a result of hospitalisation or treatment of accepted disabilities or illnesses. The coalition is not opposed to this rationalisation and calls on the government to ensure the changes are appropriately and effectively communicated to the veterans and ex-service community.

A further issue I address, relevant to this bill, is that of the Anzac centenary. Unfortunately, no money was provided in the budget for the commemoration of the Anzac centenary, a point I find deeply disappointing. So I ask: when will this government make a firm financial commitment to the Anzac centenary in 2015? The significance of this centenary cannot be understated. Communities looking forward and beginning to plan for this most important national commemorative event require certainty in terms of funding and the level of federal support.

I have on a number of occasions this year in the House mentioned the commemorative services held to mark the 69th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin during World War II. The bombings are a very significant event in the history of Darwin, the Northern Territory and Australia. Commemoration of this event has enormous significance for those who were present in Darwin during the air raids. Furthermore, the significance of this commemoration retains its importance to
today's Territorians and to past and present personnel of the Australian Defence Force.

Planning is well underway for next year's 70th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin commemorations. Earlier this year, Senator Crossin called for the bombing of Darwin to be marked by a public holiday. I understand the sentiment; however, I am not here advocating for a public holiday; I am here asking that the government appropriately acknowledge this event as one of national significance and that some funding be provided for commemoration of this important historical event.

While the coalition welcomes the government's belated funding increase to the Australian War Memorial, the coalition remains concerned that no funding to redevelop the World War I galleries has been identified. The coalition has committed funds towards this work to facilitate its completion ahead of the 2015 Anzac centenary commemorations. It is very disappointing that the Gillard Labor government acted to increase the Australian War Memorial funding only after significant pressure from the community and from the coalition.

I have been contacted by the president of my local branch of the National Servicemen's Association of Australia, Mr Ivan Walsh, who wrote to the Department of Veterans' Affairs over seven months ago requesting permission to erect a permanent flagpole at the Adelaide River War Cemetery. It is extremely disappointing that these men who served our country are yet to receive a response from the department regarding a simple request for permission to erect a flagpole as a permanent feature for ongoing commemorative services at the Adelaide River War Cemetery. I seek leave to table the letter.

Leave granted.

Mrs GRIGGS: I ask if the minister could please look into this issue, as the Adelaide River War Cemetery is a very significant commemorative area and it is also in his electorate. As the years have gone by, there seems to be more focus on Adelaide River War Cemetery for commemorative events. They are asking permission to have the flagpole installed before the national Remembrance Day in November. I would really appreciate it if the minister could investigate this and provide an answer to the committee. Another matter of disappointment is that the Gillard Labor government will cut $8 million from grassroots veterans advocacy funding over the forward estimates. I know that a review of the advocacy funding, released 12 months ago, did not recommend a cut in funding, which makes this recent announcement even harder to understand. Veterans services provided by volunteers from within our local community, particularly services to those new veterans returning from recent conflicts and their families, will definitely be impacted. My electorate represents Defence Force constituents who have served overseas, are still serving overseas or are due to be deployed. From the perspective of the electorate of Solomon, the issues relevant to veterans are of significant concern. This government must ensure that it looks after our defence personnel both during and after their service to this wonderful country of ours. The ex-servicemen community had no warning that cuts to advocacy funding were likely or about the impact of having to compete for a smaller funding pool. It is not good enough. This cut could also jeopardise the provision of assistance to younger veterans and their families, who may seek advice from volunteer veteran pension and welfare officers about claims for compensation. As I mentioned earlier this year in this place, the coalition remains the
only party in the parliament committed to military superannuation reform.

I take this opportunity to touch on Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits and DFRB fair indexation. The Labor Party and the Greens stand condemned for their failure to support the coalition’s bill to provide fair indexation to DFRDB and DFRB superannuants. This is simply not good enough. The coalition believes the current indexation arrangements are unfair. The opposition of the Labor-Greens alliance means that the only way to deliver these reforms is through the election of a coalition government. I reaffirm comments made earlier by my colleagues in this place that the coalition is committed to Australian veterans.

Mr ADAMS (Lyons) (17:54): It is a great pleasure to speak on the Veterans’ Entitlements Amendment Bill 2011. I say to the honourable member for Solomon, who thought to raise in the debate on this very good bill political issues about superannuation for the people presently serving in the military, that there were 11 years during which some of us made representation to the previous government about this, and nothing occurred. It is a pretty poor effort to come in here and start raising this on a veterans bill when we have some pretty good news here for veterans and ex-prisoners-of-war. The member may want to get into some of the history as to why her party did not deliver over those 11 years.

This bill gives effect to the veterans’ affairs 2011 budget measures, which will create a prisoner of war recognition supplement, clarifying and affirming the original intention of the compensation offsetting policy in relation to disability pensions, rationalised temporary incapacity allowance and the loss of earnings allowance. I first became aware of prisoners of war because of my friends Philip and John Green, whom I grew up with and went to school with and who are both still my friends. John has moved away a bit, but Philip is still a great mate. Their fathers were both prisoners of war. As boys we talked about this and discussed it, and I met their fathers, who had gone through that terrible experience. They were both in Timor when it fell—I think Sparrow Force was among the forces that were there as our forward defence before the Japanese landed about 22,000 troops, on their forward movement into that area—and they were taken prisoner.

Georgie Green, Philip’s father, spent his time as a prisoner of war on the Burma railway, and I think Teddy—John’s father—spent some time in the bicycle camp in Timor and later in that same area. That was not a very pleasant experience for them. In later years George was very pleased to visit Hellfire Pass and take his grandson there to show him the places where he had had to endure some harsh treatment and was able to survive that. I think it was just about trying to show those at home what they had endured, where they had endured it and how they had survived it. These were guys who never spoke of or glorified anything about war and were always conscious of that in their activities.

Georgie and Teddy were great role models and great men who had a lot of respect in the community. The community in which I grew up, the Longford community, had an RSL which was built in 1947 by the returning veterans. The annual Anzac Day sports event was a pretty well-known event right throughout Tasmania. Most of us growing up in the 1950s and going to school attended those sports days. We learnt what Anzac Day was about and what remembrance was about, and that worked very well. I can remember Georgie Green presenting me with an ice-
cream after I had run a footrace. Footraces were never my great strength, but I can remember getting an ice-cream from Georgie Green, so it was a great opportunity. We remember those veterans and those people who were prisoners of war, as we should do. We remember the great stories and the written work of Weary Dunlop and the wonderful innovations that Weary was able to bring to bear in order to help prisoners survive, using needles and implements made out of bamboo to give rainwater to those suffering from bad dysentery and lack of fluids. Incredible work and effort went into making those things work. We read about how, through Weary Dunlop's efforts, public health issues were addressed by draining away water from around the camps to prevent malaria and by ensuring cleanliness when prisoners were cooking their food. These stories are worth reading for any young person wanting to have an understanding of those times and to come to grips with what war and deprivation can bring.

While we are having this debate on the Veterans' Entitlements Amendment Bill, it is worth mentioning the 100th anniversary of Anzac Day in 2015 and to remember the battles which took place in the First World War. My Uncle Charles, my grandfather's brother, is buried on the Somme. When you look at those graves, which you see right through Europe, you realise what difficult issues people were faced with.

This bill certainly gives recognition to prisoners of war and their dependants through a range of benefits and reflects the severe circumstances of their service. Widows of former prisoners of war are eligible for war widow pensions and the gold card. Funeral benefits are payable for deceased former prisoners of war. Children of deceased former prisoners of war are eligible for veterans children's education schemes. (Quorum formed) I thank my colleagues for their attendance in the chamber during my speech on the bill. The amendments to the Veterans' Entitlements Act made by schedule 1 will give effect to the 2011 budget measure to create a new prisoner of war recognition supplement, the POWR supplement. That supplement will be $500 per fortnight, payable to former prisoners of war in recognition of the severe hardship and deprivations that they experienced in the service of their country.

A lot of veterans are no longer with us. The two I spoke about earlier, Georgie Green and Teddy Green, have now both passed on. On first meeting these ex-prisoners of war I found them both to be upstanding men. They were ordinary workers, Teddy having a small farm after shearing for a long time. He spent most of his life around the Cressey district. They were both men of great character, men that most of us growing up looked up to as decent human beings marching on Anzac Day, giving recognition to their service to their country under great hardship.

There is a lot of work to do on cenotaphs around the country in recognition of the 100-year anniversary of the Anzacs in 2015. There is a lot of tidying up work to be done, especially in the areas surrounding the cenotaphs. I think government has a role to play and I certainly hope there will be some grant programs to allow veterans' communities, along with local councils and others, to participate in bringing those cenotaphs up to the standard that we in this country expect of them. I have been involved in several of those over different governments and a lot of them have worked very well, keeping our cenotaphs and our memorials up to standard. I understand there has been a lot of work done in different parts of the world—in France and at Anzac Cove. It would be interesting to see what has occurred there. A lot of young people these
days are finding it very interesting to be involved in these recognitions. That makes us think about why young people are taking such an interest in our veterans and in the wars that we have been involved in. I think it is about young people becoming aware of community, of their sense of duty and of what being involved in a community can mean. Going to war, being a prisoner of war, can certainly give you that perspective by recognising what people have gone through. So it has something to do with that.

I pay tribute to the uncle of Peter Lawrence from my electorate. Peter, who passed away this week, searched for his uncle's medals for many years. Before Peter died, I presented him with the service medals of his uncle Leo Lawrence. It is very sad to lose Peter. I pass on my condolences to his family. He will be buried on Thursday. He was proud of his uncle's service to his nation and he has now passed on. I support the bill.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (18:09): The Veterans' Entitlements Amendment Bill 2011 gives effect to creating a prison-of-war recognition supplement, clarifying and affirming the original intention of the compensation offsetting policy in relation to disability pensions, and rationalising temporary incapacity allowance and loss of earnings allowance. The coalition agrees with all these measures.

Schedule 1 of the bill provides that, from 20 September this year, former Australian prisoners of war will receive a $500 payment each fortnight from the Australian government. This payment will be made to former military personnel and civilians who were taken as prisoners of war during World War II and the Korean War. This payment will not be taxable and will not affect present access by former prisoners of war to income support under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 and the Social Security Act or to compensation payments under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986. There are almost 900 Australians known by the Department of Veterans' Affairs to be ex-POWs. All known ex-prisoners of war will automatically receive the payment, which they will be paid from 6 October.

The coalition has a strong record of providing assistance to Australia's ex-prisoners of war. In 2001, all former Japanese prisoners of war received a $25,000 tax-free, ex gratia payment from the Australian government. In 2003, former Korean prisoners of war and, in 2007, former German and Italian prisoners of war received similar payments. This additional payment will be welcomed by the 900 Australian ex-prisoners of war—and their families—who are eligible for the payment.

Schedule 2 of the bill seeks to clarify the operation of compensation provisions under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986. Compensation offsetting is a longstanding principle under Australia's repatriation system. The fundamental principle of Australia's system is that compensation is paid for incapacity, not for a specific injury. The coalition believes that the changes proposed by this schedule should be investigated by a Senate committee. We will seek to refer the bill to afford the ex-service community an opportunity to have input into the proposed changes.

Schedule 3 of the bill will rationalise the way incapacity payments are paid under the act. The changes in this bill will remove the temporary incapacity allowance. Instead of receiving this payment, the veteran will be entitled to seek access to the loss of earnings allowance—LOE. The loss of earnings allowance is paid where the veteran accrues an actual loss of earnings as a result of hospitalisation or treatment of accepted disabilities or illnesses. The coalition is not
opposed to this rationalisation and calls on the government to ensure the changes are appropriately communicated to the veteran and ex-service community.

The coalition is deeply disappointed that there was no money in the budget for the commemoration of the Anzac centenary. Communities across Australia need certainty about the availability of funding so that they can begin planning for this important, national commemorative event. I regard Anzac Day as our most important national day, and I am sure that most, if not all, members opposite would agree with me. The importance of this occasion was today marked by New Zealand Prime Minister, John Key, who defined it as a deeply significant occasion for both countries.

The coalition welcomes the government's belated funding increase to the Australian War Memorial. It is disappointing that the Gillard Labor government acted only after significant pressure from the community and the coalition which forced them kicking and screaming to this outcome. The coalition remains concerned that there is no funding to completely redevelop the World War I galleries. The coalition has committed funds towards this work so that it is completed ahead of the 2015 Anzac centenary commemorations. Labor must now do the same thing.

The Gillard Labor government will cut $8 million from grassroots veterans' advocacy funding over the forward estimates. This decision will have a severe impact on the services provided by volunteers in our local community to veterans, especially to new veterans returning from recent conflicts, and to their families. A review of advocacy funding released 12 months ago did not recommend a cut in funding, which makes this announcement in the budget even more difficult to understand. The ex-service community had no warning that this cut was coming and they will now compete for a smaller funding pool. This cut could also jeopardise the provision of assistance to younger veterans and their families, who may seek advice from volunteer veteran pension and welfare officers about claims for compensation.

In terms of the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Scheme and DFRB fair indexation, the coalition is committed to military superannuation reform. The Labor Party and the Greens stand condemned for their failure to support the coalition's bill to provide fair indexation to DFRDB and DFRB superannuants. The coalition believes the current indexation arrangements are palpably unfair. The opposition of the Labor-Greens alliance means the only way to deliver this reform is with the election of a coalition government.

I might read a letter that I received, as would many other members of parliament. It is from Bert Hoebee, who for a time served with distinction at Blamey Barracks at Kapooka, which is in Wagga Wagga—my hometown—in the electorate of Riverina. Wagga Wagga is the home of the soldier, because every recruit in the Australian Army goes through Wagga Wagga, through Blamey Barracks, prior to other deployments within the Army. Bert Hoebee writes:

Recently I wrote to you about the matter of social justice for veterans. On 2 June, the House of Representatives agreed, evidently without dissent, to support the Coalition's policy of fair indexation for military superannuation pensions.

On 16 June, the Senate voted down the Bill to provide for implementation of that policy. This despicable act of bastardry— as Bert writes— and political opportunism, directly and with the utmost disdain, ignored the will of the people of
Australia as expressed in the House two weeks prior.
This act of what some call 'betrayal' was aided and abetted by the Greens, who abandoned their own policy to support fair indexation, through the complicity of its 'contribution' that had nothing more to offer but pompous statements on issues irrelevant to the case.
Thus are ex-service people condemned to continued unfair and unjust superannuation pension indexation, ever-depreciating purchasing power and reducing standards of living. Where are Labor's core value of fairness and its principle of a fair go for all Australians reflected in all of this?
Any government and its hangers-on that ignores the will of the people and turns its back on Australian service men and women in this reprehensible manner does so at its peril.
I now ask you, again, to examine your conscience, and ask: what are you going to do about this unjust treatment of Australia's ex-service people, in direct contravention of the express will of the House?
In another email, he writes:
It is high time to fairly index the pensions of all of our superannuated veterans (under the now-closed DFRB and DFRDB Scheme and the current MSBS scheme)—the Military Superannuation Benefits Scheme—and to put a stop to discrimination against them. That is the fair deal which was a condition of their employment and to which they contributed financially during their service. I call on the government to do it.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (18:18): The previous speaker, the member for Riverina, made recourse to a fair bit of rhetoric there. He spoke of things being 'palpably unfair'. He referred to letters that talk about pompous statements from the government. He used words such as 'complicity', 'political opportunism' and 'betrayal'. Quite frankly, I am amazed that that kind of outburst can occur this evening, because for 11 long years the Howard government was incapable of doing anything about what the member now defines as being 'palpably unfair'. To come in here and carry on in such a fashion, opportunistically appealing to the veteran community, is just pathetic.

This morning's Sydney Morning Herald has a very timely obituary in regard to this piece of legislation. It outlined the life of Keith Shearim, who at 19 years of age was captured in Singapore in February 1942. Starting at 19 years, I stress, he was to spend three years in prison. He was quoted as saying:
I survived on rice sludge: always the same—breakfast, dinner and tea.
He said later:
It was always full of weevils and rat dung.
He further commented of this period that he survived through 'good luck, good officers, good non-commissioned officers' and good luck again. As I say, that is a very timely summary of the situation of many of those who still survive, who the government is
trying to repay in some fashion this evening through this legislation.

As has been detailed by others, the survivors number only 996. That is the number of gold card recipients, and that is probably a very reasonable summary. That is why the total cost of this legislation is estimated at only $27 million over the next four years. Of course, that is an indication of what is going to happen with demography. The cost will reduce from $8.5 million in the first year to $4.5 million in four years time.

(Quorum formed) As I was saying, the budget figures indicate that within four years the 900-odd recipients will be reduced by half.

The Australian prisoner-of-war experience started with the Boer War, where 104 people were incarcerated. They shared the same experience as the future Prime Minister of Britain Sir Winston Churchill. However, while they say that generally the winners write the history, in the case of the Boer War perhaps the most reprehensible and atrocious conditions were those that the British forced upon the Boer civilians, with large numbers dying in camps. This was in an indication of what was to happen in the Vietnam War, where large numbers of civilians were moved so that they had no connection with military forces. Of course, what particularly stands out in Australian history is the situation in Japan. We know that in the European theatre of war the mortality rate of prisoners was only three per cent, whereas 36 per cent of prisoners of the Japanese perished. We have heard accounts of and know well the Sandakan march where 3,500 civilian Indonesians and 2,500 prisoners of war perished. They were originally used to construct an airstrip and prisoner camp and then, with allied action in Borneo, were forced to go on marches where they all perished.

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East in 1946 undertook an investigation of Japanese atrocities in the Second World War and convicted 5,700 officers for categories B and C prisoner abuse. Amongst the more infamous outcomes of that inquiry was that Shiro Ishii was given immunity for providing statistics to the allies of the people that he had killed with experiments. Even the Indian judge, Radhabinod Pal, who in the end objected to convicting the Japanese, said:

The evidence is still overwhelming that atrocities were perpetrated by members of the Japanese armed forces against the civilian populations of some of the territories occupied by them, as also against prisoners of war.

It is disturbing that by 2006 a survey by Asahi news in Japan indicated that 70 per cent of those Japanese who responded were totally unaware of the war time experience of prisoners of war.

As I said, the conditions these people suffered were not of the usual standard that one has come to expect. The survival rates in other theatres of war and other conflicts were far greater. The situation was that of the 22,380-odd Australians who were prisoners of the Japanese 8,000 died in captivity—a situation which is fairly unparalleled in history. I stress that there were also 250,000 local people who were mistreated by the Japanese in the Burma-Thailand rail project. It was not just the prisoners of war, but it was a serious event in Australian history.

I want to give some credit to Tom Uren, a former member of this House, a former minister and my predecessor as the member for Reid. He was captured in Timor and was one of the huge numbers of people who were imprisoned and were victims of Japanese incarceration. His lessons out of this were perhaps different from those of some people who were never in prison. He devoted himself throughout his career to the search
for international peace and cooperation. He was a staunch opponent of the war in Vietnam. He always stressed that what he learned from his period with Weary Dunlop and others was cooperation, that they survived because people learned to work together and that, as a community, people are capable of overcoming the worst and the most horrendous conditions. That was to be a life-guiding point for him, something he learned from that experience in Japan. He has played a significant role with regard to advocacy for these people over many decades. I was speaking to him a few weeks ago and—of course he did not specify to me what was going to occur in the budget—he was looking forward to a good decision. This is what has come out of it: a payment of $500 per fortnight to the remaining 990-odd victims.

It is not only people like Tom Uren. I want to briefly talk about my wife's uncle, Ernest John Walsh, who was captured in Singapore in 1941. He was thought to be missing at first. It was quite a period of time before they were actually certain that he was a prisoner. That only occurred on 17 November 1943. He was both in Singapore and on the Burma-Thailand railway. I think what is important here is that the suffering that people endured was in some cases to be with them for the rest of their lives. Knowing my wife's uncle and her broader family, the condition of his children was the worst of all of those in the extended family. He was renowned for alcoholism. He was incapable of not assaulting policemen and others in uniform. He tended to become very aggressive towards them, attacking them when there was no need whatsoever. Ernest Walsh lived with the problems he experienced as a prisoner of the Japanese for the rest of his life. His family, including his children, was very much affected by those problems. Whilst he might have been a TPI and received a number of medals and awards for his commitment to this country, the kind of suffering he experienced has a lifelong effect on people. It is that effect that this government is attempting at a very late stage to do something about, which many governments, Labor and Liberal, have failed over many decades to do. We are recognising the particular conditions that these people endured over and above the majority of servicemen. I commend the legislation.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari—Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Minister for Defence Science and Personnel and Minister for Indigenous Health) (18:30): I thank the member for Werriwa for his contribution to the Veterans' Entitlements Amendment Bill. He is just leaving the chamber, but I will come to his contribution in a moment. In summing up, I acknowledge the contributions of the members for Fadden, Ryan, Maranoa, Herbert, Solomon, McPherson, Cowan and Riverina for the opposition and the members for McEwen, Shortland, Richmond, Lyons and Werriwa for the government.

As you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill will give effect to three 2011 budget measures. Firstly, the bill will create a new prisoner of war recognition supplement for Australians who were prisoners of war. The new supplement of $500 per fortnight will be paid in recognition of the hardships that these men and women endured during their captivity. It is expected that approximately 900 former prisoners of war will benefit from the new, fortnightly supplement, which will be payable from 20 September 2011, the first payment being made on 6 October 2011.

I thank the member for Werriwa for his insights into the sacrifices made by prisoners of war. In particular, I reflect upon the 8,000 who died, out of a total of 22,300 prisoners,
as a result of their treatment while in captivity with the Japanese. That should give us some insight about the nature of their treatment. I think his understanding, and that of other members of the parliament, of the issue says a lot about our appreciation of not only the contribution made by service men and women but in particular the sacrifices which were made by these very brave men and women. Those who are still with us have proved how resilient and tough they were. Clearly, their lives would have been in danger constantly. I am sure the suffering they endured would have left some of them, as the member for Werriwa pointed out, in a state where they would have had real issues over the remainder of their lives. I know that when this payment was announced by the Prime Minister—and I thank her for making it—at Kirribilli with a group of war veterans who were former prisoners of war it was a salutary experience for me especially, as Minister for Veterans' Affairs, to see how stoic these men were and remain, how resilient they are and, indeed, what a positive attitude they have to life. That says heaps about them as individuals and about us as a community and a country.

Further amendments in the bill will clarify and affirm the compensation offsetting legislation under the Veterans' Entitlements Act. Offsetting is intended to prevent double payments of compensation for the same incapacity, as I think is now understood. A decision of the full Federal Court highlighted the need to clarify this aspect of the legislation. The bill clarifies and affirms the compensation offsetting legislation that has been in place in the repatriation system since 1973. Finally, the bill will rationalise and better target payments for veterans and members who are undergoing treatment for war or defence caused injuries or diseases.

The bill will remove the current overlap in the allowances paid to veterans and members who are unable to work due to episodes of medical treatment and recuperation for war or defence caused injuries or diseases. Payments of temporary incapacity allowance will cease from 20 September 2011, with future payments being better targeted through the loss-of-earnings allowance. This measure has no impact on a veteran's or member's existing disability pension payment. From 20 September 2011, all eligible veterans and members in this situation will be assessed consistently against the criteria for loss-of-earnings allowance. These measures continue the government's commitment to streamlining and enhancing services and support to our veterans and members and their families.

A number of matters were raised by opposition members during the debate and, indeed, have been raised outside of this place by the shadow minister for veterans' affairs, Senator Ronaldson. Despite what has been asserted, the budget measures included in this bill were the subject of wide consultation with the ex-service community. Post-budget briefings of heads of ex-service organisations, or ESOs, were held; an ex-services roundtable, including a separate briefing on the measures in this legislation, was held; PMAC, the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council, was briefed, and the ESO deputy commissioners in each state and territory discussed the issues with their ESO community. There was widespread discussion and consultation with the veteran community about the budget measures raised in the bill. We know, as I am sure you would be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the ex-service community has some very skilled practitioners who know how this legislation works and are free to raise concerns about these measures—which has not happened to date.

The compensation offsetting provisions, despite the comments which have been
made, are not about changing the current arrangements; they are about ensuring that the principles of offsetting, which have been in place since 1973, are clear and unambiguous. These measures, quite simply, maintain the status quo. These measures ensure that veterans cannot get compensated twice for the same incapacity. That is widely accepted by the ex-service community. These amendments do not deny or change any existing veterans' entitlements. Let us be very clear about it: these amendments simply clarify and affirm existing arrangements that have been operating under all governments since 1973.

The member for Fadden specifically raised communication with regard to the proposed rationalisation of the temporary incapacity allowance and the loss of earnings allowance in the veteran community. I am pleased to inform the member that there is a communication plan in place. As with any changes to any measure, communication with the veteran community occurs as a matter of course. In addition to the briefing sessions already being provided and having been provided to ex-service organisations nationwide, key strategies will include provision of information to organisations, articles for the Veterans' Affairs Newsletter and updated information on the DVA website. The department will also be writing to veterans who may be affected in order to manage transition to the new arrangements.

I wish to briefly raise three other issues. One of them is funding for the Australian War Memorial. This matter has been raised in this place by a number of opposition speakers, as well as by the shadow minister outside this place and, indeed, in the Senate itself. It needs to be made very clear that this government is now providing funding of an additional $8 million a year, on top of the current $38 million, to the Australian War Memorial budget. That is a 21 per cent increase in its budget. That was done as a result of an examination of its finances, which was undertaken by me and the Minister for Finance and Deregulation at the request of the Prime Minister. We have responded to a very important need to provide additional resources to the Australian War Memorial, yet there has not been one jot of recognition from the opposition of the fact that the government has actually done something well beyond what the Australian War Memorial was initially asking for.

Mr Snowdon: We were not dragged kicking and screaming anywhere, my friend. Let us be very clear about this. This process started at the end of October last year and it is an initiative of this government. We have had the shadow minister walking around the country bleating that, somehow or other, the opposition has forced the government into this position. That is an absolutely ludicrous proposition and anyone who has dealt with or had any knowledge of the Australian War Memorial, the Council of the Australian War Memorial, the staff of the Australian War Memorial and the staff of the Department of the Veterans' Affairs would be able to tell you that that is not the case. But these clowns opposite prefer not to listen. So what we now have is an argument that, somehow or other, we have not provided sufficient resources to the Australian War Memorial for the development of its World War I galleries.

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Let me make it very clear: this budget provides $1.7 million for the memorial to scope the full scale of the refurbishment. It may surprise the opposition that, despite the bleatings that we are not providing resources to the Memorial for this particular purpose, this $1.7 million was precisely the amount of money the Australian War
Memorial asked for. We were requested by the Australian War Memorial to provide them with $1.7 million for a scoping study so they could update their First World War galleries. The money has been provided. So let us not have any more cant from the opposition, particularly from the shadow spokesman, on this issue, because it is very clear we are meeting our responsibilities and, most importantly, we are doing it in conjunction with the Australian War Memorial.

The third issue I want to refer to is the opposition's criticism of the government about not providing funding for the centenary of Anzac for the 2011-12 budget. Again, I am at a bit of a loss to understand where the opposition is coming from here. The National Commission on the Commemoration of the Anzac Centenary report, *How Australia may commemorate the Anzac Centenary*, was presented to the Prime Minister on 28 March 2011. The Prime Minister indicated that the government would respond later in 2011. In the lead-up to the Anzac Centenary, the government has undertaken preparatory work, including the establishment of the Anzac Centenary Advisory Board. I will, hopefully, be making an announcement as to the chair of the board very shortly.

The opposition's commentary on this issue, like so many others in the veterans' community, is another example of creating unnecessary and unwarranted concern. It is a beat-up. The shadow veterans' affairs minister mentioned that the Australia Remembers 1945-1995 program set the standard. He referred to the Australia Remembers program. But he may be interested to know that no funding was provided in 1993-94 budget for that program, which, in the context of time, is comparable to the 2012-13 budget for the centenary of Anzac. There was no money provided in an equivalent year.

Initial funding of $350,000 was provided in the 1994-95 budget, which, in contemporary terms, is comparable to the 2013-14 budget. So let us be clear: we are well ahead of the game. The government will have funding in place well before then for the centenary of Anzac arrangements, and the Prime Minister has requested that we take matters back to the cabinet later this year.

The last matter I wish to raise is military superannuation. The shadow minister is on about this all the time, despite what we tell him. He appears to have a tin ear. This matter was raised by, among others, the member for Fadden, the member for Riverina and the member for Solomon. In 11 years of government, when the now opposition were in control of the treasury bench, in a period of economic sunshine, they did nothing about superannuation indexation—not a jot! They come in here, crying crocodile tears about the need for reform in the superannuation system but, when they had the levers of government, when they were in control of the treasury bench, they did absolutely nothing about it. What they are saying is clearly hypocritical. You had your opportunity, you were in government for 11 years and you did nothing. By the way, the proposal the opposition have put forward—and we saw it debated in the Senate—has not even been properly funded. The real fiscal cost of their proposal was $1.7 billion over four years, with an underlying cash cost of $175 million. It would have increased the government's unfunded liabilities by $6.2 billion.

Furthermore, their proposal was discriminatory. It did not even include the over 90 per cent of current ADF members in the Military Superannuation and Benefits
Scheme. It deigned to do something about some but not all. Superannuation is a means by which Australians can manage their living standards in retirement. It is not designed to provide a replacement for income earned over a working life. The opposition has been hypocritical in every sense on this issue and on so many others in the area of veterans' affairs.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Message from the Administrator recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr SNOWDON: by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Tax Laws Amendment (2011 Measures No. 5) Bill 2011

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (18:47): I rise on behalf of the opposition to address the Tax Laws Amendment (2011 Measures No. 5) Bill. I want to briefly do two things—to run through some of the detail of the five schedules in the bill, and to address a related issue on one aspect of one of those schedules. The opposition will not be opposing this tax law amendment bill. The five schedules deal with, as you would expect, a range of aspects—some of them are rectifications to the tax law; others are to implement budget decisions. While the coalition obviously have varying views on each of the schedules, ultimately we will not be opposing the bill.

As was outlined by the Assistant Treasurer in the second reading speech some days ago, and as is detailed in the explanatory memorandum, this tax law amendment bill has five schedules. Two of them deal with trust law, and I will deal with both of them together. The first schedule deals with changes to trust law regarding income averaging and farm management deposits. As we know, income averaging is used to smooth primary production income over time. Under tax ruling 95/29, a beneficiary of a rural trust was considered to be carrying on a rural enterprise in a year when the trust suffered a loss and could thereby continue to average their income and maintain their farm management deposits.

In a 2010 High Court case, Commissioner of Taxation v Bamford, it was decided that a beneficiary to a rural trust could not be presently entitled to a share of trust income if there was no income to be distributed. This had the flow-on effect of the beneficiary losing status as a primary producer and therefore, naturally, the ability to retain farm management deposits. In essence, as outlined in the government's second reading speech and in the explanatory memorandum to the bill, the effect was to overturn the substance of that tax ruling. As sometimes occurs, this schedule reinstates the law to the place where it was before the Bamford case, and we on this side of the House acknowledge that that will be welcomed by rural businesses that use trust structures.

Schedule 2 deals with trust income streaming and affects trusts in receipt of capital gains or franked distributions. The changes within the schedule are also a result of that same decision which altered some of the legal definitions of trust beneficiaries. In particular, it raised fundamental issues regarding the mismatch between the amount beneficiaries can be assessed for tax purposes with the amount they are entitled to under the tax law. This mismatch, according to the explanatory memorandum, could result in the potential for tax manipulation
and avoidance. The government asked the Board of Taxation for advice on what changes were required immediately, pending a broader review of trust taxation. The measures in the bill flow from that advice. The government released a discussion paper back in March. The consultation resulted in the inclusion of specific anti-avoidance rules and a carve-out for managed investment trusts. The new law allows trustees to stream capital gains and franked distributions to specific beneficiaries. It also introduces the concept of a specific entitlement to ensure a beneficiary's share of this stream reflects their entitlement under the trust deed and it introduces specific anti-avoidance rules so that income cannot be sheltered in exempt beneficiaries. We are told through the explanatory memorandum that the financial impact of both of these first two schedules is nil.

Schedule 3 makes some technical amendments to the National Rental Affordability Scheme. I will not elaborate on that beyond what has already been pointed out. Schedule 4 and schedule 5 deal with two budget announcements. The first is the phasing out of the dependent spouse tax offset, which was announced just a few weeks ago. The dependent spouse tax offset will not be available for spouses 40 years old or younger, meaning that it will be phased out over time as fewer and fewer people are eligible to claim it. The budget announcement dressed this up as a measure to remove the disincentive for younger dependent spouses without children to remain out of the workforce, but given the financial impact it is obvious for all to see that this is a savings measure that the government has jumped on at the first opportunity. Whilst it was in the budget, it was not identified by the government itself at any prior point in time.

The final schedule deals with fringe benefits tax rules for motor vehicles. This has received a significant airing. All of the legislative changes for this measure will have an ongoing gain of nearly $1 billion in revenue over the forward estimates. We are told that it will be $961.9 million precisely over the next four years. The member for Fremantle and I will check in four years time to see whether it is $961.9 million precisely, but that is what we are told in the explanatory memorandum. It obviously occurs from significant changes to the way that FBT works for motor vehicles. It was well aired in the days after the budget. It will mean those who drive fewer than 15,000 kilometres a year will pay less FBT. We are told that those who drive 15,000 to 25,000 kilometres a year will pay about the same, and those who drive more than 25,000 kilometres will, in all likelihood, pay more fringe benefits tax. I will not go through all of the details other than to say that it is obvious that the government has also grabbed this measure to raise as much revenue as it can. The increase in revenue is actually over five years, so the member for Fremantle and I will have to wait a little bit longer. Most of the gain is in 2014-15, so it is mostly over the forward estimates. We are told in the table of revenue gains that there will be a small gain in 2010-11.

I did say at the outset that there was another issue I want to address and that relates to trusts. As I said in relation to the first measure, the coalition welcomes the changes in the bill which make improvements in laws relating to primary production trusts. However, coalition senators in particular have identified other taxation laws relating to primary production trusts which should be improved. Under the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 primary production trusts can defer taxation liabilities on profits from the sale of livestock in years
where they have been affected by drought, flood, fire or disease, but if the beneficiary of a trust dies this is considered a disentitling event. Tax liabilities cannot continue to be deferred after a disentitling event. As a result, tax deferrals cease and the trust is liable for tax on profits deferred in the year that the death occurs. That is all outlined in section 385/163(3) of the 1997 act.

I am told that under the previous tax law the Commissioner of Taxation had discretion and under the current act that discretion does not exist. The coalition was prepared to move a second reading amendment to this bill to give it an airing and to try to have that matter rectified. There were discussions with the Independents and with the government. The coalition recognises and appreciates those discussions which were led by my colleague Senator Cormann. As I said, those discussions were not only with the crossbenchers but also with the government. Following those discussions, the coalition has decided not to move an amendment to this bill on this issue as a result of the fact that the government have agreed to make the necessary legislative changes to rectify this issue in the near future. On behalf the coalition, I say that we take the government and the Assistant Treasurer at their word.

We welcome the government's commitment on this important issue which was identified in the recent Senate estimates hearings, I am told. We look forward to the government and the tax office bringing forward the relevant amendment—no doubt in a future tax law amendment bill that will come before this House in the not-too-distant future.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (18:59): I rise to speak in support of this legislation and the provisions it makes in relation to the fringe benefit tax on employee vehicles and the tax amendments to the Rental Affordability Scheme. This reform is a small but significant part of the government's steady, thorough progress towards creating a sustainable energy future for Australia. That can only be achieved by ensuring that policy settings across the board provide incentives for energy efficiency in all areas of the Australian economy and of Australian life, and on the other hand, by removing what might otherwise have functioned as unnecessary incentives for inefficient energy use. This relatively small piece of tax reform achieves that by removing a tax calculation that had the effect of rewarding those who drive company vehicles more than they otherwise would. The amended approach will instead encourage a more conservative, energy efficient approach to car use for work purposes.

This is also an example of the government's willingness to reform the tax system in the interests of ensuring that the structure of tax assessments and concessions is actually working to achieve appropriate economic and wider policy outcomes. Where that is not the case and where there is a setting that forgoes revenue or makes a support payment that is unnecessary and ineffective, or even, as in this case, travelling in the wrong direction, it is absolutely right for government to say, 'We are going to make savings and we are going to apply government funds and concessions so that they work to achieve the positive reform that Australia needs right now and in the long term.'

Under the existing FBT regime, an employee issued with a company vehicle would be liable to pay fringe benefit tax according to one of two separate cost calculations: the operating cost method and the statutory formula method. The proposed changes will not affect the operating cost method of calculating FBT which still allows for the use of log books to maintain a record
of personal and work related travel. This bill addresses inadequacies in the statutory formula method by removing factors that encourage higher vehicle usage and replacing them with a single, fixed percentage fringe benefit tax calculation. Using the statutory formula method, an employee's fringe benefit tax liability is calculated using a sliding scale of cost per kilometre, with the cost declining as the number of kilometres travelled increases. The original rationale for this approach was based on the assumption that personal usage would remain static and that any additional travel would be work related. That assumption, however, no longer reflects the current state of vehicle usage data, which in fact indicate that the FBT calculation is having the general effect of increasing vehicle use irrespective of work related transport needs.

According to Australia's future tax system, commissioned by this government, the incentive in the current FBT arrangements for employees to use their vehicles more regularly in order to reduce their tax liability, is in turn leading to more road congestion and higher pollution, which of course increase carbon emissions and undermine the effort to address the causes of dangerous climate change. As I understand it, something like 80 per cent of all transport relies on petroleum based fuel. In making the transition to a more sustainable energy future, we must keep in mind that the range of renewable energy resources, while good for producing low or zero emission electricity, are generally not an appropriate replacement transport fuel. That is why we need to keep our focus on the energy demand side of the equation when it comes to transport and on the pursuit of energy efficiency in personal, business and particularly freight transport.

This bill helps to move Australia towards a more transport energy efficient future by removing a tax assessment calculation that has had the effect of encouraging people to use company supplied vehicles more than they otherwise would and for no additional social or economic purpose. Not only has it had the effect of rewarding what in many cases was unnecessary car use; in so doing, it has also inevitably dissuaded people from choosing to car-pool or to use more sustainable modes of transport such as trains, buses and bicycles.

The changes that this bill represents are eminently sensible. The bill reforms the FBT calculations as they apply to work vehicle use so that there is no unnecessary incentive in our tax system for excessive work vehicle use. It will also no doubt mean a reduction in single work vehicle use and a rise in the use of shared travel and public transport and, finally, it represents an important cost saving to government.

Other important measures in this bill include the tax law amendments to the National Rental Affordability Scheme. These amendments are designed to simplify the scheme and make it less restrictive, which will result in an increase in affordable rental housing available to Australian families. This change has even more significance at a time when families are struggling with record high rental rates, especially in Western Australia. For all these reasons, I support the bill and I commend the minister for his work in continuing the difficult but critical task of tax reform.

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (19:04): The great achievement of the Labor government has been a serious ongoing commitment to tax reform. It is with taxes that we build society and a hallmark of this Labor government has been focused and consistent attention on tax reform. We, of course, commissioned the Henry review, a root and branch tax review, which has for the first time in a generation
looked across the tax system at how to make it work more effectively. As the Henry review in its opening noted:

A 21st century tax and transfer system should meet its purposes efficiently, equitably, transparently and effectively. Critically, it would support per capita income growth rates at the upper end of developed country experience by encouraging high workforce participation, a more efficient pattern of saving, and stronger investment in education and physical capital.

The Henry review noted that revenue raising should be concentrated on four robust and efficient tax bases: personal income; business income; private consumption through broad, simple taxes; and economic rents from natural resources and land.

The Henry review has underpinned much of what the government has done on tax reform. Commentators, I think, have missed one of the big stories about the recent budget, which is that it contains substantial tax reform, not the sort of tax measures that we saw all too frequently during mining boom mark-1—recycling revenue into badly targeted measures—but measures that focus on how to make our system more efficient and more equitable, and operate on a simpler basis. It is for that reason that this government is going about putting in place a minerals resource rent tax, a tax that will ensure that Australia's big mining companies at last pay their fair share, a tax that sits very much in the tradition of the progressive side of politics of ensuring that taxes are paid by those who can best afford them and that taxes impose a minimum deadweight cost on the economy. Growth is a Labor value.

Increasing the size of the Australian economy is absolutely critical and the minerals resource rent tax will see us do that. Another substantial tax reform is carbon pricing. We are recognising, through a fixed carbon price and then an emissions trading scheme, that the best way of dealing with dangerous climate change is to go to the heart of the problem, which is dangerous carbon pollution. At the moment, polluters can put as much carbon pollution into the atmosphere as they like. They do not pay for carbon pollution. Carbon pricing has been presented as an environmental reform but it is of course also an economic reform. The most effective way of getting carbon abatement in the Australian economy is to put a price on carbon, not through the coalition's grab bag of subsidies for polluters but going straight to the issue, putting a price on pollution and bringing about a smooth transition to a cleaner, greener economy, taking Australia from its current position as the most carbon intensive country in the developed world to a position where we are able to compete effectively for the green jobs of the future.

The Gillard government is also putting in place substantial reform on fossil fuels through legislation which is finally enacting reforms originally foreshadowed by then Treasurer Peter Costello in the 2003 budget. What is tragic about these fuel reforms is that the coalition, at the last moment, have walked away. For the best part of the last eight years they have been in the cart on this fundamental economic reform but at the last moment saw a populist slogan and leapt out of the cart. I am pleased to see the Assistant Treasurer here in the chamber. I am sure he would be as pleased as I am at the passage of those reforms through this House in the most recent session.

When crisis has hit, Labor has also used taxation reform exactly as economists would have us do. We put in place a modest flood levy to deal with the rebuilding cost required from the natural disasters of the most recent summer. Looking back further to the economic downturn, we used a fiscal stimulus that was timely, targeted and temporary, recognising that household
payments and infrastructure investments were the most efficient way of getting the economy going again. On each of the tax reforms I have listed, Labor listened to the economic mainstream. While the coalition were listening to who knows what zealots, we were there focused on the economic mainstream and on delivering real reforms.

And it is those real reforms that lie at the heart of Tax Laws Amendment (2011 Measures No. 5) Bill—reforms recognising the importance of phasing out outdated payments. One of the key reforms in this legislation is removal of the dependent spouse tax offset. The dependent spouse tax offset existed at a state level prior to the 1930s but was first introduced at a federal level in 1936. During the second reading debate, one member justified the measure saying he felt it was the duty of a husband to maintain his wife and therefore it was right and proper that a husband would receive a deduction for it. I do not think that such a sentiment would be shared by most 30-somethings in the labour force today. Most families without children would not think feel it is the duty of a husband to maintain his wife and in an era in which we are trying to boost labour force participation, in which we hear much talk of skills shortages, it is important that we remove disincentives to work.

As the dependent spouse tax offset phases out, it imposes an effective tax rate in the phase-out range. If a dependent spouse earns more than $282, under the current program the entitlement reduces by $1 for every $4 the dependent spouse's income is above the threshold. The effect of this is to put in place another 25 per cent tax rate in addition to the current marginal tax rates for the first $10,000 earned by a so-called dependent spouse.

We are steadily phasing out this measure. It will be phased out for taxpayers born after 1971, recognising that some of those who have been recipients of this payment may now be in a position where it is not straightforward for them to enter the workforce. Taxpayers who are invalids, permanently unable to work or are carers will not lose this benefit. The phase-out is applying to able-bodied taxpayers, those aged under 40 and those who—certainly from the discussions I have had with my electors—would not have the social norms that were expressed in this place when the dependent spouse tax offset was put in place. This measure modernises the Australian tax system. It brings the Australian tax system up to speed with contemporary values and it boosts labour force participation—an absolutely critical measure.

We are also making the Australian tax system simpler and fairer for business and the community. It has long been recognised that the entrepreneurs tax offset is poorly targeted for small businesses. There is little evidence it has acted to encourage the establishment of small businesses. More than 80 per cent of small businesses were eligible for the offset. Rather than allowing a small business to grow, the entrepreneurs tax offset encourages businesses to structure affairs in a particular way, despite the market opportunities that might be present.

The assistance is provided at a fairly low level to very small businesses. The maximum claim is $2,500, but the average entrepreneurs tax offset claim was less than $500, with 70 per cent of claims being below $600—a fair bit of paper work for a relatively small sum of money. The entrepreneurs tax offset is difficult to administer and adds to the complexity of our current tax system. There are better ways and more effective ways to help small businesses. The $5,000 immediate deduction,
which will come into place from 2012-13, is a far more efficient and effective way of helping our small businesses grow and so boosting employment in this critical sector.

The budget also puts in place important reforms to fix the current system of fringe benefits taxation for cars. This is a system which is both inequitable and inefficient. The existing statutory formula method for determining the taxable value of car fringe benefits delivers a greater tax concession the further the car is driven. Car fringe benefits arise when an employee uses salary sacrifice for an employer provided car for private use. Under the statutory formula method, the person's car fringe benefits are determined by multiplying the relevant statutory rate by the cost of the car. The current statutory rates are designed so that a person's car fringe benefit decreases as the distance travelled by their vehicle increases. People can therefore increase their tax concession by driving their vehicle further. The Henry tax review reported evidence showing that this is exactly what people do.

Anecdotally, in my electorate one hears stories that, as the end of the tax year approaches and as a taxpayer feels that they are not necessarily going to be in the most favourable mileage bracket, they will lend the keys of their car to a teenage son to drive to the coast for the weekend. Their child might otherwise have caught a bus to the coast. These sorts of environmentally unsound practices are effectively encouraged by a poorly structured tax concession. So we are reforming the statutory formula method, replacing the current statutory tax rates with a single rate of 20 per cent that applies regardless of the distance travelled. The reform will only apply to new vehicle contracts entered into after the announcement on budget night so, of course, it will not affect people who have already entered into contracts. That shift to the single standard 20 per cent rate will be phased in over four years. Naturally, people who still use their vehicle for a significant amount of work related travel will be able to use the operating cost or log book method to ensure that their car fringe benefit excludes any business use of their vehicle. Over the forward estimates this measure will result in an increase in revenue of nearly a billion dollars, and this is additional revenue which is then available for more efficient and more equitable tax reforms.

I am very proud to be part of a Labor government which is committed to good economic management and important tax reforms, tax reforms that I hope will outlive many of us in this place, tax reforms that reflect the understanding of those of us on this side of the House that it is important to draw on the best evidence available and tax reforms that recognise that the Henry review has laid down much that we can draw on in the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (19:17): I am very pleased to rise in support of the Tax Laws Amendment (2011 Measures No. 5) Bill 2011, which affirms this government's ongoing delivery of improvements to Australia's taxation regime. These are reforms which have been welcomed across the financial services sector, and a diverse range of interests across our economy stand to benefit from the passage of this bill.

I would like to turn to the key elements of the bill, which comprises five schedules that respectively address the ability for trust beneficiaries to continue using primary production averaging and farm management deposits in a loss year from the 2010-11 income year; provisions which permit capital gains and franked distributions of trusts to be streamed to beneficiaries for tax purposes; technical amendments to the National Rental Affordability Scheme which will provide...
certainty about the entitlements of parties participating in the scheme; the phasing out of the dependent spouse tax offset; and reform of the statutory formula for determining the taxable value of car fringe benefits and replacing it with a simplified, single rate of 20 per cent, irrespective of the number of kilometres travelled.

Schedules 1 and 2 of the bill in particular deal with the outcomes that ensued as a result of the 2010 decision of the High Court in Bamford v Commissioner of Taxation. And it is these provisions which I will primarily address this evening. I turn first to the nature of trusts themselves. In understanding the relevance of these proposed amendments, it is instructive to firstly consider the nature of trusts and their prevalence in the financial arrangements of many small businesses today, particularly rural interests. It was with much pleasure that, in preparing these comments, I harked back to my well-worn edition of Jacobs’ Law of Trusts and refreshed myself on the four essential elements of a trust; namely, the trustee, the trust property, the beneficiary and a personal obligation attached to the property.

As highlighted by Meagher and Gummow from the outset, a trust can be described as 'an institution developed by equity with its own peculiar characteristics'. However, to define the juristic nature of a trust is more complex, and it is often easier to criticise attempts at such a definition and define what it is not rather than what it is. Nevertheless, today trusts are used in many contexts in the Australian landscape. Indeed, our superannuation system is characterised by funds which are structured as trusts and, according to recent APRA statistics, these trusts are responsible for close to $1.4 trillion of money under management.

Trusts are also a common vehicle for small to medium business enterprises. Many family trusts, by definition, rely on trust structures. Family trusts are an example of a discretionary trust. This where the distribution of the trust property is subject to the discretion of the trustee. When one considers that there are in fact hundreds of thousands of trusts in operation in Australia in some form, the magnitude of the implications of the provisions of this bill become clear. As the Australian Taxation Office itself has noted:

Traditionally, the use of trust arrangements was seen as a vehicle largely used by wealthy families and businesses for asset protection purposes and legitimate tax minimisation. In recent times, the use of trusts has become more widespread.

I would like to turn to the implications of the decision in the High Court case of Bamford v Commissioner of Taxation. The response of the Australian Taxation Office is significant and affects every trust in Australia. In essence, it affects how the distribution provisions of those trust deeds need to be drafted to obtain the optimal tax outcomes—subject of course to the anti-avoidance rules in the tax legislation.

Prior to the decision in Bamford v Commissioner of Taxation, the Australian Taxation Office applied Taxation Ruling TR 95/29, which dealt with the applicability of averaging provisions to beneficiaries of trust estates carrying on a business of primary production. The effect was that the ATO regarded a beneficiary as presently entitled to a share of the trust income provided there was some gross trust income and the trustee exercised their discretion in favour of the beneficiary. In cases where there was no gross trust income, the ATO regarded a beneficiary as presently entitled to a share of trust income where they had a vested and indefeasible interest in trust income, and were therefore deemed to be presently
entitled to trust income. The practical effect of these provisions meant that a beneficiary could be taken to carry on a primary production business that was actually carried on by the trustee in a year where the trust had a loss for trust law purposes. Thus, such a beneficiary continued to be eligible for income averaging and was not required to have their farm management deposits repaid to them and included in their assessable income.

However, the High Court in Bamford held that a beneficiary cannot be presently entitled to a share of income of a trust if there is no income legally available for distribution. As a consequence, the ATO ruling was incorrect at law and withdrawn. In its decision impact statement on the High Court's ruling, the ATO made several observations including: a number of issues concerning division 6 of the Income Tax Assessment Act remained unresolved; there remained at issue the effect for taxation purposes of a re-characterisation clause that requires or permits the trustee to treat capital that is otherwise received as income—the ATO noted that these were not facts before the court in Bamford; and the income of a trust estate for trust law purposes and its income for tax purposes are two different subject matters which do not necessarily correspond.

I would like to turn to the process of reform, which has led to this bill before the House today. Clearly, these developments have necessitated legislative action on trust tax law—an issue which the Assistant Treasurer rightly identified as an ongoing area of concern, where reform is necessary to simplify the system, rewrite some rules and provide more certainty to the tens of thousands of small businesses and farmers who utilise trusts. With this in mind the Assistant Treasurer announced in December last year a public consultation process with a view to seeking input from industry, individuals and peak organisations and to updating the trust income tax provisions of the Income Tax Assessment Act.

It is a reflection of this government's consultative approach that the Assistant Treasurer's announcement emphasised the role of private sector expertise in the development of its consultation paper. As the Assistant Treasurer further noted:

Any options will seek to ensure that net taxable income of a trust is assessed primarily to beneficiaries. Trustees will continue to be assessed only to the extent that amounts of net taxable income are not otherwise assessable to beneficiaries. The options will not include the taxation of trusts as companies, which would be a major departure from the current law.

In March this year the Assistant Treasurer released the discussion paper, 'Improving the taxation of trust income', and in his speech to the national convention of the Taxation Institute of Australia he announced the adoption of two recommendations to clarify the tax law for over 600,000 trusts in Australia. The two key recommendations from the Board of Taxation addressing those key areas of uncertainty for trusts were the better alignment of the concept of 'income of the trust estate' with 'net income of the trust estate'. This is indeed an area of challenge, which was noted in the consultation process, and the concerns in this area were taken on board in the legislative drafting process and the enabling of the streaming of capital gains and franked distributions. Again, the rationale for the implementation of the Board of Taxation recommendations was to enable the large number of businesses and individuals using trusts to continue to do so with confidence and greater certainty. The consultation process received thoughtful input from a range of reputable industry and interest groups including the Financial
Services Council and the Law Council of Australia.

In April a further public consultation process was announced for the exposure draft legislation to give effect to these important reforms. As can be clearly seen the process undertaken to arrive at this point has been thorough, transparent and based on invaluable industry and private sector knowledge. Importantly, the amendments contained in schedule 1 of the bill were rightly described by the Assistant Treasurer as very welcome news for approximately 23,000 Australian farmers with trusts, with these amendments introduced to the House before 30 June as promised, so that beneficiaries can continue to use the primary production averaging and farm management deposit provisions in a loss year.

I will conclude with some comments on the dependent spouse tax offset in schedule 4 of the bill, which amends the Income Tax Assessment Act to implement the budget measure of phasing out the dependent spouse tax offset. This reform will mean that, from 1 July, taxpayers with a dependent spouse born on or after 1 July 1971—a great year may I say—will no longer be eligible for the dependent spouse tax offset. This means the DSTO will be gradually phased out as the population ages.

It is important to understand the nature of the dependent spouse tax offset. This government is focused on removing disincentives for people to remain out of the workforce, including younger dependent spouses without children. It is quite obvious that the dependent spouse tax offset is an outdated measure that reflects old-fashioned gender roles. In fact, it has been around since the inception of the Income Tax Assessment Act in 1936.

As well as modernising our tax and transfer system, schedule 4 of the bill reflects this government's focus on encouraging workplace participation—something we all know we urgently needed in our skills-short economy. On this point the bill recognises the unique circumstances that do affect some people in our community who would otherwise be caught by this change. Consequently, Australian taxpayers where the dependent spouse is a carer, who is an invalid or permanently unable to work, and taxpayers eligible for such measures as the overseas civilian tax offsets will not be affected by this change.

In addition families with a dependent spouse and young children are not affected by this measure because they would receive family tax benefit part B and would be ineligible in any event to receive the dependent spouse tax offset. This reform recognises that a bigger workforce is vital for the strength of our economy and the living standards of our community. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation) (19:27): I thank those members who have contributed to this debate. In particular I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Greenway, who would appear on this matter to be constructively working with the government and I will refer a little bit more to this in some of the schedules.

Schedule 1 allows trust beneficiaries to continue to use primary production averaging and farm management deposit provisions in a year where the trust has a loss for trust law purposes. The Gillard government has broadly restored in this bill the position that existed before the High Court decision in Commissioner of Taxation...
and Bamford. That decision necessitated the Commissioner withdrawing a public ruling that in certain circumstances a beneficiary could be eligible for the primary production averaging and farm management deposit rules in a trust loss year. This schedule secures continuity for taxpayers because the amendments apply from the 2010-11 income year and the Commissioner's ruling applies up to and including the 2009-10 income year.

As I said earlier, I acknowledge that there have been productive discussions with the opposition about identifying an agreed further reform to this area, and I concur with the remarks of the member for Casey on this matter. The amendments in schedule 2 ensure that where permitted by the trustee the capital gains and franked distributions, including any attached franking credits of a trust, can be effectively streamed to the beneficiaries for tax purposes by making them specifically entitled to those amounts. The amendments also introduce specific anti-avoidance rules to address the potential opportunities for tax manipulation that can result from the inappropriate use of exempt entities as beneficiaries. These amendments will provide more certainty for the trustees and beneficiaries of trusts that stream capital gains and franked distributions, including any attached franking credits, while the government continues to progress its broader review of the taxation of trust income.

Schedule 3 amends the provisions in the taxation law related to the National Rental Affordability Scheme tax offset provisions. The amendments simplify the operations of the NRAS—the National Rental Affordability Scheme—for participants by introducing the concept of an NRAS consortium, which allows a broader range of arrangements to participate in the NRAS. The amendments provide some additional flexibility to the NRAS participants and how the incentive is shared between members of the NRAS consortium. These amendments do this by establishing an election to allow approved participants to relinquish their entitlement to an NRAS tax offset in favour of other members of the NRAS consortium. These amendments also address some minor technical issues that have arisen from the interaction of the tax law and the National Rental Affordability Scheme Act 2008. They also ensure that certain payments provided under the NRAS indirectly, such as through an NRAS consortium, are treated as non-assessable, non-exempt income.

Schedule 4 implements the government's budget measure to phase out the dependent spouse tax offset for dependent spouses currently aged less than 40 or, in other words, people who were born from July 1971 onwards. The dependent spouse tax offset originates in the initial Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 and it needs to be reformed to allow for Australia's modern and growing economy. This reform is an important measure to help encourage more Australians into paid employment by removing the disincentive for younger dependent spouses without children to remain out of the workforce. Dependent spouses aged 40 or over will not be affected by this measure, nor will dependent spouses with children or taxpayers whose dependent spouse is a carer, an invalid or permanently unable to work. Taxpayers eligible for the zone, overseas force or overseas civilian tax offsets are also not affected by this measure.

Schedule 5 amends the tax laws to reform the current statutory formula method for determining the taxable value of car fringe benefits. The changes will replace the current statutory rates with a single statutory rate of 20 per cent, regardless of kilometres travelled. Under the current statutory formula method, the calculated fringe benefit from a salary-sacrificed car decreases as the...
distance travelled by the vehicle increases. People can therefore increase their tax concession by driving their vehicle further. This schedule removes the current incentive for people to drive salary sacrificed and employer provided vehicles further to increase their tax concession and, in the process, burn more fuel. The reform implements yet again another recommendation of Australia's Future Tax System Review, also known as the Henry review, and will apply the commitments made after the budget announcement of 10 May 2011. It will be phased in over four years. This bill deserves the support of the parliament. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Administrator recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr SHORTEN: by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Home Loans and Credit Cards) Bill 2011

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (19:34): I rise to speak on the National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Home Loans and Credit Cards) Bill 2011 and, in doing so, speak on behalf of the shadow Treasurer, who was listed to speak in this debate but is at this very time giving another speech at another place—not in the Senate—which is the keynote address to CEDA that was scheduled some time ago for this time of the evening.

The bill before the House this evening outlines changes to the National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009 and introduces a requirement for lenders to provide a key fact sheet for standard home loans. It also introduces a number of reforms to lending terms for credit cards by, firstly, prescribing rules for approval for the use of credit cards above the credit limit; secondly, specifying an allocation hierarchy for payments made under credit card contracts; thirdly, restricting credit card providers from making unsolicited invitations to borrowers to increase the credit limit of their credit cards; and, fourthly, introducing a requirement for lenders to provide a key fact sheet for credit card contracts.

On behalf of the shadow Treasurer, I say at the outset that the coalition will not be opposing this bill. However, that does not mean we believe it is good legislation or that it is the best way to advance the interests of consumers of financial services. The way this legislation has been handled is typical of the government's hasty and poorly thought through approach and their approach to policy generally. Consultation with industry has been poor, to the point where extensive last-minute amendments have been made to address industry concerns. Also, much of the detail of the bill has been left to regulations, which are due to be announced, we are told, by the end of June—although there can be no certainty even on this point, today being 20 June. The parliament is being asked to vote on an important piece of legislation, again without knowing all of the details. More generally, this bill continues the government's intrusion into the commercial processes of business. Rather than try to improve the workings of the market for financial services, the government has chosen to interfere in business decisions through further regulation.
As I said at the outset, the first element within the bill introduces a mandatory key facts sheet for standard home loans. It is important to understand the history leading up to this change. The key facts sheet was one of the elements of the Treasurer's Competitive and Sustainable Banking package that was rushed out towards the end of last year, a few months after the shadow Treasurer announced his nine-point banking plan to achieve a better deal for consumers of financial services. The Treasurer has not been leading from the front on banking reform; rather he has been struggling along in the coalition's wake. The coalition's banking plan received wide support within the business community, as well as support from Independents and crossbenchers. The Treasurer's package adopted some key features of the coalition's nine-point plan, such as legislation on price signalling and the introduction of covered bonds. However, in many other respects it was a piecemeal approach addressing concerns issue by issue rather than taking an overall industry-wide approach to improve the workings of the market by increasing competition. Indeed, some of the changes appear counter-productive to the stated aims.

A case in point is the banning of exit fees on new floating-rate mortgages, which was introduced through regulation rather than legislation. The coalition has consistently argued that the banning of mortgage exit fees will materially weaken the competitive position of the smaller lenders by preventing them from offering packages which give borrowers lower interest rates in return for a loyalty commitment for a number of years. This lessens competition in the provision of financial services. Crucially, the coalition is not arguing that lenders should have to have exit fees—indeed, many lenders are now offering products with no exit fees, and the coalition welcomes this. Consumers can choose from that mix of features that best suits their circumstances from the enhanced range of products now available. It may be they prefer a lower interest rate with an exit fee. The point is that restricting competition and choice is against the broader interests of consumers more generally.

We also need to ask ourselves why it took the government so long to respond. The problems associated with a lessening of competition in the banking system have been apparent for some time. Now we are in this House in June 2011, at least a couple of years after those problems became apparent and six months after the Treasurer released his plan at the end of last year, to debate one of the aspects of the government's plan: the key facts sheet for standard home loans. The facts sheet is intended to make it easier for consumers to readily compare different home loans by requiring lenders to provide standardised loan information such as pricing and other details about the product. The Treasurer, Mr Swan, has claimed that this change, along with the other measures which were included in his banking package, will ensure that interest rates are lower over time. In fact, the Australian ran this headline the day after the Treasurer's announcement: 'Swan pledges to bring down rates with reforms'. That was on 13 December 2010. Of course, this heroic claim will soon be put to the test. The Reserve Bank has repeatedly warned over the past few months that interest rates will soon need to rise. Some commentators believe an August rise is likely, following the release of the next consumer price index figures. If this does in fact occur, it will be instructive to see how the Treasurer explains it in the context of his banking package.

The coalition has some criticisms in relation to the consultation process for this bill. It has been clear from the coalition's own consultations that many industry groups
have been asking for more time to prepare their businesses to cope with these new changes. The key facts sheet for standard home loans was originally set to apply from 1 September this year. Much of the detail required in the facts sheet was to be prescribed by regulations, which are yet to be released by the minister—and, as I said earlier, are expected to be announced sometime in the days left in this month. This would have left institutions with a very small window of time to prepare—less than three months. The government were going to give institutions less than three months to change and update their information systems, to establish new documentation processes and to train their staff in order to comply with this legislation. The point is particularly important as the bill, prior to the government's amendments, provided for serious civil and criminal penalties as well as strict liability if the requirements for the provision of the key facts sheet were breached. At the eleventh hour the government have decided to repeal the strict liability, a sign that they have listened at the last minute to the concerns of industry and institutions. And the government have delayed the commencement date by four months, until 1 January 2012. We are glad the government have chosen to acknowledge their short-sightedness through moving amendments to address these problems; however, this problem would not have occurred in the first place had the government not had a tin ear when it came to consultation with industry and affected parties.

The second aspect of this bill relates to reforms to lending terms and conditions for credit cards. The first of the reforms relates to the rules for the use of credit cards above the credit limit. This is another area where the original form of the bill was inadequate and where substantial changes have been required. The original bill sought to set a mandatory default limit above which credit cards could be overdrawn, with an additional discretionary supplementary buffer on top of that. Industry bodies and institutions expressed concern that the bill would send a message to consumers that they may, in effect, have a 10 per cent higher credit limit available. This could act to worsen credit card debt problems for some consumers. This was just one of a number of potential unintended consequences for consumers looking to take out credit cards in the future.

The government has now removed this section through its minute-to-midnight amendments. It has replaced it with a requirement for consumers to be notified if a credit card is used in excess of its credit card limit. This has been accompanied by an express requirement that no fees are to be imposed and no higher rate of interest to be charged if a customer exceeds their credit limit, unless they have provided explicit consent for a fee to be charged.

The second change relating to credit cards contained within the bill is that which now specifies an allocation hierarchy for payments made under credit card contracts. Payments will be allocated first to those components bearing the highest interest charge. This measure addresses existing practices where some credit providers allocate payments in a way that can maximise the amount and time required for the consumer to repay their credit. The coalition views this as a reasonable reform and supports this measure, as it will greatly assist consumers in trying to pay down their credit card debt.

The third reform contained within the second section of the bill relates to restricting credit providers from making unsolicited invitations to borrowers to increase the credit limit of their credit card. At first glance this
seems reasonable. Borrowers would have the limit they initially agreed. They would have the option of applying for a higher limit, but they would not be induced into a higher limit than they really wanted or required. Some institutions, however, have expressed concerns that the wording could be subject to wider interpretation to cover all customer communications in relation to the provision of credit. Also, it could have the unintended consequence of forcing credit providers to push borrowers towards higher initial credit limits than they otherwise would have been offered.

The fourth and final change contained within this section of the bill implements a requirement for lenders to provide a key facts sheet for credit card contracts. The coalition had reservations over the key facts sheet for credit cards as we did for standard home loans. Those concerns related to the limited amount of time the government was going to give industry to comply with the changes, which would have been, as I said earlier, less than three months. And, again, the detail of the content of the facts sheet would have been left to government regulations which, as I have said, are yet to be released. This would have further shortened the time frame for institutions to comply. These concerns were echoed by industry bodies and institutions. The coalition is glad that the government has chosen to acknowledge its short-sightedness by moving amendments to address these problems by extending the compliance time out until January 2012—although, again, this problem would never have occurred had the government consulted effectively in the first place.

In conclusion, as noted at the outset on behalf of the shadow Treasurer, the coalition will not be opposing this bill. It needs to be repeated that this has not been the government's finest hour in drafting legislation. There were many aspects of the original legislation which, by virtue of the government's minute-to-midnight amendments, were poorly thought through and where consultation with industry was inadequate. The coalition also views this bill as a whole as an unsatisfactory response to the perceived issues within the banking industry. As I indicated earlier, we have expressed some support for one of the measures in particular, but we stand by our view that consumer interests could best be met by measures which encourage competition within the banking sector, as opposed to this prescriptive, ad hoc regulatory approach. The experience with the Treasurer's approach to this bill, from the time of his announcement prior to Christmas, again highlights and demonstrates that it is time for a full root-and-branch review of Australia's financial system, as outlined in the coalition's nine-point plan on banking, released in October last year.

Ms SMYTH (La Trobe) (19:49): I am pleased to be able to lend my voice to this debate on the National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Home Loans and Credit Cards) Bill 2011 this evening. It is just another example of this government tackling those issues which particularly weigh on ordinary Australians—Australians such as those who are represented very much in the growth corridor in my electorate in south-eastern Melbourne. I certainly know that for many people in my electorate personal debt and particularly having a feeling of losing control of that personal debt not only have an impact on their personal finances and those of their families but also have a very significant impact on relationships and on stress within families and real consequences for the health, and particularly mental health, of those people who are concerned with their own personal debt. So it is particularly important that the
government act in relation to issues of credit to support the needs of consumers, and I am very pleased to be able to say that this government has done so. It continues the trend that this government has set in endeavouring to create a fairer and simpler banking policy that will help Australians to get a better deal when it comes to credit cards and home loans. I am very pleased that this bill gives effect to that commitment, which we made towards the end of last year.

The government's overall aim is of course to create a much more competitive and sustainable banking system. We are doing this through a variety of means. We are banning exit fees outright on new home loans from 1 July 2011, something that the opposition has had a somewhat contrary position on. We are enabling the ACCC to more readily prosecute anticompetitive price signalling. We are introducing a mandatory key facts sheet through this legislation for new home loan customers to make it very much easier for them to compare mortgage products effectively. And we are putting forward this bill to get a better deal for Australians with credit cards. In addition to that, we are launching a national community awareness program which will give consumers much more control in their banking. These are some of the very practical ways that the government has embarked upon to ensure that consumers have ready access to information which allows them to better compare those products which they are about to enter into. We have heard from the opposition this evening, as we have heard in many debates before, that the government is seemingly embarking upon a process of unnecessary regulation and unnecessary intrusion into industry. Indeed, the last time that I heard this debate ensue from the opposition was during the course of discussion about the Corporations Amendment (Improving Accountability on Director and Executive Remuneration) Bill 2011, where they said that they were very worried about shareholders, they made all the right noises and there were many speakers from the opposition ranks who spoke on the bill. Then at the very end of the debate the opposition, having said that we were as a government seeking to intervene unnecessarily in the operation of companies and were seeking to overregulate matters relating to executives, ultimately went and voted on behalf of the executives.

It pleases me to be able to say that this afternoon the Senate passed the executive remuneration bill. So, despite the opposition's bleating very loudly to the effect that the government was overregulating companies in relation to the remuneration of executives, we see once again this government standing up for the little person, for shareholders and employees and consumers and all those people who put their money into shares in our companies. The government is standing up for those people at a time when all the opposition could put forward was a claim that this government was seemingly overregulating, as though those people on the opposition benches are somehow free marketeers. It would be good if they in fact believed in a market and demonstrated that in any debate in this place.

We have also seen the extraordinary position in recent weeks of the shadow Treasurer boasting about his plan to put mortgage exit fees back in place. We have heard this regularly from the shadow Treasurer, who seems in fact to want to assist banks to stop customers from seeking out a better deal on their mortgages by keeping exit fees in place. The reforms that are being put forward in this bill, amongst other reforms that this government is embarking upon in order to enable better competition within the banking sector, have been supported by Choice. In relation to the
question of mortgage exit fees, we have heard Matt Levey of Choice saying that business models based around trapping consumers in uncompetitive deals through complex and costly fees have no place in a reformed banking sector. He went on to say that removing exit fees will pressure lenders to compete on upfront price and customer service or else face the risk of customers moving their money to get a better deal. That sort of measure, together with the measures contemplated in this bill, is exactly what we are about—ensuring that there is appropriate competition within the banking sector, ensuring that there is appropriate competition to support the very many people within this country who rely on credit cards and who enter into home loans without appropriate information.

We should reflect upon the circumstances of many Australians such as those in my electorate who very much rely on credit cards. In considering this bill, I reflected on the RBA statistics from February this year which reveal that there was some $49.3 billion in credit and charge card debt outstanding, of which around $36 billion was accruing interest. We know that at that time the interest rate on credit cards was 19.7 per cent on a standard card and interest on low-rate cards was around 13.5 per cent. These are staggering figures and I am particularly concerned about these figures from the point of view in particular of young people getting into debt. I am also concerned about the circumstances of families, and in particular single-parent families, getting into debt. So any measures such as the measures included in this bill which go towards assisting those people make their mind up consciously in advance of entering into those levels of debt are very important.

I should say that my own electorate takes in the areas of Casey and Cardinia within the south-eastern growth corridor of Melbourne and I am troubled by the increase in consumer debt in that growth corridor. A submission from the Financial and Consumer Rights Council to the inquiry into home lending practices and processes identified a 35 per cent increase in bankruptcies in Victoria overall during the last two years. It also noted that in high-growth areas such as the south-east corridor in Melbourne there has been a 70.8 per cent increase in bankruptcies over the past six years. I am also very much aware of anecdotal evidence which has been provided to me through discussions with the Casey North Information and Support Service, which offers support to many in the southern end of my electorate and throughout the region who are facing financial difficulties. I know that they have received the assistance of the federal government through emergency relief funding to the service and also have received funding for a financial counsellor for the service, but I am certainly aware that they face ongoing pressure through the need for financial counselling in areas such as Berwick, where we have new families moving into the region, areas where families have struggled with debt for some time or who have taken out debt to meet household costs. As I said before, those problems very obviously create serious financial impacts for individuals and families but they also have very immediate social impacts, putting pressure on relationships and having health and mental health consequences which are of particular concern.

In response to all of those things which are happening in my electorate, as I am sure they are happening in many other electorates around the country, this bill is one of the things that the federal government is doing to ensure that credit card providers will be limited in their capacity to entice customers into increasing their limit well above what they are able to pay.
There are a range of other things that we know the federal government is doing to relieve financial pressure on families and those who are less well-off in our community, things like providing more financial support for families with teenagers who stay at school longer, providing income tax cuts over several years within our term of office, providing a more flexible childcare rebate, providing a Paid Parental Leave scheme—all of these things together go towards alleviating some of the pressure on families dealing with cost of living. And our credit card and home loan reforms are geared towards the same concerns, ensuring that there are practical measures in place for people such as those I represent to ensure that they are able to respond to personal debt and that they are able to meet their cost of living.

The bill before us introduces quite major changes to the relationship between credit providers and consumers in respect of credit cards and home loans. In the debate this evening we have heard already about some of the things that the legislation will do, but to recap: the bill will make it mandatory for credit providers to include key information in credit card application forms about the annual percentage rate; it will prohibit credit providers from making unsolicited invitations to consumers to increase their credit limits, except where there is consumer consent to it; it requires home lenders to display on their website and make available on request a key facts sheet about the products they offer. Each of these things in turn—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms S Bird): Order! The debate is interrupted, in accordance with standing order 34. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting. The member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.
additional reduction in their budget would significantly impact their operational activities. The committee was concerned about the impact of the efficiency dividend on the smaller agencies of the Australian intelligence community and therefore recommended that the Australian government review the potential adverse effects of the efficiency dividend on the AIC.

The committee also took the opportunity afforded by this review to look at the budget of the Office of the Inspector General of Intelligence and Security, OGIS. The OGIS's budget has not grown in line with ASIO's budget growth. In light of the increases in the number of personnel and activities of the Australian intelligence community as well as an expansion in the IGIS's role, the committee recommended that the budget of the Office of the Inspector General of Intelligence and Security be increased.

The Review of Administration and Expenditure No. 7 - Australian Intelligence Agencies noted the difficulties that some agencies have experienced in relation to staff recruitment. The competitive job market, growth within agencies and the desire to ensure staff are of an appropriate calibre has raised some challenges in this area. In response, agencies have sought to invest in reviewing and better developing their recruitment strategies.

Two reports on the listing of organisations as terrorist organisations were tabled in the period under review. The two reports dealt with five organisations comprising four re-listings and one initial listing. The reports were: the Review of the re-listing of Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (the Brigades), the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) as terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code Act 1995; and, the Review of the listing of Al-Shabaab as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code Act 1995.

Seven public submissions were received in relation to the re-listing and the committee held a hearing on 22 October 2009. The committee did not recommend disallowance of any of the regulations in relation to the five organisations.

Since 2002 the committee has sent representatives to the biennial conference of oversight agencies. In 2010, the conference was hosted by the PJCIS and the IGIS in Sydney between Sunday, 21 March 2010 and Wednesday, 24 March 2010 and members of the committee attended. Delegates from Belgium, Canada, New Zealand, Poland, South Africa, United Kingdom and the United States attended the 2010 conference in Sydney with a number giving presentations on their oversight structures.

In conclusion, and on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the work of the committee during the past year, in particular Mr Robert Little, the inquiry secretary, and former committee secretary Dr Margot Kerley, who has recently retired. I commend the report to the House.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (20:05): I take this opportunity to thank the chair for his remarks. I endorse his comments about the committee secretariat, particularly Mr Robert Little and our former secretary Dr Margot Kerley. Can I just observe that this report relates to activities under the chairmanship of our former colleague and member for Brisbane, Arch Bevis. I acknowledge the very considerable personal interest he took in these matters and the leadership he undertook in relation to the committee's activities. I commend the

comments and observations made by the present chair.

I will spend a moment or two focusing on a couple of issues that I think are particularly germane—and not necessarily those emphasised by my colleague. In relation to the Review of Administration and Expenditure No. 8 (2008 - 2009) - Australian Intelligence Agencies it was particularly interesting because the review is the first full review of the administration and expenditure of six intelligence agencies which the committee was able to look at as part of the Australian intelligence community, as we understand it. During this review, the committee found that a significant inconsistency exists in relation to the way in which the oversight of the Australian intelligence community occurs. An agency whose role is in fact growing is now the subject of consideration by committees that have a different function and are not necessarily expert or do not necessarily have access to the broader information that might be relevant to examining an intelligence function.

The committee noted in its report that it had previously had evidence from a number of agencies that noted the work of the Australian Federal Police that had been developing since the terrorist attacks in the United States and the terrorist attacks in Bali. The committee noted that the Australian Federal Police have increasingly been involved in counterterrorist activities and that sections have been created to address significant counterterrorism and national security functions. I mention this because the committee made a recommendation that the Intelligence Services Act should be amended to include the Australian Federal Police counterterrorism elements in the list of organisations that the committee reviews.

The government has seen fit not to pick up that recommendation. I find that very disappointing. As I see it, there have already been substantial concerns about the work of intelligence agencies and the Australian Federal Police, which were not seen to be adequately integrated at earlier points in time. It warranted a review by Sir Laurence Street, initiated by the former Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police Mick Keelty, because it was seen to be a major oversight. I am concerned that the government is perpetuating that in the way in which it has considered this role. I understand that it was because perhaps the AFP did not want to be reporting to two committees. I suggest, with respect, that that was a very poor argument given that it was left with a committee that has no broader experience in the review of the intelligence community as a whole.

The other matter I want to draw attention to is the impact of efficiency dividends, which the committee noted in its earlier report for that same year. Most of the intelligence organisations are fairly small. The need for intelligence agencies has not in any way diminished. Their work is in fact growing, particularly in relation to counterespionage and the area of cyberterrorism. These are matters of public note, but in my judgment the impact of efficiency dividends is likely to diminish the ongoing effectiveness of the capacity of these organisations, which we have been trying to enhance. So I draw attention to our earlier comments on that matter in this report and encourage the government to be very focused on the need to ensure that the intelligence community is adequately resourced at a time when it is facing a growing challenge. *(Time expired)*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms S Bird):** Does the member for Holt wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a future occasion?

**Mr BYRNE** (Holt) (20:10): I move:
That the House take note of the report.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 39(d), the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting and the member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee Report

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (20:11): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, I present the committee's report entitled Doing time - time for doing: Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system, together with the minutes of proceedings and evidence received by the committee.

The Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs has completed its inquiry into the high levels of involvement of Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system. It is a national shame; it is a national tragedy. It has been 20 years since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody report, yet the incarceration rate of Indigenous Australians, including Indigenous youth, is now worse. The committee believes this is a shameful state of affairs and that, as the title of this report, Doing time – time for doing, suggests, it really is the time to act.

Available statistics on Indigenous young people in contact with the criminal justice systems are alarming. Fifty-nine per cent of the total detention population is Indigenous. There are 28 times as many Indigenous juveniles as non-Indigenous juveniles in detention in Australia. The prisoner census data for 2000 to 2010 shows a 55 per cent increase in men in incarceration and a 47 per cent increase in women. Young Indigenous adults aged 17 to 24 are 15 times as likely as young non-Indigenous adults to be imprisoned. The rates of imprisonment of Indigenous women in Australia is rising at an alarming rate. In 2006-07, Indigenous women were 35 times as likely to be hospitalised as a result of partner abuse. Between 2000 and 2009, there was a 66 per cent rise in imprisonment of Indigenous Australians. By the age of 25 years, 40 per cent of Indigenous men have been charged formally by the police with an offence.

The committee was made aware of these worrying statistics throughout the inquiry and consulted with a wide range of stakeholders to investigate how the federal government could assist in reversing the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice systems around the country. The scope of the inquiry was vast given the complexities of the issues that contributed to the high levels of involvement by Indigenous youth in criminal justice systems. There were many roundtables and public hearings—18 public hearings across Australia, and we visited three detention centres. There were 110 submissions from a wide range of individuals and groups. One of the major criticisms was the need for better coordination of service delivery: silos, departments not talking to departments, organisations not communicating with each other and individuals not sharing relevant information.

This is a comprehensive report, with 40 recommendations. These include two high-level recommendations that seek to address the void in the COAG Closing the Gap strategy by recommending the setting of justice targets, including a national partnership agreement under the Safe Communities building block. Indigenous engagement in and delivery of local services are highlighted as the most effective ways of creating positive outcomes for Indigenous people.
The main thrust of the report is that prevention and early intervention are of utmost importance. The committee makes recommendations about developing positive social norms, improving parenting skills, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, increasing engagement in education, initiatives to assist the transition into employment and increasing participation in sport and in cultural and recreational activities. The value of Indigenous mentors was also highlighted in relation to these matters. There are a number of recommendations to improve teacher education and police awareness of issues. Language barriers and hearing impairments were also highlighted.

As the title of the report, Doing time, suggests, too many young Indigenous people are doing time in juvenile detention centres and prisons. It is now time for doing. It is time we were doing more to prevent this national tragedy, this national disgrace. The problems are complex and longstanding. We must harness the knowledge and commitment of those working in the field to bring about real change and opportunity for the future of all Indigenous Australians.

I want to close by thanking the previous chair of the committee, the Hon. Bob Debus MP, and his committee; also Anna Dacre, the secretary of the committee; Susan Cardell and Rebecca Gordon, the inquiry secretaries; and research officers John White, Ben Mudaliar and Natalya Wells. I want to thank all those involved in the committee. I want to thank the coalition for their bipartisan approach, particularly the member for Murray, and for their great cooperation, along with that of the Labor members of the committee. I commend the report to the parliament.

Dr STONE (Murray) (20:16): I concur absolutely with the remarks of our very able chair in presenting this report Doing time—time for doing: Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system. It is, as our chair said, a very tragic situation in Australia. Far from us being able to present a trend showing there is less recidivism and less Indigenous juvenile detention and offending over time, we are seeing that the rates are increasing, particularly for young girls and women offenders. Quite clearly a lot of those young people are also parents themselves. The intergenerational cycle of offending is unbroken in Australia at the moment. It is of great concern, I am sure, not only to all of us here in this parliament but also to the broader Australian society, that so much life is being wasted and lost as young people serve time for offences which very often have been the result of extreme social, educational and health disadvantage or deprivation.

We were very concerned to look at the total justice system. The chairman has referred to the fact that we were concerned to find that there were very few targets set in the justice system. We found there is a lot of well-meaning intention and that there are a lot of programs, but very few of these programs set benchmarks, look at best practice either in Australia or internationally and then measure the outcomes of their various programs to see if in fact they work. There is often very short-term funding for innovative programs. There are, as we have heard, silos of activity. We found that it is not acceptable to have a child or a young person incarcerated or in detention simply because there is not a safer place for them to be. There is obviously a serious problem for safe accommodation for a lot of the juvenile offenders before they go into detention or indeed after they come out. It is a very sad fact that nearly 41.3 per cent of Indigenous children and young people are in out-of-home care compared with only 4.6 per cent of non-Indigenous people.

We are also very concerned about the physical and mental health problems
associated with Indigenous offending. We can directly relate the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system to things like alcohol and drug abuse, foetal alcohol syndrome, hearing loss and mental health issues and problems. Many young children are disengaging from education from the earliest age or their truancy rates are so substantial that they are not learning English, perhaps because they are in remote Australia. They may not be able to gain enough skill to get a job—yet they aspire, like every other young Australian, to buy the good things they see on television or in advertising, but they are frustrated in not being able to achieve legitimate employment. Often for them the only alternative is offending.

We found too that there is a very serious problem in our society where there are few role models in our Indigenous communities, where there are families who have not known anything other than cycles of recidivism. On the other hand, we found examples of marvellous mentors in the Indigenous community who are very embedded in terms of their own cultural understanding and their own social life. It was stressed to us many times that mentoring is a key, whether through sport or other artistic or cultural activity or in some other way. If Indigenous young people have someone to look up to, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, they can help them find their pathway through to life beyond offending.

We went to New Zealand to compare Maori offending rates and to look at what programs they might have which could give us some better guide or inform us on our policy directions. We found that they had in fact adopted the Koori Court, as it is called in Victoria; it has other names in other states. They had in particular moved towards having more engagement with the offender and the victim of the crime. We saw that as a very good thing. It brought the young person face to face with the impacts and outcomes of their activity so they could see how it impacted on and harmed another individual.

We believe that we really need to take a holistic approach to deal with juvenile offending with Indigenous young Australians. It has to begin almost prenatally, making sure children are born healthy and that they get proper medical attention so that they do not suffer a hearing loss. We really want to say that we must do better. Doing time—time for doing is a critical report.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms S Bird): Does the member for Blair wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a future occasion?

Mr NEUMANN: I move:

That the House take note of the report.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 39, the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for a later hour this day.

Report and Reference to Main Committee

Mr NEUMANN: by leave—I move:

That the order of the day be referred to the Main Committee for debate.

Question agreed to.

Cyber-Safety Committee Report

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (20:22): On behalf of the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety, I present the committee's report entitled *High-wire act: cyber-safety and the young*. It has been a great honour to be the deputy chair of this committee during our inquiry into cybersafety, and it gives me great pleasure to table this report in the House.
In such a rapidly changing world in terms of technology and the associated dangers of that technology, it is a great acknowledgement of this parliament and the work of this place that we have kept pace with the times. For most users of the cyberspace environment, it is a helpful and positive experience. I want to note that this report does not seek to demonise the great progress that has been made in digital liberty and online technology in our world today. But for a small minority it can be tragic. All committee members hope that this report will make a difference and make the environment a safer place for all users, especially for young Australians. It is so important that government does provide a safe environment for our young Australians and keep pace with regulatory and other requirements in a rapidly technologically changing world.

While the principal focus of the enquiry was on cyberbullying, it became clear that there are a number of areas where action could be taken to improve cybersafety. We have therefore framed our recommendations to do this. I would like to draw attention to some of them in the following areas: the availability of material on cybersafety, privacy and identity theft, education, and existing legislation.

We have recommended that all the material on cybersafety be made accessible through a central portal and that a national campaign be undertaken to publicise this portal, especially among children and young people. A range of resources is already available from the Australian Communications and Media Authority. But because this is such an important consideration, I will return to this.

We do believe that the internet industry needs to enhance accessibility to assistance or complaints mechanisms on social networking sites. This includes provision of prompt advice about resolution of complaints, especially reasons for any lack of action. Considering the evidence provided to the committee that children at a very young age were on these social networking sites, it became all the more graphic why we need to pursue this course.

The committee also thought that privacy and identity theft were vital issues for the online environment, especially for young people and children. We have made a number of recommendations that should improve the protection for individuals and their personal information and bring forward regulatory and legal frameworks to modern times.

Above all, we believe that better education about cybersafety is vital to reducing the risks in the online environment, especially that of cyberbullying. Therefore, there are a number of recommendations to assist schools, teachers, parents and carers. One of the most significant is a proposal to develop national core standards for cybersafety education in our schools. Another recommendation proposes the inclusion of cybersafety material in the core curriculums of teacher training courses. All Australian schools are encouraged to introduce acceptable use agreements governing the access of students to the online environment. While all states and territories have a range of legislative means to deal with cybersafety crimes, these are inconsistent and there are gaps. We therefore recommended that the Attorney-General review existing legislation dealing with the crimes in all Australian jurisdictions.

I would like to express my thanks in particular to colleagues on the committee and also to those witnesses—industry groups, other bodies, parents and teacher groups—that came and presented evidence to
us. Members here would know that I am not a particular fan of big government solutions to the problems that we face. Indeed, the committee canvassed extensively the concept of a mandatory internet filter. One of the great things about this report is that we are not recommending the introduction of mandatory internet filter. In fact, voluntary filter regimes were highlighted by parents groups, teachers groups, union groups, peak bodies in industry and other associations as the best way to proceed. Indeed, we are not recommending filtering as a solution to the problems of online behaviour and online safety.

We are also acknowledging that traditional models, such as ombudsmen and the question of an online ombudsman, are not a realistic response to a rapidly changing technological world. Nor do we accept that a traditional review of process by a government official would somehow lead to a better outcome. We are acknowledging that the rapidly changing technological world this report attempts to deal with needs rapidly changing technological solutions, and the government and legislation need to keep pace with the evolution of our society.

I thank in particular Cheryl Scarlett, the secretary of our committee, for all the work she put in. I believe that the adoption of the recommendations will make a contribution to alerting the community to the importance of cybersafety and lead to a deep penetration into these problems.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (20:27): I join with the member for Mitchell in speaking to the report of the Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety High-wire act: cyber-safety and the young.

The internet and modern information technology have become an invaluable resource in today's fast-moving world. Regrettably, those resources can also be used for wrong purposes, sometimes causing irreparable harm to others. Cybersafety is very important for all those who enter the online environment. It is vital to making this environment safer for all users, particularly for young Australians. There are risks to all users in the online environment, but some reporting can be sensational. It does not concentrate sufficiently on measures that can easily be taken to reduce those risks.

The major focus of this inquiry was cybersafety for young people in the online environment. Consultation with them was a priority, and an online survey was devised to ensure that they had the opportunity to give us their views on a range of issues. We were surprised by the response to our 'Are you safe?' survey. A total of 33,751 young people completed it and many respondents provided useful additional comments. We have made extensive use of these frank, revealing and sometimes disturbing comments. This inquiry received 152 submissions and 16 supplementary submissions. We relied heavily on these submissions in framing our conclusions and recommendations.

We took evidence from a wide range of people and organisations with an interest in cybersafety. They included the representatives of the information and communications technology industry and Facebook, academics and researchers, a range of Australian government departments and agencies, and state government education departments. Non-government organisations working with young people, professional bodies and unions, representatives of parent and carers, as well as several corporations and content providers also gave evidence. It became clear that there is a need for more education on a range of cybersafety issues. A great deal of material that would reduce online risks is available from the Australian Communications and Media Authority, for example. It is based on sound
research and on consultation with young Australians.

The existence and availability of this material is clearly not well known in the community. We have recommended that it be made more accessible through a central portal—and I thank the member for Mitchell who referred to this in his remarks—and that this portal be publicised through a national campaign. While children as young as four and five years of age are being introduced to the online environment, cybersafety education does not begin in schools until they are six or seven. We have recommended looking at the feasibility of providing this education in preschools and kindergartens. It is clear that cyberbullying is a major and serious issue in Australia but that it is not well understood. At this point, it has not even been satisfactorily defined. We have recommended that an agreed definition of cyberbullying be developed and adopted by all Australian government departments and agencies.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms S Bird): Order! The time for this debate has expired. Does the member for Mitchell seek to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a future occasion?

Mr HAWKE: I move:

That the House take note of the report.

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

Report and Reference to Main Committee

Mr HAWKE: by leave—I move:

That the order of the day be referred to the Main Committee for debate.

Question agreed to.
September 11 and in our opinion is far too narrowly focused on the threat of terrorist attacks within these sectors. While the committee agrees that such security measures are vital for the safety of the community, I believe that the security regime should be extended to defend against the threat of organised crime. This is in line with this government's 2008 National Security Statement, which identified serious and organised crime as a threat to national security.

A key recommendation is the strengthening of the aviation and maritime security identification card schemes. During the course of the inquiry the committee became aware that a number of individuals known to be closely involved with criminal activity continue to hold these cards, allowing them free access to sensitive areas. As such, the committee has recommended that such individuals could have their cards revoked on the basis of compelling criminal intelligence. Further changes to the ASIC and MSIC schemes recommended by the committee include their expansion to cover important elements of the supply chain outside of airport or seaport environments and the introduction of biometric information to simplify and strengthen the management of the system.

The committee also spent considerable time examining the law enforcement response to organised crime in the aviation and maritime sectors and the importance of criminal intelligence. Apart from targeted police operations, intelligence is useful at a strategic level, to build a picture of criminality that allows not just reactive intervention but also proactive prevention. The committee is therefore keen to see an enhanced analytical use of intelligence from all sources and supports ongoing efforts that would allow such a 'fusion' to take place. The committee has been encouraged by the development of joint agency task forces that exist now in a number of states and has recommended that these be applied in all jurisdictions. State based task forces should be supplemented by an AFP led flying squad that would direct a joint agency response to trouble spots on an ongoing basis as needed.

Importantly, the committee has recommended a number of enhancements to the air passenger environment. Organised crime figures are currently able to travel under false identities with impunity while facilitating criminal activity. In response, the committee has recommended that travelling under a false identity be made an offence. In addition, the committee has also recommended that the provision of photo identification by passengers be made mandatory prior to boarding a plane. Serious and organised crime continues to threaten Australia's community and is estimated to cost the national economy more than $15 billion each year. We must continually adapt to this ever-evolving threat. I commend the report to the House.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (20:36): It is my pleasure to follow the member for Fowler in speaking on the Joint Committee on Law Enforcement's inquiry into the adequacy of aviation and maritime security measures to combat serious and organised crime. I endorse a lot of what he had to say. Even though I was not a participant on this committee from the outset like he was, I certainly was on the committee long enough to understand that serious and organised crime remains a substantial threat to our ports and to our airports. As he noted, the security environment around airports and ports has changed markedly since 11 September 2001 with those momentous events in New York and Washington. Subsequently, criminals managed to adapt to the new measures that governments took to more adequately protect our ports and our
airports. So getting border security right remains an ongoing process.

Criminals seek to do harm to our society and I certainly agree with the government’s assessment that organised criminality remains a very serious national security risk. They are constantly probing for weakness within our border security systems. Sadly, even though the government identifies the problem correctly, it has responded to it with budget cuts to our border protection agencies, which means that Australia remains seriously exposed to a lot of these ongoing threats. This has very serious ramifications for the way we experience law and order on our streets, because the Commonwealth itself is failing to do what it should do—that is, adequately police our borders. Our border protection crisis is far more than just people being smuggled here illegally via Indonesia; our border protection crisis also extends to the fact that there is now so little screening of cargo that is coming in through our ports and our airports because of substantial budget cuts by this government and also because of the lack of resourcing to Customs and Border Protection in particular.

I will just turn briefly to the report in the limited time that I have. I would like to thank all of the members and senators on the committee, who worked very closely together in preparing what is a bipartisan report. Some of that credit must go to the chairman of the committee, Senator Steve Hutchins, who is retiring, so I am sure he will not mind if I very briefly say something nice about him. He did do a wonderful job as chair. As Chair of the Joint Committee on Law Enforcement and its predecessor committee, he did have a history of bringing down reports that were supported by everybody on those committees. As we know, in this place that is not always that easy to do. It is a credit to his stewardship that this committee report was able to reflect that also. All members were prepared to put their stamp on this committee report and I think it makes recommendations that the opposition would certainly like to see the government seriously consider.

I will just turn briefly to a couple of them. Recommendation 7 is the one that seems to have received most of the publicity. It reads:

The committee recommends that it be made a legal requirement to provide photo identification confirming passenger identity immediately prior to boarding an aircraft.

This report does have the endorsement of all the members of the committee, although I must say that I do have some reservations about further inconveniencing passengers. I think it is always important to try to find ways that we can enhance border security and make it harder for the criminals without making it more difficult for passengers when they travel.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): Order! I hate to inform the member for Stirling that the time allocated for statements on this report has expired. Does the member for Fowler wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a later occasion?

Mr HAYES: I move:

That the House take note of the report.

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

Report and Reference to Main Committee

Mr HAYES: I move:

That the order of the day be referred to the Main Committee for debate.

Question agreed to.
BILLS

Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill 2011

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Wilkie.

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (20:41): Who could forget the shocking images of animal cruelty we saw on the ABC Four Corners program exactly three weeks ago? For me the one image, more than any other, which is seared into my mind is that of the black beast shaking in fear, the look in its eyes one of abject terror because it was the last of a group to be slaughtered and it had been made to witness the shocking cruelty meted out to one animal after another. How on earth could the Howard, Rudd and Gillard governments have allowed such shocking animal mistreatment to have gone on day after day, night after night, in countless slaughterhouses in arguably our most important neighbour, especially one to whom we have such a close link and provide such significant aid?

It is not like these governments did not have cause to keep an eye on our live animal export trade given all the problems the business has experienced year after year in country after country. In the Middle East alone eight countries have been identified as mistreating Australian livestock during just the last eight years. It beggars belief that a succession of Australian governments have let us down in this way, as does the revelation that Meat and Livestock Australia has been fleecing producers for years, raking in enormous fees off the back of the lie it was looking after the interests of the Australian live animal export industry and the beasts it deals with, only to be busted as an irresponsible, incompetent, dishonest and uncaring bunch of cowboys.

No wonder there has been such an extraordinary welling up of public concern since the Four Corners program. Even those who have been concerned with live animal exports for a long time felt energised to do whatever we could to finally do something and this bill, the Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill 2011, will do just that. Most importantly the bill will end all live animal exports by mid-2014, as it should, because the live animal export system is broken and beyond repair and the arguments against shutting it down are baseless.

For a start, ending all live animal exports will not destroy our relationship with Indonesia because our ties with that country are stronger than critics give them credit for and are certainly strong enough to survive our decision to stop selling just one form of one particular foodstuff. Nor will Indonesians go hungry, because on average they consume just two kilograms of red meat each a year. In other words, even the complete removal of Australian beef would make virtually no difference whatsoever, except for more affluent Indonesians who tend to eat Australian beef and who have the means to purchase and store boxed Australian meat processed by Australian workers in Australian abattoirs. And the Indonesian government plans to be beef self-sufficient by 2014 anyway.

The religious dimension of this matter has also been mischievously overcooked by the live animal export industry, because the fact is that the overwhelming number of relatively affluent Muslims who tend to consume Australian meat would have no objection to buying that meat so long as it has been processed in an Australian halal certified abattoir. Moreover, the argument that banning live cattle exports to Indonesia will somehow destroy the beef industry is ridiculous. The direct and indirect value of
the red meat industry in Australia is something in the order of $17 billion dollars, and it employs some 55,000 workers. By comparison, the live export trade comes in at about $1 billion and 10,000 workers. In other words, ending the live export trade will have a marginal effect, even more so when the workers shift to the processed meat sector.

The economic argument is in fact strongly in favour of banning live animal exports, because of the way the trade is cannibalising the processed meat industry at the expense of thousands of Australian jobs. Any short-term commercial jolt will be limited, while the medium- to long-term benefit will be enormous. In any case, the three-year phase out period stipulated in the bill gives the industry more than enough time to move from live to processed meat. For a start, within 12 months the mothballed abattoirs in Katherine and Innisfail could be refurbished and reopened, the mooted abattoir in Darwin could be well on its way to completion and thousands of unemployed and under-employed workers could be trained.

This bill dovetails perfectly with the motion of the member for Kennedy, which seeks to energise the government's immediate response to Australia's live animal export crisis. His motion, which I seconded and which is endorsed by both Animals Australia and the RSPCA, demands the immediate implementation of safeguards in Indonesia, including the deployment of Australian government officials as well as the provision of stun-guns and other equipment, before a speedy resumption of exports. This is, I feel, a sensible and politically realistic approach: to quickly put in place effective animal welfare safeguards before the resumption of trade, pending the winding up of the industry within three years. Such an approach also considers the graziers, the Indigenous station hands, the truckers, the shipping-line operators, the feed producers and everyone else involved in the live animal export industry who are in difficulty right now from the jolt of this entirely warranted, but nonetheless unexpected, decision by government. Fast-tracking safeguards in Indonesia is also the only way to help the tens of thousands of animals currently in Indonesian feedlots which are being, and will continue to be, treated in exactly the same way as the poor animals we saw on Four Corners three weeks ago.

Yes, I certainly do see the point in abolishing the industry immediately, because the live animal export trade is deeply flawed and no amount of remedial action can be sure to safeguard the animals. But good public policy demands a balance between rhetoric and reality. There is no point coming in here with a popular response which fails to help at least the tens of thousands of Australian animals already in Indonesia. Nor is there any point coming in here and calling for an outcome knowing full well it is just theatre and there is no chance whatsoever of it being achieved.

Much has been said on compensation for the Australian live animal export industry. Yes, the government should help the industry deal with the current moratorium's commercial jolt, but let us not forget that it is Meat and Livestock Australia which stands out as the organisation funded and trusted to safeguard Australia's live animal export trade and that it is Meat and Livestock Australia which has not given a toss except to suck up the cash while showing complete and utter contempt for the industry which pays its bills. Nor has MLA apparently shown the slightest regard for the poor Australian beasts in its care, which, by any ethical measure, should be treated overseas to the same standard or better as is demanded in this country. In other words: it is MLA which should now put its grubby hands into
its very deep pockets and pull out the cash needed to help support the live animal export industry while the Australian government puts in place the safeguards necessary for trade to resume.

This country is at a crossroad. Yes, the government has done the right thing by imposing a moratorium on live animal exports to Indonesia, and I applaud it and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for doing so. But the real measure of the government is what it does next. The government must put animal welfare and the public interest ahead of everything else. It must move urgently to put in place the safeguards needed to protect the tens of thousands of beasts already in feedlots in Indonesia and those which would follow them once the trade is allowed to resume. More broadly, I call on everyone in this place to support the Live Animal Export Restriction and Prohibition Bill 2011. It already has the support of Animals Australia and the RSPCA. The support of the parliament will legislate the safeguards our animals need right now and shut down a trade that is fundamentally broken, systemically cruel and definitely not in Australia's economic interest.

Bill read a first time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): In accordance with standing order 41(c), the second reading will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2011

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Bandt.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (20:50): This bill is being introduced in the midst of an incredibly important public debate about the ethical viability of the Australian live animal export industry. The catalyst for that debate—the horrific images we saw on ABC's *Four Corners* three weeks ago—provides damning evidence of an industry peak body complicit in the shocking abuse of Australian cattle in Indonesian slaughterhouses. Before I critique Meat and Livestock Australia's role in the systemic abuse of animals sent overseas for slaughter and elaborate on the reasons why the only satisfactory government response to this abuse is the instant cessation of live animal exports for slaughter, I want to be very clear that this abuse is not a new problem. It is not even necessarily a growing problem: it is a systemic problem onto which the mainstream media is throwing some rare and welcome light. In making this observation, I am reminded of an Albert Schweitzer quote: 'Think occasionally of the suffering of which you spare yourself the sight.'

The Greens have a longstanding opposition to livestock exports for slaughter as well as for other purposes. It has been a part of our policy platform for many years, and it was part of our 2010 federal election campaign platform. I am proud, then, to move to implement that part of our policy by introducing this bill. The bill puts an immediate end to the horrific treatment of Australian cattle in overseas slaughterhouses. It creates a simple amendment to the Export Control Act 1982 to prohibit the export of live animals for slaughter. It does this by providing definitions of 'livestock' and 'livestock for slaughter' to limit the application of the bill to cattle, calves, sheep, lambs, goats or other prescribed animals intended to be exported overseas for slaughter. The bill will be in place immediately. These provisions will come into effect the day after royal assent, with no delay and with the immediate cessation of cruelty.
My colleague in the other place Senator Siewert has introduced a bill with identical provisions in order that both houses can keep pressure on the government and the minister to take swift and decisive action to end the trade.

On that point, it is disappointing that the Labor caucus has been willing to go along with the minister's plan to reinstate live animal exports to Indonesia with only weak guidelines. This is simply not an acceptable outcome.

As we have seen again today, this time in Kuwait, Indonesia is not the only country where animals exported from Australia are subject to incredible cruelty.

Despite the public desire for strong action, we seem unwilling to pursue principled policy in the face of industry lobbying. Minister Ludwig should stop being an industry patsy and should, instead, listen to the Australian public, who want strong protections against cruelty.

My bill will deliver that strong action. It will provide for an immediate and complete ban on live animal exports for slaughter.

Without wanting to repeat the descriptions of abuse, documented by Animals Australia, the RSPCA and others—I think the film taken by Animals Australia's intrepid Lyn White speaks for itself—I do want to illustrate the consequences for Australian livestock destined for overseas slaughterhouses should this bill not pass.

To provide some perspective, approximately 2.7 million cattle were exported from Australia between 2008 and 2010. In the same three years, 10.8 million sheep and a quarter of a million goats were exported.

The range of countries to which animals are exported, each with different animal welfare regulations, is also vast. Sheep are exported from Fremantle, Portland and Port Adelaide to Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Israel, Lebanon, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. Breeder cattle are exported from Darwin, Fremantle and Broome to Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Jordan, Japan, Israel and Brunei. Goats are exported from Adelaide, Fremantle and Sydney to Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius and Brunei.

Oversight, and the resourcing of oversight, of slaughter conditions for these millions of cattle, sheep and goats in such a large number of separate jurisdictions are anything but satisfactory. The concept 'out of sight, out of mind' provides a convenience to the Australian live animal export industry to overlook astonishing systemic mistreatment of Australian animals. I am not suggesting that Australian graziers are implicit in this mistreatment. Indeed, my office has been inundated with correspondence from farmers and graziers expressing shock at the recently exposed abuse, including from many who are supporting my bill. I am, however, highly critical of the industry peak bodies that usually operate with a convenient absence of examples of abuse in the mainstream media.

Thanks again to Animals Australia investigators, there is no absence today. Constituents are, again, contacting my office in astonishing numbers, asking: 'How can the parliament allow the practices seen today in Kuwait to continue where Australian sheep are stuffed into boots of cars, dragged in agony, thrown over other bloodied dying sheep on the sides of roads, all after an appalling sea voyage? And what of the other hundreds of thousands of cattle, sheep and goats that are in overseas feedlots, storage yards and slaughterhouses that are not being followed by members of under-resourced, non-government animal welfare organisations with video cameras, exposing these practices that the industry really does not want us to see?
Meat and Livestock Australia and the Australian government have had years to overcome systemic abuse in the live export industry—years that have amounted to either very little progress or no progress at all.

Serious questions need to be asked about the roles of organisations such as Meat and Livestock Australia and LiveCorp. MLA receives $5 per head of cattle exported to address animal welfare issues. Clearly, graziers have the right to be angry at the misuse of those funds. PR spin is no substitute for actual investment in animal welfare.

The recently announced industry action plan proposes that ongoing assessments of all facilities and locations processing Australian animals be required and that assessors facilitate upgrades and improvements of facilities that do not meet endorsed livestock welfare standards. But here has been an Indonesian Animal Welfare Taskforce charged with doing exactly that since 2006, a by-product of which has been the installation of many of the restraint boxes seen on the Four Corners program, emblazoned with MLA and LiveCorp logos. I struggle to accept at face value that the industry action plan, proposing to continue its futile 'assess and upgrade' program, will be successful. It is the perception of action that is significant here. Much will be promised by the industry in order to, again, get the issue off the front pages, to keep the industry in a profitable state regardless of the ethically indefensible consequences.

We as a parliament must observe the history of this flawed industry and say, 'Enough is enough.' There are simply far too many examples of entrenched abuse in Australia's live animal exports industry to support its ongoing viability.

To take the Indonesian example again, the sheer cost of refitting dozens of slaughterhouses to meet Australian standards and retraining a highly transient workforce in improved animal welfare practices, when there is no imperative to abandon traditional slaughter practices due to such poor working conditions, would be simply astronomical and, I would argue strongly, not realistic. That is why I have moved a bill without the expensive transitional arrangements contained in the bill moved earlier by the member for Denison, and it is why, with respect to him, I cannot argue for anything other than the complete abolition of live exports.

And what if that hypothetical future where slaughterhouses observed conditions that approached those approximating Australian standards? The transport of animals from Australian ports, in shiploads of misery, with the guaranteed associated incidence of death during the voyage, is still a practice that government cannot, in my opinion, condone on any ethical grounds.

There is another way. The Greens propose that the government commits to improving and increasing the process of slaughter in Australia to support local producers and local jobs. The community benefits of processing meat in Australia have been underestimated for too long and are being talked down by the live export industry.

A 2010 report commissioned by Australia's leading meat processors found that live cattle exports compete with and undermine Australia's domestic beef industry, leading to lost processing opportunities in Australia. Processing animals in Australia protects them from the worst examples of inhumane treatment that we are aware of and subjects livestock to Australian standards, which are certainly not perfect but which are an improvement on overseas standards and which are at least controllable. Additionally, we need to
meaningfully invest in real animal welfare both domestically and overseas. This bill is a significant step to a better future for animals and the Australian meat industry. The Greens will continue to call for an immediate ban on all live exports, just as we have done for many years. I sincerely hope that the environment within which this bill is being introduced, in one of those rare periods when animal welfare issues are being debated in the mainstream media, provides the opportunity for parliament to take decisive action.

I implore my fellow members to remember that the extent of these problems is much greater than these brief glimpses of examples of systemic abuse in the industry expose. Members must not mistake any future absence of examples of abuse on the front pages of Australia's newspapers with a sudden improvement of animal welfare standards. History tells us that one has never followed the other. It is time to end the abuse, and I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read a first time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): In accordance with standing order 41(c), the second reading will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Australian Building and Construction Commission

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (21:01): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes the:

(a) Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) created under the Howard Government's industrial relations legislation unfairly targets workers in the construction industry; and

(b) Government believes the current ABCC should be abolished and replaced with a new inspectorate that is part of the Fair Work Australia system; and

(2) calls on all members to support the abolition of the ABCC to restore fairness in the construction industry for workers and employers.

The Australian Building and Construction Commission is a regulator that was conceived as part of the legislative malice that the previous Howard government exhibited to organised labour and to the working men and women of this country. It is a malice that we have seen over 100 years. We saw it in the 1890s, in the shearsers' strikes; we saw it in the 1930s, in the railway strikes that brought Ben Chifley to this parliament; we saw it in Mudginberri and the disputes of the eighties; and we saw it on the docks with the dogs and balaclavas and the illegal sacking of Australians simply for being members of a union.

We see this malice towards the working men and women in the construction industry—900,000 people singled out for special observance under special powers and special prosecution with special penalties. All of this is simply because they want to be part of a union and want to organise and exert their rights at work. The ABCC is the last remaining edifice in the legislative malice that was Work Choices and the 1998 Workplace Relations Act. The then government sought to insert into Australian law all of the unfairness and viciousness that they had in their hearts for organised labour.

The building industry is at the heart of our economy. It is an industry that is robust, diverse and at times troubled. There are many examples of this. I am sure members opposite will make plenty of remarks and observations about the conduct of unions and workers. But we know this is an industry that has huge problems with sham contracting, phoenix companies, unpaid entitlements and bills to other firms. We know it is an
industry with a problem with the employment of illegal workers.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* on 26 June 2011 observed the death of a Mr Hwang who had been working illegally in Australia since 1998 and who had died of a respiratory illness. He died a pauper. He was an illegal worker in the tiling industry and one of many in that industry who are subject to those conditions. He had never been on an employer's books and was never paid any superannuation. On the website *Adelaide Now* on 9 March 2011 was the headline 'Dodgy builders "out of control"', and the story referred to underpaid construction workers, many of them illegal workers, flooding into South Australia's construction industry. It outlined the cases of workers on the SAPOL building site who were owed $200,000 in wages by a subcontractor who had fled the country. There were individuals there who were owed $11,000—one was owed $18,000—and these are just some of the examples of workers in this industry who have been ripped off, underpaid and undocumented and who have taken Australian jobs.

When we look at how the ABCC has performed and what it has done about problems such as these, we see they have received $182 million over the last few years and have had exactly five employer prosecutions. There were zero in 2006, zero in 2007, zero in 2009 and zero in 2010. Less than five per cent of all prosecutions were of employers. These were quiet years for the ABCC. This was because this regulator is myopic and blinkered. It was conceived in malice—that is why it has to go.

It is a regulator that has not fairly applied the rule of law to this industry. It has not put in place safeguards to protect civil liberties or workers. It has not looked to be a fair regulator for the Australian people, and that is why we look forward to it being replaced by a regulator that will put at its heart the rule of law, will protect civil liberties such as the right to a lawyer and will enshrine in legislation a sunset clause to protect Australians from its extraordinary powers. This is a regulator that was born of malice, and it must be replaced by a regulator that is born of fairness.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): Is the motion seconded?

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

Ms LEY (Farrer) (21:06): Tonight's debate calling on members to support the abolition of the Australian Building and Construction Commission is a prudent opportunity to remind the Australian public of why the ABCC was established. The coalition set up the ABCC in response to the Cole Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry when the brutal thuggery of some unions and businesses was making it impossible for small business and independent contractors to access sites without conceding to often unlawful union demands. Australians fully supported the Howard government's establishment of the ABCC, appreciating that we needed a body with the clout to enforce law and order on building and construction sites around Australia. The ABCC is responsible for monitoring conduct in the industry and prosecuting unlawful industrial action, breaches of freedom of association laws and addressing all complaints of unlawfulness in the industry. We have seen bikies on the West Gate Bridge, union officials being prosecuted over threats to kill, and illegal blockades of building sites. The blockade by the CFMEU at the Melbourne Markets relocation project site, between 19 May 2010 and 28 May 2010, is a prime example. The CFMEU refused to accept the greenfields
agreement between the developer and the Australian Workers Union. Construction was blocked for 10 days by union members. Such heavy-handed, illegal behaviour on the part of unions provides the evidence of the need for the ABCC. When we have union officials blockading worksites with cars and rocks, and going as far as allegedly luring kangaroos onto a worksite to disrupt building, we have a real problem. This behaviour is unacceptable in Australian workplaces. It is a direct attack on productivity and employers, and the vandalism and obstruction that occurs on construction sites in Australia needs to cease.

Without the ABCC, Australia could descend back to the dark old days of corruption and heavy-handed union bullying. Yet preventing the bully-boy tactics of unions is not the only role of the ABCC. They do go into bat for workers, ensuring they receive the correct pay and entitlements. Workers at the Pentridge Prison Apartment development received back pay recently, when the ABCC became aware of allegations of underpayments following reports on Melbourne media saying that workers at the site had been locked out and had not been paid their wages. The ABCC can provide one-on-one advice to employers in the building and construction industry about classifications and hourly rates, record-keeping obligations, leave and termination issues and employment conditions. Yet Labor's contempt for the ABCC is longstanding. Despite going to the 2007 election committing to keep a tough cop on the beat, they are now backflipping—proposing to give the minister the capacity to issue directions to Fair Work Australia about the policies, programs, priorities and the manner in which the powers and functions of the building industry inspectorate are exercised and performed. This is in stark contrast to a commitment made by the now Prime Minister when she was confronted with a sea of yellow T-shirt wearing protestors in Brisbane in 2009. She stated:

Like me, I am sure you were appalled to read of dangerous car chases across Melbourne city involving carloads of balaclava-wearing people, criminal damage to vehicles resulting in arrests, threats of physical violence and intimidation …

Balaclavas, violence and intimidation must be unreservedly condemned … and the Rudd Labor government will do everything necessary to ensure that we do not see this appalling conduct again.

That is what the Prime Minister said.

It is a real shame that the Gillard Labor government does not share this commitment, and the only promise that matters now is one that has apparently been made to the backroom boys of the unions. Unfortunately, the faceless men of the Labor Party are once again pushing their own agenda. And if it means holding an industry hostage to enact their own power plays then this is exactly what they want to do.

The coalition supports the Australian Building and Construction Commission, and we definitely support the need for keeping a tough cop on the beat. This private member's motion is nothing short of a pathetic Labor attempt to appease its faceless union bosses.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (21:11): I am very pleased to second this motion. I would like to thank the member for Wakefield for bringing it to the House tonight. This motion rightly points out that the Howard government's Australian Building and Construction Commission has unfairly targeted building and construction unions and their individual workers. It is clear from the comparison of the total number of successful prosecutions made by the ABCC. We have five for employers—

Mr Briggs interjecting—
Ms RISHWORTH: The member for Mayo has just walked in. I am sure he was critical, just as he was with Work Choices, in the back room, in coming up with the best plan about how to target unions and their rank and file members—because we know he has some runs on the board there. However, we saw five successful prosecutions of employer groups and 86 of employee organisations. The previous speaker suggested—and I find it very hard to believe—that there were no other issues, that employers in the building and construction industry never do anything wrong; they never have issues where they underpay their workers or do not hold high health and safety standards. Those numbers I think clearly state that this organisation was there to target unions and their rank and file members. This is a very important point because we do need to make sure both employees and employers are held accountable. It is important that employers do uphold health and safety standards as well as their employees and ensure that there are decent conditions for workers on building sites and workplaces right around this country.

It is not surprising that this was created by the Howard government, because they created so many things, including their first wave of industrial relations changes in 1998 and then their second wave, through Work Choices, where they got a little giddy with their Senate majority and decided to really rip away the wages and conditions of ordinary Australians that deserved—

Mr Briggs interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): Order! The member for Mayo can tell us when he gets his chance.

Ms RISHWORTH: good health and safety standards and good conditions at work. There are many who believe that, as a result of the culture of fear and intimidation that occurred as a result of the ABCC, workers could not feel they could voice their concerns about their workplace. They did not feel that they could raise health and safety issues or their entitlements, that under the ABCC if they did raise these issues or took action to address these issues they would be compulsorily interrogated and not be provided the appropriate protections and safeguards, including the fundamental right to legal representation. So it is no wonder that there are many that believe that there were reduced safety standards on building sites, increased injury rates and reduced access to employee advocates and unions for workers. And, as a result of the climate of fear and intimidation, there are many who felt they could no longer put their tools down to ensure that safety was there on the worksite. One particular story was related to me about how this affected a construction site. There was a site on which water supplies were turned off by management despite the fact that temperatures were topping about 45 degrees on some days. When water supplies were turned on again, black sludge then flowed from the taps, so workers determined that the lack of water constituted a significant safety risk and walked off the job until water supplies were fixed. However, some months later, the workers who walked off the job, as well as their friends and colleagues at the construction site, were subject to what they felt was threatening and unwarranted interrogation to determine whether a safety risk was sufficiently immediate to warrant walking off the job. I am not sure about you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I think black sludge and no access to water are an evident safety risk, and it is no wonder that in this example—and I am sure there are many others—workers felt that they were unfairly targeted by the ABCC.
It seems that with the previous government there was an obsession with targeting workers, an obsession with reducing their pay and conditions, an obsession with ensuring that people did not get a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. It has been this Labor government that has taken action to create Fair Work Australia, to restore the safety net that was destroyed by the previous government. On that point, I commend the motion to the House.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (21:16): I rise to speak against the motion by the member for Wakefield to abolish the Australian Building and Construction Commission. There are many years of history to industrial disputation in the building and construction industry, and there have been a number of investigations and inquiries into that sector over the years.

In the late 1980s—more than 20 years ago—the full bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission conducted a review into the building and construction industry. Extensive submissions were made to the full bench by employers and unions on a wide range of industry practices, resulting in the consolidation of a number of awards into the National Building and Construction Industry Award 1990. The full bench found, firstly, that there was inconsistent industrial regulation between the federal and state jurisdictions and that a framework should be developed to deal with those issues; secondly, that the paid rates system should be abandoned in favour of a minimum rate plus a supplementary payment or allowance, which was consistent with the prevailing wage fixation principles; and, thirdly, that a single award should be established with a rationalisation of respondents. This was a step in improving the performance of the building and construction industry, but clearly more work needed to be done on reforming some entrenched practices in the industry.

In early 2001 the government called for an initial report into the building and construction industry. An investigation was undertaken by the Employment Advocate on a wide range of matters such as breaches of freedom of association, including the forcing of construction workers to join a union; the pursuit of contractors to enter into an agreement in possible breach of the Workplace Relations Act; strike pay; and right of entry. This report was the precursor to the Cole Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry.

Whilst there were more than 200 recommendations, Commissioner Cole specifically recommended changes to ensure bargaining only at enterprise level, eliminating pattern bargaining; mechanisms to 'ensure that any participant in the industry causing loss to other participants as a result of unlawful industrial action is held responsible for that loss'; mechanisms to ensure that disputes are settled in accordance with legislated or agreed dispute resolution procedures rather than by the application of industrial and commercial pressure; and the creation of an independent body which:

… will ensure that participants comply with industrial, civil and criminal laws applicable to all Australians … as well as industry specific laws applicable to this industry only.

The legislation that gave effect to the Cole commission's desire for the implementation of the rule of law included the Workplace Relations Amendment (Codifying Contempt Offences) Act 2004 and later the Building and Construction Industry Improvement Act 2005. The second act commenced in September 2005, with its main object being to provide an improved industrial relations framework:

… to ensure that building work is carried out fairly, efficiently and productively for the benefit
of all building industry participants and for the benefit of the Australian economy as a whole.

This act provided for the establishment of the Australian Building and Construction Commission.

The role of the commission is to monitor and promote appropriate standards of conduct throughout the building and construction industries. As well as an education and training role, the ABCC can, and has, instituted proceedings for contraventions of laws relating to freedom of association, coercion in agreement making, right of entry, strike pay, sham arrangements and unfair services contracts. Specifically, when the ABCC uncovers a contravention, it will initiate proceedings in the courts or Fair Work Australia, and to date the courts have imposed $4,123,125 in penalties, $698,300 suspended, in successful ABCC cases. From its inception in October 2005 through to 31 May 2011, the ABCC has been successful in 74 cases and unsuccessful in only eight cases. The majority of proceedings have been in Victoria, which has had a long and difficult history with the building and construction industry, including the bitter disputation leading to the deregistration of the Builders Labourers Federation in 1986.

The ABCC has a very positive role to play in monitoring and ensuring compliance with relevant legislation in an industry that has been dogged by practices which, if not unlawful, are precariously close. The greatest risk in the abolition of the ABCC is that the positive progress that has been made to date in reforming this industry will be eroded. If that happens there is a risk that there will be a return to the poor practices that were prevalent during the— (Time expired)

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (21:21): That was a very interesting recitation of historical events, but I think the reality is better summarised by George Williams in an article on 6 July 2010 in the Sydney Morning Herald. He noted that this legislation:

… can be applied to anyone. Workers can be brought in, not because they are suspected of wrongdoing, but to report on the activities of their co-workers. Family members, including young children, can be told to reveal information about a parent in the building industry.

… One person who just happened to be passing a building site was reported in this paper— that is, the Sydney Morning Herald; it is not the construction union making this report— to have been "hauled in for several hours of secret questioning" after seeing a confrontation between a union official and a building manager.

That is a recitation of the truth, the coercive powers in this legislation, coercive powers that the police forces of this country lack in many cases in regard to real criminality. As other speakers have indicated, there is a total imbalance in the way this organisation has operated. That is because it has a very close association with the infamous Cole royal commission into the industry. As the member for Mayo well knows, it was a politically driven royal commission and totally discredited.

There is a total imbalance in the way this organisation has operated in the industry. That is derived from the way it was created and the reasons that the Howard government created it. There is a situation here where the industry in Sydney is characterised by the heavy use of imported labour. In Sydney people are locked on sites and are not allowed to leave the place where they are working. They are living on rations. On many building sites in Sydney you not only have the worker; you have his spouse working on the building site for no payment providing food. In some cases we have got a situation where, as the mover of this motion indicated, the amounts of money owed to these workers are horrendous. There has
been very little activity by this organisation in regard to—

Mr Briggs interjecting—

Mr Laurie Ferguson: Name them? You would be advised to read a few newspapers and do a bit of research for the first time in your life. The situation here, as I say, is that there is a total imbalance in the way the organisation has operated. The member for Mayo will be able, of course, because he is such a knowledgeable person in this field, to recite case after case where this organisation has pursued employers in regard to sham contracting, in regard to pyramid company operations, in regard to underpayment. I challenge him to come forward with those, because previous speakers on this side have indicated the large degree to which union officials and individual workers have been prosecuted. That is a challenge to you, my friend.

We have seen $30 million of taxpayers' money expended on a series of unsuccessful prosecutions, nationally covered, in relation to Ark Tribe and others that were exonerated. It is also worth noting a poll by Essential Media in November 2010 which indicated public opinion on these matters. They said that 63 per cent of Australians were opposed to the fines this organisation could impose and 55 per cent of Australians were opposed to the way in which evidence was produced. With regard to seeking documents it was 58 per cent, and another 60 per cent were opposed to the use of these industrial laws in general. So Australian public opinion is very much concerned about the extreme powers this body has.

It is also worth noting an article by Bernard Keane in Crikey. I know the member will comment on this as well. It certainly demolishes some of the research by Econtech in regard to the way in which this has been justified. A figure of 9.4 per cent for productivity improvements was put forward by that research. Once again that supposed gain for the industry was demolished by the Wilcox royal commission. The situation here is that severe problems in the industry are being ignored. This organisation is one whose agenda is essentially driven by a biased position. We do not see any concern about donors in Western Australia on the wharves who have said they are prepared to bring guns onto building sites to solve industrial problems. There is no activity or prosecution by this organisation.

In summary, this is not $30 million worth of taxpayers' money well spent. It is an organisation which has been discredited by the failure of its activities. Its prosecutions have been essentially unsuccessful, it has been regarded by the Australian people as having too extensive powers, powers that go beyond any other body in this country, and it is selective in who it has concentrated on.

(Time expired)

Mr Briggs (Mayo) (21:26): It does give me great pleasure to speak on this motion moved by my little friend over there, the member for Wakefield. I must say I am surprised that the member for Wakefield has moved this motion. I cannot quite work out the connection. He is obviously trying to find some connection into the Left in South Australia. We have got Don's children here tonight. We have got the member for Wakefield, the member for Adelaide and the member for Kingston, Don's children, before us—born out of the SDA, given birth to by Senator Don Farrell, who famously yesterday wished the Minister for Foreign Affairs happy anniversary, this week being the anniversary of fundamental injustice.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms AE Burke): The member must stop reflecting
Mr BRIGGS: I am just reflecting that it is a surprising motion moved by a paid-up operating member of the SDA. I will say another thing about the two former practising industrial advocates over on the other side who both referred to the 1998 workplace relations act. I thought they would have known better; it was 1996 to begin with. They were reforms moved in 1986, landmark reforms from a great workplace relations minister, Peter Reith, the former member for Flinders, a fantastic minister for workplace relations who got things done, who fixed the wharves. I notice the member for Wakefield referred to that earlier in his remarks.

This is an industry that was littered with illegality, where the rule of law no longer applied. Terence Cole QC in a royal commission found example after example of illegality which bedevilled this industry, which added cost to buildings across this country, reduced productivity across this country. The previous speaker, the member for Werriwa, has got a great connection with the CFMEU, a long-term connection which he should have declared during his remarks, although it is so well-known he probably did not need to.

What those on the other side forget to mention is that this legislation deals with both sides. If there is illegality in the system, both sides of the argument will be prosecuted. It was out of the royal commission of Terence Cole QC in a royal commission that the CFMEU, a long-term connection which he should have declared during his remarks, although it is so well-known he probably did not need to.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! It being 9.30 pm I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Queensland Natural Disasters

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (21:30): I rise to put on the record how delighted I was to attend the Disaster Recognition Ceremony at South Bank in Brisbane on Sunday 12 June
2011. At this ceremony we paid tribute to our many Queensland and Brisbane flood heroes. Can I say from the outset how honoured I am to represent an electorate and a state where so many brave people, young and old, went to extreme lengths to help their neighbours, friends, family and in some cases total strangers in their time of need.

At ceremonies held across the state as part of Queensland Week 2011, 3,500 men and women from across Queensland were acknowledged for their efforts. It makes it truly inspiring to call Queensland home. As a community, as a city and as a state we fronted up to the challenge, we supported each other and we came through it stronger and more determined than ever.

My electorate suffered, but Ryan is a wonderful community. Indeed, it is a collection of communities. It is a special place where people look out for one another, where friends and even total strangers greet one another and, most importantly, where people do not hesitate when asked to go above and beyond the call of duty.

It is worth noting that during the January floods, no-one had to be asked to help. Busloads of the very heroes we honoured two Sundays ago turned up in droves to parks, streets and neighbourhoods all over Brisbane. With a bucket, mop and gloves in hand, locals were ready to help and ready to get our beautiful city back on its feet. It is fair to say that Brisbane would not have recovered as quickly without our heroes.

It is quite astonishing to comprehend, but with the help of the Army we achieved in three days what took three months after the 1974 floods. Much credit must go to the extraordinary leadership and work ethic of former Lord Mayor Campbell Newman, and to the Brisbane City Council, who arranged tetanus shots and organised the buses to get our heroes where they were needed.

There were so many everyday heroes who simply got out and about and helped with the clean-up. They are the reason the city of Brisbane was back on its feet in a matter of days. We really have so much to thank them for. Their work was extraordinary. It was a great privilege to witness so many of these flood heroes receive their awards. It was a moving ceremony, as it had been a moving experience to watch the outpour of community spirit during the January 2011 floods.

When the floodwaters came, Brisbane was hit hard and hit fast. Thankfully, the community responded just as rapidly. It was humbling to see both friends and strangers go to each other's assistance. Whether it was helping to evacuate the elderly from their homes, or cooking for the tireless volunteers in the street, the fact is that if there was a job to be done there was someone in Brisbane prepared to volunteer and get it done.

I still to this day recall a visitor from America who was so completely amazed at the traffic jam of volunteers coming into Brisbane. I remember this young fellow saying that only in Australia would you see people actually driving towards the disaster.

The Disaster Recognition Ceremony in South Bank on Sunday was about paying tribute to the remarkable Brisbane residents who went above and beyond the call of duty. It saw the volunteers, emergency services workers and community members thanked for their steadfast community service during this summer of disasters.

As the federal member for Ryan I want to pay tribute to our outstanding community, our volunteers, our emergency service men and women and of course our everyday Brisbane residents who picked up their mops and buckets and were ready to be put to work. There are so many heroes around Queensland who contributed in so many
ways following the floods and Cyclone Yasi. Many were acknowledged on the weekend and of course others will go unnoticed. The fact of the matter is that as a state we shone through those dark days. Again this has highlighted for me what a great place our community is to live, work and raise a family in, and I am very proud to represent it in the federal parliament.

Finally, we should never forget that there are so many people who have still not recovered from these disasters. As much as the physical damage may have been cleared away, they still need our support.

Bass Electorate: Defence Science and Technology Organisation Facility

Mr LYONS (Bass) (21:35): I rise tonight to welcome and express my support for the public works motion put forward in parliament last week by the Special Minister of State, the Hon. Gary Gray, for the redevelopment of the Scottsdale Defence Science and Technology Organisation's facility in my electorate of Bass.

Recently, the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, the Hon. Warren Snowdon, joined me at Scottsdale to announce the $18.7 million, plus GST, project to redevelop the Scottsdale Defence Science and Technology Organisation's nutrition research facility. The works at the facility will include the redevelopment of food technology facilities, upgrading of the existing chemistry and nutrition laboratories and improvements to the site infrastructure and working areas.

The Scottsdale DSTO facility researches and manufactures the freeze dried components used in the Australian Defence Force patrol ration packs and has been producing these since the early 1970s. In fact, Scottsdale is the only facility in Australia to both produce food and to undertake research into the nutritional value of ration packs and rationing systems used by the Australian Defence Force.

The funding will generate employment opportunities in a region of Tasmania that has faced some difficulties in the recent past. It is an announcement welcomed by the community. It reiterates that the federal government is committed to the people of Scottsdale and that Defence has a long-term future in the region. I am pleased that the Public Works Committee will conduct a hearing at Scottsdale on 27 July regarding this project that has been proposed by the Australian Labor government. This is good news for the people of the north-east of Tasmania. The redevelopment will result in a modern science facility that will be equipped to meet the nutritional needs of Australian Defence Force personnel. This project, through the public works motion in parliament last week, is furthering the Australian Labor government's commitment to the Scottsdale DSTO—something that the Liberals, for 11 long years, neglected and failed to do anything about.

There has been a lot of scaremongering by opposition members in this place about the future of the DSTO facility. It is a pity that, as Senator Barnett leaves this place, he continually causes unnecessary uncertainty in and misleading of the north-east community. The future of Scottsdale DSTO is strong. It will continue to play a leading role in food technology and will continue to play an important role in the local community and economy. The government is committed to the modernisation and sustainability of this facility. It is a shame that certain opposition members cannot show the same level of commitment instead of causing unrest and uncertainty.

Construction is due to start later this year, subject to parliamentary clearance, with an estimated completion date of late 2013. This
is great news for the people of north-east Tasmania. The redevelopments will not only bring employment opportunities to the region, which has suffered a number of setbacks over recent times, but also provide an opportunity for growth within the community. The facility offers such potential that it amazes me that those opposite would want to question its future in the region. I am looking forward to the commencement of construction at the Scottsdale DSTO and to the positives and the opportunities it will bring to this wonderful region of north-east Tasmania and the great electorate of Bass.

**Wannon Electorate: Workplace Relations**

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (21:39): I rise tonight to wish Jane Spencer a very happy birthday. She deserves it on this day in particular, because on this day Fair Work Australia, following three appeals, has decided that students will be able to go back to work for an hour and a half after school. This is a sensible decision, a common-sense decision, but a decision that has taken 16 months too long. Sixteen months ago Jane Spencer rang me to ask me why her son Matthew and five other students, including a young girl called Leticia Harrison, could no longer go to work after school. I said: 'That's crazy. No laws would stop young students going to work after school to earn some pocket money and get some work experience.' But, when I looked into it, that was in fact what had happened.

Matthew Spencer, Leticia Harrison and four other students at the Terang Co-op had lost their work after school because, when the government re-regulated the workplace, it made a minimum three-hour requirement, which hurt, in particular, regional and country kids. Matthew Spencer and Leticia Harrison, when they left school at 3.30 to go to work at the Terang Co-op, got there at four o'clock. The business shut at 5.30, so they could no longer do three hours unless their boss, Charlie Duynhoven, was prepared to pay them for work they did not do—and neither the students nor Charlie wanted that.

Jane Spencer decided she wanted to fight this, and so did Matthew Spencer and Leticia Harrison. So Neil Mitchell was called, and it was put to Julia Gillard—the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations at the time—that it seemed silly that these students should not be able to work after school. Julia Gillard said she would look into it and fix it. So what happened? Nothing. She did a Pontius Pilate; she washed her hands of these poor students and said, 'Over to Fair Work Australia.'

These students—and their courage and their independence—have been fantastic. They said, 'This isn't good enough.' They got a petition going. From the community in Terang of 2,000 people they got 1,600 signatures. They drove down to Julia Gillard's office and, with their employer, Charlie Duynhoven—and I went with them—delivered the petition, saying, 'Please, we want our right to work.' What happened? She washed her hands of it. Julia Gillard ordered the Fair Work Ombudsman to go and investigate and, rather than get the students back their work, he fined the Terang Co-op for having employed the kids for an hour and a half—made the business out to be the crooks.

So these two students decided that was not good enough. Not only did they deliver the petition; they then said: 'We're going to go down to Fair Work Australia and give evidence to say that we want our right to work. We want to be able to go back and do our hour and a half after school.' And what happened? One of the trade unions sent its lawyers in, and Leticia Harrison—a 16-year-old student who was down there giving
evidence because she wanted her work back—was intimidated. I spoke to her the night after the hearing, and she was very shaken up by it. She said, 'I just wanted to go down there and give my explanation of why I want to get my one and a half hours of work after school back and not be intimidated and bullied.'

We have had another appeal, to which Fair Work Australia said, 'No, sorry.' But finally, today, on Jane Spencer's birthday, Fair Work Australia has decided that yes, students can work after school, between three o'clock and 6.30 for a 1½-hour period—a common-sense outcome. Matthew Spencer and Leticia Harrison will not be able to go back to work, because they have now moved on, but young students across regional and rural Australia will be able to work after school again. I commend Matthew Spencer and Leticia Harrison for having the courage of their convictions to stand up and take the unions on and deliver this result. (Time expired)

**Braddon Electorate: Scams**

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM** (Braddon) (21:44): Good job to Fair Work Australia on its deliberations. Over the last couple of weeks I have dealt with a number of fellow north-west coasters who have supposedly won large sums of money from overseas 'businesses' who have conducted 'raffles' and 'lotteries'. Two that are doing the rounds—this experience may be shared by other members here—are Solaris Holiday and Oceania Tourism.

Opposition members interjecting—

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM:** Some people have received 'scratchies' type tickets which, once scratched open, just so happen to be the winning ticket for one of the main prizes on offer. All the 'winners' have to do is verify they are indeed the ticket holder and contact one of several numbers overseas to do so. Some were led to a genuine-looking website, which adds to the authenticity of the scam. None of my callers had ever purchased a ticket in these raffles or lotteries. So there is a surprise! Some of the 'winners' were asked to provide proof that they were indeed the ticket holder and were asked to provide bank details, licence details et cetera as part of the verification process. The person on the other end of the phone states, 'I will put you through to our legal team to whom you can confidentially give your personal details.' Of course, there is no legal team, rather just a person in the same or adjoining room, adding to the authenticity of the scheme.

While this may have started off as a somewhat jovial matter for members opposite, I am sure they share with me concern about this whole issue of scams. Unfortunately, the number of people fooled by these scams is beyond a joke. We say to people, 'Beware', and that is why I am raising this matter tonight.

Our 'winners' are asked to wait until they receive a letter from Solaris, for example, then to proceed to the post office or other place which has Western Union transfers available. In the instances raised with me, they were requested to pay $3,900 in processing, administration and court fees and to contact Solaris immediately the transfer had taken place, preferably by mobile phone, as this is quicker than waiting until you get home to contact them. It is all very chatty. It seems the quicker you call after depositing the money, the quicker $130,000 will be placed into your account—and, remember, it is never the first prize; it is the third prize—as well as refunding the $3,900 you just transferred to them. Of course, no money will be received—indeed, the opposite: the scammers will have the money you transferred to them and, in some cases, your bank account details so that they can fleece your account.
Unfortunately there are many, many scams doing the rounds at any given time, of which fellow colleagues here are no doubt aware and remind their constituents. It is a very serious issue. With technology the way it is now, it is getting harder and harder to pick these scams. I recommend that people, particularly those listening to this broadcast, regularly check out the SCAMwatch website, which has lots of information relating to scams and how to pick them and what to do if you are approached by scammers. As well as that, you can request to have scam alerts sent to you. If you go to www.scamwatch.gov.au you can actually become a subscriber to SCAMwatch—when you determine they are not a scam!—and they will keep you updated on the number of scams that are about.

I rang and spoke to someone about Solaris, who advised that the Solaris scam is indeed circulating Australia at the moment, with variations of the business names used but always using the same types of scenarios. If you have not done so already, jump online and see what other scams are currently around. One which has started recently is a 'Centrelink' scam, where you are told that Centrelink owes you money and that, if you give your details, they will give it to you.

When you look at the online material on these websites you see that some of it is quite ordinary, with poor grammar and punctuation, while other material looks very professional. You have to be very careful. I know one constituent of mine who lost a lot of money. Beware: get onto the SCAMwatch website and take care.

Boothby Electorate: Health

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (21:50): I would like to speak about health in my electorate of Boothby, and there are a number of issues that I want to touch on. Blackwood Community Hospital has been providing healthcare services to the Hills community in my electorate since 1954. The hospital has been run on a not-for-profit basis. Unfortunately, it closed its emergency department in October 2010 and all other facilities, including its after-hours GP clinic, in December 2010. The closure of the Blackwood Community Hospital has only exacerbated the shortage of general practitioners and after-hours services in the area. The immediate area around this hospital—the suburbs of Belair, Glenalta, Blackwood, Flagstaff Hill, Craigburn Farm and Hawthorndene—is classified as a district of workforce shortage. It is an area which has less than the national average number of GPs. So there is a genuine need for additional primary care, GP and after-hours services in Blackwood and Belair and the surrounding suburbs.

Recently the hospital site has been purchased by the international musculoskeletal research institute, operating as the Southern Adelaide Health Service. Any primary care services that the Southern Adelaide Health Service are able to revive on the Blackwood Community Hospital site will go some way to reducing the shortage of doctors in the area. Any after-hours services they are able to resume will also help take pressure off the already struggling public hospitals in the area.

As an example of the pressure that is on public hospitals in my electorate, the major public hospital in my electorate, Flinders Medical Centre, has recently had an issue of ramping. Ramping involves patients being kept waiting on the entry ramp to the hospital under the care of ambulance officers. It happens when there is a backlog within the emergency department that forces all emergency department beds to be filled, meaning that there are no available beds for incoming patients. Ramping also means that ambulances and ambulance officers are tied
up outside the hospital and unable to attend to any other emergencies, as they cannot leave until the patient is handed over to the emergency department. Patients have had to wait up to three hours before being handed over to the emergency department by the ambulance officers. This problem has been going on for almost eight months. In one instance, every ambulance south of the CBD was banked up outside the Flinders Medical Centre waiting to offload patients. In April, a constituent of mine spent more than an hour and a half with a fractured hip waiting on the ramp. In all the recent public appearances, it has been very obvious that the public servants and the South Australian Minister for Health, the Hon. John Hill, have been in complete denial about the nature of the problem and what is going on in the emergency department in Flinders.

It is clear that the public hospital system is struggling in parts and it is clear that the private health system is required to take the pressure off our public hospital system. I have always believed that private health insurance plays a key role in keeping pressure off the public system. These two things, the closure of the Blackwood Hospital and the pressure on Flinders and its emergency department, highlight the importance of keeping private health insurance levels high. The Labor Party have always hated private health insurance. The Gillard government is intent on whittling back and undermining private health due to its continuing attack on the private health insurance rebate.

Almost 96,000 residents in the electorate of Boothby are covered by some form of private health insurance. This represents 71 per cent of households. The Labor Party's decision to wind back the rebates, after they said they would not in 2007, is only going to put further pressure on public hospitals like Flinders, which are already struggling to cope. I look forward to the contribution that the Southern Adelaide Health Institute can make to primary care and to the health network and health system within my electorate and the inner southern suburbs of Adelaide.

Workplace Relations

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (21:54): Earlier this evening, the member for Mayo referred to me as one of 'Don's children' and an SDA official, which indeed I was. I suppose metaphorically I may be one of 'Don's children', but I rise to speak about John's children—this Praetorian guard on the backbench, this bunch of young guns who have been talking about industrial relations reform. Although the opposition say that Work Choices is dead, the dream of extreme industrial relations laws lives on in the minds of those opposite, particularly those on the backbench. We know that the Liberal Party frontbench are now militantly committed to pretending nothing at all happened with industrial relations under a Liberal government, but we know that the backbench is very keen on extreme industrial relations change.

We see all these young Turks and we see there is a bit of tension between the frontbench and the backbench. The member for Mayo is out there constantly. I notice that the Business Spectator on 18 February this year called it the 'Briggs breakout' and said that he had kicked the sleeping dog of industrial relations. I am sure that sounded promising to the member for Mayo, but I do not think the Liberal Party frontbench would have appreciated it. In December 2010 the member for Mayo, in the Australian newspaper, said:

There are benefits for all of us of further industrial relations reform.

He also said:
This is a debate we must have. This is a reform road that must be travelled.

That is pretty serious stuff. We know that the member for Mayo was one of the architects in Mr Howard's office—one of the architects of Work Choices, one of the architects of taking away people's penalty rates, their job security and their conditions of employment. When he says 'deregulation' or 'a reform road' we know exactly what the member for Mayo has in mind.

Most recently we have had the member for Kooyong talk about industrial relations reform. In one of the Fairfax papers there was the headline 'Coalition push for fair work reform' to an article by Michelle Grattan, a very good journalist in the press gallery. It talked about how the member for Kooyong wanted to stop industrial action and talk about changes to the industrial relations laws. The story did talk about the reluctance of the opposition leader, Tony Abbott, who was worried about the prospect of Labor successfully raising the spectre of Work Choices. So you can see there is a bit of tension between the backbench and the frontbench, between these young guns—John's children, if you like.

We also had the member for Higgins criticising the Australian Building and Construction Commission for having an inquiry into sham contracts. She said there was so-called sham contracting in the industry. Never mind that there have been prosecutions in that area, even by the ABCC. There have been only five employer prosecutions, but nevertheless prosecutions. We have these young guns who are trying to get on the frontbench and we have a far more cautious frontbench. The reason we have a cautious frontbench is that they are terrified that the Australian people will cotton on to their strategy of benign security in opposition—they will not touch wages, they will not touch penalty rates, they have somehow learnt their lesson. Of course, we know that that is a strategy based on subterfuge. We know that when they get into office they will do something entirely different. We can see this in the state of New South Wales, where Barry O'Farrell did not put anything in his 100-day plan—his 100-day a list of things he was going to do—and then turned on the working men and women of New South Wales the moment he obtained power. He passed laws butchering the International Relations Commission and restricting wages in the public sector.

We know there is this tension between the backbench and the frontbench—a tension between honesty and courage from the backbench and complete subterfuge and deliberate misleading of the Australian people as to their intentions from the frontbench. There is no doubt that deep in the coalition heart is malice against organised Labor, against working men and women, and a deep desire to reform the industrial relations system. We all know what reform means. It means losing penalty rates, losing job security and losing your conditions, and every worker in this country should be aware of it.

**Online Gambling**

Mr TUDGE (Aston) (21:59): I would like to raise an issue that I have recently had brought to my attention that I believe needs to be addressed by the Northern Territory parliament or, if it fails to do so, then by this parliament. The issue relates to online gambling and specifically the ability of online gambling companies to provide credit to their customers for the purposes of betting. Providing credit is prohibited in most jurisdictions in Australia, but it is not in the Northern Territory, where most internet gambling companies are licensed. It should be prohibited in the Northern Territory also,
as their laws in this area affect all Australian residents.

The matter was brought to my attention through a tragic case involving a local constituent, who I will call 'H', and his mother, who I will refer to as 'B'. They came to see me in early March to see if I could assist them. H is a self-professed problem gambler and, according to his doctor, suffers from depression, anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder. Over the course of May 2010, H was offered $80,000 in credit by Sportsbet. According to H, he was initially given $5,000 in free bets and when he lost this he was given $10,000 in credit, which was followed by a further $30,000 and then a further $40,000. He was eventually unable to pay for the credit issued to him. Sportsbet consequently took H to the Magistrates Court to get an order for payment and subsequently to the Federal Court to get a bankruptcy notice, which allows court appointed trustees to handle his affairs. H's and B's family home is now in jeopardy, and this is when they came to see me.

It is clear that H is in the wrong from a legal perspective. He clearly has a gambling problem and there is no dispute that he took the credit and gambled it away. There is no indication that Sportsbet has broken the law. This episode, however, should not have occurred and I am determined to see that cases like this do not happen again. Sportsbet was only able to provide credit to H due to regulations in the NT which are more lenient than in other jurisdictions in Australia. All jurisdictions except the NT and ACT expressly prohibit extending credit to these customers or only allow it in exceptional circumstances. In Victoria, where H resides, it is prohibited.

Sportsbet is headquartered in Melbourne but licensed in the NT. By being licensed there, it is covered by the Northern Territory laws, despite its online presence being Australia wide. Further, online gambling companies do not fall under the National Credit Code. This loophole in the Northern Territory law needs to be closed and I am determined to see this occur. Online gambling companies should be prohibited from extending credit to their customers or, at the very least, they should be covered by the National Credit Code. Online gambling companies providing credit is particularly egregious because they take no risk when they issue the credit. There is no cash on the line for the gambling companies, yet they can seize the gambler's assets when the gambler loses the money. This creates a massive moral hazard that should be regulated against. These companies are unlike any other credit provider.

Providing credit for the express purpose of gambling is not something that we should be supporting in any case. As the Productivity Commission points out in its recent report, gambling with credit is primarily an activity undertaken by problem gamblers only. Low-risk or moderate-risk gamblers very rarely use credit for gambling. The Productivity Commission goes as far as saying:

… using credit to gamble differentiates well between recreational and problem gambling.

Many in the gambling sector, including Clubs New South Wales, support a blanket prohibition on gambling companies providing credit, including internet gambling companies.

I have written to the Northern Territory Chief Minister and asked him to change the NT laws. His laws affect all Australians, including my constituents. If he fails to change the laws then I will be seeking to get the Australian parliament to address the matter. There are a number of avenues that I will be considering: (a) putting the matter to the Joint Select Committee on Gambling
Reform for their consideration; (b) seeking to incorporate internet gambling credit provision under the National Credit Code; and (c) seeking to override the Northern Territory laws and prohibit online gambling companies providing credit to their customers.

In H's case, I have asked Sportsbet to show compassion to H and his mother, B. They do not deserve to lose their house over this. Sportsbet would have suffered very little cash loss. I know that addressing this loophole in the law as I have outlined will not stop problem gambling altogether, but it would make a difference and provide one additional layer of protection.

**Adelaide Dutch Festival**

**Mr ZAPPIA** (Makin) (22:04): On Saturday, 30 April I attended the Adelaide Dutch Festival, held at the Dutch Club community centre at Greenfields. The festival was officially opened by the honorary consul of the Netherlands, Mr Willem Ouwens, and was attended by people from around the state. The Dutch community have had a long history in Australia. Dutch explorers were the first Europeans to set foot on Australian soil. The Dutch ship *Duyfken*, captained by Willem Janszoon, made landfall in Queensland in 1606.

Throughout the 17th century, Dutch ships explored and charted the coastline of Australia. It is for this reason that for many years the continent that became Australia was known to Europeans as New Holland. Many Australian places carry this history of Dutch exploration in their names, including Rottnest Island, the Tasman Sea and Tasmania, which was previously known as Van Diemen's Land after a Dutch governor of the East Indies. In my state of South Australia the west coast islands of St Francis and St Peter were named by 17th century Dutch explorers. These islands have the oldest European place names in South Australia.

After South Australia was proclaimed in 1836, the Netherlands was one of the most active trading partners with the new British colony and Dutch ships were regular visitors to Robe and to Port Adelaide. The 19th century also saw Dutch settlers migrate to South Australia. The most prominent of these Dutch migrants was Guillaume Delprat, who was the general manager of BHP in the early 20th century, during which time he pioneered iron ore mining techniques and was involved in such iconic production sites as the Newcastle steelworks and the Port Pirie smelter. From these first few but significant early settlers Dutch migration to Australia increased significantly in the 1950s. Today there are over 300,000 Australians of Dutch ancestry, including nearly 3,000 in my own electorate of Makin. There is also a strong relationship between the respective governments of Australia and the Netherlands, which share similar values and a similar global outlook. The two countries have strong trade bonds and have partnered together to address global issues such as human rights, war crimes, fair trade and the Millennium Development Goals. Regular meetings are held between the respective leaders and ministers. As recently as December 2010, Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd met with Dutch Prime Minister Rutte. Representatives of the Dutch government have visited Australia on several occasions. Queen Beatrix visited Australia in 1988 as part of Australia's bicentennial celebrations. The Dutch Prime Minister and Crown Prince both attended Australia in 2006 as part of the celebrations marking 400 years since the first European landing on Australia by the Dutch ship *Duyfken*. As a shared project between the Dutch and Australian governments, a replica of the *Duyfken* was built and sailed from Australia to the Netherlands and back.
in 2006. This shared celebration of common history shows just what a strong relationship there is between the governments and the people of Australia and the Netherlands.

I will briefly comment on the contribution of the Dutch community to my local area. The Dutch Social and Welfare Club—or the Dutch Club, as it is known—is located in the northern Adelaide suburb of Green Fields. It was one of the first community facilities established in the region and has provided an invaluable cultural centre for Adelaide's Dutch community. The club holds regular lunches and social events as well as a range of special events, including the annual Dutch festival, St Nicholas kinderfeest at Christmas and special remembrance services. The club also plays a valuable community service role, especially for groups that have unique needs, and works closely with the Netherlands Australian Aged Services Association and the Netherlands Ex-Servicemen and Women's Association.

It has been my privilege to attend many Dutch community events at the club over the years and I thank the Dutch community for their very warm hospitality on all of those occasions. I congratulate members of the Dutch Club for organising the Adelaide Dutch Festival and I particularly acknowledge the hard work of committee members: club president Gerrit de Vries, Kees Velzeboer, Peter den Hartog, Ernie Mullart, Jack Korver, Bob van der Hoeven, Marco Kuipers, Gary Rozenboom, Maurice McLeod and Anouk Werkhoven. Dutch people have been a model example of resettlement in a new country and today can be found making their contribution in every aspect of Australian life. I count many of them as personal friends and tonight I pay tribute to their contribution to our nation.

Calare Electorate  
Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (22:09): When I first entered politics I was responsible for most of western New South Wales all the way out to Broken Hill and Cameron Corner. I never dreamt that I would one day represent the town in which I was born and in which my mother and grandparents were born and died—that is, Bathurst, which is way to the east. My electorate now goes all to the way to the Blue Mountains, including Lithgow and Oberon and out to Forbes and Parkes. This coming Friday the ex-Mayor of Bathurst, Ian MacIntosh, has graciously accepted the job of opening my new office in Bathurst, which will look after the eastern side of the electorate while the Orange office looks after the western side.

Bathurst is quite an incredible place. It is the oldest inland town so registered in Australia. In 1862 it was made the headquarters of Cobb and Co. I have to say that Freeman Cobb is no relation. He was an American who came here, made a fortune, went back to America and lost it when he went home. Today Bathurst sits on the junction of the Great Western, Mid Western and Mitchell highways. It is the local government area in which the first mining, particularly gold mining, started in Australia. It is the part of Australia where, outside of the Sydney Basin, agriculture and mining really began, the oldest part of the serious side of Australian production.

It has a lot going for it. Not only is it incredibly old in Australian European settlement terms but it has architecture not seen in many places. It is a very old town and it has Sofala, which is Australia's oldest surviving gold town. It has Hill End, which in 1872 had the world's largest specimen of reef gold, the Holtermann Nugget, weighing 285 kilograms and measuring 150
centimetres by 66 centimetres with an average thickness of 10 centimetres. That is one heck of reef. I have no idea what it would be worth today, but I suspect we could all retire on it. That town grew to 8,000 people, making it one of New South Wales's largest inland towns at that time, with a kilometre of shops, five banks, two newspapers, a brewery and 27 hotels. I regret to say only one of those is left, the Royal Hotel. I have been a client there and I will be again.

The office in Bathurst will also look after Lithgow. Lithgow is, apart from being the home of—

Dr Southcott: Marjorie Jackson

Mr John Cobb: That too—the Lithgow Flash. It is also the home of a small arms factory which made rifles over two world wars. It actually still exists and still produces certain things for the defence forces. It was the site of the first steel manufactured in Australia. The first smelting works were there because it had coal. They had to bring the iron ore there, but they had everything else. In fact, one of the more interesting things about Lithgow which very few people realise is that meat refrigeration was established there by Thomas Mort in 1875. The first Australian chilled meat from Lithgow arrived in England in 1880.

The Bathurst office will also look after Oberon. Oberon is one of the centres of the New South Wales timber industry. Early pioneers knew Oberon as Bullock Flat. Permanent settlement occurred as early as 1839, but in 1863 the name was changed to Oberon. (Time expired)

Mackie, Professor Jamie

Dr Leigh (Fraser) (22:14): I rise to pay tribute to Professor Jamie Mackie, who passed away on 21 April, aged 86. Jamie was a key player in the deepening of Australia's engagement with South-East Asia and the campaign to dismantle the White Australia policy.

Jamie's first exposure to South-East Asia came as a 19-year-old gunner on HMAS Warramunga. He was part of General Douglas Macarthur's amphibious landings against Japanese positions. Visiting Manila, he was struck by its heritage, 'a history that almost none of us in Australia then knew anything about'. This spurred a lifelong interest in the region.

He knew interesting people. At Geelong Grammar, his history master was Manning Clark. At Oxford, Jamie got to know Rupert Murdoch, who was then secretary of the Oxford University Labour club. Jamie quipped that perhaps history might have been changed had Murdoch taken up Jamie's offer to go and see Citizen Kane together.

In the 1950s, Jamie volunteered to go to Indonesia as part of the new volunteer graduate scheme launched by Herb Feith. He worked in the State Planning Bureau in Jakarta, and lectured in economic history at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta. These lectures eventually became his first book, to be followed by a spate of articles about the political economy of Indonesia and Australia's foreign policies. His group at Monash University's Centre of Southeast Asian Studies earned the title of 'a second Cornell', in recognition of its concern for human rights in Indonesia.

Jamie's engagement with Indonesia naturally brought him into an active role in campaigning against the White Australia policy. With Ken Rivett, he wrote an influential 1959 pamphlet, Immigration: Control or Colour Bar?, arguing that the policy was not just morally wrong but also against Australia's national interest. In his obituary of Jamie, David Jenkins noted that the values in this argument underpinned
much of the modern multicultural Australia we value today.

But articulate pamphlets were not enough. My father, Michael Leigh, a close friend of Jamie's, says that one of the turning points for him came with the Sharpeville massacre in 1960. After the brutal killing of 69 civilians, including 10 children, the Labor opposition called on the Menzies government to pass a censure motion against the South African government. Menzies refused.

My father told me that this was the moment that people like he and Jamie decided that a street demonstration would be necessary to express horror at this brutal manifestation of the consequences of racial exclusivity and of the Prime Minister's refusal to join international condemnation. Victoria Police refused permission for their march and warned that they should not proceed outside the boundaries of Melbourne University. Yet proceed they did, with police lining both sides of the road. Australia is a better country for the courage of these marchers.

I had known Jamie since I was a child, and enjoyed the way he would often drop into my ANU office unexpectedly to share an idea or an anecdote. After more than a decade as a professor in the ANU Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, and as co-founder of the annual Indonesia Update conference, Jamie clearly delighted in strolling the halls of the labyrinthine Coombs Building. He would buttonhole me about economic policy, the treatment of refugees or Australian foreign policy. Jamie would hold forth at length until—I would eventually explain that I had to get back and do some research. He always left me with a new idea and, looking back, I wish I had asked a few more questions and been a little less precious with my time.

ANU professor Tony Reid wrote:

Jamie Mackie epitomized the best in the reformist enthusiasm of post-war Australia to open out to its region. For him as for many of that generation, Indonesia pre-eminently represented the Australian 'other', the Asia with which Australia had to come to terms. Because he was himself very much an Australian of that era—warm, open, maverick, visionary, irreverent, unpretentious—he understood better than most how exciting and challenging, but painfully difficult, a prospect it was to get that relationship right. He played his part like no other, and it will be impossible to think of the development of that relationship without him.

One of the great Indonesian poets is Chairil Anwar, who passed away in 1949, aged just 26. Aku, perhaps his most famous poem, ends with the line: 'Aku mau hidup seribu tahun lagi.' Which translates as: 'I want to live for another thousand years.'

Chairil Anwar did not. Jamie Mackie did not. But their influence might.

Thursday Island: Tuberculosis Clinics

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (22:19): Three of the great killers around the world—endemic TB, malaria and HIV—come no closer to Australia's continent than the Torres Strait. TB, with a prevalence of around two per cent, afflicts tens of thousands of Papua New Guinea nationals. Torres Strait Island residents who live in these beautiful northern islands require world-class health facilities to maintain adequate biosurveillance. So it is with great alarm that, over the last six months, that community has seen the bickering between state and federal Labor over who will fund the continued TB screening on those islands.

Looking after PNG nationals is a very important role for AusAID, but nothing is more important for an Australian government than to look after Australian
citizens—and Torres Strait Islanders are just that. We would like to see a federal government that acknowledges its important role in treating tuberculosis and monitoring the Torres Strait Islands, which is marked by up to 50,000 border crossings each year, for the arrival of this disease from Papua New Guinea—particularly for drug resistant TB, which is incredibly hard to treat and monitor.

We have seen correspondence emanating from the Queensland government, which is greatly concerned that it can no longer afford to provide these TB services in Boigu and Saibai. We have seen a response from the Prime Minister which effectively refers to some project assistance, which is of course code for AusAID and its underspent budget, to bail out Queensland Health and the federal government's own health responsibilities in the Torres Strait.

The decision last Friday, when the Queensland and federal agencies met and decided to move the Thursday Island clinics into Papua New Guinea, came as a shock. It all seems reasonable on the surface, except that the obvious will now occur: extremely sick PNG nationals will no longer be evacuated to receive better levels of care. More importantly, the biosurveillance that we have always counted on in the Torres Strait Islands will disappear entirely. To expect Thursday Island and its committed clinicians to keep an eye on infectious TB, particularly partially or fully drug resistant TB, is simply impossible. There is a hierarchy of policy approaches: we must first look after Australian citizens. We must make that pledge from both sides of the chamber in this place.

At a second level we must also do everything we can to help Papua New Guinea and, while we do not mind extra money being deployed, it is utterly ridiculous to have transitional meetings about screening for tuberculosis when you have actually shut down all of the clinics and then talk about restarting those clinics in October, when they finally roll out to Daru in Western Province. It is unacceptable to ignore people with tuberculosis but say, 'We are currently recruiting a TB doctor for Papa New Guinea; we are currently looking for a TB vessel to travel down the coast and treat.' It is ridiculous not to even have a TB coordinator in place. Incredible as it is, AusAID is months away from delivering these services on the PNG mainland. So it makes the decision doubly abhorrent that this federal government and the Department of Health and Ageing would fail, in the interim, to continue these TB clinics. All local clinicians ask for—and most of them have been gagged by their government—is a chance to hand over these patients who are already partially treated. It is ridiculous that, up until last Wednesday, patients could travel those three kilometres by sea to Boigu and Saibai and receive treatment but there are no plans to continue the care of those 50 PNG citizens.

Worse still, people are crossing every day of every week, of every year, from Papua New Guinea and we no longer have these TB clinicians, these specialists, who are able to prescribe secondary treatments and tertiary evacuations where required. They are no longer going to be deployed in the Torres Strait Islands at all. To simply think that you can move Australian doctors to Daru, in Papua New Guinea, where they are neither registered nor accredited and expect them to work in conditions like those in Daru in providing support when, the moment those clinicians leave, these patients will of course be left with what is there at the moment. That is, with very few ways of recovering patients and very few ways of continuing care. There is one very important thing to remember about TB and that is that partially treated TB is more dangerous than non-
treated TB. The reality is that, once patients become resistant to certain treatments, not only are they almost impossible to treat with the most advanced modern-day treatments but they are also infectious and lead to other people falling ill with the same extremely hard to treat varieties. To expect that treatments like Amykacin, prothionamide and Pasa will be available continuously in Papua New Guinea is simply beyond belief.

We will never, in the next generation at least, see the eradication of TB in PNG. More will always need to be done. But let us remember one thing: we must put Australian citizens first. Ti residents are Australian citizens and, above all, they deserve not the penny-pinchng and the nickel and dimeing of federal health, but care, coverage and biosurveillance for tuberculosis.

Page Electorate

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (22:24): I want to do a regional round-up of the good things that have been happening in my seat of Page over the last months, but particularly over the last few weeks. Two Sundays ago I was privileged to attend a luncheon at the Quota International Conference. The international president, Gwenn Jackson, was present. She is from the United States. It was held at the RSL in Ballina. There was a handover to the international president elect, Chris Tracey-Patte, who is from Beaudesert. So it was being handed over from someone from the US to an Aussie. That was a really nice happening. The topic was 'The Strength of Women' and three women spoke from three different generations: one who had been a boat person from Vietnam, who is now a very successful dentist in Kyogle; a high school student; and also someone who was representative of the war period. They talked about the strength of women, women in the community and women giving service to their community and families. It was a really nice luncheon to be at.

Last weekend was the Primex event. It is a national event, which is held in Casino. It is a three-day exhibition, held annually in June. It always follows the Queen's Birthday long weekend. It is one of the prime events. There are 12 exhibitions in one. It covers a motor show, trucks and machinery and the Pacific beef trade. It followed the successful Beef Week in Casino, which was one of the most successful to date in nearly 30 years of having Beef Week.

Also, the senior reporter of our local paper, The Northern Star, confessed to being a former city slicker and a convert to country areas. It was his first Primex event and he is sold on it. He said:

The Northern Rivers is fast becoming a significant food bowl for the nation, producing such diverse crops as macadamias, soy beans, coffee and blueberries.

He talked about the importance of our primary industries. Director Bruce Wright, of the Wright family, who, amongst other things, hosted and organised this premier event, said:

… our primary industries are once again expanding into new areas to support the region's next stage of economic growth.

On Saturday night I attended the Surf Life Saving Far North Coast Branch Inc. Awards of Excellence. That particular branch covers 10 branches and those branches also cover some of the areas in the area of my colleague the member for Richmond. So some of those people were present as well. It was a lovely evening in Ballina where there are a whole lot of life members. Some people have also got life membership. Some of the younger ones, including Alyce Bennett and Hugh Doherty who compete in ironman events and are stars themselves are also locals and they were there to talk and help. It was run and
MC-ed by two of the young lifesavers and Wilson Cregan, who is the president. He keeps trying to retire, but they will not let him go because he does such a good job. He is still there. It was a successful night.

I give credit to Debbie Pawsey, Director of Administration, for all the wonderful work she does. I would also like to pay tribute to John Adams, who was in the Queen's Birthday honours list, getting an Order of Australia Medal. He joins his wife, Shirley, who received her OAM in 1989. They are a formidable, wonderful couple who live in Grafton, in the Clarence Valley. They have done amazing things in the community—a lifetime of service. I wrote to John and, among other things, I said:

I am thrilled that your marvellous volunteer work at the Alumny Creek Public School Museum and on other significant community projects has been nationally recognised.

John and his wife, Shirley, are a partnership in community service.

Just ending the regional round-up, I will turn my mind to an international happening, well worthy of mention and support of all members in this chamber. Mr Speaker, you might have seen that women in Saudi Arabia are saying that they want to get their drivers licence. They took to the streets. I was reading in the paper, and it said it was 1990 when they first demonstrated. I thought, 'Goodness, that long ago!' but I remembered it well. It seemed like only yesterday. They took to the streets again the other day, and I say, 'Well done, and we stand with you.'

Question agreed to.

House adjourned at 22:29

NOTICES

The following notice(s) were given:

Mr ADAMS: to move:
That this House notes that 2011 is the International Year of the Forests (Year) and therefore asks Members to:
(1) recognize that forest and sustainable forest management can contribute significantly to sustainable development, poverty eradication and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;
(2) support concerted efforts to focus on raising awareness at all levels to strengthen the sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations;
(3) call upon State Governments, relevant regional and international organisations, and major groups to support activities related to the Year, inter alia, through voluntary contributions, and to link their relevant activities to the Year.

Mr BANDT: to present a Bill for an Act to amend provisions in the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1998 relating to injuries sustained by firefighters, and for related purposes.

Mr ABBOTT: to present a Bill for an Act to require a plebiscite before Australia introduces a carbon tax, and for related purposes.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs D' Ath) took the chair at 16:00.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

McMillan Electorate: Australian Fire Services Medal

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (16:00): As a former volunteer firefighter with a 12-year badge, I know the importance of the Australian Fire Services Medal. A local long-serving member of the Korumburra fire brigade was recognised on the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Billy, as he is known, was presented with the Australian Fire Services Medal. The medal recognises distinguished service by members of Australian fire services, especially volunteers. The AFSM, as it is known, award citation for Bill Rodda read:

Mr Rodda has given exemplary service to the Country Fire Authority … after joining the Korumburra Fire Brigade in 1974. His outstanding dedication and commitment are exemplified by his contribution to the safety and welfare of the community, by his leadership and support of the volunteer culture in general through his involvement as the leader of the Korumburra Brigade over a considerable period of time, and by his active representation of volunteers at the state level as a member of the governing body of the (then) Victorian Urban Fire Brigades Association, now known as the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria.

Mr Bill Rodda has served the fire brigade in Korumburra for 37 years. Mr Rodda is a Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria district 9 president, and captain of his local brigade for 25 years. When told of his award, he commented, 'I am very honoured and shocked. I did not know that I would be considered good enough. For someone like myself, when you retire the CFA is great because there is lots to learn still, which keeps the grey matter kicking over. Socially it is great; I have met heaps of fantastic people through the CFA.'

At a recent joint presentation dinner on 7 May, operations manager Mark Jones presented 755 years worth of service awards to volunteers. He recognised the members and the employers who supported those volunteers as well as the members who are self-employed and the partners of those volunteers—and Maureen Rodda is one of those amazing women who support the Bill Roddas of this world. Bill was as surprised as several other members present that night when he presented two life memberships to two very surprised members of his local brigade: one to Don Allan, district group officer with the Leongatha Korumburra group, and one to Don Landry from Leongatha South. As I noticed Don Allan DGO with the Leongatha Korumburra group, I remembered the night of the Ash Wednesday bushfires. When we were thrown into the heat of the battle I called one of my very important leaders 'DOG' rather than 'DGO'. He has never forgiven me.

Canberra Electorate: Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:03): One of the most enjoyable elements of my job is being asked to take part in the many ceremonies and openings in my electorate, and I especially enjoy those where small children are involved. It is always a privilege and an honour to attend these events and I end up learning so much about my community and the excellent work being done by so many Canberrans. One such event I had the privilege to attend was the recent official opening by the ACT Minister for Community Services, Joy...
Burch, of upgrades to the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre in Mawson. The upgrades were funded from a generous $180,000 grant by the ACT government which provided much-needed office and reception space for the expanding centre.

The centre provides long day care for up to 46 children under the age of six. As the name suggests, it also has a focus on bilingual education in Mandarin, helping to develop a proficiency in and appreciation for the Chinese language and culture from an early age. To my knowledge, this centre is unique in Canberra if not Australia for offering Mandarin language education at such a young age. It was also interesting to note that many of the staff there are native Mandarin speakers and had been teaching at the school for over a decade. This work at the centre dovetails with the language programs at Mawson Primary School, which is co-located with the childcare centre. The centre has been running for over 25 years, thanks to the fine work of the Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia. It was obvious from the conversations I had with the parents and staff that, apart from the great teaching of Mandarin, it was also a great childcare centre. Every one of the parents I spoke to at the opening mentioned the dedication of staff to their work and the sense of community that has been generated as a result.

I believe that there are now plans well underway to expand the model of this centre to another location in Canberra. In fact, I am told that just this morning the President of the Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia is in conversation with University of Canberra to locate the childcare centre there. I would like to congratulate Ian McLean and Dr Mandy Scott from the Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia and the rest of their team for the promotion of the Mandarin language. I would also like to thank the school staff, especially director Judy Kuzma, Laura Cai and Yongmei Uksi, for organising a wonderful singing concert of the children on the day of the launch. It was really lovely. Finally, I would like to thank Sam Wong for his continued advocacy of and dedication to multiculturalism and the local Canberra Chinese community.

**Cowan Electorate: Crime**

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (16:05): I would like to make some remarks today about my concerns about crime within the suburbs of Perth, within my electorate of Cowan. There have been some disturbing reports lately on the number of clandestine drug laboratories that have been established around Perth. Whilst I am grateful that not a huge number have been discovered or detected within Cowan, there is a great concern that these drug labs are becoming more and more prevalent. Back in 2008 there were just 24 discovered within Perth. In 2009 there were 125 and in 2010 there were 133. Sadly, in 2011, there are 87 so far. This is very disturbing.

I have always had a great interest in crime prevention within Cowan. I have always promoted to people in my constituency, whether they are primary school children or adults, the feeling that they have the power to be involved in the process of making our community a better place, particularly when we see more and more of these clandestine drug laboratories being discovered. I believe that a lot of that is because of the greater awareness amongst the people of Perth that this insidious trade, this insidious criminal activity, is taking place. People are more aware of it. I encourage people to continue to report it because it is not just the responsibility of the police; it is about every person in our community saying, 'I've had enough. I don't want that sort of stuff. We don't want people selling drugs. We don't want
people making drugs in our area. We want those people in jail. We want them dealt with properly by the courts.' It is only through maximum community involvement that we are going to see these numbers reduced, more people brought to account for their crimes and the number of drug laboratories reduced—not because they are not being detected because they no longer exist. I certainly encourage everyone to no longer tolerate any suspicion of these sorts of crimes, with maximum reporting of crime within the community. I take my hat off to all those people who are prepared not only to report but to go the distance to do what needs to be done, to go to court and give evidence against these criminals. That is the way to say that we will tolerate it no longer and fight to the end for a drug-free Australia.

Parramatta Electorate: Climate Change

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (16:08): If you are under the age of 35, every year of your life will have been hotter than the 20th century average and every decade will have been hotter than the previous one. The climate is changing. The world is warming, leading to more extreme events such as record heatwaves, intense fires and drought, heavy storms and deadly floods. Higher land and sea surface temperatures do and will contribute to more intense rainfall and severe cyclones, but a hotter climate will also dry the soil more quickly, change rainfall patterns and create new deserts.

Global warming is caused by pollution, creating a warm-up blanket of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere around our planet. This blanket holds in more heat and to limit the damage we must act. Thirty-five countries have already acted by introducing or are currently introducing carbon trading schemes or taxes. I know some people in my community do not believe we should act. Their arguments against action are constantly changing. A few years ago the principal argument was that the world was not warming at all. It was hard then to argue that. The argument moved on to, 'It's a natural occurrence' and now the argument is, 'There's nothing we can do about it, Australia's too small,' or, 'The cost will be too high.' My concern overwhelmingly is that it will cost our children dearly if we do not act and will cost our economy through the effects of changing climate itself or the risk that a fearful Australia will not develop new technology and will be left behind and punished for it.

There is an argument that we should not lead the way. However, when it comes to pollution, we do lead the way. Australia is the world's second highest emitter per head of population, higher than the USA and China, and beaten only by the United Arab Emirates. By volume we are in the top 20 emitters in the world, coming in as the 15th worst polluting nation out of 195 countries. When it comes to the problem we are leading the world, but we are not leading the world in answers and that is where our attention should be. We should be leading the way in developing technologies in the wind, solar and wave energy and ways to do things with fewer emissions. Our economy is built on the old and we must now transition to the new. The most effective way to do that is to put a price on pollution, requiring the big polluters to pay and compensating low- and middle-income households for any impact on household budgets, but the main purpose of an emissions trading scheme is to drive innovation, to put business throughout the economy to work to transition from old economies to new answers.

Countries such as Germany and China are already reaping the rewards of being early starters in the new energy industries. We need to be clever and take industry with us through the transition, to ensure that our scientists, researchers, manufacturers and innovative
businesses find a place for Australia in the world of clean technology. As the world tackles climate change, we need to make sure we are leading the way in answers or we risk being well and truly left behind.

**Bonner Electorate: Carbon Pricing**

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (16:10): I rise today to highlight the risk this government is taking with its proposed carbon tax on jobs in my electorate of Bonner. Recently the Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, the shadow minister for innovation industry and science, Sophie Mirabella, and I visited the Visy recycling centre in Murarrie, Brisbane. Visy is one of Australia's largest recycling companies, collecting more than 1.6 million tonnes of paper and cardboard, more than 450,000 tonnes of glass, over 58,000 tonnes of plastics and more than 26,000 tonnes of metals. The Brisbane Visy plant undertakes very important work and for every tonne of carbon emissions this plant produces it saves 1.6 tonnes. Although this planet does emit carbon, net emissions are reduced because of its work, but Visy gets no recognition for the highly significant contribution it makes to landfill methane avoidance.

Despite its highly significant contribution to reducing carbon emissions, the Brisbane Visy plant will become one of the many victims of this government's perverse environmental policy. By taxing this plant, emissions will not decrease, but will severely strain this company financially. In doing so, this tax will no doubt place jobs in my electorate in jeopardy and Visy Brisbane employs around 200 people. Visy is of the view that there is the opportunity to increase paper waste recycling even further beyond the current levels attained. In order to do so, the right carbon incentives need to exist to drive further investment. At the moment, energy and other costs are rising rapidly and even with energy efficiency and reductions in energy footprint, margins in paper remanufacture do not currently justify new investment. Government policy should be to encourage the expansion of recycling operations and not hinder the good work that plants like this do in reducing emissions. There is no doubt this carbon tax is bad policy.

I remind the House that even the government thinks that the carbon tax is a bad policy. As Penny Wong, Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, said, 'A carbon tax does not guarantee emissions reductions.' This carbon tax will not clean the environment but it will harm jobs and it will clean up the wallets of everyday Australians.

**Greenway Electorate: Tamil Community**

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (16:14): I rise today to acknowledge and affirm my respect for the Tamil population living in my electorate of Greenway and to mention a number of very important issues surrounding the Australian Tamil community. The electorate of Greenway is an extremely diverse and vibrant place and one that I am very privileged to represent. A large part of this diversity is the some 3,000 strong Tamil community. I say '3,000' but—as I have been told by Tamil community leaders, and I have no doubt as to this—this number is, in fact, far higher in reality. The Tamil population in Greenway is one of the largest in the country and one that is a great contributor to the multicultural fabric of our wider community. In recent times, the Tamil people have come into the consciousness of the Western world due to the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka. This conflict has been documented in great depth and is now beginning to receive the real acknowledgement it deserves around the world.
People in this place were afforded the opportunity last week to visit the Sound of Silence photo exhibition, which I was privileged to host, thanks to the Australian Tamil Congress. This exhibit displayed a collection of photographs taken by Melbourne documentary photographer Shelly Morris during her visit to the northern parts of Sri Lanka in late 2010. This powerful and shocking exhibit allowed a rare insight into the human face of the civil war in Sri Lanka, and I thank members from all sides for taking the time out of their busy schedules in this place to visit this exhibit, including the Special Minister of State.

Recently, the UK’s Channel 4 News continued this awareness raising regarding the Sri Lankan civil war when it screened extended footage of executions of Tamils by the Sri Lankan military and other crimes against humanity. This footage was shown during the most recent United Nations Human Rights Council session with the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, Christof Heyns, announcing that the evidence in the footage amounted to ‘definitive war crimes’. In light of this we must look to move Tamil relations—and justice for Tamils—forward in a constructive and meaningful way. The federal government has consistently maintained that accountability will be a crucial part of reconciliation and lasting peace in Sri Lanka. While the Sri Lankan government has commenced some initiatives to improve conditions in parts of the country, there must be an external examination of atrocities committed by military forces on both sides. Australia must now join other Western nations in pushing for an international independent investigation into war crimes in Sri Lanka. With the persecution of people in Sri Lanka causing thousands of people to flock to Australia in search of asylum, peace and stability in the island of Sri Lanka will also benefit Australia.

I would like to commend the work of individuals such as Ms Varuni Balachandar of the Australian Tamil Congress and Dr Mano Mohan and Mr P Sivasubramaniam of the Australian Tamil Electoral Lobby for their hard work and dedication to achieving and ensuring a peaceful outcome for all Sri Lankan people. I particularly acknowledge their ongoing volunteer work within my community of Greenway.

Hasluck Electorate: Zig Zag Scenic Drive

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (16:17): I rise today to talk about the Zig Zag scenic drive in the Shire of Kalamunda. Situated in the Gooseberry Hill National Park, the Zig Zag offers great views of the Perth metropolitan area and is a popular tourist drive. Tens of thousands of people use this road every year. The area of the Zig Zag is historic and scenic. It attracts many families who live alongside it and helps to preserve the rich history that the area has to offer.

There are also organised motor enthusiast and racing events held along the Zig Zag annually. The tranquillity and beauty of the Zig Zag is unfortunately spoilt by extreme cases of antisocial behaviour. I have received over 100 emails, calls and letters from residents who are fed up with hooning along this major tourist drive. Hoons are the not the only issue. There are broken glass, syringes, empty cans and bottles and other rubbish found along the road and throughout the bushland and car parks.

Earlier this month, I organised a meeting of more than 40 local residents with myself, the WA state member for Kalamunda and the WA Minister for Planning, Culture, the Arts and Environment, the Hon. John Day, to talk through possible solutions to the problem. It is a critical one. Recently, a young man wrapped his car around a tree and nearly died while drag-racing along the Zig Zag. Concerned residents are fed up with the lack of action on the issue and came together to demand action from their local representatives. I will take up that fight
for them. They and their children deserve to be safe in their own homes and when they drive along the Zig Zag track. John Day and I are committed to working with the people of Kalamunda and local stakeholders to find a solution to this problem. I find it hard to believe that in 2011 we are unable to preserve a beautiful tourist attraction whilst limiting drug taking, hooning and antisocial behaviour taking place in the evening. The same issue was picked up by the local newspaper and featured on their front page.

I will continue to fight alongside the residents of the area to ensure that the Zig Zag becomes a safer area and road for tourists and residents. It is a beautiful track and it is based on the historic railway track that came down the Darling Scarp, hence the zig-zag factor. What I suppose disappoints me is that a scenic area of our state and a very rich area in terms of its views and fauna and flora is not respected by those who choose to demonstrate antisocial behaviour, which is not only a reflection on themselves but also a disappointment to those who value the area in which they live. I will continue to work with them to achieve a suitable solution that is beneficial for all.

**Corio Electorate: Charities**

Mr MARLES (Corio—Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs) (16:20): Each year, as winter arrives, we are reminded that many people find life a daily struggle to make ends meet. Appeals like last week's CEO Sleepout help focus the national spotlight on the homeless and the vulnerable. These appeals also demonstrate the preparedness of the community to help out in times of need. We do not like to see people going hungry or unable to provide their children the comforts that others enjoy.

In Geelong, a grassroots campaign—the Feed Geelong campaign—run by our local newspaper, the *Geelong Advertiser*, and food charity FairShare has focused our local attention on this issue. In particular, it highlights the tremendous amount of good food that goes to waste. There are some fantastic agencies that help distribute this surplus food to local charities, which in turn provide meals and food parcels to people in need. But it all costs money, especially when there are fridges, freezers and food transport vehicles needed for the safe storage of fresh food. In a few short weeks, the Feed Geelong campaign has raised close to $12,000 from donations. A charity auction this Thursday night supported by a Yarra Street business, the Groove Train, will no doubt see the tally climb further. I am told most donations have been from individuals, not corporations or businesses, which shows the incredible willingness of people in our community to look after one another.

In the context of the Feed Geelong campaign, I am very proud to highlight the efforts of the Gillard government in addressing the needs of some of Geelong's most vulnerable, including the provision of emergency food relief. The new financial year's round of funding, to commence from 1 July, of the Emergency Relief and Commonwealth Financial Counselling Services will see nearly $1.9 million over three years provided to four of our local organisations: the Salvation Army, Uniting Care, Barwon Health and Diversitat. It is a significant amount of money because we recognise that many people right now are doing it tough. UnitingCare have been allocated nearly $850,000 for three years. They say that 2011 has been a particularly tough year with more people finding it hard to pay rent, gas and electricity bills and that many more families who are working but are on a limited income are having trouble making ends meet. Last financial year, with support provided by our government, UnitingCare was able to help 12,500 people with food, clothing, budgeting
advice and small loans. That is 6,500 local families, 1,000 of which have never accessed UnitingCare emergency relief before.

The Salvos will receive nearly $243,000 a year to provide food and emergency relief to people in Geelong. Again, the need is great. Last year the Salvos distributed more than 7,000 food and emergency relief vouchers in addition to nearly 8,000 parcels of non-perishable food and a constant and ever-changing supply of fresh food which is available for free from their Bellarine Street premises.

Importantly, both the Salvos and UnitingCare also focus on helping families improve their financial management in the long term. Their work along with the Feed Geelong campaign are wonderful examples of community spirit in action. I also congratulate the Geelong Advertiser for their initiative and thank all those who have supported this campaign.

Swan Electorate: Junior Football

Mr IRONS (Swan) (16:23): I rise to talk about junior football in my electorate. I see the honourable member for Corio in the chamber and, knowing his passion for the Geelong Football Club and that they are undefeated at the moment, I am sure we will hear more about the club later in the year from the member for Corio. Last Saturday I attended the Belmont Bombers Junior Football Club Auskick Gala Day, which was an inaugural event held at Peet Park in Kewdale in my electorate. The Belmont Junior Football Club caters for boys and girls aged between 15 and 17, and it has a long history in the local area as a club steeped in tradition. From the success of the gala day it looks as though the event will become another tradition for the football club.

The event has been held at the Gosnells Junior Football Club for many years, but the district decided to split the event between Gosnells and Belmont this year. This was done to help with numbers and also to assist in reducing travel time for many of the club's players and parents. Other clubs that attended were Redcliffe, Lynwood/Ferndale, Manning Rippers, Victoria Park and Queens Park. Before the games started the clubs had a parade where the boys and girls marched past the parents and volunteers and sang their respective club songs.

There was a prize awarded to the best presented club, which I had the honour of selecting, and the winner was the Queens Park Bulldogs. The reason they were chosen was not because they had the largest number of kids—that was Belmont—but because they sang their club song the loudest and longest and with great passion all the way around the parade. The Redcliffe Football Club, which have traditional colours of gold and blue, came a very close second, with three of their club girls wearing bright pink football guernseys. Redcliffe have started a group for young girls to play Auskick, called the Eaglettes, in a bright pink strip. I know the member for Curtin supports this initiative, because Ms Bishop launched the Eaglettes in her office earlier this year.

At the start of the day the senior coach from the Perth Football Club, Damien McMahon, and about 15 of the senior players attended the day and encouraged the Auskick players and parents. The Perth Football Club players also signed autographs and kicked footballs around with the young players. Over 400 players with their supportive parents and families attended on the day. The rain, unfortunately, did not hold off and the morning was peppered with showers and plenty of umbrella raising and lowering. On the day, 64 games of two 10-minute
halves were played and the enthusiasm and joy of participating on the players' faces was testament to the success of the day.

The event coordinator and also Belmont Junior Football Club President, Mark Romeo, did a fantastic job along with his committee, the junior Auskick coordinator and the many volunteers who worked tirelessly in preparation for and on the day. The day was also attended by the chairman of the junior council, Neil Darby, as well as Scott Faulkner, the district manager, and Anthony Balcombe, the Perth Football Club Development Officer.

It was an event that had great community spirit and saw teams from various suburbs within the electorate of Swan attend and come together. Once again I congratulate the Belmont Bombers for a great community day and event.

**Makin Electorate: Tyndale Christian School**

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:26): On Saturday, 26 March I attended the official opening of the BER project at Tyndale Christian School at Salisbury East. Also in attendance were my parliamentary colleague Minister Mark Butler, state member for Wright Jennifer Rankine, and South Australian Legislative Council member Jing Lee. Other guests included principals of nearby Christian schools, the project builders, Christian and independent school representatives and the Tyndale Christian School community of students, family members, board members and staff.

The Tyndale school community wanted to ensure the official opening of their BER project reflected the significance of the unique project that Tyndale had committed to. It was unique because Tyndale had used their $3.2 million of federal funding to build a visionary special needs education centre. The 1,000 square metre building will provide high-quality, accessible support for up to 200 students who have a diagnosed learning need or disability. The support includes the provision of six special education teaching staff, seven support staff, two main centres for students with learning needs or disabilities, a reception to year 1 early intervention unit, a high disability unit which includes special support programs including speech therapy, psychology and occupational therapy, sensory rooms and a new arrivals support area. In addition the centre houses the school's new healthcare facility, which provides a holistic approach to the health care of students at Tyndale.

I was impressed with the enthusiasm and attitude of the staff who will be working with the children, from the school teachers to the speech pathologist, registered nurse and psychologist. The school has an outstanding track record of acknowledging the individual needs and unique ability of every child and has already in place a range of vocational education pathways including hospitality, child care and construction.

The new special education centre takes the school's commitment to providing every child with a positive educational outcome to another level, because children with a disability also have extraordinary ability. Through early intervention and appropriate support, disabilities can be overcome as can barriers which prevent children from focusing on their abilities. It is an investment in our children where the returns justify every dollar spent. For those children and their families, the new facilities at Tyndale bring hope and peace of mind. Parents of a child with a disability also hope for the best for their children. Interest about the new special education centre at Tyndale has already come from right across Adelaide and I have no doubt that a long waiting list will quickly develop.
On the day I spoke with Garry Le Duff, Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia. Garry asked me to convey to the government the gratitude of all the independent schools, which he represents, for the BER funding provided. He also expressed the very clear view that all of the independent schools he represented had ensured that each of their projects had resulted in value for money and that public funds had not been wasted. Subsequently, on 18 March I accompanied Minister Garrett on a visit to the Tyndale school's special needs education centre. Whilst we can always do more for these schools, I know that the school was very appreciative of the additional $200 million allocated in this year's budget. I commend Principal Mike Potter and the Tyndale school community for their commitment to children with special needs.

BILLS

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2011-2012

Consideration in Detail

Climate Change and Energy Efficiency Portfolio

Proposed expenditure, $447,140,000

Mr COMBET (Charlton—Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (16:30): The government is committed to introducing a price on carbon, and the 2011-12 budget makes some changes to existing climate change programs to better align with that objective. Introducing a price on carbon is a key reform for the government. The budget makes a number of changes for the Climate Change and Energy Efficiency portfolio to better align with the government's objectives. One of the changes within the budget is in relation to the National Solar Schools Program, which has assisted more than 2,600 schools. The program will close earlier than had initially been planned for. It will close in June 2013, generating a number of savings, including creating funding opportunities for energy efficiency, greenhouse and energy reporting, and Solar Cities programs.

Overall, departmental operating funding, of the appropriation funding, will total $435.1 million in 2011-12. That comprises operating funding of $142.3 million, down from $218 million in 2010-11; departmental capital funding of $11.3 million, which is down from $50.4 million in 2010-11; and administered funding of $289.5 million, down from $683.7 million in 2010-11. The major components of the administered funding are energy efficiency programs including the Home Insulation Program, the solar hot water initiative, Low Carbon Communities and a number of other, minor measures. The Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator will receive appropriation funding totalling $29.6 million in 2012-12. The department's operating funding decreases significantly from 2010-11 to 2011-12 and beyond, which reflects lapsing programs and one-off funding for what was then the Australian climate change regulatory authority that had been anticipated under the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. The department's funding does not reflect any funding for establishing a carbon price regulator at this point in time.

Major new measures for the portfolio announced in the budget include the savings I have already indicated from the National Solar Schools Program closure as well as the renewable energy target and implementation of legislative amendments for the Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator, the energy efficiency functions that I have alluded to, greenhouse and
energy reporting over four years, the Solar Cities program and savings for the Green Loans and Green Start programs, which were previously reported in additional estimates.

All of these changes ensure that the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency has the resources that are necessary for the work that is ahead of it in its departmental functions: the formulation of an important reform in the form of a carbon price mechanism, the important work of the Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator and the necessary departmental capacity in systems to administer a number of important programs.

Amongst those important programs, the Home Insulation Program has received a good deal of attention over the last 12 months or so. This program, of course, has been the government's focus for dealing with the issues that arose in the implementation of the program. We implemented a foil insulation safety program with regard to foil insulation installed under the Home Insulation Program. That foil insulation safety program is now largely discharged. There is a more general program for non-foil insulation, and the government committed to inspecting a minimum of 150,000 households insulated with non-foil insulation. That inspection program is now also approaching a conclusion. The government sought a range of advice and analysis from organisations, including the CSIRO and a risk assessment organisation—Booz and Company—to advise on the announcement that the government made to draw the wind-up of the Home Insulation Program to a conclusion. We are confident that that will be concluded in the not-too-distant future. *(Time expired)*

**Mr HUNT** (Flinders) (16:35): I ask the minister: on what date did any minister or departmental official first engage a market research firm or advertising agency on a commercial basis for any preparatory work in relation to the proposed carbon tax advertising campaign? On an associated matter, I refer to an announcement last Thursday that the government will spend $12 million on carbon tax advertising. Is this in addition to the $13.7 million allocated for the Climate Change Foundation Campaign in the 2011-12 budget, including a carryover from 2010-11? If so, what will the $13.7 million Climate Change Foundation Campaign funding be used for? Will any foundation campaign money be available towards carbon tax advertising in a supportive manner by non-government organisations?

**Mr COMBET** (Charlton—Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (16:36): Firstly, of course, it is a responsibility of the department to engage contractors. I do not have the precise dates of engagement at this point in time, but it is a function of the department to engage contractors for that purpose. As I understand it, that process is still ongoing. When those contracts are finalised, they will be recorded on the AusTender site. In relation to the funding that has been announced, last week the government indicated that $12 million has been committed for a national advertising campaign. That is a new commitment. The shadow minister is referring to an amount of $13.7 million that the government had previously announced in relation to a climate change engagement campaign. That is a separate amount of funding that appeared in the budget for 2011-12. It is divided over both financial years. That $13.7 million appears as $5.5 million in the current financial year and $8.2 million in the financial year 2011-12. That $13.7 million was derived originally from what was described as the climate change foundation campaign in the previous term of parliament. There was an amount approximating, I think, $29 million allocated to that campaign. Approximately $15.3 million was returned to the budget, and the remaining $13.7 million was provided for the
engagement campaign. So the $12 million announced last week for advertising is an additional commitment that the government has made.

These are measures that are important for ensuring that members of the community have access to the appropriate information at an appropriate time in relation to the measures that the government is taking in the area of climate change and energy efficiency. The engagement campaign funding is not advertising funding in the sense that it is funding television advertising, but it is providing an opportunity for working with organisations, including non-government organisations, to improve understanding of climate change issues and energy efficiency issues. The national advertising campaign for which $12 million has been committed will be to assist community understanding at an appropriate point in time. A final decision about the advertising campaign is yet to be taken and is contingent on further discussions being held and concluded, but the campaign would be intended to provide information to the community about the carbon pricing measures that the government is proposing to implement.

Of course, there has been a lot of community debate about the issue of carbon pricing, a lot of it led by the opposition—of course, extremely misleading and misrepresented of the positions. I think the community is entitled to be informed about the important measures associated with a carbon price mechanism and in particular that, as the government has committed, at least half of the revenue generated by the carbon price mechanism would be dedicated towards assisting households to adjust to any price impacts associated with the introduction of a carbon price into the economy. Of course, other measures are also important, and the government has further committed that the carbon price revenue would also be disposed towards supporting jobs and competitiveness of the most affected industries and, furthermore, supporting other climate change programs and measures to support the investment in clean energy that we need to be able to reduce our emissions and substantially improve the contribution of cleaner energy sources to our energy supply.

So those generally are the commitments that the government has made. We are continuing to work on the detailed carbon price package. We do so through the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee. Contingent upon the outcome of those discussions, the detail of the carbon price mechanism will be announced, and I think it will be very important for the community generally to have access to reliable factual information about the carbon price itself and how it may impact upon people.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (16:41): Minister, I am particularly interested in the Climate Commission. I have read the report that has been brought down and met with some of those that were responsible for the report, and I also attended the event in the theatrette. I am particularly interested in what the ongoing role of the Climate Commission is; how the Climate Commission will be able to provide information to communities throughout Australia; how the Climate Commission will work on an ongoing basis; and the benefits that it will provide for communities throughout Australia. I am sure that other members in the House are as interested as I am.

Mr Chester interjecting—

Ms HALL: We have the chair of the climate change, environment and heritage committee here with us, and he is a person that is, I know, very interested in this and has also met with members of the body that wrote the report. So, Minister, if you could tell the House how the
Climate Commission works, what its role is and its benefits to Australians, I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr COMBET (Charlton—Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (16:43): Thank you to my close friend and colleague the member for Shortland. I see she is supported by the member for Gippsland in the thrust of that question. I think he was jumping up to ask it himself—almost! Of course, the government has taken a number of initiatives to ensure that the best quality information and research is made available for the consideration not just of the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee members on science and other matters but for members of the community generally. As part of the engagement strategy that generally obtains in the portfolio, the establishment of the Climate Commission is a very important part of engagement with the community.

Just quickly, though, I will point to some of the other measures before I go directly to the issue of the Climate Commission. The government, of course, commissioned Professor Ross Garnaut to update his 2008 *Climate change review* and in particular to focus on significant changes or improvements in expert knowledge that have implications for the key findings from his 2008 review. Professor Garnaut has concluded that update; he published eight papers and they have been consolidated into a recent book that has been published. So there is very comprehensive information about the science, the economics and the state of international negotiations contained in Professor Garnaut's work. The Productivity Commission was also asked to undertake analysis of the carbon pollution reduction policies of key countries around the world including China, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States. It found that all countries examined had adopted major policies. In fact, over a thousand policies were identified in the area of climate change intended to help reduce pollution levels. A key finding from the Productivity Commission was that a market mechanism in the form, for example, of an emissions trading scheme is unquestionably the cheapest and most efficient way of reducing pollution across an economy. Those are just two important measures that the government initiated in relation to climate change and to inform the carbon price debate and deliberations over policy.

Another important one though, as the member for Shortland has pointed to, is the establishment of the Climate Commission. It is chaired by Professor Tim Flannery, a former Australian of the Year. There are a number of other eminently qualified members of the commission, including Professor Will Steffen of the ANU, who is a world renowned climate scientist and who is also advising the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee. Recently the Climate Commission conducted a seminar within Parliament House. It was one of a series that it has conducted to date around the country. It commenced with a public forum in Geelong in Victoria and it has visited a number of other important regional areas around the country, particularly with a focus on communities in areas where there is a lot of employment in emissions-intensive and trade-exposed industries. They have been very successful fora at explaining the science and, to some degree, the economics of climate change.

In addition, the Climate Commission has published an important report updating the science which is titled *The critical decade: climate science, risks and responses*. There were four key findings from the Climate Commission's report. One of them was that there is no doubt that the climate is changing and that the evidence of this is overwhelming and entirely clear. The atmosphere is warming, the ocean is warming, ice is being lost from glaciers and
icecaps, sea levels are rising and global surface temperatures are rising. The member for Tangney will no doubt appreciate this. He is unusually quiet while I am mentioning these matters. He is usually slightly more vociferous.

Dr Jensen interjecting—

Mr COMBET: The Climate Commission’s document makes these changes very clear and states what the science is. Secondly, the report adverts to the fact that we are already seeing social, economic and environmental impacts from changes in the climate. Thirdly, the report traverses the area of the contribution of human activity and specifically the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation as contributing to climate change. Fourthly, it makes the point that this is the critical decision. Decisions that we make from now to 2020 will determine the severity of climate change that future generations have to deal with.

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (16:48): I refer the minister to the Minister for Finance and Deregulation’s refusal to guarantee budget neutrality of the carbon tax in Senate estimates on 30 May 2011. Will the minister guarantee that the carbon tax will be budget neutral in each or even just any one of its first three years?

Mr COMBET (Charlton—Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (16:48): When we publish the details of the carbon price mechanism and the entirety of the package, the government will make available the financials in relation to the carbon price mechanism. We are working from a set of principles that have been made public and that have been agreed in the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee. That included budget neutrality, or revenue neutrality, for the scheme for a number of the measures that were anticipated within it.

We have done an extraordinary amount of work over the last seven or eight months within the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee to devise a range of the measures that would operate for a carbon price. We published in February of this year the proposed framework for the carbon price mechanism. It is an emissions trading scheme that commences with a fixed price period of between three to five years.

There is in contemplation, within the principles that have been enunciated by the multiparty committee, the necessity for a number of things to occur. One of them is to ensure that households are assisted to meet the anticipated price impacts of a carbon price being introduced into the economy. The government from its standpoint has made clear, as I indicated in an earlier answer, that at least half of the revenue from the carbon price mechanism would be used to assist pensioners and low- and middle-income households with what we anticipate to be modest cost impacts.

In addition to that, a number of other measures generally—that I also adverted to in an earlier answer—are being contemplated within the broad description of support for jobs and competitiveness within the trade-exposed and emissions-intensive parts of the economy. This will be very important. The government for its part is contemplating a significant level of assistance for those industries that are in the emissions-intensive trade-exposed part of the economy. This will be important from the standpoint of supporting Australian jobs and it will be an important disposition of part of the revenue, as it were, of a carbon price mechanism. Further to that there will be measures, as we have generally described, to support further efforts to drive towards clean energy and other climate change programs.
All of these categories are the subject of detailed discussion within the multiparty committee context. It is not appropriate for me to go into them in greater detail at this point in time nor in relation to the financials of the carbon price package. We are yet to settle on key elements of it, including until there is a final agreement on what the starting carbon price will be. These are all matters that we are discussing within the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee at the moment. When we do settle on a package we will make available not just the detail of each of the measures but also the financial implications of the measures that are taken. That is the government's commitment. We will continue to do the work. We are aiming to finalise this in the not too distant future and make the material available for consideration by the community, which is again why it is important that the government does communicate the detail of these matters to the members of the community in the way that we have foreshadowed.

This is, at the end of the day, I think, the most significant environmental and economic reform that a government will have undertaken. It is extremely important for the country's future. It is an important investment in the country's future as well. It will operate by obliging the largest emitters of carbon pollution in our economy—they number less than a thousand entities—to pay a carbon price for each tonne of pollution that they generate. That is an important distinction from the way that it is being misrepresented by the opposition. They are the largest emitters of carbon pollution in our economy that would have a liability under the carbon price mechanism and it is the revenue that is generated by the payment of that obligation that would support the general categories that I have described: the household assistance, the support for jobs and competitiveness, and the drive towards a clean energy economy.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:53): Recently I met with members of the Climate Commission, as did other members of the committee which I chair, and that includes the member for Shortland. I also attended the presentations by the commission both here in Parliament House and in Adelaide. Furthermore, I attended a Christian coalition on climate change forum, which the member for Isaacs and the member for Flinders also attended, where we heard from a scientist there and other speakers on the issue of climate change.

It is clear to me from the summaries provided by all of those at each of those forums that the evidence supporting the view that climate change is real and that carbon dioxide emissions are contributing to it is very strong. However, it is also clear that there is a campaign underway of some kind to discredit that science. I was very pleased to hear this morning that some of the scientists have come out in support of their fellow scientists on this very issue.

My question to you, Minister, is twofold. Firstly, are you aware—and I appreciate the response you gave earlier to the member for Shortland—of any country or any government that refutes the science of climate change? Secondly, given that it is quite often raised that carbon dioxide emissions are contributing and that what we need is a global response, can you advise as to what the next stage of the post-Copenhagen process will be?

Mr COMBET (Charlton—Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (16:55): Thank you to the member for Makin for those questions on important issues. I had the opportunity, along with my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, of attending the international conference under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change at Cancun in Mexico in December last year. During that
period of time and during the various discussions over the course of the period that the conference ran for, which was the better part of two weeks, I was certainly not aware of a single country that questions the climate science. There were specific elements of the conference and side events to consider these matters. No serious political leadership, I think, internationally questions the science. The advice governments are receiving internationally is that the science is clear that carbon pollution is contributing to climate change and the warming that is being experienced, and that the response that we need to take is to reduce our levels of carbon pollution.

The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Warringah, and perhaps the member for Tangney stand out internationally in this field. They are quite outstanding from that point of view. No-one seriously in political leadership questions the responsibility that governments have to make public policy to address this problem. We had the Prime Minister of New Zealand address the House of Representatives today. New Zealand is a country with an emissions trading scheme in operation. It is currently under review to extend the scope of its operation and, potentially, the carbon price that is in operation in their economy. I have had the opportunity of speaking with the Prime Minister about the operation of the scheme and, of course, the report is that New Zealand is still there, the sun still comes up and the economy is operating well. They have had a number of challenges and tragedies to deal with, as we all know, but emissions trading is operating within the New Zealand economy effectively and is assisting in driving down carbon pollution. I think the New Zealand government looks forward to the opportunity for their scheme ultimately to link with an emissions trading scheme within our own economy.

On the side of the international negotiations, of course it is necessary. This is a diabolically complex environmental and international economic problem. It requires an unprecedented level of international cooperation to effectively address it. Despite some of the criticisms that are made from time to time of the efforts of the international community to tackle that complex problem, there is no doubt that a lot of progress has been made. The Kyoto protocol has been a very important instrument in garnering support internationally for developed countries making emissions reduction commitments. It has provided an important basis for the development of market mechanisms and a host of other measures that are important foundations for a stronger effort internationally to mitigate the effects of climate change and reduce pollution.

The next UNFCCC conference will be in Durban in South Africa in December of this year. The government is hopeful that that will lead to further progress in the international efforts to deal with this complex problem. There has been an endeavour to popularise, by those who do not support action on climate change, the concept that the Copenhagen conference was somehow a failure. In fact the Copenhagen conference led to pledges by many countries to reduce their emissions. Those pledges have been included for the first time in a decision of the UNFCCC at Cancun in Mexico and will be the basis for the further negotiations to take place during the course of the rest of this year and at Durban for how the international community will go about dealing with this issue and identifying the responsibilities that individual countries will take on.

So it is a process that the government is very committed to, an important one from an international standpoint that this government remains committed to. Internationally, I think
that there is goodwill to take this issue further. There is respect internationally for the science and there is certainly an appreciation of the necessity to get on and tackle this problem.

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (17:00): Minister, you have spoken many times and have stated that the science is basically conclusive on this and that the effects of CO\textsubscript{2} on temperature are very well understood. You as an engineer in a previous life would understand that scientifically, if you have got some sort of bar and you put a certain stress on it, you know the point at which that is going to fail. Given that the science is so well understood, assume that the rest of the planet goes on with business as usual under the IPCC scenarios for all global economies apart from Australia and we have a carbon tax/ETS: can you please tell me what we are after? After all, it is not actually reducing CO\textsubscript{2}, it is actually reducing global average temperatures. Can you please tell me what effect our scheme will have on global average temperatures by the year 2100?

Next, assume that all nations actually act on climate change in exactly the same way as Australia does: what is Australia's effect on global average temperatures then by 2100? And in the Australian context, how much will the total cost of this be? What is the anticipated price required per tonne of CO\textsubscript{2} abatement as opposed to CO\textsubscript{2} emitted in order to achieve it, and what will that cost be per household?

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 17:02 to 17:15

Dr JENSEN: The final part of the question I was asking before the suspension is: what will that cost be per household?

Mr COMBET (Charlton—Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (17:15): The first part of the question, as I recall it, relates to the science. I will address that first. I might need some clarification about the final part of it—the cost relating to households.

Dr Jensen: What is the anticipated price per tonne of CO\textsubscript{2} in abatement as opposed to CO\textsubscript{2} emitted in order to achieve it, and what will that cost be per household?

Mr COMBET: I think the best way I can tackle this is to go back to what the scientific evidence is telling us, firstly, and possibly the most convenient way to do that is to refer again to the most recent report that the government has received and that has been published, and that is the report by the Climate Commission titled The critical decade. I made some remarks in brief about the findings of that report in updating and overviewing the scientific evidence. Of course this is an international problem that needs to be tackled internationally but Australia needs to play its part.

In part, the member for Tangney's question is essentially asking what is the point of Australia doing anything. The point of Australia doing something is that we are a contributor to the carbon pollution that the scientists are indicating is contributing to the warming being experienced and the increasing threat that climate change represents. We are the highest per capita emitter of carbon pollution amongst the developed economies, we are one of the top 20 emitters of carbon pollution of all countries internationally, and we share the responsibility, as other countries do, of mitigating the risk of climate change. The reason we need to be mitigating that risk is based on what the scientists are telling us. Again, the Climate Commission's report finds that there is no doubt that the climate is changing and that that evidence is overwhelming and clear. It finds that the atmosphere is warming, the ocean is warming, ice is being lost from glaciers and icecaps and sea levels are rising. It finds that the
biological world is changing in response to the warming. It finds that global surface temperature is rising fast, and that the last decade was the hottest on record.

Furthermore, the Climate Commission findings go on to indicate that we are already seeing the social, economic and environmental impacts of a changing climate and that, with less than one degree of warming globally, the impacts are already being felt in Australia. These are the findings of the Climate Commission, and they have relied on eminent scientists within the Australian scientific community. It also finds that in the last 50 years the number of record hot days in Australia has more than doubled and that this has increased the risk of heatwaves and associated deaths as well as extreme bushfire events. The Climate Commission has found on the evidence—

Dr Jensen: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was not questioning the science; I was asking, accepting the IPCC position, assuming a business as usual case, assuming all the science was correct, how much are we going to reduce global warming—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Sidebottom): Order! It is very unusual to be asking questions in the middle of a response. There is ample opportunity to jump again and re-form your question or ask your question again after the minister or whoever is speaking has finished.

Mr COMBET: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am endeavouring to answer the question. The Climate Commission finds that sea level has risen by 20 centimetres globally since the late 1800s, impacting on many coastal communities. It finds that another 20-centimetre increase by 2050, which it finds is likely at current projections, would more than double the risk of coastal flooding. The Climate Commission finds that the Great Barrier Reef has suffered from nine bleaching events in the past 31 years, and of course that iconic ecosystem and the economy that depends on it face serious risk from climate change.

The Climate Commission goes on to traverse the evidence about human activity, and particularly the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, contributing to what we are experiencing. The Climate Commission finds that there is a very large body of observations, experiments, analyses and physical theory pointing to increasing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, with carbon dioxide being the most important as the primary cause of the observed warming. All governments have to take this into account in responding to this challenge, and Australia needs to play its part along with other nations. (Time expired)

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (17:21): Recently I and other members of the House met with a delegation from Tibet and with a delegation from Bangladesh. Both delegations expressed alarm and concern about the melting of icecaps in the Himalayas, and in particular about the impact that melting is having on their future water supplies and, in turn, their ability to grow their own food—in addition to the fact that their land may well be inundated by seawater if the sea level rises predicted by some of the scientists eventuate. Minister, what representations have you had from countries such as Bangladesh and Tibet in respect of the concerns they have about climate change and sea level rises, and in particular what representations have been made to you for assistance from our government to try to cope with those changes?

Mr COMBET (Charlton—Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (17:21): I thank the member for Makin for that very important question. About six weeks ago my
counterpart from Bangladesh, the Minister for Environment and Forests, who has responsibilities for climate change was in Australia. It was the second occasion I have had the opportunity to speak with him about the issue, as I firstly met him in Mexico in December last year. In fact, we co-chaired discussions about the establishment of an international financing mechanism, a global fund, principally for the purpose of assisting developing countries to implement mitigation measures to cope with the impact of climate change.

There are many people in the population of Bangladesh who live on land that is only marginally above sea level. The risk of sea level rises is immense for the people of Bangladesh. It is one of the reasons that Bangladesh and many other nations affected in a similar manner, such as island states which also have populations living marginally above sea level, have a critical interest in international efforts to mitigate the risk of climate change. They are very mindful of the scientific evidence that I was pointing to in my previous answer and the fact that increasing carbon dioxide emissions, primarily produced through the burning of fossil fuels such as coal and oil, as well as through deforestation activities, are critical issues from their point of view that need to be addressed in an international context.

They are very mindful of the fact that developed countries such as our own have had the opportunity, through industrialisation and through deriving energy sources from the combustion of fossil fuels, to industrialise and develop particular standards of living that the developing nations generally do not share and enjoy. Therefore, they come to the international negotiations with some very firm and understandable views about these matters. They see it as a responsibility upon developed nations, particularly a nation like Australia which has the highest per capita emissions amongst the developed economies and is one of the 20 largest emitters of carbon pollution internationally, to take measures to reduce our levels of pollution and to contribute to international efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change. Therefore, the minister from Bangladesh was very interested in the government's carbon price plans. They see it as an important contribution to international efforts. They understand that nations acting on their own can only have so much influence to mitigate the risk of climate change, but they understand well that nations acting together and in good faith to put in place measures to reduce carbon pollution will be what it takes to mitigate risks for millions of people who live very close to sea level.

I have not had the opportunity of speaking with representatives from Tibet directly about this particular issue, but I well know and understand the concerns that they have, and they have expressed them in the international fora as well. At the end of the day, the important message for the Australian community and, I think, for the political leadership in Australia is that the scientific evidence is there. The government formed the Climate Commission to review the evidence, publish material, update the science, coordinate the scientific community and debate within Australia, and conduct public fora to discuss the foundation or policy reason for taking action on climate change and reducing pollution. That is happening. Political leaders need to take responsibility for this matter—to respect the scientific evidence that is presented and to formulate public policy responses accordingly. The public policy response that I think has to be accepted is to reduce pollution in our economy at the lowest cost way—that is, the lowest cost across the economy, households and businesses—to make sure that we are playing our responsible part internationally, and that we are able to participate in international discussions in an appropriate way and have our efforts recognised.
Mrs MIRABELLA (Indi) (17:27): Minister, given the government has now unceremoniously dumped the cash for clunkers program, was the coalition not correct all along to maintain that this was nothing other than an ill-conceived idea? Why did the cash for clunkers policy not have adequate preparatory work done on it before it was announced as ALP policy during the 2010 election? Seeing that you are now arguing that the carbon tax will be introduced at a price well south of $40 a tonne, why was a scheme that would have cost $430 a tonne ever announced as policy? Surely you now concede that it was a ridiculous policy at that sort of price tag. Is it true that the industry department alerted the government to there being a clear risk that the rollout of the cash for clunkers program would replicate the kinds of problems experienced in the government's disastrously bungled Home Insulation Program?

Mr COMBET (Charlton—Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (17:28): Firstly, I accept none of the contentions made by the member for Indi. I make that clear at the outset. Generally, in policy responses to climate change, when one respects the science and therefore accepts the responsibility to reduce carbon pollution, we have to look at which public policy measure is the most desirable from the standpoint of economic efficiency. Some public policy measures that have the objective of reducing pollution may also have other public policy objectives such as, for example, supporting the development of the solar industry within our economy. However, when you are looking at the principal policy response to climate change and of the need to reduce our carbon pollution we need to go about doing it in the most cost-efficient manner. That is why the government has argued strongly for a market mechanism—whether it be through an emissions trading scheme or a carbon tax—as the way of putting a price signal in our economy to achieve the emissions reductions at the least cost.

The Productivity Commission considered these issues in general in the Australian economy and in the economies of our major trading partners in a recently published report. The Productivity Commission, unsurprisingly I think for those familiar with these issues, found that the least cost way of reducing pollution is through a market mechanism like an emissions trading scheme. That is why the government have been arguing on this basis. Also, over the last 10 months and beyond and in the previous term of parliament as well, we have rationalised a number of the climate change programs and initiatives—for example, one that went back to the Howard government period in the form of subsidies and support for solar panels on domestic rooftops. If the sole purpose of these sorts of programs is to abate carbon pollution, they are not necessarily the least cost means of achieving the outcome. The government, particularly over the last 10 months while I have been in the role as minister, have been looking at these programs, rationalising them where appropriate and focusing on the principal policy response that is necessary.

If the member for Indi is seriously concerned about these matters and the most efficient public policy response is through reducing pollution, I am sure that she would recognise and accept the fact that a market mechanism is the best way of reducing carbon pollution in the economy. The Productivity Commission report that I referred to in fact found that the effective cost of the abatement measures currently in place in our economy within our electricity system—whether they are state feed-in tariffs or other programs of support for various technologies or changes—is in the range of, I think, $44 to $98 per tonne of carbon.
abated. It also found that across the economy, had we done it through a market mechanism, we would have achieved the same levels of carbon pollution abatement for an approximate cost of $9 a tonne. These are material matters and it is extremely important when considering our policy response to climate change that we go down the path that is going to achieve the abatement at the least cost to our economy, and as I have said before that means the least cost to households and the least cost to businesses.

In my role as minister, I certainly have no concern about looking at alternative policy approaches from the standpoint of using the most effective approaches. Contrast that with the nonsense that forms the subsidies-for-polluters policy that the coalition are advancing as a response to climate change. It is going to cost tens of billions of dollars out to 2020 in direct government subsidies for polluters to achieve no net environmental gain. Ultimately, the subsidies-for-polluters program will be funded by taxpayers to the tune of $720 per household on average. No rational economic analysis could ever justify that approach. It is not a credible policy response to this issue, and unless and until the coalition and the member for Indi accept some basic economic principles in relation to this issue—that is, that a market mechanism is the best way of proceeding—they have no credibility in criticising anything. (Time expired)

Mr CHEESEMAN (Corangamite) (17:33): There has been plenty of scientific evidence to show that a one metre rise in the sea level will have a very substantial impact on many parts of the Australian coastline. Many parts of the Bellarine Peninsula within the Geelong community will be substantially impacted. Parliamentary Secretary, what will the impact be on the Australian economy if we do not reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, with sea level rise likely to inundate not only many parts of the Geelong area but also many other parts of the Australian coastline?

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Cabinet Secretary and Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (17:34): I thank the member for Corangamite for his question which relates to the identified impacts of sea level rise across Australia as a result of climate change that we know is certain to occur and is already occurring, and that is why various state governments have already written it into planning schemes. Notably, the Victorian state government have written into the planning schemes for the 12 coastal municipalities a projected sea level rise of 0.8 metre by the end of this century, which will of course affect parts of the electorate of Corangamite and indeed parts of my electorate on the eastern shores of Port Phillip Bay. Some of the material published by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency indicates that with increased sea levels, it is likely that storm surge and inundation events could well threaten some 9,000 homes in the electorate of Isaacs by the end of this century. Similar events are predicted to occur right across Australia in coastal areas, particularly in low-lying areas and up the east coast of Australia that will threaten homes and businesses—all of which are likely to require very serious adaptation measures to be taken.

In addition to the mitigation policy work being undertaken both at the domestic and at the international level, the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency is also working on adaptation measures, funding research into adaptation and assisting both local governments and state governments in planning for the inevitable changes that are going to occur in Australia's coastal areas as a result of climate change that we know is going to occur. One of the reasons that the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency has published a range of material, including first pass coastal mapping exercises, is to increase

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awareness of the threat posed by sea level rise in the coastal areas of Australia. That mapping uses aerial photography and computer assisted calculation to map and show in a direct way the areas that are exposed to the effects of sea level rise. One of the reasons the government last week published a series of facts sheets dealing with the effects in each state of sea level rise, or indeed all of the effects that are predicted now from climate change, is to raise awareness of sea level rise. We know, for example, that sea level has already risen by 20 centimetres globally since the late 1800s. There have already been impacts on coastal communities throughout the world. There is a projected further 20 centimetre increase by 2050, on current predictions, which would more than double the risk of coastal flooding.

As already pointed out by the minister, it is not just Australia that is at risk of sea level rise; it is every coastal community in the world. It is a global problem that we are trying to deal with. As the minister mentioned in his previous answer, we have recently had a visit from the Bangladeshi minister for climate change. Their problem—somewhat different from the those faced by the large number of small island states—is that they face the potential dislocation of some 30 million of their people. Bangladesh is a populous country of 160 million people currently, and 30 million of those are at risk from the sea level rise that is predicted by the turn of the century if we do not quickly act on the mitigation task we face.

Mrs MIRABELLA (Indi) (17:39): Is the Australian Food and Grocery Council's modelling correct when it says that we should expect an increase in food and grocery prices of three and five per cent under the CPRS modelling? Is Citigroup correct when it says a carbon tax will impact on the profitability of supermarket retailers by between two and four per cent? If not, why do you refute these figures? Has anyone from the department, the minister's office or your office met with the Australian Food and Grocery Council to consult on the impact of a carbon tax on food and groceries? Have either you, Minister Carr or Minister Combet commissioned any modelling or seen any modelling about the impact your carbon tax will have on food and groceries? Parliamentary secretary, is it correct that your government signed an agreement late last year, as part of the Cancun process through the UN, which now requires Australia to contribute to a so-called 'green climate fund'? Is it also correct that payments to the fund are sourced from approximately 10 per cent of the carbon tax revenues raised from developed nations? Is it also true that the government has committed to spending $599 million on payments to this fund over the current three-year budget period and that about $470 million has already been allocated? If not, what are the correct figures? If the starting price of the carbon tax was to be $25 a tonne, what would be the total amount that Australia would need to pay into the green climate fund in the first year of the tax?

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Cabinet Secretary and Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency) (17:41): I thank the member for Indi for her multipronged question, the first part of which went to grocery prices. We have just had another example of so much of the misinformation campaign we have had to endure over the last several months from the opposition. It is the case that all that has occurred to date in the many meetings of the Multi-Party Climate Change Committee, following on from the start of those deliberations in October last year, is that agreement has been reached on the broad architecture of the carbon price scheme, the detail of which has now been in the process of negotiation since that announcement by the Prime Minister and the minister for climate change on 24 February this year. It is of course the case that we are yet to announce the carbon price. It is of course the
case that we are yet to announce the precise levels of assistance to go to households, although
the Prime Minister has made it clear that more than half of the revenue from the carbon price
that is going to be raised from polluters is going to go in assistance to low- and middle-
income households.

We have not yet announced either the price or the levels of assistance, let alone the details
of assistance that is going to also be available to businesses, nor have we announced the
details of exactly which industries in what amounts or what level of assistance is going to be
available to the energy-intensive trade-exposed sectors. That is why it is not possible for the
member for Indi or Ms Carnell, on behalf of her trade association, or anybody else to make
the kind of estimate that is included in the question just posed by member for Indi, which
asserted there would be a three to five per cent rise in grocery prices. Of course it is the case
that the government is modelling the impact of the carbon price on food and groceries. The
member for Indi would be aware, having debated in the House the carbon pollution reduction
scheme legislation—and indeed the member for Wentworth is also here and he would be only
too well aware—that there was very detailed modelling of the likely impact on food and
groceries in relation to that scheme.

When the carbon price and its details are announced, which the Prime Minister has
indicated is going to be in the middle of the year, then it is going to be possible to make
detailed calculations and to make estimates with much greater precisions of the likely impact
on food and grocery prices. Until then, it remains simply part of a scare campaign or a
campaign of misinformation, which we have had all too much of from the Leader of the
Opposition through this year. The other part of the question from the member for Indi went to
Australia's contribution to financing arrangements emerging from the United Nations
Framework Convention on Climate Change. I will start with the second part of the member
for Indi's question, which went to what is known in the United Nations Framework
Convention on Climate Change talks as fast-start funding. I can confirm that Australia
committed, in 2009-10, to contribute $599 million to fast-start funding. The figure that the
member for Indi gave in her question was of approximately $470 million having been spent or
otherwise committed. I can say, although I cannot say to the nearest million dollars, that that
is generally correct. I can indicate to the member for Indi that, to give an example of what the
fast-start funding goes to, one part of that funding was committed to and announced by the
minister and me at Cancun in December last year at the United Nations framework
convention talks: a $30 million contribution that Australia is making to carbon projects in
Indonesia—in particular to a project for dewatering of peat in Kalimantan province. It is
something that we are very pleased to join with Indonesia and Norway on in a joint project
that is going to enable Indonesia, through a range of forestry and other related projects, to
contribute to the carbon emission reduction task that the world faces.

The other proposition was to the effect that 10 per cent of the carbon revenue was to be
contributed— (Time expired)

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Proposed expenditure, $1,669,355,000

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and
Transport) (17:47): I will make some brief opening remarks to the Committee. Through the
2011-12 appropriation bills, the government will provide the Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy portfolio with $4.1 billion to deliver its priorities. This includes $2.7 billion directly to the department portfolio to deliver its priorities, including a $2.3 billion contribution to the $3.1 billion equity injection into the NBN Co. in 2011-12, with $300.7 million of the remainder coming from the 2010-11 appropriation act and $438 million from the Building Australia Fund. There will be $990.7 million through the department to the ABC, $228 million through the department to the SBS and $112.6 million to the Australian Communications And Media Authority. The government will provide $372.4 million in new funding and $18.2 billion in equity funding over the period 2011-12 to 2014-15 to the portfolio for a range of measures, the National Broadband Network, of course, being the most significant. There will be $18.2 billion in equity funding provided to the NBN Co. over the budget in forward years, with $3.1 billion being invested in 2011-12. There will be $37.4 million over four years to support the government on the NBN rollout. The $376.5 million will be provided from 2011-12 to 2014-15 for the switchover to digital-only television. Funding will be provided to the department, the Department of Human Services and the ACMA. In 2011-12 $15.2 million will go to continuing funding for the National Indigenous Television network, or NITV. There will be $12.5 million over four years for community broadcasting to increase content production in the areas of ethnic and Indigenous broadcasting and radio for the print-handicapped and to establish a new community radio content development fund, and $2.2 million in 2011-12 to continue the current arrangements for untimed local calls in the extended zones pending the outcome of the review of telecommunications retail price controls. The budget provides $8.3 million to the department and the ACMA to facilitate the auction of spectrum in the 700-megahertz and 2.5-gigahertz bands in 2012-13 and to undertake preparatory work required in the lead-up to the auction, including the valuation, planning licence framework and auction process, and there will be $3.4 billion to the ACMA to ensure greater compliance and strengthen communications with industry.

The Australian government understands that access to affordable high-speed broadband is increasingly essential to the way in which Australians communicate and do business. The NBN will help improve education and health service delivery and connect our cities and regional centres. It also delivers a significant microeconomic reform through the restructure of the telecommunications sector. NBN Co., the company established to build and operate the NBN, has forecast in its corporate plan that $35.9 billion in capital expenditure will be spent on building the NBN. The government will make an equity investment of $7.5 billion towards the NBN. NBN Co.’s corporate plan confirms that taxpayers will get their investment back with interest and that the NBN will provide a rate of return higher than the government bond rate.

The government is also extending its support to assist Australians to make the switch to digital television. The 2011-12 budget provides $376.5 million in funding for ongoing assistance. The household assistance scheme remains the centrepiece of the government’s ongoing assistance to Australians in making the switch to digital TV. There are also a range of digital economy initiatives in the budget. The National Digital Economy Strategy launched on 31 May 2011 announced government programs that will assist Australian households, businesses and non-profit entities to enjoy the economic and social benefits that the NBN can deliver and programs that promote tele-health and online education. These measures are part
of a coordinated approach to help grow Australia's digital economy and increase digital productivity. (Extension of time granted) They represent the next step in the government's commitment to strengthen Australia's digital productivity. The government will closely monitor the implementation of these initiatives and progress against the goals outlined in the National Digital Economy Strategy. Further measures may be identified and implemented over the duration of the strategy. Funding announced in the 2011-12 budget for the department, the ABC, the SBS and the ACMA will encourage a vibrant, sustainable and internationally competitive digital economy here in Australia. I commend the appropriation to the House.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth) (17:52): I ask the minister to turn his mind to the National Digital Economy Strategy, which he just referred to, and in particular to page 21 of that strategy, which confirms what we know from the ABS: that the biggest obstacle to universal internet access in Australia is household income, or rather a lack of it, with 34 per cent of households on incomes of $40,000 a year or less not having any access to the internet. Internet access rises rapidly with household income. Agreeing, as I am sure the minister does and as we all do, about the virtues of universal access to the internet and the benefits it brings, affordability is an absolutely key issue.

In the NBN's corporate plan it estimates that, following the introduction of the NBN, customers on the lowest speed—that is the 12-megabit-per-second speed, which is really no more than and in many cases slower than ADSL2 speeds—would be charged in the order of $55 to $58 a month. There are many ADSL2 plans currently in the market—with 50-gig caps, for example—which are costed or priced at a similar or indeed lower price. Dodo offers a similar plan with a 100-gig limit for only $29.99 a month. The question for the minister to reflect on—and I will provide him with some more information to assist him an answering it—is going to be: given that affordability is a key issue in terms of universal access to the internet, how is the NBN going to make internet access more affordable if it is not going to offer connectivity at a lower cost, and indeed a markedly lower cost, than that which is currently offered in the market at the moment? I ask the minister, as he formulates his answer, to reflect on the fact that in the NBN's corporate plan it forecasts the prices for the 100-meg, 50-meg and 12-meg speeds, beyond which it is difficult to imagine that any residential user would have any conceivable appetite for additional speed, remaining constant over time. Yet we know from the authority of the OECD and from our own experience that between 2005 and 2008 ADSL prices in Australia fell by 45 per cent. That 45 per cent decline in prices was the consequence of technology and competition. The NBN, as I said, has forecast or predicted or stated that these access prices will remain the same in nominal terms through to 2020.

The minister should address this issue. This is a fundamental threshold issue. Nobody denies that fibre to the home will deliver faster speeds and greater capacity of data transmission. That is not an issue. But is it going to deliver more affordable access to the internet? There is nothing in the business case, the corporate plan or anything else that has been said by the NBN which suggests that it would. I would seek the minister's assistance in telling us how he believes the NBN is going to make internet access more affordable to low-income households.

Mr CHEESEMAN (Corangamite) (17:57): I am very grateful to be given the opportunity to address the issues in this particular appropriation. I can recall being elected in 2007 and
getting around my electorate of Corangamite and speaking to many of my communities. Of course, my seat covers 7,000 square kilometres and has many communities that for a very, very substantial period of time have not been able to access decent internet speeds. As a consequence, many kids who are studying year 12 classes cannot email projects from their schools to their homes so as to work on them in the evening. Nor can they, at the end of their evening studies, email them back to school so that they can have the material ready for when they return to school. When I talk to many of my colleagues from regional Australia they report the same things. Regional Australia has been very much isolated in many regards from the benefits that come from having reliable, decent internet.

Of course, when I was talking to those communities in the lead-up to the 2007 election and through the course of the last parliamentary term and the last election, many communities raised with me the National Broadband Network and asked what benefits might be provided to them in a practical sense by having the National Broadband Network deployed. I can report that there have been a number of visits from key groups within my community to parliament to talk to the government and to talk to the National Broadband Network company to raise with them the very tremendous opportunities that having reliable, high-speed broadband will provide to regional Australia and, indeed, to my region of greater Geelong. They certainly report to me tremendous business opportunities that will come.

Of course, when we look at the alternative policies it appears to me that there is no alternative policy being articulated by the other side. Indeed, the National Broadband Network problems within my electorate were allowed to be developed under the Howard government, who could not manage to hold onto any plan for any length of time. In fact, there was a new plan almost every year, each of which failed dismally.

Minister, I am very curious to hear your views of the benefits that might ultimately come to regional Australia, particularly electorates like mine, where we have many communities that are spread out over a large area. What opportunities might there be for new technologies to be deployed in areas like my seat? I have a very vibrant tourism economy, and tourism economies sell their wares through the internet. Many of my tourism operators cannot trade overseas through the internet as a consequence of having very poor or unreliable broadband. So I am curious to know, from your perspective, how the National Broadband Network might assist seats and communities like mine in taking advantage of superfast broadband.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:02): To address first the contribution from the member for Corangamite about regional benefits for the National Broadband Network: because the NBN is such a transformational piece of infrastructure, it will indeed remove the current digital divide between country and city. It will deliver the same service access in wholesale prices in rural Australia as in our cities. We are rolling out some 6,000 kilometres of fibre-optic links connecting cities and regions from Perth to Geraldton, Darwin to Toowoomba and to Broken Hill along the Murray.

The $60 million Digital Regions Initiative is funding innovative trials in health care, education and emergency services in these regional communities. For example, high-quality telehealth trials in Armidale and Kiama, where the NBN will be rolled out this year, provide in-home services for older Australians with chronic conditions and for youths with mental illness. Four of the five first-release sites in Australia are in regional Australia, as are eight of
14 second-release sites. In Queensland, our most regional mainland state, the NBN will sustain 5,000 jobs per year, with about $7 billion of investment in that state. We have finished the backbone linking Geraldton, where families can now get speeds 10 times faster and at twice the download quota for the same price.

Indeed, there are benefits for urban communities as well. When I launched the national urban policy, it noted that one of the ways that we can deal with issues such as urban congestion is by removing the tyranny of distance, changing the way that we work and the way that we live as communities so that people who have the great benefit of living in your beautiful electorate along the Great Ocean Road can be connected in a similar way to which they are in the Melbourne CBD. That breaks down the tyranny of distance, which is of great benefit particularly to regions but also takes pressure off our cities.

With regard to the comments from the member for Wentworth, I say to the member two things. Firstly, retail prices are yet to be advised by retail service providers. The member would be aware of that. NBN Co. have indicated that wholesale prices are comparable. Secondly, the NBN is designed to transform the competitive environment for telecommunications services. This is an important microeconomic reform. This, essentially, provides the spine, just like—in another area of direct relation to my portfolio—the Australian Rail Track Corporation builds the track. On top of that, there is competition for freight service provision. You have to have the breakthrough such as the ARTC, and I give credit to the former government for the establishment of that corporation.

But we had tried 20 different plans under the former government to deal with high-speed broadband and its delivery. The market had essentially failed at that point to deliver the sort of outcome that was required. So the government made what I believe was the bold and correct decision to seize the initiative in the national interest: to have a bold initiative that ensured that we could compete with our neighbours in delivering high-speed broadband that is affordable and available regardless of where people live and regardless of the income that they are on. One of the great issues of broadband is, of course, that high-speed broadband does deliver significant productivity gains, but it is also a very egalitarian exercise as well. It provides access for students, for example, to information technology regardless of where they live. It is a transformational piece of technology; hence the whole design of the scheme, which was an initiative based upon the failure of the former government's 20 separate plans.

I notice that the member for Wentworth acknowledged that fibre to the home will be faster. That is why the government has promoted this initiative. (Time expired)

Mr Turnbull (Wentworth) (18:07): I am touched by the minister's remarks about the NBN conquering the tyranny of distance, but the question that I addressed to him and that he singularly failed to respond to is about the tyranny of poverty. The digital divide is marked by poverty—by lack of household income—and the affordability of the NBN or of internet access is absolutely critical. It is fine for the minister to try to brush that issue away as though it is of no concern to anybody in this place, but this is the single biggest barrier to internet access. If the government and this parliament are serious about social equity and people getting access to the internet then the issue of affordability is fundamental.

The minister said that the retail prices have not been determined. They have not been determined in the sense of being finally determined, because the NBN is not operating and the retail service providers are not in operation. However, the numbers I quoted to him are taken
from page 105 of the NBN's corporate plan, and the figures that I quoted, of $53 to $58, are
the estimated retail prices for the 12-megabit service with a 50-gigabit limit. There it is: page
105 of the NBN corporate plan. Those numbers, the minister should be aware, are very much
at the low end of what the market participants are estimating the likely retail price will be
after all of the additional connectivity and backhaul is provided by the relevant retail service
provider. So I would ask the minister once again if he could actually answer this question and
not seek to fob it off.

I might add to the information I provided in my previous remarks another point, and this is
also a critical issue about affordability. You would not build the NBN, or contemplate
building the NBN, for $50 billion or whatever it winds up being if all you were going to do
was to deliver download speeds of 12 megabits per second, because many Australians now
are able to get that on existing technology, and you certainly would not need to go to fibre to
the home to do that. So the promise has always been that households will demand faster and
faster speeds.

I refer the minister to a study that was recently conducted in the United States for the
Federal Communications Commission by the US economists Greg Rosston, Scott Savage and
Donald Waldman. The study is called Household demand for broadband internet service; it
had quite a lot of currency at the time it was published. It found that people were willing to
pay an additional US$45 a month to go from slow broadband to fast broadband but only an
additional US$48 a month to go to superfast. They concluded that there is only a US$3
premium to go from fast to superfast, which would be the equivalent of, say, 50 megabits per
second; it would actually be considerably lower than this, but certainly 12 megabits per
second would be regarded as fast broadband. Yet the NBN's corporate plan—again, I am
referring the minister to page 105—estimates that people will pay an extra $35 to go from 12
megabits per second to 50 megabits per second. The experience of all of the telcos offering
higher speeds over HFC cable at the moment is that they have great trouble in getting material
additional income for getting an uplift of speed from fast to very fast or superfast speeds.

So I would ask the minister to take that on board as well, because if the NBN is not going
to make 12 megabits per second more affordable as a baseload ADSL2-comparable speed and
if the promise of the NBN is to offer superfast connectivity, which is much more expensive—
$35 a month more expensive according to the NBN—then why does the minister believe the
NBN will make internet access more affordable? I would ask the minister not to dodge this
question again. This is central to the whole plan.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (18:12): I represent one of the fastest growing residential
areas of New South Wales, and some of those growth suburbs include areas such as the
Ponds, Kellyville Ridge and Stanhope Gardens. I can say without any shadow of a doubt that
the issue in these areas about which I receive more complaints and inquiries every single day
than about anything else is broadband accessibility. These are areas where absolutely no
investment has taken place in these new suburbs up until now. I have people ringing me up
and saying: 'In this day and age, I am amazed that I am unable to get ADSL2+ to my home. I
have a small business at home. I am absolutely unable to run it effectively because I cannot
get adequate broadband accessibility.'

Minister, as you are aware, Riverstone is the site of the first Sydney metro rollout, which
means that it is important for these new areas in the north-west, which have not only growing
residential areas but also a huge amount of employment lands being released. These are industrial areas of Riverstone and Schofields which are being opened up to more innovative technology and are looking for affordability, accessibility and also the wide variety of applications and services which will be provided from access to the highest quality broadband, which they have not had until now.

In asking this question of the minister, I would also like to say that this is not just a poverty barrier and, if it were, I would question what the opposition did when they were in government to address that barrier. We have had whole areas of Western Sydney which had no investment in infrastructure. If you look at the maps of Mount Druitt, you see that they are areas which have been totally neglected for over a decade. These are areas which are crying out for transformational change. They had no input over the 12 years that those opposite were in government, and even today those opposite have the hide to stand up here and say that it is a poverty issue. It is not just a poverty issue. I would ask the minister whether he agrees that it is an issue of simply not having investment in these new suburbs and having no incentives to invest. There has been absolutely no incentive to invest. Even today we query whether or not there is going to be any investment in those areas without the NBN because the NBN is the investment in these new suburbs. I would say to the member for Wentworth: I do not get asked by these people why we are having the NBN. The only question I get asked is when, and it cannot come soon enough for these people.

I attended on Saturday night a house meeting in the suburb of Kings Langley of a group of residents who were concerned about their inability to obtain even ADSL2+. One of the residents called a street meeting and opened his house up to people. This is an area of Kings Langley which, as the member for Parramatta will know having once represented this area, is a pretty well developed suburb. But this particular subdivision was actually developed after the cable wars so does not have any cable running through it. These are people who have satellite dishes on their roofs and they are rightly asking, ‘Why in this day and age are we unable to access the highest-quality affordable broadband services?’ It is a legitimate question. So I went along to this meeting and heard the concerns of those 20 residents who were there, each of them not saying, ‘Why are we getting it?’ they are saying, ‘When are we getting it?’ For these people, it cannot come soon enough.

I will also mention in asking my question to the minister: we know that internet access is one of the applications and services that will be provided from high-speed broadband that can only be delivered through the NBN. I would like to ask the minister in terms of both the affordability of that internet access and the economic benefits, what will the NBN deliver for residents, such as those in Greenway, who are waiting to get high-speed affordable broadband services?

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (18:17): I thank the member for Greenway and the member for Wentworth for their contributions and their questions. Indeed, I do agree with the comments of the member for Greenway. My only regret is that she did not take the member for Wentworth to her meeting in north-west Sydney so that he could actually see on the ground what has happened in terms of a poverty of infrastructure being provided in terms of telecommunications.

It is no accident in terms of the equity component that the NBN will bring that we are beginning the rollout in Sydney in Riverstone and Schofields. These suburbs will be
transformed as communities because the NBN will not only transform what people can do in their own home with fibre to the home but also transform employment opportunities for high-tech, high-paid jobs. It is no accident either with regard to the equity component that was raised by the member for Wentworth—I say with some convenience—that the rollout began in Tasmania in areas that had been deprived of high-level technology in the past. Already six Tasmanian retailers are offering more competitive prices and services than many on the mainland can get. This is what Stephen Love of Galloway's pharmacy in Scottsdale had to say:

I've taken a 100mbit speed offer, that's actually very close to the cost of my previous ADSL2+ connection. The NBN will provide huge potential, for lots of new applications, especially in health which is of interest to me being a pharmacist.

So you can see what the response is on the ground. Certainly wherever I have gone, the NBN has had enormous support and indeed is one of the reasons why I am here as a minister and not as a shadow minister, because a range of the representatives on the cross benches regarded this as a critical issue moving forward.

With regard to the question about access raised by the member for Wentworth, under our system almost everyone gets access to fibre to the home. That is the basis of the system in terms of getting fibre to the home under the National Broadband Network. The NBN will not set retail prices. It is an open access, wholesale-only provider. So you will have a level playing field there. It will encourage competition which will lead to lower retail prices and better services—to give the analogy again, back to the way that freight rail system has been developed in this country. If you have a secure foundation then you are able to build competition on top of that that will allow the market to operate. I know that the member for Wentworth supports markets, unlike some of his colleagues who seem to have walked away from support for markets. I certainly support markets as well. I believe markets can be an extremely democratic way of allocating resources and providing significant benefit to more people on the ground.

The NBN Co. approach to developing its pricing model is this: the product and pricing approach developed by NBN Co. as part of its corporate plan has a number of core concepts, including a strong focus on gathering retail service providers, end-user requirements being simple and easy to understand and harnessing observable trends in end-user demand and utilisation. NBN Co. has consulted with more than 25 ISPs in developing its pricing approach. Given that the bells are ringing—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It's a quorum, minister.

Mr ALBANESE: Well, I am going for a quorum. I commend the appropriation to the House.

A quorum having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 18:22 to 18:30

Question agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Sidebottom): It being 6.30 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 192, and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for the next sitting.
Ms OWENS:  I move:
That orders of the day Nos 2 and 3, government business, be postponed until the next sitting.
Question agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Live Animal Exports

Debate resumed on the motion by Mr John Cobb:

That this House:
(1) deplores the inhumane treatment of cattle at some abattoirs in Indonesia;
(2) notes that this is unacceptable to all Australians, especially our farmers, who take great pride in breeding and raising healthy and well cared for animals;
(3) supports the suspension of trade of Australian live cattle to facilities that fail to comply with acceptable practices;
(4) notes with concern the impact of a total live exports suspension to Indonesia on:
   (a) the economic, social and environmental fabric of northern Australia;
   (b) Indigenous employment in northern Australia;
   (c) Indonesian abattoirs already operating at acceptable standards; and
   (d) the entire cattle Industry including producers in the south who are already seeing reduced saleyard prices; and
(5) calls on the Government to:
   (a) immediately establish a register of Indonesian abattoirs, to be known as the Approved Indonesian Abattoir Register, that have adopted and implemented acceptable animal welfare standards;
   (b) require that Australian sourced cattle be processed only at abattoirs that are listed on the register;
   (c) revoke the legislative instrument Export Control (Export of Live-stock to the Republic of Indonesia) Order 2011 upon one or more Indonesian abattoirs being included on the register;
   (d) provide support to Indonesia to bring more abattoirs up to acceptable standards; and
   (e) provide assistance to the cattle industry to deal with the consequences of this suspension.

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (18:31): I rise to speak in support of the live export industry through the motion before the House. I have been a beef producer who has bred, raised and cared for cattle most of my working life. I believe I know that beef producers, perhaps even more than the rest of the Australian public, were horrified by the cruelty showed recently on television. I fully supported the government's initial action in banning the supply of animals to those abattoirs such as the ones that were shown on TV processing cattle inhumanely, and to implement an urgent review of the abattoirs system in Indonesia. However, the subsequent caving in to a very vocal group—admittedly a minority of voters—advocating a full suspension of live-shipping trade to Indonesia has been a massive overreaction from a government that has lost all credibility with the general public in dealing with difficult issues, who acts first and thinks later.
I understand the outcry from people who were shocked at the senseless cruelty that they witnessed, as we all were. However, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of families doing the right thing, that are being penalised. It is not just beef producers. This will be felt all across Northern Australia, through real estate, finance, insurance, transport, the trucking and helicopter industries and fuel industries, export yards, shipping and stevedores, veterinarians, animal health, Indigenous employment and training, stock agencies, hay producers, feed producers, processors and nutrition supplement manufacturers, rural contractors, local town suppliers, government department jobs—right across Northern Australia, the whole social fabric.

And it is not just the beef producers in Northern Australia. This has impacted on the beef producers across the country with prices dropping around 25c. For the uninitiated, for a well-conditioned cow, that is $150 a cow. That is a lot of money. Do not get your hopes up that this will reduce the retail price of meat, because even if we could trust the processors and supermarkets to pass on the $150 to $200 per beast to the consumer, the meat supplied impact is mostly on grinding meat for the US market, the hamburger market, so it will have little impact on our retail price for meat in supermarkets and butchers.

We have made our position on live exports clear. We support the suspension of the trade of cattle to abattoirs that are not processing cattle humanely. But we should not be penalising those who are doing the right thing. Being a player in the market and only supplying those that are doing the right thing is the best tool available for animal welfare reform in developing countries. There are a number of abattoirs in Indonesia that have state-of-the-art processing facilities with stunning facilities, and if we have the infrastructure already in Australia to track these cattle with the National Livestock Identification System, the only true cattle tracking system in the world. Every animal that gets on a boat has a tracking device and these cattle have to be checked off as arriving at compliant abattoirs. We use plenty of handheld devices for reading the tags at saleyards in Australia, which can immediately deploy to accredited abattoirs.

The fact is that industry has combined to provide the way forward, the mechanisms to ensure that Australian cattle are now always slaughtered humanely in Indonesian abattoirs. It just remains for the Gillard government and Minister Ludwig to fix the politics and to talk to Indonesia and to fix relations both in industry and in government there.

I am concerned for those Australians that oppose this industry that they are being led by misinformation from agenda-driven groups who do not even want us to eat meat at all. Have Australians become so disconnected from the social, economic and agricultural basis on which this country was built and from the farmers who built it? Farmers are the most determined to stop cruelty, but it seems that most Australians have no idea anyhow how food is actually produced. Do people truly think that like an episode of The Goodies a happy cow goes in one end of a machine and sausages magically come out the other? Primitive man hunted animals and so do we, and for the same reasons, and we do it far less cruelly and wastefully than primitive man did it. Yet those who believe we should not now touch them have no problem with that.

A national school survey by the Kondinin group found that 88 per cent of children had never visited a farm and 73 per cent did not know a farmer. Let us take a quick history lesson. The Northern Territory industry really struggled in Australia until the introduction of the
Zebu or Bos indicus cattle—most of you would know them as Brahman—in the 1930s. Since the 1970s these cattle have revolutionised the industry and taken it from near bankruptcy to an efficient and profitable enterprise that contributes hundreds of millions of dollars annually towards the economy, supports the whole social fabric of Northern Australia and brings in export dollars, apart from anything else. These cattle are drought resistant, great foragers and descendants of four breeds of Indian cattle. They are bred to not only survive but thrive in the tropical climate. However, the main reason for the breed's success is their resistance to cattle tick, which certainly broke early pioneers with European cattle. Traditional European breeds could not overcome the ticks and were in poor condition and susceptible to diseases carried by the ticks.

So from the onset of live exports Northern Australia has flourished. This major economic industry that has been developed has been very important to the local economy, especially for Aboriginal or Indigenous employment. It has been reported that there are some 80 large Indigenous cattle stations, employing around 700 Aboriginal stockmen, plus many other non-Aboriginal run stations. Those 80 Aboriginal stations turn off around 200,000 cattle a year.

The Indonesian market alone takes over half a million cattle, mostly from Northern Australia, worth over $340 million directly and contributes about $1 billion to the overall economic activity. The meat from these animals is different from traditional European breeds. If it comes down south, as I said earlier, it is not going to end up on our plates, because we consume a different type of animal down here. It is going to have an awful effect upon the whole beef industry in Australia. The double standards that abound are rather outrageous. We continue to have stricter standards imposed on our farmers with regard to OH&S, chemical use and care for animals by a conscientious Australian public; however, when they go to the supermarket they seem quite happy to buy the cheap imports that have not been required to abide by the same standards.

Many people believe the answer is simple: just set up an export abattoir in Northern Australia. Many have tried. Failed abattoirs in Broome and Innisfail are a testament to that. It is not as simple as saying: 'Let us put abattoirs in Northern Australia. We can send everything off in boxes chilled.' It is not like that. There is a very small window of opportunity to operate in Northern Australia. You need skilled people who are not going to put their hand up for four or five months work a year and come back in eight months time when they can work in mines for far more. It does not work like that. On the other side of the equation boxed meat will not replace live exports to Indonesia any time in the near future. Many of the places that have been provided with our cattle are rural and regional villages that have little access to electricity let alone refrigeration.

This motion provides a simple way forward that can get the trade restarted immediately. I urge the government to adopt this rational and sensible approach. All of us, particularly those who breed cattle, only want humane slaughter of cattle. It can be done. This is Australia. These are traditional Australians doing this, traditional Australians in every sense of the word. They have shown they will overcome anything and do anything that needs to be fixed. Gillard and the Labor government must proceed to get this going as soon as possible.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (18:41): I rise to speak on the issue of live exports that is facing the country and the industry at the moment. The honourable member for Calare said that it is simple. It is not that simple. If it were that simple, it could be fixed overnight. Part of the
problem is you get some people saying you have to fix it straightaway and you get other people saying take the time. The fact is that it will take time. I will focus on what we are dealing with now—the cessation of the export of live cattle to Indonesia.

There are a few things I want to focus on tonight. I want to start by putting on the record what some of the people in the industry are saying. Some people in the industry feel very frustrated as well. They want to get this right so that when it restarts it starts in the right way. They have had a long time to get this right and they have not. I read in all the media coverage that major cattle producers, the Consolidated Pastoral Company, Heytesbury Holdings, the Australia live export council, AAco, RSPCA Australia and other bodies that care about animal welfare all support mandatory stunning before the slaughter of Australian cattle in Indonesia. Before that can happen we have to know that that will happen. We have to know the supply chain and that it will happen. I know there has been talk about the different standards—the OIE and Australian standards—but the fact is that the Australian community and the industry have said clearly that, whatever the legal policy practice framework is, this is what they want to happen and this is what they expect. That is the first thing.

There has also been a lot of talk about what practices are appropriate and inappropriate culturally. The fact is that stunning is not contrary to halal. That is very clear. The evidence is there. That is another debate that we do not need to have, because the evidence is absolutely clear. So stunning can happen.

I want to talk about the MLA. The *Land* was interesting reading this week. It is one of my regular newspapers. There is a whole debate going on in the *Land*. It is interesting because farmers and people on the land write to the *Land*. Overwhelmingly, they are saying they are appalled by what they saw on the ABC *Four Corners* program and they are appalled that the industry bodies did not have this in order, among other things. I would like to quote Mal Peters in *The Land* on Thursday, 16 June on page 30. Among other things, he says:

> Equally importantly Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) needs to start explaining why its name was all over one of these atrocious practices. He is talking about the cruelty that we witnessed on TV.

> I am particularly pleased to donate about $4000 in a year in levies to a mob that has just decimated our export trade by their sheer bloody ineptitude.

> If stopping animal cruelty was the goal what the hell are the knocking boxes MLA has supplied to Indonesia abattoirs meant to do?

> Any reasonable observer could see they would never fix the problem.

> Some heads need to roll for what is clearly a monumental stuff up.

Mal always says it as it is. He calls it how he sees it, and he has there. He has said other things, but I want to focus on what he said directly about the MLA. I also went onto a National Party website to look at something they have put out which says: 'Blanket ban on live exports sends wrong message'. What hypocrisy! Then you read that they have said:

> We support the live cattle trade ban on facilities that fail to comply with acceptable animal welfare practices …

> It is just a whole lot of gobbledygook which is really aimed at maximising political support, not fixing the industry. That is what is about. It would be so nice if we could come here, actually have a sane debate and discussion and chart a way forward where people are not
seeking to maximise political gain and advantage and going into the traditional 'divide and rule', which happens. The website also says:
There is a better way to handle the issue.
If there was, they could have done it. They did have 12 years in government. They did introduce self-regulation. The Nationals have also said:
We know from experience that when live exports are halted—such as the ban on cattle to Egypt or sheep to Saudi Arabia—demand for boxed meat does not rise.
Yet if you have a look at the facts and figures on the industry websites you will find:
In Egypt, the one scenario where live export was stopped, there was a remarkable growth in the exportation of meat processed in Australia. Egyptian imports of Australian processed sheep meat rose by 300 per cent between 2002-03 and 2005-06, when Australian live sheep imports were stopped.
There is so much hypocrisy around this debate and all sorts of comments that just do not stand up to scrutiny. The best article in The Land on Thursday, 16 June was written by John Carter and is on page 31. The heading is 'Meat structure stinks of failure.' He says:
In 1997, when John Anderson announced the new meat structure, I wrote a scathing Counterpoint on its impracticality.
I am on the record in this place talking about that issue as well. He goes on:
Now, 14 years on, with $1.7 billion of our money gone, the lowest cattle prices in the developed world and a drop of more than 20 per cent in domestic consumption the hopelessness of the structure has been painfully illustrated.
Australia's beef industry has its worst crisis in 25 years.
The Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC) is meant to advise the minister.
He goes on to talk about the MLA and he questions whether the producers have any confidence in the MLA to fix the problem. But the problem is: they are there. I have no confidence in the MLA to help fix the problem, but the fact is that they are there and we have to deal with them for the moment.
When I looked at the MLA website—as the honourable member for Kennedy said, taking everything advisedly—on 10 June 2011, in relation to one of the claims that cattle sale prices are plummeting as a result of the suspension announced, it said:
… the suspension of the live cattle trade to Indonesia will neither result in a rush of cattle into Australian processors, nor a surge of beef in coming weeks and months. Cattle placed on ships to Indonesia are typically Brahmans of light weight (less than 350kg lwt). These cattle will require much longer periods on feed to reach suitable slaughter weights for either the Australian, or more particularly, export markets.
When that cattle weight was introduced because of Indonesia's requirements and because they are moving to self-sufficiency for 2014, it had an immediate impact on the Australian live export market. The figures that I have read are a drop of between 34 and 40 per cent in exports of cattle to Indonesia. So that was happening anyway. The MLA finish by saying:
Therefore, the most impact for the entire beef industry will be felt in the medium term if the situation is not resolved quickly, as heavier cattle move through to slaughter in 6-18 months time.
There are all these claims, but we have to look at them. I know a lot of people in the industry say they would like a judicial inquiry into the MLA and I think that shows the absolute frustration with a body that they all pay levies to.
Mr HAASE (Durack) (18:51): I rise to second, and speak on, the motion. This is a very serious debate, and the decision that the government has taken is very severely and adversely impacting on the lives of struggling Australians now. Northern Australian pastoral leases have one sustainable economic purpose, and that is the breeding of beef cattle for export. There is no abattoir in the area. There is no abattoir from Harvey in Western Australia right around the coast to Rockhampton. There is not one operating abattoir that handles beef cattle for export licence. The argument that this industry should have been shut down on the whim of a number of impressionable Labor members adds weight to the argument that this government has lost its way and no longer represents ordinary hardworking Australians.

We have had so much pap fed to us in this place today by the member for Page that it is almost intolerable, because it proves without doubt the level of her ignorance. It proves without doubt that she is not concerned about animal welfare; she is consumed for union members’ welfare.

Ms Saffin: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The honourable member’s use of—

Mr HAASE: I hope so.

Ms Saffin: That is just plain rude. It shows what a rude pig you are.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Sidebottom): Thank you, Member for Page; your point is noted. You can use other practices in the House to raise your point.

Mr HAASE: And when one realises that the concern here is with union members and voters in an electorate and not for the welfare of animals, it puts a level of hypocrisy into this debate that is absolutely intolerable. We have people on properties whose whole livelihood is being destroyed by a decision based on, primarily, ignorance. Some of the impacts of the decision are that kids are being ripped out of school. Families will not be able to pay their mortgage. They made their last payment on it more than 12 months ago because of the extended wet. We have truck owners who will not be able to make payments on their prime mover, which they purchased solely for the purpose of moving live export cattle across Northern Australia. We have helicopter pilots in debt to the bank for repayments on choppers that are there specifically for the muster season in Northern Australia. This decision has far deeper, more meaningful ramifications than appeasing a few members of the union. If you go around abattoirs in Australia, you will find that most of the employees are working on 457 visas anyhow. So this nonsense about taking jobs away from Australia is just that—absolute nonsense.

If people in this nation truly want over time to achieve some improvement in the welfare of animals at slaughter in Indonesia—I underline the fact that it is necessary to slaughter animals before you eat them; it is a prime requisite, which comes as a shock to many people in suburban Australia—and if the suburban Australian population are truly concerned about improving the conditions of those animals going to slaughter, they would send bouquets to the MLA and to the livestock industry, because more has been achieved for the welfare of animals being slaughtered in Indonesia in the last 15 years by the MLA than any other institution—more than the RSPCA, more than PETA, more than Pew and more than Animals Australia. If the ignorami of Australia realised this, they would work with MLA and they would start to achieve more than just five abattoirs being convinced to use stun guns. We
would start to work on the greatest majority of the 700-plus abattoirs. How members of this place can believe that 3,000 years of culture could be overturned by— (Time expired)

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (18:56): I oppose this motion. It is another example of the pressure being put on the government by Liberal and National Party MPs to resume live cattle exports to Indonesia. I do not want the suspension to be lifted. I fear that, if we lift the suspension, the pressure which is now on the industry to lift its game will melt away. The suspension is doing a power of good. We are now seeing a flurry of activity on the part of the Indonesian government and the industry, which is a good thing, taking us towards an end to the cruel practices which were exposed by the Four Corners program.

I believe the Australian people do not want the suspension to be lifted. I see the opposition leader has discovered the idea of holding plebiscites. How about we hold a plebiscite on whether we export live cattle abroad and the opposition agrees to abide by that? Failing that, I urge all concerned Australians to contact members of parliament, particularly their own member of parliament, to tell them that they do not want live cattle exports to Indonesia to resume any time soon. Every MP’s and every senator’s view matters, but, in particular, tell those Liberal and National MPs who are putting on the pressure to resume live exports that this is a bad idea. Send the emails, ring their offices and go and see them. Tell them the jig is up in relation to live exports. It is time to move to domestic processing. That is the future of the meat industry.

They may well raise various objections to the live cattle exports ban, but these objections are not valid. They may claim that the animals will starve and that there will be an environmental disaster. This is not correct. There are animal welfare standards in this country. People are not allowed to starve their animals or just turn them into the bush. They may claim that the industry will collapse and that people will lose their jobs—not true either. There are abattoirs around Australia, including Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton, which have spare capacity. Animals can be fattened up and sent to those abattoirs. There are industry plans for an abattoir in Darwin. The Northern Territory government and the industry should focus their efforts on making that happen.

The truth about jobs is that jobs have been lost as a result of the industry focus on live exports to the detriment of domestic processing. In the past 30 years, 150 abattoirs have closed and 40,000 jobs have been lost. It is still going on. Last year 1,000 jobs were lost. They may claim that Indonesia will go elsewhere and we will lose the market. It seems unlikely to me. Indonesia has put out feelers to New Zealand. New Zealand, which, to its credit, has a ban on live animal exports, said no. Last year, global beef production declined. In 2006, the Howard government suspended the live cattle trade to Egypt as a result of media revelations of animal cruelty. The trade was not resumed for three years. The sky did not fall in. The Egyptians bought chilled beef killed here in Australia instead. They may claim that this action will annoy Indonesia and damage our relationship with that country. There is no evidence of that. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has ordered his health minister and his agriculture minister to personally inspect Indonesian abattoirs to improve their animal welfare standards. This is a good thing.

The advice I have received is that there is nothing inconsistent between humane animal welfare standards and halal killing. In any event, religious convictions do not give anyone a licence to depart from basic standards of decency and humanity. You cannot get out of
observing basic animal welfare standards by claiming it is against your religion. The great philosopher Immanuel Kant said:

We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals.

He was right.

They may claim that domestic processing is not as profitable as live exports, that there are extra costs, but overall I have no doubt that the meat processing industry will be better off. A study by ACIL Tasman concerning live sheep exports showed a 20 per cent increase in the economic value of domestic processing compared with live exports. Some things are more important than money. We should not seek to make a profit on the back of the torture, misery and suffering of powerless animals. We rejected this argument way back in 1791 when William Wilberforce introduced his anti-slavery bill. We rejected it 220 years ago; we should reject it again today.

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (19:01): I am pleased that the member for Wills spoke long enough to say something that I did agree with. What I do agree with is that the mistreatment of animals cannot be accepted at any price. What I cannot agree with is the way that this government has handled this issue.

The member for Wills believes that we should stop this trade and the people of Australia should demand that. I would like it to be a prerequisite that, for every email that his constituents send around the country, they donate one year's salary with that email because that is what they are asking the people of Northern Australia to do—to donate one year's salary. As for this email flood, I am getting a lot of emails in my office too, but they all have the same words. They are all coming from my constituents at 3 o'clock and 5 o'clock in the morning. I think an investigation into GetUp! finding out how that email list is being put around would also bear not much scrutiny.

I am rather disappointed in the member for Page, who represents one of the finest beef-producing areas in New South Wales. The fact that the member for Page had a motion on banning exports on the books of this parliament for some months—

Ms Saffin interjecting—

Mr COULTON: It is about saving face within the left side of the Labor Party. The reality is that the cattle that are leaving Australia now will not be killed for 90 to 100 days. That leaves plenty of time to put the required changes in place. These cattle are not house bricks. They cannot be stacked up until we build an abattoir in five year's time. The wet season starts by Christmas time. Where will they go then? What is going to happen to these cattle? Are they going to go to a farm where they are going to live out their old age? This is a nonsense.

We can get this trade going. We can ban the delivery of cattle to the abattoirs that are not up to standard. But nowhere in that Four Corners report was there any question that the cattle were mistreated on the trip to the wharf. Was there any question that they were mistreated in the feed line?

I was a cattle producer for 35 years and I have great admiration for anyone that can fatten a Brahman. Anyone who saw that Four Corners show saw that those cattle in those feedlots were in prime condition. The issue here—to the member for Wills, the member for Page and others who want to speak on this—is in the last five minutes of that animal's life. We are banning a whole trade and putting the economy of Northern Australia and the welfare of
520,000 animals at risk, and the member for Page has the hide to say that some website said that the cattle market was not going to be impacted by this. If she wants to go to the saleyards in my electorate, it is already 30c to 40c a kilo. I have to say the bottom has fallen out of the sheep market as well on the strength of the rumours that there is another Four Corners show coming on sheep.

Ms Saffin interjecting—

Mr COULTON: The idea that the member for Page can go on to some website and be reassured that the cattle market is hunky-dory is nonsense. Quite frankly, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have had it up to here with people in this place taking the high moral ground with other people's welfare. We have people with full wallets and full stomachs wanting to affect the livelihoods not only of individual families and companies but also of entire communities. The party on the other side is supposed to be the great carer for the Aboriginal people. What about the 700 Aboriginal people that are employed in this industry? What about the 70 to 80 stations that are owned by the Aboriginal corporations in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia? What about their livelihoods?

We have just had it up to here with the hypocrisy in this place. We need to fix up the welfare of these cattle. We need to be over there doing it. I take my hat off to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry—I think he was rolled in the first place. He has gone over to Indonesia to sort this out three weeks or probably six weeks too late from when he would have known about this. This has been a disaster at a diplomatic level and an implementation level. I want to know what is going to happen to those cattle that are stranded in Australia: where they are going to go and how the members opposite think they are going to restore some of economic balance—(Time expired)

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (19:06): It is now some three weeks since the footage of horrendous treatment of Australian cattle in Indonesian slaughterhouses aired on Four Corners. While acknowledging the difficulties faced by producers as a result of the government's suspension of the live trade to Indonesia, it must be said that the abject failure of the industry representative bodies to ensure the most basic animal welfare standards left the minister no other choice. It is critical that, during any discussions related to the reopening of the trade with Indonesia, we do not forget the scale of the brutality we witnessed in the Indonesian slaughterhouses and that, currently, there is no enforcement of laws to prevent such treatment from recurring on a nightly basis. Indeed, I understand that no Australian officials are being allowed into Indonesian slaughterhouses at present, so there is no way of knowing what is happening inside.

Indonesian animal welfare groups have expressed the view that a majority of the 6.5 million Australian cattle exported to Indonesia over the past 18 years would have been subjected to some form of appalling and inhumane treatment. A recent report in the Jakarta Post quoted a slaughterhouse worker talking openly about routinely slashing the leg tendons to bring down cattle for the throat cut in a major Jakarta abattoir. In no way was he ashamed to admit this; it was just part of the business of slaughtering cattle—as is their traditional method of roping slaughter, which is a standard practice throughout Indonesia except in a small number of privately operated abattoirs.

It is apparent that the willingness of Australia's live export industry to supply cattle has reinforced local beliefs that such cruel practices are acceptable, and we now know that the
restraint boxes Meat and Livestock Australia provided in fact facilitated the inhumane roping slaughter method. We know that, on viewing the operation of MLA's boxes, the world's leading slaughter expert, Professor Temple Grandin, was appalled and said, 'I think it is just disgusting that Meat and Livestock Australia is actually helping facilitate something like this' and that the mark 1 box 'violated every humane standard anywhere in the world'.

In the past week, another internationally renowned slaughter expert, Dr Mohan Raj, of Bristol University in the United Kingdom, wrote to Prime Minister Gillard in support of Professor Grandin's findings that the mark 1 box is inhumane and should never be used. Dr Mohan Raj is an expert adviser to the European Commission and on the working groups of the OIE, the World Organisation for Animal Health. In his letter to the Prime Minister, Dr Raj concluded that the slaughterhouses documented in the Animals Australia footage are 'in breach of even the minimum standards of animal welfare adopted by the 174 OIE member countries' and, further, that it is worth noting that the 'OIE codes are not intended as auditable standards or as best practice but as basic minimum standards for developing countries'.

It is these OIE codes that are being proposed as the basis for 'acceptable standards' for the reopening of the trade with Indonesia, and this is where I take issue with the motion moved by the member for Calare. OIE standards do not exclude the terrible roping slaughter techniques that we witnessed on Four Corners and they do not require the stunning of animals prior to slaughter. Cutting the throat of conscious cattle is brutal and barbaric and subjects them to unacceptable trauma and suffering. The entire live cattle trade to Egypt was stopped by the Australian government on the basis of the cutting of leg tendons of conscious animals. Why would we consider the cutting of the throat of a live animal any more acceptable?

Religious authorities in Indonesia accept pre-slaughter stunning of animals as part of halal slaughter. This is a significant breakthrough, and it begs the question of why we would undermine Indonesian attempts to improve the welfare of livestock during the slaughter process by setting a lesser standard, especially when stunning is the ethical and legal standard required by the Australian community for the slaughter of Australian cattle. What is more, I am informed by Paul Holmes a Court that major cattle producers, including AACO, Consolidated Pastoral Holdings and Heytesbury Holdings, as well as exporters Elders and Wellard and the Australia Live Export Council, all support mandatory stunning and independent monitoring in Indonesian slaughterhouses. Why would we not support the industry in its efforts to ensure sustainability and certainty?

The remarks of Jim Anderton, former New Zealand agriculture minister and former deputy prime minister, on ABC radio last Saturday are instructive. He said that New Zealand's decision to ban live exports in 2007 was a 'combination of concern for animal welfare and concern for the economic backlash that would occur if New Zealand's reputation was harmed by evidence of mistreatment'. It would be a mistake to think that the horrors of the Four Corners report will fade in the mind of the Australian community. Many Australians already want the live trade to end, so they will certainly not accept the trade reopening with Indonesia without confirmation that Australian cattle will be stunned while appropriately and humanely restrained in an upright position or without assurance that abattoirs will be regularly and independently audited and that a fully accountable and traceable system is in place. (Time expired)
Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt—Chief Opposition Whip) (19:11): I rise to speak on this motion. There is much in what the member for Fremantle has said that I agree with. I am somebody who has had quite considerable experience in the cattle industry and I still have an interest in it. I agree that stunning is the most appropriate way of processing and slaughtering these animals. I too was absolutely gobsmacked when I saw the types of killing boxes that were shown on that program. To me, they are totally inappropriate and, given the technology that is readily available, even on my place, where I restrain cattle with a compression crush and what have you, it beggars belief that that has not been implemented over there. So those sorts of questions need to be answered. However, there are already seven abattoirs that I am aware of in Indonesia that have all of those facilities—stand-up slaughter, stunning and the whole lot—and they process a very significant number of cattle.

It is this knee-jerk reaction. As I have said before, I have no issue with the first decision made by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in stopping these animals going into abattoirs that do not comply, but the next step is the major issue in that we now have thousands and thousands of animals stranded in stock export yards, with nowhere to go. We have to address this quickly.

I note that some of those who are arguing for the closure of the live export trade have said, 'Why don't we just slaughter them, freeze them and send them away?' For anybody who has no understanding of the industry I suppose that is a logical argument to put up. But the reality is that we have only two export-processing abattoirs in northern Australia, from the Kimberleys right through to the east coast, and the types of animals they slaughter there certainly would not meet that criteria. We would love to have more. It would certainly value-add to the jobs and create jobs in our region. However, I suppose it is that middle-class thinking on the type of consumption of beef that would be happening in these destinations in Indonesia. The reality is that it is not just the electricity issue concerning chilled beef; you also have to understand that a lot of the people that access product from these cattle do not have the capacity to enjoy what I call the middle-class cuts—and, unlike in Australia, over there they eat everything from the hoofs to the horns. There is very little that is wasted. A lot of the product that is consumed from these animals over there is stuff that for us ends up in the pits and is turned into fertiliser, but it is the only product that these people can afford. The value of that animal is much greater in relation to what is needed in that community. It is impossible to contemplate any prospect of our cutting these animals up and sending them over as chilled.

There are abattoirs over there now that are fully accredited and that comply with Australian standards, which in fact are much greater than any of the international standards, so there is no reason why we cannot start this trade again tomorrow. There are cattle sitting there that need to go somewhere. There are animal health issues in those cattle that have now been confined for several weeks. There are ships there that comply in all aspects; we have feedlots over there that comply; and we have abattoirs over there that comply with Australian standards. There is no reason why trade cannot resume tomorrow. Those abattoirs that wish to process Australian cattle—or any cattle for that matter, because I think we should be out there trying to prevent any sort of inhumane treatment—need to be upgraded before they can access them. We have an NLIS tag tracking system that is very effective in Australia and that could easily be put into place so that those animals can be traced from the paddock right through to
the plate. Any suggestion that it cannot is an absolute nonsense. The government is constantly changing its position; it has destroyed the authority of the minister and has left Northern Australians asking whether or not there is anybody in the Labor government who will ever stand up for them. I think it is absolutely appalling.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (19:17): I do not think the position of the previous speaker, the member for Leichhardt, is very far different from where the government stands at the moment. Coming from the very southern part of this nation, I fully appreciate the importance of the live meat export trade to northern Australia. I have just looked at some of the figures for Northern Australia. The cattle industry is worth around $200 million a year—absolutely vital to the economy of the north. It directly supports more than 1,800 jobs—very important. It supports hundreds of Territory families who manage in excess of 220 pastoral leases. Pastoral properties in the north are almost totally reliant on the live export trade. There are 80 Indigenous land corporation properties across the Top End, including the Kimberley, who have a vital interest in the continuation of the trade.

I share the sentiments of the member for Leichhardt, whom I heard in this place last week, of how he along with Northern Territory cattlemen and most people in this country were appalled by those pictures we saw on the Four Corners program, and I heard the member for Leichhardt quite rightly condemn those. We have a situation where we have a significant trade which is important to many families in Australia, and the end result of that trade is that we cannot guarantee the welfare of the animals that we send—indeed, that we breed, we feed and we send—to Indonesia. That is at the nub of this whole issue. I join with the member for Leichhardt in saying I want this resolved as quickly as possible so we can do something about that. So does the minister. The minister has said that several times and is in Indonesia now trying to do something about it. He joins the industry and most people in Australia who want something done about it straightaway.

How did we get to this situation? The member for Leichhardt spoke about this earlier. I remember back to the time when we had live export trade of sheep and cattle to the Middle East that had to be suspended because of the cruelty to the animals involved and because Australia could not guarantee what happened to the welfare of those animals when they arrived there. That is at the nub of what is going on here. I can sit here and shout—as some others shouted earlier today—and call others hypocrites, but that gets us nowhere. For instance, I know that the member for Page, who is very passionate about this, raised this issue in March, talking about the welfare of the animals. The member for Leichhardt might disagree with the member for Page in terms of the extent that they would go to do something about it, but the member was raising the question of the welfare of those animals in March, and the parliament went about its business, as did the industry and all those involved, knowing that this would come to a head.

There has been criticism of this government on its decision to suspend the trade without giving a firm timeline about how we could resume it. I draw the attention of members in the chamber to the Land of Thursday, 16 June 2011 and an article by Mal Peters—no great supporter of our cause. Mal went on to send one in to the government, as those opposite and others may want to, but he also had some very serious words to say about Meat and Livestock Australia and its inability to take responsibility for its side of the chain of supply and what
happens both from here and into Indonesia. I could sit here and rant and rave and cite that, but that gets us nowhere.

I noticed today an update on the industry animal welfare plan in Indonesia from Meat and Livestock Australia which talks about increasing stunning. The member for Leichhardt quite rightly said: 'That is what we should be doing; that is what we should insist on.' It does not in any way make halal suspect. That is what we should be doing: improved infrastructure, OIE compliance assurance programs and also traceability of cattle within Indonesia. I can tell you one thing: most people in the industry and most people in Australia want this traceability worked out now. They want it worked out as quickly as possible so we can get on with this. There is no easy solution except to say that we need to communicate this much better. (Time expired)

Ms Marino (Forrest—Opposition Whip) (19:22): Australian farmers take great pride in breeding and raising healthy, quality, well-cared-for animals, and they were appalled by the footage of the mistreatment in some Indonesian abattoirs. But they also know that in Indonesia there are at least seven A-grade facilities right now and a further 18 B-grade facilities that could be accredited and could be processing animals. By working government to government and putting as many departmental and industry officials on the ground as it takes to bring these up to accredited standards as soon as possible, the decision could be made to recommence live exports to these accredited abattoirs. This is a time-critical decision that cannot wait six months. Limiting trade to only those that meet our animal welfare expectations will have flow-on effects in other abattoirs through training, traceability and processing.

The first ban was the right decision, but this second, total ban has been referred to as one of the most severe trade restrictions imposed by government on local industry in living memory. The government either ignored or certainly did not plan for the broader effects of their live export ban, and they did not even inform the Indonesian government or the livestock industry here. How many people were out of work the minute the ban was announced, and how many people are now in very dire financial circumstances as a result? This is not only an agriculture and biosecurity issue but an economic issue and a foreign affairs and trade issue, and we have offended our neighbours in Indonesia. It is a regional development and sustainability issue. It is an Indigenous employment issue and it is an issue for the thousands of families, individuals, contractors, and small and large businesses that are directly and indirectly affected both here and in Indonesia. Farmers right across Australia know that this decision has or will impact on them no matter where they sell their animals.

I went to the Boyanup store sale on Friday in my electorate. Farmers there were not only disgusted with the government's knee jerk total blanket ban; they are shaking their heads. They are also worried that meat processors will drop prices locally as a result. One farmer said to me, 'You know, if we had a problem in an abattoir in Australia, we would fix the problem, not ban the lot.' Unfortunately, the Labor government did exactly that and this decision resonates to many electorates right around the nation.

The member for Bennelong, who gave his speaking opportunity to me—and I thank him for doing so—asked me to raise the following points on his behalf. Australian live exports comprise approximately 10 per cent of the cattle slaughtered in Indonesia. The most humanitarian policy response on this issue would care for the slaughtering methods employed
on all cattle in Indonesia, not just Australia's 10 per cent. Argentina and Uruguay are enthusiastic in their attempts to take Australia's place in the live export market. Neither of these nations have strong records on animal welfare. The long-haul shipping of live cattle from South America to Indonesia would only exacerbate the trauma, leading to significantly more animal cruelty compared with the short-haul trip from Northern Australia to our Asian neighbours. Argentina and Uruguay have considerable problems with foot-and-mouth disease, with Argentina currently vaccinating approximately 50 million cattle twice a year. Refrigeration facilities are rare in many regional areas of Indonesia, so the local slaughtering of cattle for same-day sale is the only option available to much of the population. Australian aid efforts were central to the eradication of FMD from Indonesia for more than 20 years as a buffer to protect our own high quarantine standards. The reintroduction of South American cattle will threaten Australia's biosecurity, potentially harming millions of Australian cattle.

We provide $558 million in aid funding to Indonesia. The member for Bennelong suggests that a proportion of this aid should be redirected for the purchase and installation of stunning equipment, and halal and other slaughtering equipment. This is a long-term remedy to satisfy all parties. We have practical experience of the use of licensing arrangements for the transportation of meat to insure ethical standards have been utilised. These are the words from the member for Bennelong.

I am very concerned, but I am not surprised, that the Labor government made such a city-centric decision. There is not one member of the ministry who lives in or represents regional Australia—not one who genuinely understands the challenges faced by regional communities and families and the people in this room every single day of their lives. The government does not understand. Western Australia supplies nearly 65 per cent of the live cattle sent to Indonesia and is hardest hit—from $47 million to $60 million directly, and the multiplier effect makes it $98 million to $125 million, just in Western Australia. This is a very serious issue that needs immediate action.

**Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (19:27):** This is an issue I have spoken on before in this parliament, and it is an issue that has engaged an enormous number of Australians. In the last speech I made on this issue before this parliament, I quoted Mahatma Gandhi: 'The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way it treats its animals.' The first part of this motion states that it deplores the inhuman treatment of cattle at some abattoirs in Indonesia, and it noted that it was unacceptable. In the entire time I have been a member of parliament, and that is nearly 13 years, there has never been an issue that people within my electorate and throughout Australia have engaged with me on more. When the *Four Corners* program finished, within 30 seconds I had three emails from people within my electorate. This just demonstrates how the people of Australia—because I do not think the Shortland electorate is any different from anywhere else in Australia—believe that this is an issue that we as a nation have to resolve.

I think it is also important to state that this resolution that we have before us was introduced in the Senate and was voted down in the Senate. The reason it was voted down, and the reason that it is so important that we address the issues, is that, if we allow live export to recommence to Indonesia at this stage, there are no guarantees in place that the same thing will not happen.
I think it is really important to note that Paul Holmes a Court backs ban on live exports. He has put out a media release. It is also important to note that he is one of the biggest cattle exporters to Indonesia in Australia. He states that there is no way that this live export should start until the issues that were identified in that Four Corners program have been dealt with. He points out that there needs to be a much tighter surveillance system. He also points out that Australian producers currently cannot guarantee that the standards that the industry and Australians would like to see will be met. He also says that the ban should only be lifted—I emphasise that—once we have an independent, auditable system which can allow that to happen. And that does not exist. He says that there needs to be an improved surveillance system to the extent that the National Livestock Identification System can be put in place to track animals in Indonesia.

These are very tangible things that need to happen before the live export of Australian cattle can ever be thought of. Currently we are in a situation where that cannot be guaranteed. Australians demand that animals that leave Australia be treated humanely, and that Four Corners program demonstrated very graphically that Australian cattle were being mistreated. We cannot support that. The motion we have before us today wants that trade to commence immediately to identified abattoirs; but, as I have already pointed out, the tracking system for the safety of the animals cannot be guaranteed. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms K Livermore): Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

World Refugee Day

Debate resumed on motion by Ms Parke:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) that 20 June each year is World Refugee Day, celebrating the courageous spirit and resilience of more than 10 million refugees around the world;
(b) that the global theme for World Refugee Day 2011, occurring in the year of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations Refugee Convention, is '1 refugee without hope is too many.';
(c) Australia's history of support for the United Nations Refugee Convention and its objectives, being the sixth signatory to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention which brought the convention into force in 1954, and having since welcomed 750 000 refugees who have made an enormous contribution to the culture, economy and social fabric of Australian society;
(d) that much of the political, media and public commentary in Australia regarding asylum-seekers and refugees misses or ignores the following facts:

(i) of the more than 10 million refugees identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), just over 100 000 or 1 per cent are resettled under orderly programs each year, which means that if someone puts their name on a list today they could wait more than 100 years for processing;
(ii) in many countries wracked by conflict, like Iraq or Afghanistan, there is no list or queue to join;
(iii) Australia's 8250 asylum seekers in 2010 is a minimal number compared with the 358 000 people who sought asylum in the 44 major industrialised counties in 2010, and compared with the millions of people from Iraq and Afghanistan who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries like Jordan, Iran and Pakistan.
(iv) only two per cent of the world's asylum claims are made in Australia;

(v) persons fleeing from persecution are not 'illegals', they have a legal right under international law
to seek asylum, and under the Menzies Government, Australia agreed to this by signing up to the
United Nations Refugee Convention; and

(vi) while Essential Research has reported that 25 per cent of Australians believe that 75 per cent of
our migrant intake is made up of asylum-seekers, in fact only 1 per cent of Australia's annual
migrant intake comes from them and even less from asylum-seekers who arrive by boat;

(2) notes the UNHCR report of April 2011 entitled Back to Basics: The Right to Liberty and Security of
Person and 'Alternatives to Detention' of Refugees, Asylum-Seekers, Stateless Persons and Other
Migrants and welcomes the forthcoming parliamentary inquiry into mandatory detention;

(3) recognises that it is possible to protect Australia’s borders while also treating asylum-seekers fairly,
humanely and in accordance with international law; and

(4) calls for:

(a) a return to bipartisanship in support of a reasoned, principled and facts-based approach to the
issue of asylum-seekers and refugees; and

(b) Australia to continue to work with other nations and the United Nations to address the complex
global and regional challenges associated with increased numbers of asylum-seekers and other
people movements that cannot be addressed by countries acting on their own

Ms Parke (Fremantle) (19:31): It makes me very proud to speak to this motion that
marks and celebrates World Refugee Day and occurs in the same year as the 60th anniversary
of the refugee convention. On this important day I want to make a plea for a more reasoned
and compassionate consideration of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia—a
consideration based on the facts and on simple humanity.

I know from my experience of working with the UN with refugees in Kosovo and Gaza
that people have a powerful attachment to their homes. I will never forget that bitterly cold
winter of 1999-2000 and seeing hundreds of thousands of Kosovar refugees returning from
neighbouring countries to their burnt out homes to spend the winter in UNHCR tents—or the
millions of Palestinian refugees throughout the Middle East waiting in limbo for decades in
UNRWA refugee camps for their internationally recognised right to return home to finally be
realised.

My experience tells me that people do not leave or stay away from their homes without
very good reasons. In 2001, President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia, who had fled her
country as a child after the Second World War, made this statement at a meeting of parties to
the refugee convention:

No one leaves their home willingly or gladly. When people leave en masse the place of their birth, the
place where they live it means there is something very deeply wrong with the circumstances in that
country and we should never take lightly these flights of refugees fleeing across borders. They are a
sign, they are a symptom, they are proof that something is very wrong somewhere on the international
scene. When the moment comes to leave your home, it is a painful moment.

... ... ...

It can be a costly choice. Three weeks and three days after my family left the shores of Latvia, my little
sister died. We buried her by the roadside, we were never able to return or put a flower on her grave.
And I like to think that I stand here today as a survivor who speaks for all those who died by the
roadside, some buried by their families and others not and for all those millions across the world today
who do not have a voice who cannot be heard but they are also human beings, they also suffer, they also have their hopes, their dreams and their aspirations. Most of all they dream of a normal life.

I entreat you ladies and gentlemen when you think about the problems of refugees, think of them not in the abstract think of them not in the bureaucratic language of decisions and declarations, and priorities in a sense that you normally think of things. I entreat you think of the human beings who are touched by your decisions, think of the lives who wait on your help.

Refugees are ordinary people fleeing from extraordinary circumstances. As a country, Australia has been deeply enriched by people who have come here as refugees. This is reflected in an email that I received a week ago from a young man in South Australia. He wrote:

I am a refugee. I arrived in 1981 at the age of three with my parents, having escaped Vietnam on a boat. We spent three days and three nights on an overcrowded vessel before landing in Malaysia. We then spent approximately nine months there before being granted a place in Adelaide. We had only the clothes on our backs and could not speak a word of English when we arrived. My father was a highly qualified teacher in Vietnam. He spent years going to university at night to regain his degrees and spent the days working as a postie to put myself and my brothers and sisters through school. I can still remember him leaving at five in the morning and not returning until late at night for several years.

I recall fondly the Australian battler friends we would have over to share in our family's milestones and being told by my parents not to copy their colourful language. 'Bloody hell' was something I learnt very early on! We were and are grateful to the Australian government and people for their support in those early years. We did need your support. We stayed at the Pennington hostel before living in housing trust homes until the mid-1980s. My father worked hard, and we bought our first Australian dream in the mid-1980s. He finally gained work with hard work—a full-time teaching position in the early nineties—and helped establish the Vietnamese curriculum in South Australia at that time.

And where am I now? I am a qualified thoracic medicine physician. I am in the final year of completing a PhD studying lung, head and neck cancer. And, yes, I could not speak a word of English when I started school at the age of five. I was 'one of them' on those boats, but luckily one of those who was given an opportunity to make a future here in Australia.

As this email shows, refugees are profoundly committed to peace and tend to pursue lives imbued with a sense of purpose, community and good fortune. The email also points to an era before mandatory detention. According to UNHCR's recent report, there is no basis in international law or practice for this policy aside from brief detention for initial identity, security and health checks. It is also expensive both in terms of cost to the taxpayer and in terms of damage to the mental health of people who have already suffered a great deal. I welcome the forthcoming parliamentary inquiry into mandatory detention.

Our first response to the term 'refugee' should be to understand that no-one willingly chooses to be one. Our second response as Australians should be to recognise that our share of the world's refugee crisis is actually a very small one and that, in fact, Australia is lucky to have its tapestry enriched with refugees. (Time expired)

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (19:37): I rise to also recognise World Refugee Day. In November last year I gave a speech to the Lowy Institute where I made a very simple point, and that is that we focus on the few at the great expense of the many. The many are the 99 per cent who will never see a resettlement outcome in another country in their lifetime. While some at this point will pause and reflect and think about the less than one per cent who may
seek to come to Australia and claim asylum here, whether they come by boat or by any other method, the vast majority of refugees will never see that opportunity. They will never see a resettlement outcome. They will languish in camps for their entire lives or for generations, and one day they might be able to go home.

The Australian government and the Australian people run the most generous refugee resettlement program per capita of any country in the world. It is something that as a country we should be extraordinarily proud of, it is something that we should continue and it is something that we should uphold the integrity of. So we believe very strongly that it is important that we run a humanitarian program that has integrity; that is not held hostage to the people smugglers who would seek to undermine the integrity of that system; and that will enable the Australian people, through their government, to hand out what is probably the most precious gift on offer to a refugee—and that is resettlement, because, as the motion notes, less than one per cent will end up getting a resettlement outcome in a third country. We should continue this program and we should be proud of it, but we should hold steadfastly to protecting the integrity of that program so that at all times we are in a position to decide who will get that great life chance of resettlement in a country—in particular, in Australia.

The motion points to the fact that there are not queues. Well, there simply are queues. There were 47,000 people in the queue to be part of our offshore applied humanitarian program in Australia last year: 9,577 of them were Afghans and 7,532 of them were Iraqis. Of the Iraqis who applied offshore 1,688 were able to receive a visa, and of the Afghans who applied only 951 were. So one in 10 Afghans who applied offshore got that opportunity for a resettlement place in Australia, and over the same period more than nine out of 10 or thereabouts of those that had arrived by boat took that opportunity by presenting on our shores.

It is important that we have a program that has integrity. In the speech that I gave to the Lowy Institute last year, I called on an international focus to ensure that the UNHCR put its first priority on countries of first asylum—ensuring that the conditions in those camps in the countries of first asylum are of a standard that enables the vast majority who will live their lives in those camps, and often see their grandchildren live and be raised up in those camps, to be given at least some opportunity in life—and also that all of our efforts internationally are focused on ensuring that people can get home safely. That is what our soldiers are doing in Afghanistan today: to provide the opportunity for a safe country where people can go home and live their lives in peace and in freedom. That is our goal for the world's refugee problem: that people can go home safely.

There is a call in this motion for there to be a bipartisan position that recognises that it is possible to protect Australia's borders while also treating asylum seekers fairly, humanely and in accordance with international law. We had that arrangement. We had it in 2007, when there were just four people in our detention network who had arrived by boat, and this government departed from that. I am all for bipartisanship, but not at the expense of bad policy. I am all for bipartisanship that enables us to pursue policy that is in the best interests of this country, but when we have policies such as those pursued by this government—which have led to around 11,500 people taking that treacherous voyage to force claims on a country rather than enable those claims to be assessed along with the offshore applications that would enable an equal opportunity for those who are applying offshore—when we see over 6,500 people in
detention, spending three times as long there as they were just two years ago, and when we see the costs balloon and the misery continue, you can draw only one conclusion: that this is failed policy.

So the coalition will continue our strong support for our refugee and humanitarian program, but we will stand up for the integrity of that program. We are concerned about its integrity under this government, and we want to see that restored. That is why we believe the more cost-effective, more humane and more effective and proven solution is to reintroduce processing on Nauru and to reintroduce temporary protection visas, because that is what stopped the boats and, at the end of the day, supported the rights of refugees. (Time expired)

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (19:42): I want to begin by thanking the member for Fremantle for putting forward this motion. The member for Fremantle has a record of work and advocacy for the rights of refugees, and I welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion this evening. Today, as has already been mentioned, is World Refugee Day, and as such we have an opportunity to recognise and reflect on the plight of people who are forced through a myriad of circumstances to flee their homes in search of refuge and asylum. The conditions and circumstances of some 10 million refugees can often shake the strongest of human resolve. Yet, despite being amongst the world's most vulnerable people, refugees have time and time again displayed a level of courage and resilience that is testament to the extraordinary human capacity to endure and survive amidst dislocation and displacement which strike at the very heart of human life and dignity.

The rights of each and every individual are sacred, and this year's theme, 'One refugee without hope is one too many,' recognises this. Refugees do not choose their circumstances, and the purpose of seeking asylum is an article of faith in itself. It is placing faith in a common humanity—a faith that others around the world can restore hope through a compassionate and humanitarian approach. It is a faith in international law and the mechanisms which guide it. Yet, unfortunately, there are those amongst us who choose to play politics with this issue and who, for cynical reasons, prefer to fan the flames of fear and anxiety. As a result, they lose sight of their common humanity.

World Refugee Day serves to remind us that, as a society, Australia can stand and has stood tall in meeting its responsibilities to refugees. Historically, we have offered asylum to hundreds of thousands who have sought safety and refuge in this country. We will continue to do so because it is morally and legally the right thing to do, but we also need to reflect on the fact that refugees have made a positive and profound contribution to this country. My electorate is home to many refugees, initially from war-torn Europe, from Africa, from the Middle East and from Asia. These are wonderful people, grateful for the refuge they were given, eager to make a contribution and eager to build a new life for themselves and their families. More recently we have welcomed thousands of Chaldeans from Iraq, settling in our region, becoming Australian citizens and eager to be a part of what they call a democratic, multicultural community. Part of the fear campaign waged in this country goes to the perception that we are being swamped by illegal arrivals, or boat people. It is so easy to peddle fear, but we need to put things into perspective. The reality is that Australia receives an extremely small number of people seeking asylum when measured on a global scale. We need to note this here today. Our current refugee situation is a pathetically minute issue in comparison to, let us say, what is going on in Europe—in particular, to what is going on in
countries like Greece, which, for example, has about 400,000 refugees—or to what is going on in our neighbour Malaysia, which has about 94,000. These countries are much smaller and poorer than ours and they are countries with porous borders. The motion calls for a return to bipartisanship in support of a reasoned, principled and fact based approach to this issue. Bipartisanship is essential to developing policies and strategies that uphold our legal, moral and humanitarian responsibilities.

I want to reflect on the political debate on refugees that we are currently having, a debate that must surely shame us. I say 'shame' because in the last decade, in particular since the Howard government broke bipartisanship on refugees, we have been caught up in a self-indulgent political narrative that seeks to politicise the issue of asylum seekers and refugees through a campaign of fear and political opportunism. It is a narrative that has distorted the intentions of government and blurred the truth when it comes to reporting facts. We can bear discussions and differences of opinion, but what this House must not tolerate is the hypocrisy and political point-scoring that drives the debate at the moment. It does not serve our national interest.

Refugees and asylum seekers do not seek charity; they seek life—a right which is natural, inalienable and self-evident. Let us remember that this is a complex global issue which needs a sensible and measured approach. Political parties and politicians have a responsibility to inform public debate, not to misinform it. Some of us may never imagine being forced to face life-threatening risks, but here in Australia we live amongst people who have been refugees, who have made the perilous journey and who, proudly calling Australia home, have joined us in our safe haven. I pay tribute to them and to the many in my electorate I proudly represent and to their resolve to be some of our most outstanding citizens.

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (19:47): Sixty years ago, Australia was the sixth country in the world to sign the United Nations refugee convention. Since the convention came into force, 750,000 refugees have made Australia their home. As this motion says, refugees have contributed to every aspect of Australian life, bringing with them unique cultures, skills and values which have enriched our culture, economy, social fabric and governance. I strongly support this motion and I thank the member for Fremantle for bringing to the attention of the House the celebration today of World Refugee Day.

For me, however, the day is one that comes with deep sadness and a sense of shame, knowing that the Australian government will implement the so-called Malaysian solution. For those fleeing persecution, war and ethnic cleansing, there are few options but to flee their homeland. We are dealing with the worst of human conditions and, as a parliament, we must resolve to craft a durable, humane and regionally based response that is proportionate to the dimensions of the problem. I particularly endorse the call in this motion for a return to bipartisan support so that this debate is both reasoned and principled.

As it stands, the current approach is both a human and a diplomatic disaster. Do we not stop to consider how our approach may look to neighbouring countries? Malaysia, for example, has registered 93,000 refugees. Yet our political rhetoric is that we are being swamped by refugees—in fact some have even called it a tsunami. As this motion points out, Australia took in 8,250 asylum seekers in 2010 compared to the 358,000 people seeking asylum in 44 major industrialised countries in 2010. Do we not stop to consider what might happen to this very important convention if every other country in the world were to seek to
shift their responsibility onto states which are not signatories to the convention and which are less well-equipped to manage the resettlement of refugees than we are in this country? We whip up fear and fervour with the use of slippery slogans and puerile prose, such as being 'swamped' and 'tsunamis of refugees', along with 'queue jumpers' and 'illegals'. Such language is unbecoming of our leadership and should be banished from our lexicon.

The spectacle of a mother, with her young child, having arrived on Christmas Island seeking refuge, being threatened with separation from her husband and the father of the child and with being sent to Malaysia is cruel beyond belief. The action demonstrates a yawning moral and legal deficiency in our policy approach to refugees. This case was widely reported over the weekend.

In my view, it is time to return to the foundation principles that should be the hallmark of all policymaking—the robust defence of human life and human dignity. Neither the Malaysia nor the Nauru solutions fit the criteria and both should be immediately abandoned, as should the cruel practice of arbitrary, indefinite mandatory detention. It is still a matter of grave concern to me that several years—in fact, it is about five and a half years—after having negotiated with the Howard government to make sure that families with children were removed from detention centres, we still have hundreds of children in detention in this country. We had an agreement with the Prime Minister at that time, which was enshrined in legislation, to only put children into detention centres—and let us be honest here; we call them detention centres, but they are really prisons, and in some of those prisons there are people awaiting deportation for murder, for rape, for violent crimes—as an absolute last resort, yet we still have children locked up in these centres. From my point of view, I think it is time to honour the commitments made by both governments to only detain children as an absolute last resort. Let us get those children out of detention centres and let us, for once, join together to put an end to arbitrary, indefinite mandatory detention.

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (19:51): What do all these great Australians—researcher Gustav Nossal, entrepreneur Frank Lowy, scientist Karl Kruszelnicki, academic Eva Cox, commentator Les Murray, comedian Ahn Do; sportsman Majak Daw, television presenter Yalda Hakim, the late businessman Richard Pratt and Justice James Spiegelman—have in common? They were all refugees. World Refugee Day is a day to reflect on the generosity of Australia. We are a big country with a big heart. This is something we should be proud of. Since 1945, over three-quarters of a million people have resettled in Australia. Those who have sought refuge in our country have made significant social, economic and cultural contributions to the nation we are today and to the nation we will be tomorrow.

Today, along with the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, I attended the Canberra Refugee Support scholarship ceremony. For the past six years the Canberra Refugee Support scholarship program has brought together the ACT government, local businesses, community organisations and individual citizens in helping refugees overcome hardship and persecution through the benefits of education and vocational opportunities. Today 22 refugees from Burma, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iran and Ethiopia were awarded scholarships to assist and acknowledge their determination and resilience in achieving their dreams.

One such recipient was See Mu Paw. See Mu is 18 years old and currently in her final year at Dickson College where she is studying to attain the ACT Year 12 Certificate. Gentle and caring, she is an active member of the Refugee Bridging Program. Before moving to a refugee...
camp in Thailand, See Mu had spent her young life in a small village in Burma. From the camp in Thailand, See Mu and her family settled in Australia in 2009. See Mu's teachers comment on her kindness and her willingness to support others in need. She is planning to study childcare at the Canberra Institute of Technology next year. See Mu's scholarship was sponsored by Athol Morris in memory of his mother, Helen Morris. A refugee herself, Helen came to Australia before World War II, escaping the Nazi regime in 1936. The letter she wrote to Prime Minister Joseph Lyons made its way to his office via, of all places, the CSIRO. Wanting to help people in her situation, Prime Minister Lyons granted her an entry permit.

Helen's story highlights that Australia's generosity and understanding predates our commitment to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and the formation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Australia was a founding member of the 1958 UNHCR executive committee and, before that, the 1951 advisory committee. This government is committed to Australia taking more refugees and has expanded the humanitarian program to 14,750 places per year. Last year we provided $50 million in funding to the UNHCR.

In my electorate of Fraser, I am proud to work with and support the work of Canberra Refugee Support and its president, Geoff McPherson, vice president, David Cran and secretary Ben Pynt; the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum; the Dickson College Refugee Bridging Program; the senior multicultural information and learning exchange; and the Refugee Resettlement Committee with president Gabriel Blair, vice president Peter Peterson and community liaison officer Bev Purnell.

World Refugee Day celebrates the contribution of refugees to Australia and other nations. This year is the 60th anniversary of the United Nations refugee convention. Today we celebrate the diversity and richness refugees have brought to our country. But today is also a sobering day because, as far as we have come and as generous as we have been, we face the new challenges of working with our regional neighbours and the UNHCR to provide humane and respectful resettlement services while ending people smuggling. Through the contribution of those who have chosen to call Australia home, refugees to Australia have brought employment and job opportunities to thousands. (Time expired)

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (19:57): In rising to speak on this motion, I offer my recognition this World Refugee Day of the role refugees and migrants have played in the prosperity of our great nation. On this day I pause to think about the unbearable situation that many refugees go through when they are forced to flee their homes. I pause to think in particular of the life of my friend Malcolm. Mao ky—or Malcolm—came to this country in the early 1980s after surviving the killing fields of Cambodia. As a 10-year-old, he made the dangerous crossing with his family into Thailand and registered with the UNHCR. Malcolm came to Australia and worked hard on learning to speak English—his fourth language—before serving with the New South Wales Police Force for a decade and then later taking up his current role as an electoral officer in my office. Malcolm, like many who have come to Australia through legal channels, has made a great contribution to this country. I am proud to call him my friend.

It comes as a surprise that this motion was moved by the same member for Fremantle who only last week voted in support of the so called Malaysian solution. I understand the member...
for Fremantle to be a very principled person but Hansard will show and history will record for perpetuity that the member for Fremantle failed to condemn a policy which will see asylum seekers that reach Australia tagged like cattle and shipped off to Malaysia in a five-for-one people swap. If the coalition had even considered such an extreme and inhumane plan as the Malaysian solution there would have been riots in the streets. However, the member for Fremantle cannot cleanse her conscience by supporting the Malaysian solution one day and then moving this motion the next.

This motion calls for the return of bipartisanship in support of a reasoned, principled and facts-based approach to the issue of asylum seekers and refugees. Really? Does the member for Fremantle really think that Labor's Malaysian solution, which she supports, is a reasoned, principled and facts-based approach to the issue of asylum seekers and refugees? The coalition would be more than pleased if this government took a bipartisan approach by supporting the reopening of facilities on Nauru. If the member for Fremantle wants to take a facts-based approach, the fact is: Nauru worked.

Compare that with this government's abysmal policy on asylum seekers, with policy failure after policy failure. In opposition the Labor Party railed against the Howard government's asylum seeker laws and when they came to government they unraveled policies that were working. While this Prime Minister's policies have successfully destroyed the ceiling installation industry, and now she wants to destroy the manufacturing industry with a carbon tax, one of the few industries that is thriving under this government is the people-smuggling business. Look at the mess we are in from this government's policies. We have thousands crammed into overcrowded detention centres across the nation. We have police forced to use tear gas to break up riots. The Villawood detention centre has been set ablaze, causing $9 million worth of damage. Aerosol cans are banned after the construction of home-made bombs. We have had a blow-out in costs of over $1.7 billion from Labor's failed policies on asylum seekers.

And then we had the pre-election con job of the East Timor solution followed by the Prime Minister giving the excuse that she would not consider Nauru because Nauru was not a signatory to the UN convention. But last week the President of Nauru formally signed that convention, and this is despite Malaysia not being a signatory of that convention. The Prime Minister's excuse for not re-opening Nauru because it is not a signatory to the UN convention is in exactly the same league as her promise not to introduce a carbon tax. No wonder the electorate has stopped listening to this Prime Minister.

Now, we have a motion of appalling and shameful hypocrisy calling for bipartisanship. Personally, I would like to see an increase in the refugee quota so that Australia can welcome more refugees, especially the persecuted Christian Copts from Muslim countries in the Middle East. The Coptic Christians in Egypt are currently being murdered and kidnapped, and their churches are being burned and bombed, yet this Labor government remains silent to their plight. We should immediately be offering more places to Coptic Christians under our refugee quota. That would be the best way that we could all celebrate World Refugee Day.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.
Computers in Schools

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (20:02): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges the Government's failure to deliver on its promise to provide a computer for every secondary school student between years 9 to 12 within the original budget commitment of $1 billion;

(2) condemns the Government for promising to families that they would not have to pay for charges associated with using the laptop computers, and then for breaking that promise by authorising schools to charge fees and levies to parents to use the laptops; and

(3) calls on the Government to explain to families why it has broken its promise and why parents should be the ones to pay up to hundreds of dollars to make up the funding shortfall associated with the program, at a time when cost of living pressures are increasing.

Let us look briefly at the history that has led to the unfortunate situation of parents now having to foot the bill for the computers in schools program. The computers in schools program was once the centrepiece of Labor's education policies, but now it is another in a long list of programs where so much was promised and so little delivered. When the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and soon to be Prime Minister again, stood up at a press conference before the 2007 election, laptop in one hand and microphone in the other, and promised all Australian parents that he would provide a computer for their child, they took him at his word. Labor's original education promise was $1 million to give a computer to every student in Australia in years 9 to 12. That was approximately one million students and therefore each computer was to cost the taxpayer $1,000.

At budget time in 2008, that became a $1.2 billion program and the government started using weasel words like 'access to a computer' as if they would not be held to account to their promise of a computer on every desk. In its first year of operation under the stewardship of the former minister for education, Julia Gillard, now Prime Minister and soon not to be, computers were allocated to less than 10 per cent of public schools in Australia. Many schools that were promised computers in midyear 2008 had still not received a single computer when their students left for Christmas that year. Freedom of information applications in estimates hearings forced the government to reveal that the program was underfunded by $1 billion, because it had not occurred to the Prime Minister that giving someone a computer without software, networking or IT support is pointless.

Departmental figures released under FOI in 2008 demonstrated that in order to deliver on the election promise of one computer for every child in years 9 to 12, the whole program would cost more than $5 billion. This was based on figures showing that states were going to have to commit $3.27 for every federal dollar under the $1.2 billion program.

Minister Gillard then tried to pass these costs on to the states but the states refused to pay for her federal Labor mess. Then the New South Wales Labor government dropped a bomb. In an interview in October 2008 the New South Wales Premier, Nathan Rees, confirmed on The 7.30 Report that the government's computers in schools program was in freefall across Australia, confirming what the coalition had known all along. Responding to a question about why his government was unable to take part in the second round of the program, Mr Rees said:

Well, the most recent advice to me from some of the other jurisdictions is that they [had] serious reservation as well.
Shortly thereafter, New South Wales withdrew from the program altogether and others states threatened to follow suit.

The South Australian and ACT governments then said that they were going to use the funding for new computers to replace old computers rather than increase the numbers of computers in schools. The Western Australian government threatened to withdraw from the program. By late 2008 the computers in schools program was in freefall and to save it the then minister for education was forced to announce a further $807 million at a Council of Australian Governments meeting as a bandaid solution, bringing the cost to over $2 billion by the end of 2008. The government attempted to blame the global financial crisis for the budget going into deficit—when in doubt, in emergency, break glass and blame the global financial crisis! It is a change from blaming Work Choices; it the new 'in emergency, break glass and mention Work Choices'.

The reality is that cost blow-outs in programs like computers in schools are driving down the surplus. It is economic incompetence and bungling mismanagement that is leading Labor to only produce budget deficits. I cannot recall any government in history where a $1 billion budget blow-out was considered acceptable.

Mr McCormack: A Labor budget!

Mr PYNE: Exactly; another Labor budget. Since then there have been two further budget blow-outs for computers in schools. The 2009-10 and the 2011-12 budgets have added a further $400 million to the cost of the program for so-called maintenance, bringing the total cost now to $2.4 billion. That is now a $1.4 billion blow-out.

Mr McCormack: Pretty good for Labor.

Mr PYNE: That is probably cheap for Labor in comparison to what they usually do. The pink batts program was even worse. The delivery of the computers has become an impossible mission for this government. Labor promised to deliver one million computers to every student in years 9 to 12 at $1,000 a computer by December 2011 and to have all of these computers connected to fast, 100 megabits per second, fibre internet. As at 31 March 2011, less than half that number have been delivered and none of the computers have been connected to fast internet, not one. On these figures, the government will need to deliver most computers in six months—more computers in six months than they have delivered in four years—to keep even part of this promise.

I will return to the point of this motion. In early 2010 reports emerged that schools were charging parents fees and levies to access the computers in schools program. One such example was Seaford public school in South Australia. As funding was insufficient to cover the real costs associated with the program, this school was forced to charge a yearly levy of $365 in order to allow a student to take a laptop home to use after hours, on the weekends and during holidays. The children of parents who could not afford this fee would not be able to use a computer during these times. It appears that all students are not equal in the computers for schools program. At that time the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, categorically ruled out any additional charges could be applied on this program. He said:

When we are providing that level of support—

$2 billion—
to schools for computers in schools I don't see any basis for any school then subsequently charging parents for its use.

Those were the words of the former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd about the centrepiece of his 2007 election campaign. Further evidence at Senate estimates hearings provided by the department of education confirmed the government policy last year was:

… the Commonwealth position was that, as is reflected in the COAG agreement, the Commonwealth is providing for the total cost of ownership of those devices for four years and that there is no justification for additional charges to be levied so that computers can be taken home; that any issues that might arise in terms of costs flowing from that, such as lost computers or damaged computers, can be handled by way of specific policies and agreements with parents on those issues; and to repeat that, in the Commonwealth's point of view, there is no justification for parents’ levies to cover the cost of taking a computer home.

It was promised that such instances of abuse where schools were charging fees for the program that was supposed to be free would be investigated and resolved. More and more examples have emerged over the past two years of parents being charged for computers. In December 2010 in the dead of night the guidelines for the computers in schools program were changed so as to allow schools to pass on additional costs to parents. The computers in schools program is no longer free. There is a clear and undeniable broken promise by this government and we have a bundle of examples of where this is occurring, which some of my colleagues will discuss in this debate. There have been examples in Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales. The charges have ranged from insurance charges to take-home fees. Parents who are already struggling with cost of living pressures are rightly asking why the Rudd-Gillard government that promised them so much is now breaking another promise.

As we enter 'fundamental injustice week' and approach the anniversary of the political assassination of a Prime Minister, it is worth considering that the changes to this program were made after the member for Griffith was assassinated, because if he were still Prime Minister he would not have countenanced parents being charged under this policy that was the centrepiece of his election campaign. I want to conclude by suggesting that the coalition does not support students having access to appropriate ICT in schools to meet their needs on a cost basis charged by this government in a broken promise. The former coalition provided funding for the popular Investing in Our Schools Program. Our policy, as was reflected in the 2010 election, is to give schools the funding for ICT so that they, or in collaboration with their school system, can make the appropriate decisions as to what equipment they wish to invest in for their students. We recognise that no school is the same or has the same needs. I believe it is not acceptable to promise Australian families free computers and then pass those costs on to the states, individual schools and parents. I commend the motion to the House.

Mrs D'ATH (Petrie) (20:12): It is disappointing but not surprising that I have to stand here and respond to a motion criticising funding going to schools. We have been doing it since the day we got into government in 2007 and we continue to have to do it today. It is my responsibility today to put on the record the facts because the opposition tend to ignore the facts when they put motions like this forward. The closing statement from the member for Sturt was that the opposition do not oppose schools getting funding for computers and ICT yet they went to the last election wanting to cut more than $2.5 billion from schools. That was in August last year. The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Sturt this year proposed
further education cuts of $355 million. That is $2.8 billion the Liberal Party want to cut from schools. No matter what the program is—whether it is building halls, libraries, trade training centres, science and language centres or performing arts centres or putting computers into schools—the opposition have opposed it every step of the way.

Let us get the facts on the record. With the National Secondary School Computer Fund the government committed in 2007 to $1 billion over four years to provide access to computers for every secondary school student in years 9 to 12. This is being implemented today by achieving a computer to student ratio of one to one for students in years 9 to 12 by 31 December 2011—a total of over 780,000 computers. You do not have to take just my word for it. Look at some of the school websites. I look at some of the school websites and their annual reports to see what they are saying about their computers. They are already at the two to one ratio and are talking about how they will move towards the one to one ratio by the end of the year. Some schools have already got the one to one ratio and some schools have gone beyond that and have got the one to one ratio for the earlier grades as well, so grades 8 as well as grades 9, 10, 11 and 12. In November 2008 the government also committed $807 million to supplement the original commitment so that state and territory education authorities could contribute to the legitimate oncost of installing the computers purchased through the fund. This is making sure that the schools and the students are getting the most out of this technology. The opposition do not acknowledge that computers are not just a type of word processor or are not just for downloading something but are to connect with other schools—to connect with schools interstate, to connect with schools overseas. That is what my schools are doing—they are going online through Skype and other programs. They are talking to students in Japan as part of their language lessons, in the new language centres that this Labor government built for them. So, we did commit to additional funding to ensure schools had the adequate infrastructure to make the most of these computers.

The opposition also fails to mention that from day one, beyond the initial funding to put the computers in the schools, we provided the ongoing funding to maintain these computers. What is the point of purchasing computers when four or five years down the track they are all obsolete and no-one replaces them? It was the first question the schools actually asked—what happens as these technologies age? We committed to maintaining them from day one. Those opposite are carrying on and saying there is a budget blow-out and all of a sudden there is more money going to computers in schools, but it was always part of our commitment. You actually have to read what our commitments were to understand that. We made a commitment and we are fulfilling that commitment to provide funding.

There are allegations that the government is forcing schools to charge fees and levies. The government does not support the charging of a fee or the imposition of a levy or co-contribution or bond from parents or carers for a computer provided under the National Secondary School Computer Fund. Some schools in limited circumstances are charging fees. Why are they doing that? Because schools and education authorities are required to maintain the investment in computers that they were making before the computer fund began. Many of the schools had programs in place and were already charging parents a computer levy. Of course those opposite want to attribute that levy to this government and the computers in schools program, even though it was already being charged. Some schools, in conjunction with their P&Cs or P&Fs, have chosen to provide more expensive computers, more expensive
technology, and as a consequence are charging fees or requesting co-contributions. As I have already said, some schools are extending this program beyond years 9 to 12 so that more students in secondary schools can get access to this technology at younger ages. They may be charging fees, but attributing these fees to this program is just false.

The member for Sturt's 17 schools have got 3,730 computers under this program already. What are they saying? What are his school parents saying? The member for Grey has received 2,191 computers in 60 schools in his electorate. The member for Dawson has 2,422 computers at 18 schools. The schools in my electorate, who have 2,899 computers already under this program, are very pleased to have this technology. It is not technology that the previous government were willing to provide. It was not an investment that the Howard government were willing to make in our schools. They were not providing the computers; they were not providing the funding for Smart Boards. They were not providing new libraries. They were not providing hall facilities or trades training centres or new science centres or new language centres or new programs for partnering between state and private schools. They were not committing to education at all. This was not an important area for them. It is not an important area for them now.

We only need to listen to their election commitments in August last year, and we only need to listen to the member for Sturt and the Leader of the Opposition this year, to understand the sorts of cuts that they want to make in this area. They want to cut computers in schools—they made that very clear—and cut the trades training centres. Every school that has not built their new hall or library, that is it—they do not need that funding any more. They are a party that is not committed to education, that is not committed to the future of our children. Their opposition to the National Broadband Network is another prime indication that they do not understand the future of this country. They do not understand what the youth of today need to prepare them for the jobs of the future. They do not see computers as necessary in our schools. They do not see them as important. They do not see broadband and its role in relation to education as important.

I am very proud of what this government is doing in education. I am very proud of the commitment we are making not just in relation to the infrastructure, as important as that infrastructure is, but also in relation to other programs such as the extra funding for the National Partnership Agreement for Literacy and Numeracy and the extra funding that we are putting towards creating specialist teachers so we can get more science and mathematics teachers. It took this government to actually develop a national curriculum. We are finally getting a national curriculum in this country so no matter where you live, no matter where your job takes you—if you are in the defence forces and you happen to be a family that moves around a lot and moves across borders—you can guarantee that your children are being taught the same in maths, science and English in a school in New South Wales as they are in Queensland or Western Australia or Tasmania. This is what a Labor government is committed to. We are committed to education; we are committed to our young people. We take a holistic approach to education. We want to improve education and provide the best education we can for our children, for their parents and for the broader school community. We value our teachers, we value our parents and we value our students. That is what with this Labor government is about.
Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield) (20:22): Essentially, what we have heard from the member for Petrie in response to this motion is that, firstly, lots of schools have some computers so we should not really worry about how many do not have computers and, secondly, the Labor government have spent lots of money and are even spending more so how could we dare to criticise. Neither of those are good responses to the core of this motion, which is that we have a substantial program here which has been maladministered and has not delivered on the commitments that were made. In 2007 there was a very clear promise made by the Labor Party, in seeking government, that $1 billion would be spent so that there would be a computer for every secondary student between years 9 and 12. That has simply not been delivered upon.

When this bold, shining vision first appeared some people were sufficiently prosaic to ask: 'That is interesting. What are the arrangements going to be for maintenance and support costs? What are the arrangements going to be under which software is provided for these computers? How is the operational expenditure going to be provided for the networking that is required for these computers?' But it seemed that those were mere details which were not to impede the grand vision. So we had a promise that was made and it quickly became evident that the detailed work had not been done to substantiate that promise.

How do we know this? One very interesting indication is to look at the second, now abandoned, limb of this program under which there was to be $100 million spent to connect schools with fibre. At the time, the then shadow minister for broadband and communications, Senator Stephen Conroy, had this to say:

The fibre project is based in industry estimates. The figure of $100 million is based on lengthy discussions with a range of providers and industry suppliers, the people who actually do it.

That was all right, then—they had done the detailed planning. So, mysteriously, when you fast forward to 2011 what do you find? You find that Dr Arthur of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations appeared before the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications in March 2011 to announce that none of the $100 million had been spent at all. They had done absolutely nothing in relation to the promise that was made in 2007. A little later we learned, and it was confirmed recently in estimates, that in May 2011 a decision was made to simply abandon that expenditure altogether. It seems that responsibility for the connectivity part of the program has simply been quietly shuffled onto the National Broadband Network. Therefore, we may then be waiting a very long time indeed for this connectivity to be delivered.

The question is whether Australian citizens, parents, students and communities have received what was committed to them by the incoming Labor government in 2007. When the commitment was made to deliver computers to one million students for $1 billion, could that have been achieved by the deadline of December 2011? I have to admire the touching faith of the member for Petrie. We may be at June and it may well be the case that the total number of computers delivered is so far behind the required rate that you would need to more than double the rate if you are to achieve completion of the program by December 2011, but she is keeping the faith and I have to admire that. She is holding onto her faith in the absence of any objective evidence that this rate of delivery is going to be dramatically accelerated. There is no evidence for that.
Sadly, what we have seen in every aspect of this program is that it is quite clear that what was originally committed was dreamt up probably on the back of a whiteboard. There was very little detailed planning done. The economics simply do not hold up. As the shadow minister has eloquently demonstrated, it became clear as early as 2008 and 2009 that the program was simply not able to stack up based upon its own economics. There has been a desperate attempt to throw additional cash at this to try to keep the show on the road, but the reality is that this was not planned properly from the start. There was not even a skerrick of basic managerial competence and Australian parents and students are being let down as a result.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (20:27): Over the last few months I have had the great pleasure to get around to a number of the schools in my electorate, both government and non-government schools, for the opening of a range of projects built under the Building the Education Revolution program. Universally, we are met with great gratitude because the teachers, students and parents of each and every one of those schools understand that this Labor government have visited upon them the greatest injection of investment into our school system since the Second World War.

Mr Danby: They go to all the openings.

Mr STEPHEN JONES: The member for Melbourne Ports is quite right. Those opposite are always there to get a photograph taken.

Mr Pyne interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Sturt.

Mr STEPHEN JONES: They are heroes in their electorates and cowards in Canberra. When they come to this place they disown the openings that they have been to and do nothing but 'slag and bag', as the member for Sturt is very fond of saying.

I recently had the pleasure of attending Warrawong High School, which has been the beneficiary of around 160 new computers that have been delivered under this program. That is one of the 19 schools within the electorate of Throsby which have received a total of over 4,570 computers under this particular program. It really is quite extraordinary that the member for Sturt, and those who have lined up to support him, brings this motion before the House when, as the member for Petrie has correctly identified, there are 17 schools within the member for Sturt's electorate that have received a total of over 3,700 computers under this program. I see that the member for Dawson is about to get up and speak. There is no doubt that he will have something to say about the 18 schools within his electorate that have received a total of nearly 2½ thousand computers under this program. When you think about it, there is only one reason why the member for Sturt brings this motion before the House: they have no policy and they have a lousy record when it comes to education. The only thing that they can point to after 11 years, during which the member for Sturt struggled, scratched, crawled and begged to be elevated to the front bench but was continually overlooked—you walk past it on your way into the classroom in most of the schools in my electorate—is a flagpole. Their contribution to the Australian education system is flagpoles. Do not get me wrong: I think flagpoles are very important. I think understanding the importance of our flag in our schools is very important, but when the importance of providing working-class kids in my electorate with a laptop, with a computer that is going to help them in their education, is
stacked up against walking past and saluting a flagpole, I know what most of the parents would opt for.

So there is only one reason why the member for Sturt comes in here to slag and bag a program once again, and that is that they have a lousy record and no policy in this area. Their only policy is to gut the education budget. They went to the last election promising to cut more than $2.5 billion from schools. In addition to that, the spokesperson for education, the member for Sturt, has proposed a further $355 million worth of cuts—that is right, about $2.8 billion in cuts to our school system. So it is quite clear that the real reason they have come here to slag and bag a great program, these gormless characters who have lined up to stand behind the Manager of Opposition Business in defiance of the great work that is going on in their electorates, to stand up behind the member who does nothing but slag and bag and disrupt proceedings in this place, is that they have no policy and a lousy record. The motion should be rejected.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (20:32): If there is one legacy this government will leave our school students it is a new definition for the word 'revolution'. Over the four years of the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments, we have come to learn that when the word 'revolution' is in the name of a program it is shorthand for bungled failure; it is shorthand for mismanagement and waste; it is shorthand for saying, 'We were in such a rush to put something together that we just grabbed a couple of words and stuck revolution on the end.' And here we find it again with the Digital Education Revolution, otherwise known as the computers in schools program.

It is a shame that the education revolution did not start with the Labor Party, because that is where basic mathematics is sadly deficient. Just about every aspect of their Digital Education Revolution promise in 2007 has been broken, and they are only a few months away from making it a complete set. The Australian people were promised a computer for every student in years 9 to 12. The Australian people were promised that the taxpayer cost for this program would be $1 billion. Australian parents were promised that there would be no additional fees or charges. They were promised that this program would be completed by the end of 2011. The clock is ticking. It has now been 3½ years in the making and there is only six months to go, and where are we up to? Last month the Prime Minister informed us that 413,000 computers had been delivered, out of the one million that were promised, achieving a student-to-computer ratio of around two to one, when one to one was promised.

They are not even halfway with their rollout and we are expected to believe that more than half a million computers will be delivered in the final six months of this program—that is, 600,000 computers in six months when it took 3½ years to roll out 400,000. No, there will not be a million computers by the end of this year and there will not be a one to one student-to-computer ratio. The sad truth is that thousands of students started secondary school after the promise was made by the government and they will leave before the promise is even halfway delivered in their school. There is a very good reason why they cannot finish the program: no-one in this government thought to add up the figures, no-one thought to think the policy through and no-one thought to even cost the delivery of a computer. Someone simply plucked the figure of $1,000 out of the air and thought, 'That'll do.'

It is the same methodology that is behind the digital television set-top box costing. Harvey Norman can deliver set-top boxes for half the amount, and they can deliver a computer for
half the amount as well. The government simply have no excuse for going over budget, apart from the fact that they have no idea how to spend taxpayers' money wisely. Their answer is to simply keep throwing money around until something happens and then keep introducing taxes to keep the money supply coming. But Australian taxpayers are not an endless supply of money for the government to waste. Australian taxpayers are facing spiralling living costs precisely because of this attitude. Australian parents are struggling to pay for the essentials: electricity, water, food and school fees. The 2007 promise made when the Minister for Foreign Affairs was the Prime Minister guaranteed that parents would not have to foot the bill for this so-called Digital Education Revolution. Somewhere along the line, the policy changed. Somewhere along the line, a constituent in my electorate of Dawson was being told by the Proserpine State High School that they now had to pay a fee for their child to use a computer they got through this program.

Part of the reason behind that fee is mismanagement behind this program. Rather than deliver the student-to-computer ratio of one to one as promised, the government deducted one new computer for every existing desktop computer that the school already had on the books. They were deducting desktop PCs. I have to say that you cannot take home a desktop computer from school, and that was exactly what this scheme was promoting. Now the Proserpine State High School is delivering the one to one ratio to years 9 and 10 only, and that is a ratio of two to one for the whole school, while they are being forced to decommission out-of-date desktop computers.

This government stands condemned for breaking its promise to parents. On all aspects of this program, serious questions must be answered. Parents have the right to know why the cost has blown out to more than double. They have the right to ask why the delivery to date has been less than half. These parents know that they can purchase a brand new netbook with appropriate software for around $500. Somehow the government allocates $1,000 and then parents are asked to shell out hundreds of dollars more. Parents and students deserve better than that.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (20:37): I just love it when the Tories talk about teachers and teaching because they just do not get it. Since we have been in power, we have doubled the funding in education to $64 billion. That is more than double what the coalition put in. We have provided $16.2 billion in Building the Education Revolution, $109 million for 65 schools in my electorate. We have provided $2.5 billion for trade training centres. The Ipswich trade training centre is already up and running. It is located for Ipswich Grammar School, Ipswich Girls' Grammar School and St Eddies at St Edmund's College. We have provided $2.4 billion in the Digital Education Revolution. As at 31 March 2011 we have delivered 2,456 computers in 17 schools in my electorate of Blair—Ipswich and the Somerset. There are over 70,000 computers across Queensland. I say to the member for Dawson and the member for Sturt: can we have that money back? Can we have the computers back? We would love to have them back and place them in schools in my seat. Place them in Bundamba State Secondary College. We will have them in our Bundamba State Secondary College. We will have them at St Mary's in East Ipswich and Lowood State School. We will have them at Bremer State High School, Ipswich State High School and Kilcoy State High School. We will have the computers. If they do not want them, we will have them.
We know that education is not about the politics of left or right; it is about social justice; it is about increasing productivity in our economy; it is about improving small business; and it is about increasing national wealth. Those opposite have no idea about the prosperity of this country, because they disinvested in health when they were in power. They failed to invest in education when they were in power. Their policy is to strip away the trade training centre program that gives kids in working class areas in my electorate opportunities. Those opposite will take away the computers in schools. If they were in power, there would be no computers in schools.

What was their idea when they were in power with respect to investing in education? When I was elected in 2007, I went around to every single school that I could in my electorate to look at the school infrastructure. Teachers talked about the fact that they would have been lucky if they had got something from the Investing in Our Schools Program. It was one-tenth of what we have put in. Those opposite have no record with respect to education, whether it is for private schools or public schools. They have simply failed education in this country.

What did those opposite go to the last election wanting to do? Let us have a look. I want everyone to listen to this. I want everyone who is listening to parliament or who reads the Hansard—to know this. Those opposite went into the last election promising to cut the trade training centres, which would have affected 1,800 schools and 1.2 million students across the country. There would now be 20,000 fewer apprentices commencing a trade. They wanted to scrap our apprenticeship program. They failed to deliver any reform to disadvantaged students. I went to the going-away party for Peter Davis—a wonderful principal who had served Ipswich Special School for over 20 years. The teachers who were there that night, at the Brookwater Golf Club, said how fantastic it was that we had provided $200 million for disability support initiatives for students. This is what we did in the recent federal budget. Those opposite failed to do that. Because special education means nothing to them, they failed to invest.

Those opposite opposed the BER programs. The BER halls in my electorate at Fernvale and Esk were the flood recovery and evacuation centres. I say to the member for Dawson that he knows about flooding and problems in North Queensland. He knows about the impact of cyclones up in North Queensland. Those halls provided accommodation assistance. That is where the food, clothing and everything else went. The halls are important infrastructure, and people in rural towns in my electorate know very well how important they are. But I say to all those LNP members who were in flood affected areas in Queensland: they should have a really close look at their conduct in relation to BER and infrastructure. Those opposite have failed not just in road funding; they have failed in the digital education revolution because they are a bunch of Luddites when it comes to computers. They think telecommunications involves a carrier pigeon.

Those opposite opposed the NBN. They know very well how important the NBN is in regional and rural Queensland. They opposed computers in schools. They do not support people with disability. They do not support disadvantaged youth. They always want kids from working class families to stay down because the Tory entitlement of privilege has no respect for those people from battling areas. They believe in divine right to rule. That is what you hear from those opposite: it is hard; it is brutal; it does not support education; it does not support health; it does not support the people who really need it. You hear it when they speak.
It is a disgrace the way they speak in relation to education and on so many other issues. The LNP members from Queensland should hold their heads in shame.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

**MOTIONS**

**Leeding, Senior Constable Damian**

**Mrs D'ATH (Petrie) (20:42):** I move:

That this House:

1. expresses:
   - its condolences to:
     - (i) the family of Senior Constable Damian Leeding who was shot in the line of duty on Sunday evening, 29 May 2011; and
     - (ii) the colleagues of Senior Constable Leeding at Coomera CIB, Queensland Police Service;
   - its gratitude to men and women who serve in our police forces across Australia for the burden placed upon them and the sacrifices they make to protect others; and

2. acknowledges:
   - (a) the risks associated with the work performed by our men and women in the police forces across Australia and the bravery that they display in the performance of their duty; and
   - (b) the husbands, wives and partners of serving police officers for their support of those who serve in our police forces.

It is not just the members of this parliament but also the Australian people who express their sadness at the death of Senior Constable Damian Leeding from Coomera CIB. I acknowledge the members speaking on this condolence motion, the members for Fowler, Riverina and Macarthur, and I thank them for that.

Damian Leeding was shot while attending an armed robbery on the Gold Coast on Sunday evening, 29 May 2011. Damian received a gunshot wound to the face. He was then placed on life support until 1 June 2011, when his wife, Sonya, and his family made the agonising decision to switch off his life support. Senior Constable Leeding was only 35 years old and was married to Sonya Leeding, also a police officer with the Queensland Police Service. They have two children, their son Hudson, who is aged two, and baby Grace.

This House wishes to express its condolences to Sonya and her children and to Damian's family members, including his parents. We hope that they take some solace from the fact that Damian died doing what he loved and what he believed in. He put his life on the line to protect others. That makes him a hero in the hearts of the Australian people.

This House also extends it condolences to Senior Constable Damian Leeding's colleagues at the Coomera CIB, Queensland Police Service, who are also grieving at this very difficult time. This House wishes to convey our gratitude to the men and women who serve in our police forces across Australia for the burdens they carry and the sacrifices that they make to protect others, and no greater sacrifice has been made than that made by Senior Constable Damian Leeding and his police officer partner, Sonya. This House acknowledges the risks
associated with the work performed by our men and women in the police forces across Australia and the bravery that they display in the performance of their duty. The Australian public know that, when they need help, police are there to assist, but sometimes police officers are not shown the respect that they deserve. Maybe the public are going about their busy lives and do not stop and consider the risks that our men and women voluntarily face for the sole purpose of protecting people in our community.

I believe a renewed level of respect is being shown out of this terrible tragedy. What I ask of the people in our communities is that maybe when you are being pulled over for a speeding ticket or you are complaining about having to stop for a breath test, stop and think this is to protect you and your loved ones on the road. You should also consider the other work that those officers do—for example, walking into a domestic violence situation not knowing what they might face, finding children in the house when one spouse has taken the ultimate action and ended the life of the other parent with the children present or discovering paedophilia material when that officer has children the same age as the children that have been abused, or facing horrific traffic accidents and then telling the loved ones of that fatal accident, or being assaulted while trying to protect others.

The risk that our police officers face is evident every day and once again it is evident today. Just today it was reported by Detective Senior Sergeant Mark Proctor, officer in charge at Coomera CIB where Senior Constable Damian Leeding worked, was slashed by a glass tube during a raid on an illegal drug lab last night on the Gold Coast. Detective Senior Sergeant Proctor was a close friend of Damien Leeding. Thankfully, Mr Proctor escaped serious injury but this is just another example of the risks that our police officers face.

I would also like to acknowledge the husbands, wives and partners of serving police officers for their support of those who serve in our police forces. As Sonya Leeding said in the 60 Minutes interview last night, the knock on the door from police officers is a wife or husband's worst nightmare, especially when you know the duty that your partner performs.

Why do I move this motion tonight? I did not know Senior Constable Leeding nor do I represent the Gold Coast where he worked. I move this motion this evening because I am the wife of a police officer. I am the proud wife of a man who has served the Queensland Police Service for more than 17 years. I have had the nights worrying why my husband is not home at 3 o'clock in the morning when he was supposed to finish at midnight. I have seen him come home with bruises and blood on him. I have heard the stories of being spat on or abused when you are trying to help someone who is being assaulted. It is for this reason that I move this motion tonight. It is for this reason that I support our police forces throughout Australia and support the need for appropriate legislation and resources for them to do their job properly. We need to ensure that they have appropriate staffing levels, that they are being given the tools to protect themselves and others, and that they are treated as valuable employees and paid accordingly. I support the men and women of our police forces.

This House thanks Damian Leeding and Sonya Leeding for putting their lives on the line and our thoughts are with Sonya and her family and Damian Leeding's family as they grieve and face their future without the loving husband and father that he was. I end on the note that a fund has been set up to support Damian Leeding's family. I encourage people to support and donate to that fund and also to donate to the Police Legacy fund to support all families of fallen police officers. They are our protectors and they are our heroes.
Mr McCormack (Riverina) (20:48): I endorse the member for Petrie's eloquent and moving contribution. Every day many of us kiss our loved ones goodbye with minimal thought that it could be the last time we do so. However, for some people it is a small action they hold dear and sincerely hope it will not be their last. These are usually people who spend their day protecting others, people such as Senior Constable Damian Leeding.

On Sunday 29 May, Senior Constable Damian Leeding, based on the Gold Coast, went to work as a frontline police officer of the Queensland Police Force. He was a police officer who saw policing as his calling and vowed to take the fight to the crims on their turf. An emergency call at the Pacific Pines Tavern was placed at 2.45 am after Senior Constable Leeding was shot at close range by three armed robbers. Senior Constable Leeding was rushed to hospital and underwent surgery. In the following days his family maintained an anxious bedside vigil, hoping that something, anything, would change the inevitable outcome—holding out hope for a miracle. However, he never regained consciousness and the heartbreaking decision was made to turn off life support.

Senior Constable Leeding was 35 years young. He was an admirable police officer who had just before his death been promoted to detective. He had a good life, a beautiful wife, Sonya, a two-year-old son, Hudson, and a newborn baby daughter, Grace. He had so much to live for and so much more to give. His father-in-law, Gary O'Brien, described him as: ‘A great father, just a top bloke. He'd do anything for anybody.’ Sonya, also a police officer, has lost her partner on and off the beat, her shining light. Her two children have lost a dad who will live on in their memories only as the description that other people tell them—great stories but sadly not stories they got to create with their dad themselves.

Australia has lost a remarkable man and police officer in Senior Constable Leeding. He was willing to put his wellbeing in the line of fire to ensure a better and safer society, as all police do each and every day. Thank goodness for their goodness, their commitment, their duty. The public outcry at the death of Senior Constable Leeding has been extraordinary. At Coomera Police Station flowers flooded in from complete strangers, bikies and even ex-cons, at the realisation one of the good guys lost. From all around Australia to his own suburban street has come a renewed appreciation for police. Homes around the country have tied blue ribbons as a mark of respect for a man who was trying to make the streets safer not only for his family but also for families nationwide.

Blue ribbons are used around Australia as a way to commemorate fallen police officers. Police Remembrance Day is 29 September and it is a significant day of commemoration when police officers and the public can reflect on and remember those officers killed while helping to make Australia a safer society. Appropriately, 29 September has been chosen as Remembrance Day as it marks the Feast of St Michael who was always fighting evil.

New South Wales Minister for Police, Michael Gallacher, stood in state parliament last Thursday to remind the government of the risk these men and women take every day and the stark reminder of how many officers have lost their lives in the line of duty. I am pleased to say that the O'Farrell-Stoner coalition government is committed to ensuring that the police force is involved in fewer situations which place police officers in a position which results in the loss of life. The Nationals and Liberals have long said that they want to know where our police are, where they need to be and how best to use them to protect and serve the community whilst not endangering these brave men and women. We are determined to give
the police the powers, resources and the backing they need to keep themselves and their communities safe, as are the people on the opposite side in their state parliaments.

An audit being conducted currently throughout New South Wales will cover three key areas including police numbers and current allocations, authorised strength and alternative measurements including full-time equivalents and operational staff. The audit will also examine police stations, their operating hours, stations listed for closure and the effectiveness of the current local area command structure, especially in regional areas. I hope the other states will follow this procedure through as well.

I would like to finish with the words of Detective Senior Constable Leeding's widow, Sonya, who maintains that despite everything she will return to her job. Let us hope that from her husband's death her profession will be safer and better resourced. She said: 'The job we do is unique. This last week I have seen just everybody stand up and be counted and still get up and go to work and put their firearms on and know that they are going to perhaps encounter something similar. But at the end of the day—and I have always maintained this—it is our job. Everybody has their own job. We were both very proud to be a part of the job and even now everyone says, "You don't have to come back and you can do whatever you want." Well, I can't. This is what I do. It's who I am and it's who all of us are.'

Damian Leeding, man of courage, of honour, of sacrifice, is gone but his spirit will live on. His duty is done. May he now rest in peace.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Government Whip) (20:53): I am proud to speak today in support of the motion of the member for Petrie. This motion expresses our deepest condolences to the family of Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding, who was shot in the line of duty on Saturday, 29 May 2011. He left behind his wife, Sonya, who is also a serving police officer; his two-year-old son, Hudson; and his three-month-old daughter, Grace. He also leaves behind his colleagues at Coomera CIB, colleagues in the broader Queensland police force and in fact the whole Australian policing community.

It is always a great loss when we lose a serving police officer while they are carrying out their duties. In this instance Detective Senior Constable Leeding was serving with great courage, integrity and honour. He was doing what he was passionate about. He was making a difference. He was out there protecting the community. Detective Senior Constable Leeding was called out to an armed robbery on the Gold Coast. Like many times before, he did not hesitate in taking on that task, risking his life for the safety of his community. This is a commitment which is shown by police officers across Australia. When the ultimate sacrifice is made it is a deep tragedy for our entire community.

The shocking events of 29 May highlight again just how difficult and dangerous police work is and why we should always honour the work that they do. All the loved ones of police officers know the dangers of the work they do and that moment that Sonya Leeding received the dreaded news shortly after that fateful shooting. The member for Petrie, being the wife of a police officer, George D'Ath—who I know does a sterling job in the Queensland police force—indicated the physical and emotional effect when a police officer does not come home at the time you expect. This motion acknowledges that police work across the nation is dangerous but is essential and it extends our gratitude not just to the police officers but also to the families—to the husbands, the wives, the partners and the children of serving police. On
behalf of a very grateful community I would like to thank all of them for the support they show day in day out to our police officers.

I would also like to especially acknowledge today the sacrifice and bravery of Detective Senior Constable Leeding's wife, who is herself a police officer. The strength and the courage that she has shown during this very difficult time are amazing. Sonya has recently confirmed that she will continue to serve in the Queensland police force, an act of unspeakable courage which epitomises the commitment that police officers all across the nation make in their respective jurisdictions.

I have long been committed to supporting the police. I had a long association with police of all state and territory jurisdictions prior to coming to this place and I acknowledge Mr Ian Leavers, the President of the Queensland Police Union, who is sitting in the gallery tonight. He and his organisation do a fantastic job looking after the industrial and professional interests of police officers.

A tragic event such as this reminds us all of the work that police officers do. It should also remind us that as legislators we must do all that we can to ensure that our police have the tools they need as well as the legislative support to undertake the work that we expect of them—that is, to protect our community. I know the police associations have long used the term 'the thin blue line'. Quite frankly, it is a very thin blue line that protects our community from anarchy—these men and women are special types of people and possess a special type of courage to wear the police uniform. Their sole motivation is to make a difference for the better in the community they serve. Having grown up in a police family, I know the stresses and strains that that poses on a family. I am in awe of the courage of the men and women who take the oath of office and stand ready to protect our community.

Once again I extend my deepest condolences to the family of Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding and to the Queensland police community and I congratulate all police officers on the courage they show and what they achieve in the protection of our community.

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (20:58): I would like to pay tribute to Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding and offer my condolences to his wife, Sonia, his son, Hudson, and his daughter, Grace. Detective Senior Constable Leeding has been described by his family and peers as a great father, a top bloke, a larrikin, a quiet achiever, a hero, a mate who would do anything for anybody. He was only 35 years old and was shot last month after responding to an armed robbery and a hostage situation at the Pacific Pines Tavern on the Gold Coast. His death has demonstrated the dangers that members of the police force put themselves into every day to keep the community safe.

According to his colleagues, Damian was a hardworking officer with a distinct dislike for anyone dealing in drugs. He would drag a drug dealer off the street and into the police station on a daily basis. His workmates have promised to honour Damian by remaining strong and keeping his community safe. I am sure his colleagues, friends and family will make sure that his death will not be in vain.

I felt compelled to speak here today because I was a police officer for 25 years and have seen firsthand the heartache felt by families, the police force and the community when a police officer is killed on duty. I can imagine the desperation, fear and anguish Damian's workmates felt as they fought to keep him alive until paramedics arrived. There is no telling
how many police officers all over Australia will be affected by his death. There will obviously be a ripple effect across the nation. I am sure many will reconsider the risks they take every day just going to work and the family members they would leave behind if something were to go wrong.

Damian's son Hudson is only two years old and his daughter Grace is just three months old, too young to lose a loving and devoted father. Having two beautiful daughters myself, I am well aware of the sacrifices made by police officers and their families every day. Like any member of the emergency services would know, it takes a great deal of courage to leave your own family behind to protect those who you have sometimes never met on a daily basis. These men and women take great risks every time they go to work, and they deserve the utmost respect by the community for risking their lives to protect others. They join the job to make a difference, and sometimes this can be a thankless job.

I feel for Damian's wife, Sonya, who had to make the heartbreaking decision to turn off his life support. I cannot think of a more devastating and traumatic decision to make. I am sure that she is now surrounded by loving friends and family. Sonya is also a police officer and has said that she will return to work—great courage. This will take a lot of courage but the police community is a tight one. They treat each other like family, and I am sure she will be supported by her fellow officers when she returns. That is our way.

It is not just Damian and his family that will suffer as a result of this tragedy. His colleagues and friends in the Gold Coast community will all grieve alongside them for a long time to come. As a police officer, I experienced this widespread grief first hand in 2001 when Senior Constable Jim Affleck, a highway patrol officer in my electorate, was run down during a police pursuit along the F5. He was laying road spikes to stop a stolen vehicle when he was run down at high speed. I remember that day like it was yesterday, as would many others in Macarthur. After his death, Jim was awarded the Commissioner's Valour Award for his exceptional bravery. I believe this would also be a fitting tribute for Senior Constable Damian Leeding. The Jim Affleck Bridge on the F5 in Campbelltown is now a solemn reminder of the brave and dedicated police officer we lost that day.

Like Damien Leeding, Jim Affleck was well respected and loved by his colleagues. Jim was a dedicated and professional police officer, and his death shocked not only the police force but also the entire Campbelltown community in which he served. He is in our thoughts every day and a memorial service is held each year in his honour. The 10th anniversary of his death was marked in January this year with a service next to the garden dedicated to his life at Campbelltown Police Station. Even though it has been 10 years since he was killed, more than 100 people attended the service, which shows the widespread and devastating impact the death of a police officer can have on your local community.

I am sure the Gold Coast community will also continue to honour Damian Leeding in this way to ensure that his memory will live on. After his death Jim Affleck was placed on the police honour roll which commemorates those members of the New South Wales Police Force who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the execution of their duty. This will also be the case with Senior Constable Leeding—a sad but fitting tribute to those brave police officers.

I join many people in the Macarthur electorate who have the utmost respect and admiration for members of the police force. It takes a person of great integrity and character to carry on through the many tragic and heartbreaking situations that they encounter. Both Damian
Leeding, Jim Affleck and their families have paid the ultimate sacrifice, and the heartache will stay with their families, colleagues and the community for many years to come.

To the families of these fine police officers and all those who have been killed in the line of duty, I offer my heartfelt condolences. I am sure they will share with me the hope that one day society will understand and respect the great undertaking that is required to serve as a police officer. Until then, the fine members of the police force will continue to protect the safety of communities across Australia, despite the dangers they will face and the harsh reality that some may not return to their families. Today my heart goes out to the loved ones of all our fallen comrades, including Damian Leeding and Jim Affleck. May they all rest in peace.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Brodtmann): Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Debate resumed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That grievances be noted.

Carbon Pricing

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson) (21:03): I rise tonight to raise a grievance on behalf of the people of Paterson. Their will has been ignored by the current Labor government. My constituents do not want a carbon tax, and they deserve at the very least a plebiscite to make it clear to the Labor government that refuses to listen to what ordinary Australians want. I turned on the radio last week and the top national news story was a piece about seven eminent Australians who supported the carbon tax. It made me furious. Why? Not because eminent Australians do not deserve to have a point of view or to express it—of course they do. As a matter of fact, I welcome it. What made me furious was that the residents of Paterson have never been at the top of the news bulletin, yet their views matter every bit as much as any prominent Australian's. I am not talking about seven Paterson residents who do not support a carbon tax; I am talking about the seven or so people that are calling or emailing my office every single hour of every single day. The number of people who have contacted me to oppose the carbon tax is in the thousands.

I would like to read a couple of emails that I have received from my constituents. First, a bit of a tongue-in-cheek email from Peter and Janet regarding recent carbon tax advertising:

We were so pleased to see the advertisement on TV last night asking us to say yes to a carbon tax as finally the government is asking us to decide. Can you please keep us informed as to the date set for either the referendum or the election? We cannot wait to cast our vote on this incompetent and lying government.

Judy wrote to me:

Please let Julia Gillard know we do not believe in a carbon tax. As far as I am concerned this will just be another tax, and as a self-funded retiree we certainly cannot afford any more taxes as the standard of living for older Australians is being eroded every day.

Then there is Colin:
We contribute 1.4 per cent of the world's carbon emissions. The aim of the carbon tax is to reduce our emissions by five per cent. So that means we are going to disrupt and damage our economy, put many people out of work and increase our inflation by five to 10 per cent just to save seven parts in 10,000 of the world's emissions. What a great idea.

Lastly there is Kevin, who wrote:

If the Prime Minister believes she has a mandate to introduce a carbon tax, she should be prepared to do the following: to every enrolled voter in Australia she sends a simple question to the voters with a reply paid envelope: do you support the introduction of a carbon tax, yes or no. The result then would be to support or dismiss her policy. On a personal note, she lied and misled the public on this matter.

These people might not get a spot on the news but they have a voice here in this parliament, and I will ensure that it is heard by the Prime Minister.

People in my electorate not only do not want this tax; they simply cannot afford it. This time last year in the Hunter, electricity prices rose between 17 and 13 per cent, gas prices went up by 13 per cent, water bills went up by five per cent, council rates went up by 2.6 per cent and taxi fares went up by 3 per cent—and that is without the rise in petrol, grocery and rent bills that have occurred across New South Wales. Now Labor wants to add $860 a year to the household budget with a $30 per tonne carbon price, and that is just the start. The Greens want a price of $100 per tonne, and there is no telling how far Labor will go to keep de facto prime minister Bob Brown happy. But what exactly is the point of putting a tax on carbon, you might ask. How will extra expense help the environment? Labor says that adding the extra cost will stop people using things, reducing energy consumption and therefore reducing emissions. But you cannot cut back on essentials, and power, groceries and fuel are essentials. You only have to look at history to see that the Labor government's theory is flawed. Between 2000 and 2008 the cost of electricity in Australia rose by 55.9 per cent. Yet over that same period, consumption rose by 10 per cent, from 10,194 kilowatt-hours per capita to 11,217 kilowatt-hours per capita. I repeat: you cannot cut back on essentials and this insidious Labor tax grab will not reduce emissions; it will only reduce the affordability for average Australians.

It is not just the household budget that will take a hit from a carbon tax. Costs for industry will also skyrocket and those costs will either be passed on to consumers, absorbed in job cuts or indeed both. In the Hunter region, thousands rely on the mining and aluminium industries for their work. That includes 1,070 permanent staff and 250 contractors at Tomago Aluminium, the 395 staff and 16 apprentices at Port Waratah Coal Services, the 540 permanent and 38 casual staff at Four Jacks, and the 537 workers at the Hydro Aluminium Kurri Kurri, to name but a few. That is not even mentioning the indirect jobs that those businesses generate, which number in the tens of thousands. Whichever way you look at it, Labor's carbon tax will cost jobs. It is going to put a huge financial strain on the companies that provide work for my constituents.

The Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Tony Abbott, visited one of these companies just this weekend, the Drayton Mine at Muswellbrook. I note that local federal member, Joel Fitzgibbon, was absent. It is not the first time he has failed to show to such meetings. His Hunter colleagues, Jill Hall, Sharon Grierson, Greg Combet and, further north, Rob Oakeshott have all been surprisingly quiet on this issue in the local area. I fear it is because they have decided to toe the party line on the carbon tax rather than represent their constituents. It is
probably because they have heard the figures. AngloCoal, for example, which owns the Drayton Mine, would invest $3.4 billion over the next decade, creating 3,000 new jobs, in the absence of a carbon tax. Those jobs would support families who would spend on local goods and services, in turn boosting the local economy and providing more jobs. Labor does not understand the flow-on affect nor the multipliers of investment. Yet despite all this, Labor wants to put a huge tax on the companies that invest in Australia. It not only wants to tax big businesses, its tax will cripple small, family-run businesses too. If power bills go up thousands of dollars a year, small businesses already struggling to cope will have no choice but to pass on the cost. Jodie who runs the Donut King in my electorate says that if power bills skyrocket with a carbon tax she will have no choice but to put up the cost of a cup of coffee or cut back staff hours. She cannot cut her electricity use any further.

Local Labor members are willing to sell out their workers and send our emissions overseas to less efficient producers, all to appease the Greens. Talk about a government that has lost its way. I want to make this clear: this debate is not about whether we should do something about the environment. It is not about cutting emissions by five per cent by 2020 because we all agree: coalition, Labor, Greens, Independents alike. That is something that needs to be done to reduce our CO₂ output. In fact, the government and the coalition have the same target of five per cent reduction by 2020. This debate is about the best way to achieve that aim. A tax that will force emissions and jobs offshore is not the way.

If Prime Minister Gillard, Labor, the Greens and the Independents were convinced that the Australian people wanted a carbon tax they should put it to a vote. The people of Paterson and Australia deserve to have their say. That is why the coalition and I call on this government to hold a plebiscite because it is just too scared to call an election. A plebiscite will give our people the power to say yes or no to a carbon tax that will increase the price of just about every good and service in this nation. It would be the chance we never got before the election. If Prime Minister Gillard had been honest with the people back in August, the public would have had the chance to decide whether it would support a carbon tax. Instead, the Prime Minister stared into the camera five days prior to the polls and ruled out a tax with that famous quote, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.' Former Prime Minister Rudd said that addressing climate change through tax was the greatest moral challenge this country faces. I put it to the current Prime Minister: the greatest moral challenge now is to be honest with the people she purports to represent. This government needs to call an election or at the very least hold a plebiscite to get a mandate from the Australian people for its carbon tax. To do otherwise would leave this moribund government with a moral dilemma: after all, it was the Prime Minister who said there would be no carbon tax under the government she led. Therefore, in closing, I call on the Gillard Labor government to take its tax to the people for a decisive answer:

Australian Greens

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (21:12): Soon after the beginning of July in the Australian Senate we will have an increased number of representatives of the Australian Greens, a political party which is supporting the current government on the important issue of carbon tax. But the Greens have views on a wide number of other issues which many members of the government, including the Prime Minister, the Minister for Resources and Energy and the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, have all quite responsibly sought to differentiate
themselves from. The Prime Minister, during her inaugural Whitlam Institute oration in Sydney said:

The differences between Labor and the Greens take many forms but at the bottom of it are two vital ones.

The Greens wrongly reject the moral imperative to a strong economy.

The Greens have some worthy ideas and many of their supporters sincerely want a better politics in our country. They have good intentions but fail to understand the centrepiece of our big picture—the people Labor strives to represent need work.

The Minister for Resources and Energy, Martin Ferguson, also made it clear that the Greens' extreme views are not what the Australian Labor Party, the government, supports. He said:

You know we can all sit under the tree and weave baskets with no jobs if that's what some people in the NGOs and the Greens want…

The lack of coherent, pragmatic policy from the Australian Greens, and particularly its watermelon faction, the dominant faction in New South Wales, was summed up by the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Anthony Albanese, who worked tirelessly with Carmel Tebbutt to defeat the Greens in that most important election in Marrickville, during the New South Wales state election. In an article in the Australian, Albanese argued that the Greens 'tend to be a grab-bag of issues and tend not to have a coherent policy that adds up', and do not try to represent the majority of the Australian people. So we have these extreme policies, and when people have a close look at them—and that has not been the case; there has not been that scrutiny—I think people will turn away from them. On TV on the weekend, I was citing some of their policies, quoting an excellent article by Mr Alan Gold in the Spectator Australia, which dealt with the Greens' opposition to skilled migration and their support for a 30 per cent death duties tax. All of these are policies that I believe the great majority of the Australian people do not share. In particular, Alan Gold says of the Greens political party:

On the question of taxation, they want less from the GST counterbalanced by higher income taxes, raising the top income tax rate to 50 per cent … based on a Green’s central planning model, something which world governments … have abandoned.

On immigration, the Greens want to restrict the numbers of skilled and educated migrants … The Greens see no votes from the business sector, which is desperate for skilled and educated migrants.

In particular, the arrival here soon of Senator-elect Lee Rhiannon is something that I want to reflect on. In the recent New South Wales election, the Greens candidate Fiona Byrne was defeated after an extremist campaign of the NSW Greens that focused on the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions group. This policy was supported by Senator-elect Rhiannon, who, after the defeat of the Greens in Marrickville, made the astonishing claim that it was because they had not argued hard enough that the Greens lost that particular election. Let me remind people that in Marrickville the Greens recorded a swing of six per cent; the swing against Labor in every seat in the rest of the state was double that, a reflection of the extremist policies of that particular candidate and her mentor, Senator-elect Rhiannon.

Today we have a Kafkaesque situation reported in the Sydney Morning Herald: one of the other watermelons is going to participate in a flotilla to Gaza. Even the hard men of the Turkish Islamist group the IHH have said that local circumstances mean that they are not going to participate in the flotilla. What they mean by 'local circumstances' is exactly what my
friend Sandy Gutman—'Austen Tayshus'—identified on *Q&A*; there are 1,200 people who have been killed in Syria, and no flotilla, no watermelon faction and no Greens from New South Wales are going there. I have never heard these people speak up on all of the issues of international human rights which I and other people in the government and indeed in the opposition speak up on. I have never heard them speak up on the issues of the murder of 300,000 African Muslims in Darfur or the 300,000 people who are held in the gulag in North Korea. The hypocrisy and absurdity, particularly of Senator-elect Rhiannon and her watermelon faction, are astonishing.

Her past itself is revealing, and Mark Aarons points this out in the May edition of the *Monthly* in an article entitled 'The Greens and fundamentalism'. He points out that Rhiannon was a member of the Socialist Party of Australia. The Socialist Party of Australia was the faction that split from the Australian Communist Party because the Communist Party were insufficiently pro-Moscow—extraordinary! As Aarons, her former close confederate in the Communist Party, explained:

This would be simply history if Rhiannon had admitted her youthful errors and moved on. But, in a lengthy blog posted last August, she defended her parents' and her own political records …

All of the crimes of the former Soviet Union are not issues that people in Australia should pay no attention to. We have hundreds of thousands of people, great Australians—people like Frank Lowy, who fled Hungary; people from Ukraine and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union; people from Poland—all of whom were victims of this terrible system of communism, the other half of the coin of fascism. These people all suffered. There are never any denunciations by Lee Rhiannon of the infamous Serbsky institute of forensic medicine. When I was a student leader organising demonstrations against the former Soviet Union, we always knew that the Lee Rhiannons of this world would be on the other side. I also want to focus on the fact that I find it very strange that in Mr Aarons's article he cites a seminar commemorating the founding of the Communist Party of Australia and quotes Lee Rhiannon, saying that she:

… argued that a broad-based left movement is being built already, and argued that the Greens is closest to the best of the CPA’s politics and methods.

That is a verbatim quote from her speech.

The Australian Greens have many great people in their ranks—people who are concerned for the environment. Senator Brown is a person of principle on the issue of Tibet, and on environmental policy people can disagree with him but they know where he and most of the Greens stand. But these New South Wales Greens policies are not his policies. It is little wonder that, when Senator-elect Rhiannon was standing as an upper house member in New South Wales, it was Senator Brown's current chief of staff, Mr Oquist, who was the main candidate against her and was defeated by her. It is very instructive that, during the last federal election, when she was an upper house member, Senator Brown instructed her—that she stand down, and she failed to do so, being a full-time state politician running for federal office. If that had happened in any other political party, I do not think the person would have been elected to the Australian Senate. Finally, after all of her recent extremist remarks, the very interesting reaction of Senator Brown was to say that the Australian Greens in Canberra run foreign policy, not the New South Wales Greens watermelon faction.
Mr Deputy Speaker, the grim politics of Lee Rhiannon do not impress me, as you can understand. I predict Senator-elect Rhiannon will be a divisive factor in Australian politics, in the Senate and indeed in the Australian Greens. She and her party are not the progressives that they think they are. When she stands up to make her first speech in the Australian Senate, I call on her to finally admit the historical crimes of the former Soviet Union and of Soviet communism—the terrible psychiatric institutes that they used to torture dissidents like the great Andrei Sakharov, whose wife, Yelena Bonner, just died on 18 June. I call on her to apologise for the stances of her political party for which she has never apologised—for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, for the cruel oppression in those countries of tens of thousands of people who suffered under brutal systems. There is a perfect opportunity coming in the Senate next week, and I ask her to thank those apologies.

Home Insulation Program

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (21:22): Tonight I raise in this chamber evidence of this government's gross incompetence and negligence—the latest chapter. It is the latest twist in the home insulation saga, which has cost Australian taxpayers more than $1.7 billion, in addition to destroying homes and, most horrifically, four young lives.

You will recall that I came to this place to highlight what had happened to my constituent Mr Geza Horvath as a result of insulation installed under the government's Home Insulation Program. Mr Horvath was doorknocked, like so many others, and agreed to install insulation in his roof because he was advised that it was a government program. Within eight weeks of having this insulation installed, part of Mr Horvath's bedroom ceiling collapsed while he and his wife were sleeping. He described this incident to Neil Mitchell on 3AW, and I will read you a little of what he said because he best describes it in his own words:

NEIL MITCHELL This must have given you an almighty fright, did it?
GEZA HORVATH Yeah, I thought it's an earthquake because it happened at one o'clock in the morning. We were in bed.
NEIL MITCHELL Did it come down on you?
GEZA HORVATH Not exactly on us. It's about a metre from us. It came down on the wardrobe, top of the wardrobe, and it probably slipped over to the bed or hung down right on the end of the bed.
NEIL MITCHELL Well, you're very lucky.
GEZA HORVATH We were lucky because it could have come down, the whole lot, because the weight of the concrete, this is the slab, the concrete … into the timber and then plaster closed up on the front, so it's really heavy. When we cleaned it up, it was four wheelbarrows topped up of rubbish.
NEIL MITCHELL And you're quite sure this was caused by the insulation work?
GEZA HORVATH Definitely, because the timber … where it's squeezed into the plaster, it's broken. I contacted the minister's office to get an inspection done as a matter of urgency. This was off the back of Mr Horvath's own attempts. Again I quote from his interview with Neil Mitchell:
NEIL MITCHELL And you still haven't had a government inspector out to look at it?
GEZA HORVATH No, I couldn't cope with it because I'm on chemo, and the second chemo now, and I couldn't cope with it. But I was expecting, I got a call from Sydney about the first time I reported it, and these people they rang me up and they asked me if I have any spotlights, and I tell them I haven't got.
But the crack was already there, and what he was saying is, 'Look,' he said, 'you'll be alright', and boom, he dropped the phone.

I pursued the home safety inspection with some vigour, yet it was only after Mr Horvath appeared on Neil Mitchell's program that a date and time was provided for the inspection, on Friday, 29 April. I made clear when asking for the home inspection that the key issue was to ensure the structural integrity of Mr Horvath's ceiling, given that part of the ceiling had come down. That was the whole reason for requesting the safety inspection, as was made clear in my conversations with the minister's office as well as in correspondence. I read from the letter that I sent to the minister, the Hon. Greg Combet AM, Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. First I wrote:

Today I was contacted by one of my constituents, Mr Geza Horvath of Carnegie, regarding the collapse of his plaster ceiling as a result of faulty installation of insulation under your government's Home Insulation Program.

I went on to say:

I am further advised that during the installation the contractor damaged Mr Horvath's plaster ceiling, resulting in its recent collapse in the early morning. The ceiling collapsed in the bedroom in which Mr Horvath was sleeping. Thankfully Mr Horvath was not injured despite the ceiling collapsing around him.

I went on:

Minister I request you immediately send an inspector to Mr Horvath's house to assess the safety of the installation and rectify any faults or issues that are a result of the installation.

I sent a second letter to the minister after I was notified by my constituent that the minister's office had made a time for the home safety inspection with him after his interview with Neil Mitchell. I stated:

I would appreciate it if your office would keep me personally updated. My concern is that Mr Horvath's home is made safe and that he is compensated for any damage as a result of the insulation installation.

After the inspection, I spoke with Mr Horvath, who was none the wiser as to whether his home was safe. He asked about his ceiling. The inspector told him that he simply performed the inspection and provided the information to the government. I contacted the minister's office and requested the result of the inspection report, and a copy of the inspection report, so that Mr Horvath could be made aware of any ongoing safety concerns with his ceiling.

That night at around 8.45, the night of the Royal Wedding, I received a telephone call from the parliamentary secretary, Mr Mark Dreyfus, who expressed his extreme displeasure that I had been in contact with the minister's office and not with him. He went on to express his displeasure that Mr Horvath had spoken with the media. We had quite a willing exchange. I reiterated to Mr Dreyfus my concern that Mr Horvath was still none the wiser about whether or not his home was safe after the inspection in relation to the structural integrity of his ceiling. Mr Dreyfus provided me with an assurance that Mr Horvath's home was safe. I asked for a copy of the inspection report, which was supplied to me the next day by his office. The safety report concluded that the safety inspection result was 'a pass'. It also stated in the comments:

… hip insulation is safe with quality issues … old insulation batts not removed. Installer has stepped on ceiling causing a massive crack which later collapsed. Half the ceiling has fallen and broke at 1 am one morning in the hh bedroom. Hh is old and has cancer. He has been in and out of hospital the last year.
The house is about 80 years old and is in immaculate condition. Hh has tried to contact installer but no one speaks to him.

So it referred to the concerns raised but was silent on the substance of them. The inspection report left the impression that the home was safe. Following on from the inspection, however, I received a letter from the parliamentary secretary. In it he refers to a safety inspection being conducted but stated in his conclusion that no electrical safety issues were identified.

Senator Simon Birmingham, shadow parliamentary secretary for the environment, questioned the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, Mr Martin Bowles, during the Senate Estimates process on 22 May to try to get to the bottom of this situation about the safety inspections. Senator Birmingham asked the deputy secretary specific questions about Mr Horvath's case. Here is part of the transcript:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Yes. Has the department looked as to whether there are structural issues related to the insulation in that regard?

Mr Bowles: As I said, a safety inspection was done on 29 April. It has been declared safe from that electrical perspective. But we have actually noted some quality issues in relation to the inspection. That is why we are helping him to talk to the insurers.

Senator BIRMINGHAM: The electrical perspective is at least one part of a peace of mind for Mr Horvath. But I think when the ceiling collapsed on him, he was probably worried about some other broader issues.

Mr Bowles: Again, Senator, that is why we sent the inspector out there on 29 April.

So, from the inspection report, the parliament secretary's assurance and the testimony of the deputy secretary it would be reasonable to conclude that the home safety inspections properly look to the issues that have been raised about safety. Yet you could come to an entirely different conclusion when you look at the correspondence from the parliamentary secretary where he only references electrical safety, which was not an issue in this case. This raises serious questions about the value of the government's safety inspection program.

First, either a proper safety inspection—that is, one that went to the substance of the concern, which was the structural integrity of the ceiling as a result of the faulty insulation installation—was not conducted; or, second, if it was properly conducted, the parliamentary secretary did not communicate the outcome of this inspection in his letter. But there is a third issue here because, if the safety inspection was properly conducted, it failed in this case to identify a serious safety issue for Mr Horvath.

After the government wiped its hands of assisting Mr Horvath, my office and I stepped in to assist him in dealing with the installer and the installer's insurer. I have nothing but praise for CGU and their handling of this matter. They moved very quickly to assess the damage so that Mr Horvath could have his ceiling repaired. They understood that it is not healthy for a pensioner undergoing chemotherapy treatment for cancer to have a huge gaping hole in his bedroom roof. They also knew that he did not need the extra stress. So I have nothing but praise for how thoughtfully they dealt with Mr Horvath and how expeditiously. But it was in going through this process that the builder inspected the bedroom where part of the ceiling had collapsed and inspected the bedroom next door. The builder advised Mr Horvath that, in fact, the adjoining bedroom was not safe, that it too had been damaged and it was very likely that the same ceiling collapse could occur. The builder advised Mr Horvath to shut the door and not go in until the entire ceiling had been replaced—which is what he did.
How could it be that something as serious as this was missed? Either the safety inspection did not look at this structural issue, which is a damning indictment on the inspection, or it did, and was deficient. Either way, the home insulation mess just got messier. So what had to be done to Mr Horvath's place to make it safe? The ceiling of the second bedroom was entirely removed and replaced. The main bedroom was replastered. Light fittings in both rooms were replaced. The ceilings of both rooms had to be repainted, the skirting board fixed up because of the damage of the fallen ceiling and, finally, the curtains and carpet had to be cleaned.

There have been 1.2 million homes that have insulation installed under this program. There have been 205 known fires as a result of the faulty insulation to date. There have been, tragically, four deaths. The government's very own report into the program conceded that of the inspections carried out 24 per cent were found to be faulty; that is, these installations did not meet building standards. There has been fraud that has yet to be quantified because the government will not release this information. In fact, the government's response has been to refer people to the relevant consumer affairs office in their own home state. They will not take responsibility for it directly. Now, of course, as I have outlined tonight, there is a serious question about the safety inspections that are being conducted.

This government has to answer these questions. Are they conducting proper home safety inspections? Or are they leaving people with a false sense of security about the safety of their home? Are these safety inspections simply more dangerous spin by this government? Do the government stand by their safety inspections?

The home insulation scheme is but one of many examples of how this government has comprehensively failed the Australian people. One year on it is clear that the Gillard experiment is no different to the Rudd experiment. The arrogance, the spin, the waste and the incompetence that typified the Rudd reign of terror are all still there. If anything, the Greens-Labor experiment has set a new low benchmark for just how out of touch and inept a government can be.

This is not a government that cares about people. You only need to look to the treatment of Mr Horvath to see that. If this government had even a shred of integrity left, it would immediately call an election and let the people decide.

Workplace Relations

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (21:32): I rise tonight to grieve for the public servants of New South Wales. These are the public servants who are having their rights stripped from them by a Liberal state government committed to nothing more than an ideological attack on the working people of New South Wales. Last Wednesday some 12,000 workers and their families descended on Macquarie Street in teeming rain to voice their protest against these draconian laws. By amending the Industrial Relations Act, the O'Farrell government has passed disgraceful Work Choices style laws through the New South Wales parliament which will end the independent role of the NSW Industrial Commission; cut the pay and conditions of public sector workers in NSW; undermine the ability of public sector unions to represent their members; and cut services to the community. This legislation is an affront to the hardworking people of New South Wales—the nurses, firefighters, bus drivers and train drivers who are committed to serving the community and providing for their own families.
I want to talk about the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission. For over 100 years New South Wales public servants have had access to an independent umpire. This disgraceful O'Farrell government has overturned 110 years of precedent by removing the arbitration powers of the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission in relation to the setting of wages and conditions for all cases before the commission and all future cases before it. The New South Wales IRC will no longer be an independent umpire protecting workers' rights in NSW. For more than 100 years the commission has worked independently, listening to the parties, hearing evidence, conciliating and arbitrating disputes between public sector workers and their employer, the NSW government. By seeking to restrict its role, the O'Farrell government is walking away from 100 years of effective industrial relations practice.

In 2007 the New South Wales Nurses Association produced a report entitled *Industrial Relations and the NSW Nurse Shortage*, which found that:

… with a strong and fair Industrial Relations Commission public hospital nurses have won some valuable conditions that have improved their working lives, including:

- a legally enforceable commitment to reasonable workloads;
- groundbreaking 14 weeks paid maternity leave;
- monetary recognition of nurses with postgraduate qualifications; and
- improved union delegate rights at work.

But the Secretary of the New South Wales Nurses Association wrote earlier this month:

The O'Farrell Government's … laws would reduce the NSW Industrial Relations Commission to a rubber stamp on government wage policy.

This is simply not acceptable and the people of New South Wales do not deserve it.

Premier O'Farrell's laws will transfer the role played by the New South Wales IRC to the New South Wales government. I would not want that to happen under any government. I believe in the role of the independent umpire in industrial relations and so do the majority of workers. The devastating changes under this Liberal government will undermine the separation of powers between government and the judiciary. Instead of public sector workers having a fair and independent umpire, the changes will make the O'Farrell government the prosecutor, the judge and the jury.

In fact, Premier O'Farrell's legislation is so far reaching that it allows the government to do the following: immediately cut the wages of any public sector worker; immediately cut the employment conditions of any public sector worker, with no guarantee that they will receive a wage increase in return; and all of this can happen without workers having access to that independent umpire—because the Industrial Relations Commission will be bound to enforce the government's policy. As Unions NSW Secretary Mark Lennon put it:

"This is an unprecedented assault on the rights of public-sector workers to have their day in court to determine their wages and conditions".

I want to talk about breach of international law issues. This legislation will have an adverse impact on over 300,000 public sector workers. As I have mentioned, it will remove rights for unions to argue in front of the IRC, a move that has been deemed a 'denial of procedural fairness' by constitutional law specialist Mr Arthur Moses SC. In a media release today, the Australian Council of Trade Unions Secretary stated,
… the O'Farrell workplace laws would be a clear breach of international law and Australia's obligation to respect human rights, which include labour rights and the right to collectively bargain …

It is clear that these laws will see the executive absorb the powers of the judiciary and it is clear that these laws stand in the way of labour rights for the people of New South Wales. After being engaged by the trade union movement to look into the constitutionality of Premier O'Farrell's laws, Mr Moses found:

There is no doubt the laws would be considered repugnant to the judicial process.

What is interesting in all of this is that those opposite, including the Leader of the Opposition, have remained extremely quiet on the most dramatic changes to industrial relations in a century. Those opposite and their New South Wales state government colleagues have made a habit of purporting to be concerned about cost-of-living pressures in New South Wales, particularly in Western Sydney where my electorate of Greenway lies. But I find this very hard to believe when this is the same opposition who championed the Work Choices legislation, and the same people who wanted to rip the rights from hardworking Australians and appease their big business mates. If those opposite really cared about cost-of-living pressures in Western Sydney they would support the rights of working families in New South Wales—the nurses, the firefighters and other public servants who will now have the worst industrial rights of any workers in New South Wales.

Today the ACTU has called on the federal opposition leader to break his silence on these new industrial relations laws introduced by the O'Farrell government. I join the ACTU in this call. The opposition leader must either condemn the actions of his New South Wales colleague Premier Barry O'Farrell or confirm the actions are indeed Liberal Party policy. I suspect he will remain silent on this issue regardless of how many hardworking Australians protest Premier O'Farrell's IR laws because we all know that those opposite have a passion for denying the rights of decent working men and women. We all know that they are committed to Work Choices. We know the only thing dead, buried and cremated about Work Choices is the name. Nevertheless, I invite the opposition leader to share his views on Premier O'Farrell’s approach to industrial relations.

I stand in this place condemning the actions of the New South Wales state government towards the public sector workers of New South Wales. These laws reflect a coalition government determined to introduce Work Choices style laws and change industrial relations in Australia—changes that will destroy the rights of workers. Without indisputable denunciation of these laws, working families can only conclude that the federal opposition condones the New South Wales government’s introduction of laws that remove workers' rights and remove the independent umpire. When it comes to industrial relations, those opposite simply cannot help themselves and cannot be trusted.

I will end by saying that over the past few weeks I have been inundated with constituents who have randomly approached me and told me that in the last state election on 20 March they voted Liberal for the first time. They are now saying to me that they will never do that again. For all the feigned concern by those opposite about cost-of-living pressures, they are conspicuously silent on the rights of decent, hardworking men and women in New South Wales.

I have been a proud member of a union for my entire working life, from the shop floor of a supermarket at the age of 15, and today I am proudly a member of the PSA in New South
Wales, the same union which represents the decent, hardworking public sector workers of New South Wales. Those opposite stand condemned for merely seeking to endorse this Work Choices style legislation in New South Wales.

For all their laughter and all their scorn I say to them that they will rue the day they sought to bring these changes into New South Wales. They have been exposed for what they are. They cannot help themselves when it comes to industrial relations. They cannot help themselves in putting down the rights of hardworking men and women of New South Wales and Australia, and they will stand condemned.

Food Security

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong) (21:41): You do not have to look far in our daily media cycle to find an attention-grabbing headline about the issue of food security. The Sydney Morning Herald bellows 'A new food crisis on our plates', the Adelaide Advertiser warns that it is 'Time to stop selling the farm' and just yesterday in my own state of Victoria the Sunday Age led with 'Qatar land grab angers bush' on its front page.

The truth is that Australia is not about to starve. We produce considerably more food than we consume. We export 60 per cent of all our agricultural produce which has created a thriving industry worth $24.5 billion in 2009-10 alone. But these statistics do not tell us the complete story because there are two major international developments of which we must be aware and be prepared for. The first is the inexorable upward pressure on global food prices which is ultimately leading to shortages and intrastate and interstate tensions. There is a series of complex reasons on both the demand and supply side for this trend. As a developed nation with specific expertise in food production we have a capacity and responsibility to contribute to the global response to the food security issue. The second development relates to the deliberate policies of those countries with potential food shortages to acquire agricultural-producing assets including arable land in developing and developed countries alike. Australia, like a number of other nations, has been the focus of increased in-bound investment in its agricultural sector. Given the sensitivities involved, we do need greater transparency and scrutiny of such investments to ensure they pass the national interest test.

I will now speak in more detail about both these developments. It was in 1798 that the English scholar the Reverend Thomas Malthus issued his grim warning, 'that a gigantic inevitable famine stalks in the rear' as a result of the consumption demands of an ever-growing population. Fortunately the world's population—then 800 million—went on to prosper and the prophecy came to nothing. However, the rapid growth in the world's population, now 6.9 billion and estimated to surpass nine billion by 2050, has created and is creating significant stress on the food supply chain.

Today it is estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organisation that 925 million people do not have sufficient food to eat and with much of the population growth in Africa and Asia, where countries like Ethiopia, Niger and Uganda already suffer food security issues, existing food shortages will become more acute. The potential for spillover into domestic unrest is real with food shortages and price hikes in the Middle East being a contributing factor to the dramatic developments we recently saw in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere. It is for this reason that Bob Zoellick, former US Deputy Secretary of State and now head of the World Bank, said that food security is now a global security issue. With maize prices up 73 per cent in the
last six months and the Food and Agricultural Organisation's food price index just below its 2008 global food crisis peak, Zoellick has said that prices are now at dangerous levels.

To understand what is happening now, it is important to recount the developments leading up to the crisis of 2008 when rice prices tripled in just 12 months and world grain prices more than doubled. At the time the World Bank warned that up to 33 countries were unstable due to rapid price hikes that had seen 100 million people fall into poverty. On the demand side there were a number of factors, including a more prosperous and growing population whose food preferences, particularly among the middle classes in China and India, were for higher calorie products, including meat. With one kilogram of beef requiring seven kilograms of feed grain, the implications for demand are obvious.

The expansion of the biofuel industry—production tripling between 2000 and 2007—also had a major impact. It was estimated by the FAO in 2007 that more than 100 million tonnes of cereals were diverted annually from food production to fuel production. Speculation by commodity investors also soared, with Alan DuPont and Mark Thirlwell pointing out in a significant article in the international journal Survival that the level of large institutional investment in the commodity index was around $10 billion in 2000 but had risen to a whopping $250 billion in 2008. Such an explosion in demand for commodity contracts adds both to the upward price pressures and the market volatility. On the supply side, rising energy prices impacted on the cost of inputs, including fertiliser. Extreme adverse weather events—droughts in Australia, Russia and Ukraine and floods in northern Europe—soil degradation and water scarcity were all significant factors.

We are not talking small numbers. The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that human activity has precipitated soil degradation across 2 billion hectares of vegetated land and estimates that up to half the world's population will be living in areas under extreme water stress in the next 15 years. The prognosis is dire.

The reality is that all the factors we saw at play in 2008 are again on the rise—higher energy costs, extreme weather events and water scarcity. Those supply factors and of course the upward trajectory of millions of people in China and India into the burgeoning middle class will only ensure that, when it comes to food consumption and production, demand will exceed supply. With global food production needing to double over the next 30 years, the status quo is no longer enough. That is where Australia must play a lead role. We have the institutions in place—the Australian aid agency, AusAID, and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research are cases in point. They can direct financial support and expertise into developing countries, particularly in our region, to support sustainable production practices and programs. The adaptation of innovative technologies and approaches is a proven path to better productivity and crop yields.

We must also do all we can within the international institutional framework. This includes generating international support to bring the decade-long Doha round of free trade negotiations to a positive end—if we eventually see a reduction in the extensive European agricultural subsidies, we will stimulate greater production in developing countries. We have a special opportunity as hosts of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, CHOGM, in Western Australia later this year to push for coordinated international action on the present food security issue. Most of all, this issue needs the attention of our Prime Minister and our Minister for Foreign Affairs because it is a security issue as well as a
humanitarian one. Only if it gets the necessary attention will we have the chance of heading off the next, inevitable, food crisis.

In light of these international developments, it is totally predictable and understandable that a number of other countries, particularly the more wealthy ones, are sending their sovereign wealth funds abroad in an attempt to lock up agricultural assets abroad. There are reports that the Qatariis have taken control of thousands of arable hectares in Kenya, that the South Koreans are in the Sudan and that the Bahrainis are in Turkey. Just recently Hassad Foods, which is owned by the Qatar government, has bought—as revealed in the *Sunday Age*—more than 8,000 hectares in Victoria’s Western District. This follows soon after its purchase of more than 2,500 hectares of Victorian farming land the previous year. Other examples of foreign government owned entities entering Australia’s market abound.

The issue is not with foreign investment per se; foreign investment is a significant enabler for Australia. Our economy would not have developed in the way it has without billions of dollars of foreign investment giving our resource, manufacturing and other industries the capacity to capitalise on the opportunities available. But at the same time we need to know more than we do about who is investing in our agricultural sector and why. The current rules governing foreign investment are opaque and the national interest test is ill-defined. In the words of Patrick Colmer, the executive member of the Foreign Investment Review Board and a senior Treasury official:

The way that the legislation is set up is that the default position is that the investment is allowed to proceed.

What is more, the threshold for consideration by FIRB for a foreign investor in Australian agricultural land is a purchase price over $231 million. Compare this to New Zealand, where the Overseas Investment Act 2005 requires government consent before a foreign investment in any rural land acquisition exceeding five hectares can proceed. Indeed, when Treasury's Patrick Colmer appeared last year before my colleague Senator Heffernan in his capacity as the chair of the Senate Select Committee on Agriculture and Related Industries, he was asked by the senator:

You could acquire an entire district, just farm by farm by farm, with a foreign entity and it would never come on your radar?

The response from Colmer was:

It is quite possible, yes

It is clearly inadequate to have a situation where these acquisitions can go under the radar and where we find ourselves in a position in which we do not have a reliable and comprehensive register of information about foreign investments in Australian agricultural assets.

Labor is clearly cognisant of the growing community concern about this issue but is sitting on its hands. While the Assistant Treasurer is happy to talk the talk by posing the big questions—such as, 'Is land being bought up by foreign interests?' and 'Are we losing control of our food and water?'—he offers no serious follow-up. The coalition, however, have moved a motion in parliament to request the Productivity Commission to gather data on foreign ownership of agricultural land and agricultural businesses. In doing so, we want to facilitate an informed constructive, bipartisan public consultation about foreign investment in our agricultural sector, as this issue will only become more sensitive and important.
The Australian community needs to appreciate that food security is a global issue of the utmost importance. It is not merely an issue of development but one of war and peace. What is more, those countries most acutely affected are taking preventive action to secure food supplies ahead of the next food crisis. Australia has a responsibility to help our neighbours and friends around the world who will be affected by price hikes and shortages. At the same time we need to do all we can to ensure that, when it comes to foreign investment in our precious agricultural sector, we have greater transparency so that it can be more effectively determined whether a particular acquisition is in the national interest. (Time expired)

Blair Electorate: Ipswich Motorway and Blacksoil Interchange

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (21:51): I am deeply and historically aggrieved at the attitude of the coalition with respect to the road infrastructure in South-East Queensland. I say to the coalition: what is the attitude of the coalition towards the Ipswich Motorway's Dinmore to Goodna section? What is the attitude of the coalition to the $54 million allocated in this budget to the upgrade of the Blacksoil Interchange? In the three election campaigns which I have fought, on each occasion the coalition opponent has opposed the Ipswich Motorway upgrade. Why should I not be surprised about that? My predecessor who I fought in 2004 and 2007 opposed the Ipswich Motorway upgrade and the coalition opposed it for 11½ years while they were in office. The member for Wide Bay, the shadow minister for roads, in this place just last week poured scorn on the Ipswich Motorway upgrade and said that they would not do it. In fact, his view was that they would support a Goodna bypass. In October 2009 he said, in an interjection he made in federal parliament, that he would actually stop construction on the Ipswich Motorway.

If the coalition had their way, the 25 kilometres of road between Ipswich and Brisbane would not have anything done on it and for 11½ years almost nothing was done. But just before the 2007 federal election former Prime Minister John Howard came up with an idea at the request of my predecessor that he would cross the Brisbane River on at least two occasions, possibly four occasions, with a road that cut through the leafy suburbs of Brisbane but with no off ramps so that people from Ipswich could get into Brisbane that way—because you would not have any Ipswich riffraff in the leafy suburbs of Brisbane! That is the attitude of those people in the posh suburbs, the wealthy western suburbs of Brisbane. But guess what? The cost would be twice as much in real terms to the Ipswich Motorway upgrade from Dinmore to Goodna now. That puts in not an $11 billion black hole for the coalition but a $15 billion black hole.

The Ipswich Motorway has at its least busy 80,000 vehicles a day across the length and breadth as people commute—farmers, small business operators, workers, mums and dads taking their kids to school—because it is a very important road not just for the people of Ipswich but for Toowoomba, the Lockyer Valley, the Brisbane Valley and the Scenic Rim in Brisbane. Up to 100,000 vehicles per day use that road. It is probably the most important road apart from the Gateway Motorway and those of us from Ipswich say that it is the most important road in South-East Queensland. Yet the coalition has steadfastly opposed road funding for it.

I say to the coalition members opposite: what will your attitude be to the road funding and the nation building funding we have put in this budget? Having voted against the Ipswich
Motorway funding allocations year after year after year and bill after bill after bill, what is your attitude now? It is one of disdain and disrespect for the people of Ipswich—that is the attitude historically in relation to that. For 11½ years the coalition failed to upgrade the Blacksoil Interchange. The Blacksoil Interchange is the intersection between the Warrego Highway and the Brisbane Valley Highway. The Blacksoil Interchange was No. 1 on the list of projects—one of the magnificent seven—that the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors supported. Guess who was the chair of the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors? It was Campbell Newman, the former Lord Mayor of Brisbane, yet the coalition did not fund it, did not support it for 11½ years and failed to make a commitment in the last federal campaign with not a whisper, not a peep from the coalition in relation to the Blacksoil Interchange. This is really important because 8,000 vehicles a day go through that intersection on the Brisbane Valley section. Up to 40,000 vehicles a day go through the intersection from the Warrego Highway through to Ipswich Central. Yet the coalition has voted against the road funding allocations and the nation building funding to resurface that road. All the funding that we have given in relation to the Warrego Highway towards Toowoomba the coalition has voted against. The LNP candidate and member for Lockyer consistently bleeds about the issue yet when John Howard was the Prime Minister they capped the funding.

We have put in an enormous amount of funding and so has the state Labor government in Queensland. The state Labor government in Queensland, on this $70 million project of the Blacksoil Interchange, has added $16 million to our $54 million. What is the attitude of the LNP opposition in Queensland in relation to it? I have not heard a peep about it—not a whisper, not a scintilla, not a jot, not a dot—nothing from the coalition in relation to the Blacksoil Interchange. I have not heard anything from them in this parliament and they have said nothing about it in the Queensland Legislative Assembly. There is nothing in the media back home and yet I have coalition mayors and coalition councillors throughout South-East Queensland talk to me regularly about this particular project but they will not do anything about it. Their failure with respect to road infrastructure in South-East Queensland is appalling. Let us talk about the Toowoomba bypass which they failed to do for 11½ years. The member for Groom constantly bleats about it offering mythical money in relation to it. It is the federal Labor government that is putting so much money into the Warrego Highway, the Brisbane Valley Highway, the Ipswich Motorway and all the road infrastructure in South-East Queensland. I will give one illustration of the failure of the previous coalition government and of the impact of regional infrastructure and the commitment of this government to road funding in the area. The Somerset Regional Council is the least populated council in South-East Queensland, but it covers the biggest area in South-East Queensland. Mr Deputy Speaker Slipper, you would know parts of it well, having previously been responsible for the Kilcoy area. But, guess what? The coalition allocated $357,000 for road funding in their last year for this local council that has the biggest land area in South-East Queensland. We are putting in nearly double that in this budget—$653,000. That is a demonstration of this government's commitment to road infrastructure. The opposition have opposed our Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, which provides $2 billion for states like my state of Queensland. Bear in mind that we have put in $8.5 billion for road, rail and port infrastructure in Queensland—more than double the amount the coalition put in when they were in power.
The coalition did not really care about the economic development of South-East Queensland and the western corridor between Toowoomba and Brisbane or my electorate around Ipswich and the Somerset region. They are not worried about the safety concerns, about the lives and the lifestyles of the farmers, the small business operators, the employees, the schoolchildren and the mums and dads in my area. They have failed comprehensively and totally with respect to road infrastructure in South-East Queensland and Ipswich particularly. We have shouted and screamed and agitated and advocated for that funding for a long time. For 11½ long years those opposite did nothing about it. They stand condemned. I am very proud to be part of a Labor government that has done something about this. We have fulfilled our election commitment on the Ipswich Motorway and fulfilled our commitment on the Blacksoil Interchange.

The days of those opposite are gone. I am proud to be part of a government that funds the Ipswich Motorway upgrade, that provides business opportunities and opportunities for the whole of South-East Queensland and beyond. South-East Queensland is the fastest growing area in all of Australia, and Ipswich is the second fastest growing area in South-East Queensland. The Somerset region is the fastest growing area in South-East Queensland. Those opposite adopt a flagrant, extravagant approach to road infrastructure. They come out with mythical funding that does not even exist. There are outrageous, expensive and unrealistic options. We are about responsible, prudent economic management and economic prosperity and development. They cannot grasp the obvious, that even the state coalition opposition in Queensland supported the Ipswich Motorway upgrade. Yet those opposite continued to oppose it. Their position is untenable, unacceptable and irrelevant.

Mr McCormack interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper): Order! Does the honourable member for Riverina wish to have an hour out of the chamber?

Mr NEUMANN: They previously said that upgrading the Ipswich Motorway was a shemozzle and a hopeless situation. I say to those opposite that the only shemozzle and hopeless situations are those opposite. I welcome the upgrade of the Ipswich Motorway and the Blacksoil Interchange, and so do all the people in South-East Queensland and every council, including the coalition. Coalition members here have no idea about the needs, aspirations and lives of people in South-East Queensland. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time allotted for the debate has expired. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Main Committee adjourned at 11:03
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Broadband
(Question No. 2)

Mr Fletcher asked the Minister representing the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, in writing, on 29 September 2010:

In respect of the report commissioned by the Government titled National Broadband Network Implementation Study, that claims that Australia’s broadband services are the third slowest among OECD countries (McKinsey & Co and KPMG, 6 May 2010, Exhibit 430, page 234), is this a fact; if so, what data exists to support this claim; if not, how does Australia rate internationally, and on what data is this based.

Mr Albanese: The Minister representing the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

According to McKinsey & Co and KPMG, the data supporting the claim that ‘Australia’s broadband services are the third slowest among OECD countries’ is based on the information provided to Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF) Broadband rankings 2008, which may be found at: www.itif.org/files/2008BBRankings.pdf

The ITIF data indicates that in 2008 Australia’s average advertised download speed was 1.7 Mbps, ranking Australia’s broadband services the third slowest out of the 30 countries surveyed.

By way of comparison, Japan recorded the fastest average advertised download speed of 63.6Mbps and Greece recorded the slowest average download speed of 1.0 Mbps.

The primary source for the ITIF speed ranking is a 2006 OECD report, Multiple Play: Pricing and Policy Trends.

More recent data published on 21 April 2010 suggests that in the fourth quarter 2009, Australia ranked 28 out of 33 OECD member countries in terms of actual average broadband speeds (www.akamai.com/stateoftheinternet).

Ministers: Staff, Capital Works and Acquisitions
(Question No. 238)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister representing the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, in writing, on 3 March 2011:

(1) How many personal staff are employed by the Minister.
(2) What is the (a) total cost, and (b) breakdown of costs, of all capital works and acquisitions in the Minister’s private office since 3 December 2007.

Mr Albanese: The Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(1) The employment of staff under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 is administered by the Department of Finance and Deregulation. On 22 February 2011, the Department tabled with the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee a list of Government Personal Staff Positions as at 1 February 2011.

(2) (a) and (b) The cost of capital works and acquisitions for ministers’ offices is shared by the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS), the Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) and home departments in line with Appendix 2 of Supporting Ministers, Upholding the Values. The Special
Minister of State will accordingly respond on behalf of all ministers in respect of costs incurred by the DPS and the DoFD.

I am advised that the costs incurred by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy since 3 December 2007 are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plant hire</td>
<td>$4,271.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water cooler hire</td>
<td>$2,481.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office equipment including desktop computers, laptops</td>
<td>$31,173.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and printers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accommodation and Food Services: Depreciation Expenses
(Question No. 386)

Mr Baldwin asked the Treasurer, in writing, on 25 May 2011:

What was the total value of depreciation expenses in the accommodation and food services industry for (a) 2009-10, (b) 2008-09, (c) 2007-08, (d) 2006-07, and (e) 2005-06.

Mr Swan: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The total value of depreciation expenses is as follows:

Table 1: Consumption of Fixed Capital by the Accommodation and Food Services Industry (chain volume measure, $ millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Consumption of Fixed Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>2729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>2890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>3052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>3201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>3311</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS Cat. No. 5204.0

The table shows the consumption of fixed capital, or economic depreciation. The ABS defines economic depreciation as the difference between the real economic value of the asset at the beginning of the period and at the end of the period (Australian System of National Accounts, Concepts Sources and Methods, ABS, 2000). Therefore the data may not reflect actual depreciation 'expenses' (book value).