INTERNET

The Votes and Proceedings for the House of Representatives are available at

Proof and Official Hansards for the House of Representatives,
the Senate and committee hearings are available at

For searching purposes use
http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au

SITTING DAYS—2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 6, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>13, 14, 15, 26, 27, 28, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>14, 15, 16, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>26, 27, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 22, 23, 24, 25, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>1, 2, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RADIO BROADCASTS

Broadcasts of proceedings of the Parliament can be heard on ABC NewsRadio in the capital cities on:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADELAIDE</td>
<td>972AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRISBANE</td>
<td>936AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANBERRA</td>
<td>103.9FM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARWIN</td>
<td>102.5FM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOBART</td>
<td>747AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MELBOURNE</td>
<td>1026AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERTH</td>
<td>585AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYDNEY</td>
<td>630AM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For information regarding frequencies in other locations please visit
http://www.abc.net.au/newsradio/listen/frequencies.htm
FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mrs Karen Lesley Andrews MP,
Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP, Mr Alexander George Hawke MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP, Mr Craig Kelly MP, Hon. Charles Christian Porter MP,
Mr Donald James Randall MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Brett David Whiteley MP

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

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

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

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

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbott, The Hon. Anthony John</td>
<td>Warringah, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanese, The Hon. Anthony Norman</td>
<td>Grayndler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander, Mr John Gilbert OAM</td>
<td>Bennelong, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Mrs Karen Lesley</td>
<td>McPherson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, The Hon. Kevin James</td>
<td>Menzies, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin, The Hon. Robert Charles</td>
<td>Paterson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandt, Mr Adam Paul</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billson, The Hon. Bruce Fredrick</td>
<td>Dunkley, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird, The Hon. Sharon Leah</td>
<td>Cunningham, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, The Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen</td>
<td>Mackellar, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, The Hon. Julie Isabel</td>
<td>Curtin, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen, The Hon. Chris Eyles</td>
<td>McMahon, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briggs, The Hon. Jamie Edward</td>
<td>Mayo, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad, Mr Andrew John</td>
<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan</td>
<td>McMillan, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brodtmann, Ms Gai Marie</td>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brough, The Hon. Malcolm Thomas</td>
<td>Fisher, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchholz, Mr Scott</td>
<td>Wright, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, Ms Anna Elizabeth</td>
<td>Chisholm, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, The Hon. Anthony Stephen</td>
<td>Watson, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, The Hon. Mark Christopher</td>
<td>Port Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, Ms Terri Megan</td>
<td>Griffith, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrne, The Hon. Anthony Michael</td>
<td>Holt, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalmers, Dr James Edward</td>
<td>Rankin, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion, Mr Nicholas David</td>
<td>Wakefield, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester, The Hon. Darren</td>
<td>Gippsland, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie</td>
<td>Bendigo, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christensen, Mr George Robert</td>
<td>Dawson, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciobo, The Hon. Steven Michele</td>
<td>Moncrieff, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare, The Hon. Jason Dean</td>
<td>Blaxland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine</td>
<td>Newcastle, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobb, The Hon. John Kenneth</td>
<td>Calare, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleman, Mr David Bernard</td>
<td>Banks, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins, The Hon. Julie Maree</td>
<td>Franklin, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conroy, Mr Patrick Martin</td>
<td>Charlton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulton, Mr Mark Maclean</td>
<td>Parkes, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danby, The Hon. Michael</td>
<td>Melbourne Ports, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreyfus, The Hon. Mark Alfred QC</td>
<td>Isaacs, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutton, The Hon. Peter Craig</td>
<td>Dickson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliott, The Hon. Maria Justine</td>
<td>Richmond, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis, The Hon. Katherine Margaret</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entsch, The Hon. Warren George</td>
<td>Leichhardt, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeney, The Hon. David</td>
<td>Batman, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson, Mr Laurie Donald Thomas</td>
<td>Werriwa, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzgibbon, The Hon. Joel Andrew</td>
<td>Hunter, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher, The Hon. Paul William</td>
<td>Bradfield, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frydenberg, The Hon. Joshua Anthony</td>
<td>Kooyong, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambaro, The Hon. Teresa</td>
<td>Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles, Mr Andrew James</td>
<td>Scullin, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillespie, Dr David Arthur</td>
<td>Lyne, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald</td>
<td>Moore, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray, The Hon. Gary AO</td>
<td>Brand, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffin, The Hon. Alan Peter</td>
<td>Bruce, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griggs, Mrs Natasha Louise</td>
<td>Solomon, NT</td>
<td>CLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, Ms Jill Griffiths</td>
<td>Shortland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartsuyker, The Hon. Luke</td>
<td>Cowper, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke, Mr Alexander George</td>
<td>Mitchell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes, Mr Christopher Patrick</td>
<td>Fowler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson, Ms Sarah Moya</td>
<td>Corangamite, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendy, Dr Peter William</td>
<td>Eden-Monaro, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey, The Hon. Joseph Benedict</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogan, Mr Kevin John</td>
<td>Page, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howarth, Mr Luke Ronald</td>
<td>Petrie, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt, The Hon. Gregory Andrew</td>
<td>Flinders, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husic, The Hon. Edham Nurreddin</td>
<td>Chifley, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutchinson, Mr Eric Russell</td>
<td>Lyons, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irons, Mr Stephen James</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jensen, Dr Dennis Geoffrey</td>
<td>Tangney, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr Ewen Thomas</td>
<td>Herbert, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr Stephen Patrick</td>
<td>Throsby, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katter, The Hon. Robert Carl</td>
<td>Kennedy, QLD</td>
<td>AUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keenan, The Hon. Michael</td>
<td>Stirling, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, Mr Craig</td>
<td>Hughes, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, The Hon. Catherine Fiona</td>
<td>Ballarat, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laming, Mr Andrew</td>
<td>Bowman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landry, Ms Michelle Leanne</td>
<td>Capricornia, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundy, Mr Craig</td>
<td>Reid, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh, The Hon. Dr Andrew Keith</td>
<td>Fraser, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ley, The Hon. Susan Penelope</td>
<td>Farrer, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macfarlane, The Hon. Ian Elgin</td>
<td>Groom, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macklin, The Hon. Jennifer Louise</td>
<td>Jagajaga, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacTierian, The Hon. Alannah Joan Geraldine Cecilia</td>
<td>Perth, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marino, Ms Nola Bethwyn</td>
<td>Forrest, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus, Mrs Louise Elizabeth</td>
<td>Macquarie, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marles, The Hon. Richard Donald</td>
<td>Corio, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matheson, Mr Russell Glenn</td>
<td>Macarthur, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCormack, The Hon. Michael Francis</td>
<td>Riverina, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGowan, Ms Catherine AO</td>
<td>Indi, VIC</td>
<td>IND.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McNamara, Mrs Karen Jane</td>
<td>Dobell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell, Mr Robert George</td>
<td>McEwen, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison, The Hon. Scott John</td>
<td>Cook, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neumann, The Hon. Shayne Kenneth</td>
<td>Blair, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolic, Mr Andrew Alexander AM, CSC</td>
<td>Bass, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Connor, The Hon. Brendan Patrick John</td>
<td>Gorton, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Dowd, Mr Kenneth Desmond</td>
<td>Flynn, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O’Dwyer, Ms Kelly Megan</td>
<td>Higgins, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Neil, Ms Clare Ellen</td>
<td>Hotham, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owens, Ms Julie</td>
<td>Parramatta, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer, Mr Clive Frederick</td>
<td>Fairfax QLD</td>
<td>PUP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parke, The Hon. Melissa</td>
<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasin, Mr Antony</td>
<td>Barker, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas</td>
<td>Moreton, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitt, Mr Keith John</td>
<td>Hinkler, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plibersek, The Hon. Tanya Joan</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter, The Hon. Charles Christian</td>
<td>Pearce, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prentice, Mrs Jane</td>
<td>Ryan, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price, Ms Melissa Lee</td>
<td>Durack, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyne, The Hon. Christopher Maurice</td>
<td>Sturt, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric</td>
<td>Grey, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randall, Mr Don James</td>
<td>Canning, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ripoll, The Hon. Bernard Fernando</td>
<td>Oxley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rishworth, The Hon. Amanda Louise</td>
<td>Kingston, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robb, The Hon. Andrew John AO</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert, The Hon. Stuart Rowland</td>
<td>Fadden, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowland, Ms Michelle Anne</td>
<td>Greenway, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy, Mr Wyatt</td>
<td>Longman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruddock, The Hon. Philip Maxwell</td>
<td>Berowra, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine</td>
<td>Lalor, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, The Hon. Bruce Craig</td>
<td>Maranoa, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Ms Fiona Meryl</td>
<td>Lindsay, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten, The Hon. William Richard</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpkins, Mr Luke Xavier Linton</td>
<td>Cowan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, The Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn</td>
<td>Lingiari, NT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowdon, The Hon. Warren Edward</td>
<td>Boothby, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southcott, Dr Andrew John</td>
<td>Murray, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone, The Hon. Dr Sharan Nancy</td>
<td>Gilmore, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudmalis, Ms Ann Elizabeth</td>
<td>Deakin, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukkar, Mr Michael</td>
<td>Lilley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan, The Hon. Wayne Maxwell</td>
<td>Hume, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, Mr Angus James</td>
<td>Wannon, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehan, Mr Daniel Thomas (Dan)</td>
<td>Kingsford Smith, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thistlethwaite, Mr Matthew James</td>
<td>Wills, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson, The Hon. Kelvin John</td>
<td>Wide Bay, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truss, The Hon. Warren Errol</td>
<td>Aston, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudge, The Hon. Alan Edward</td>
<td>Wentworth, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnbull, The Hon. Malcolm Bligh</td>
<td>Calwell, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vamvakinou, Ms Maria</td>
<td>Forde, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>van Manen, Mr Albertus Johannes</td>
<td>Barton, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varvaris, Mr Nickolas</td>
<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier</td>
<td>Gellibrand, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watts, Mr Timothy Graham</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Members of the House of Representatives

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

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

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

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

Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
SHADOW MINISTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Shadow Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Science</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Small Business</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depute Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</td>
<td>Gai Brodtmann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</td>
<td>Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Infrastructure</td>
<td>Allanah MacTiernan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Western Australia</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Ed Husic MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water</td>
<td>Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Water</td>
<td>Senator Louise Pratt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Industry</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Vocational Education</td>
<td>Hon Sharon Bird MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Manufacturing</td>
<td>Tony Zappia MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Shadow Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hon Jason Clare MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Attorney General</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Justice</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Lisa Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hon Kate Ellis MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Agriculture</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Northern Australia</td>
<td><strong>Hon Gary Gray AO MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia</td>
<td><strong>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hon Catherine King MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Stephen Jones MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>Senator Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Sport</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health</td>
<td><strong>Hon Amanda Rishworth MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Families and Payments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hon Jenny Macklin MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Disability Reform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Doug Cameron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Carers</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Payments</td>
<td>Senator Carol Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hon Richard Marles MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</td>
<td><strong>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hon Shayne Neumann MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td><strong>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Aged Care</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hon Brendan O'Connor MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Services</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 25 MARCH 2014

Chamber
COMMITTEES—
   Public Works Committee—
      Reference ................................................................. 2985
   Reference ................................................................. 2985
BILLSS—
   Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014—
      Second Reading.......................................................... 2986
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—
   Banknotes ........................................................................... 3008
   Schools Industry Partnership .............................................. 3009
   Greste, Mr Peter .............................................................. 3009
   Moore Electorate: Yellagonga Regional Park ...................... 3010
   Broadband ......................................................................... 3010
   Anzac Centenary .............................................................. 3011
   Greste, Mr Peter .............................................................. 3011
   Sport .................................................................................. 3011
   Bryce, Her Excellency the Hon. Quentin, AC CVO ................ 3012
   Broadband ......................................................................... 3012
   Workplace Relations .......................................................... 3013
   Goods and Services Tax ..................................................... 3013
   Ministry of Food Program .................................................. 3014
   Espie, Colonel Nell, AM, RRC, FRCNA .............................. 3014
   Workplace Relations .......................................................... 3015
   O'Shea, Ms Sarah .............................................................. 3015
   Gellibrand Electorate: Crime .............................................. 3016
   Greek Independence Day .................................................... 3016
   Kingsford Smith Electorate: Medicare ................................. 3017
   Page Electorate: Agriculture .............................................. 3017
STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE—
   Malaysia: Missing Aircraft .................................................. 3017
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
   Racial Discrimination Act 1975 .......................................... 3018
   Carbon Pricing ................................................................. 3019
   Racial Discrimination Act 1975 .......................................... 3020
   Carbon Pricing ................................................................. 3020
   Racial Discrimination Act 1975 .......................................... 3021
   Aged Care .......................................................................... 3023
DISTINGUISHED VISITORS .................................................. 3024
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
   Budget .............................................................................. 3024
   Racial Discrimination Act 1975 .......................................... 3025
   Road Infrastructure ........................................................... 3025
CONTENTS—continued

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 ................................................................. 3026
Mining ........................................................................................................ 3026
Racial Discrimination Act 1975 ................................................................. 3027
Former Member for Dobell ................................................................. 3028
International Development Assistance ............................................. 3029
Child Care ................................................................................................. 3029
International Development Assistance ............................................. 3031
Mining ........................................................................................................ 3032
Distinguished Visitors ........................................................................... 3033
Questions Without Notice—
  Economy ................................................................................................. 3034
  Broadband .............................................................................................. 3034
  Budget .................................................................................................... 3035
Business—
  Rearrangement .................................................................................... 3036
Documents—
  Presentation .......................................................................................... 3044
Matters of Public Importance—
  Future of Financial Advice ............................................................... 3045
Bills—
  Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013—
    Consideration of Senate Message .................................................. 3061
  Marriage (Celebrant Registration Charge) Bill 2014—
  Marriage Amendment (Celebrant Administration and Fees) Bill 2014—
    Second Reading .............................................................................. 3061
    Reference to Federation Chamber ................................................. 3063
  Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment
    (Classification Tools and Other Measures) Bill 2014—
    Second Reading .............................................................................. 3063
    Third Reading .................................................................................. 3072
  Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation)
    Bill 2014—
    Second Reading .............................................................................. 3073
    Third Reading .................................................................................. 3115
  Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014—
    Second Reading .............................................................................. 3115
Adjourment—
  Qantas ................................................................................................. 3120
  Climate Change .................................................................................... 3121
  Indi Electorate: La Trobe University ............................................... 3122
  Western Australia Senate Election ................................................. 3123
  Qantas ................................................................................................. 3124
  Western Australia Senate Election ................................................. 3126
Notices ...................................................................................................... 3127
CONTENTS—continued

Questions In Writing
Richmond Electorate: 2013 Election Commitments—(Question No. 49) .................. 3130
Regional Development Australia Fund—(Question No. 53) .................................. 3130
Tuesday, 25 March 2014

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

COMMITTEES

Public Works Committee

Reference

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (12:01): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: AIR 9000 Phase 5C Replacement Chinook Facilities Project, Townsville, Queensland.

The Department of Defence is proposing to provide new and refurbished facilities at the Royal Australian Air Force Base Townsville, Queensland, to support the introduction of new CH47F Chinook helicopters for the Army. The facilities will be used by Army's 5th Aviation Regiment located at Royal Australian Air Force Base Townsville and will provide new and upgraded working accommodation, new maintenance hangars, storage and workshop facilities and a simulator building. The project is valued at $54.8 million plus GST and includes the provision of facilities and supporting infrastructure necessary to support the new F model Chinook medium-lift helicopter by enhancing capability to provide efficiencies in the delivery of the capability through the provision of either new or expanded and modified facilities.

This investment will bring economic benefits for local industry in the Townsville region over the next three years. The works are anticipated to generate around 50 full-time jobs over the life of the project. Subject to parliamentary approval of the project, construction is expected to begin in late 2014, with completion by mid-2017. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

Reference

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (12:03): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Defence Terrestrial Communications Network Facilities and Infrastructure Project.

The Department of Defence is proposing to remediate and upgrade its terrestrial communications network facilities and communications infrastructure at 282 Defence sites in all states and territories. Successive independent reviews have identified the need for Defence to substantially improve the management of its information and communications technology. Defence's response has been a series of ICT reforms which will deliver significant business advantages to Defence by upgrading, replacing, standardising and rationalising its ICT network. Defence will use this opportunity to reduce operating costs and complexity, and provide new collaborative business processes for ICT users, such as wi-fi, mobile videoconferencing and remote access—very important. The project will include the provision...
of computer cabinets and storage, power, lighting, air conditioning, fire protection and security alarms. The project will also replace broken infrastructure and install fibre-optic cabling and connections to buildings. Defence will partner with Telstra to implement the transform network solution.

The upgrade is valued at $131.1 million plus GST. Funding has been approved by the government. The cost includes management and design fees, construction costs, furniture, fittings and equipment, contingencies and an allowance for escalation. The works will bring economic benefits to local industry at the 282 locations. Defence's investment will generate job opportunities for local subcontractors over the next two years. Subject to parliamentary approval of the project, construction is expected to commence in mid-2014, and should be completed on all sites by mid-2016. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014

Second Reading

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

to which the following amendment was moved:

That all the words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading the House notes the:

(1) program will be deeply flawed in its design and implementation given the poor environmental record of the current Government;

(2) bill provides insufficient protections for participants in the areas of occupational health and safety, workers compensation and rehabilitation;

(3) Government should clarify why participants do not have employee status even though they are to be removed from the social security system and paid an equivalent training wage;

(4) Government must provide assurance that the Green Army Program will not displace or reduce employment opportunities for existing workers;

(5) lack of detail of the training provisions in the program, namely specified minimum hours, provision of accredited recognised training and opportunities for ongoing training and career pathways; and

(6) importance of supporting young people to make the transition to meaningful work and further training opportunities."

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

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (12:06): It is a pleasure to continue my contribution from yesterday. I was speaking about the terrific Green Army project that we have announced for Lorne which is a very important town along the Great Ocean Road and a mecca for tourism. We will be cleaning up the Lorne St George River tramway track to the west of Point Grey. Walking tracks and adventure are so important in the Great Ocean Road region, and this project will add to the tourism assets of our great region. I commend the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee as well as volunteer organisations, such as Lornecare and Friends of Queens Park, for their preliminary work on this project.
Another wonderful project is a Green Army project in Apollo Bay, further down the Great Ocean Road and another wonderful tourist town in my seat of Corangamite. The Barham River Green Army restoration project will enhance the health of the river between Apollo Bay and the Marengo Flora Reserve. This project will include extensive weed removal and the revegetation of the banks of the Barham River. It is another very important project for the region.

In Colac the fourth Green Army project, which will be rolled out in the foreseeable future, is the preservation and enhanced works at the Barongarook Creek. Barongarook Creek forms an important part of the local river system and the project will involve doing quite a lot of work in weed removal, revegetation and the inclusion of some interpretive signage. Again, we see a great commitment by the government to the environment. We see the funding of wonderful local projects which would otherwise not be funded. Very disappointingly, of course, these were not funded by the previous Labor government. We are also building on the terrific work of the Howard government. Its successful Green Corps program, established in 1996, propagated and planted over 14 million trees, erected more than 8,000 kilometres of fencing, cleared more than 50,000 hectares of weeds and constructed or maintained more than 5,000 kilometres of walking tracks or boardwalks.

Although the Green Army program supports important local projects, to me, as the member of Corangamite, they are not the only important environmental projects we are undertaking. We have also announced a $300,000 program for a solar Surf Coast. This is a project to help fund the installation of solar panels for community groups, surf-lifesaving clubs, schools and senior citizens groups. It is a wonderful opportunity for so many communities along the Surf Coast, in my electorate, to apply for funding and to get the support they need to install solar panels. I am a big supporter of renewable energy and particularly solar energy. In a country such as ours where each home has the capacity to generate its own power—to be its own mighty power station—this project provides an important incentive for the use of renewable energy in Corangamite.

This is in stark contrast to what the previous government did to help the environment. It introduced a carbon tax, which is a tax on jobs, a tax on manufacturing and a tax on every family in my electorate of Corangamite and across the country. It is a $7.6 billion hit to the economy, costing each and every family $550 a year. Consider the damage that it has done to small business, which has not been compensated, and also to manufacturing—a $1.1 billion hit on manufacturing. I represent a very important farming district in my electorate and farmers are also adversely affected. For example, dairy farmers will be hit with a $7,000 a year impost as result of this dreadful and economically destructive tax. I say to the people of WA, Labor is leading you in a merry dance. They have no intention of looking after your interests. We are doing everything we can to abolish the dreadful carbon tax. Labor is saying one thing in WA and another thing here in Canberra. If Labor were to have its way, it would impose a carbon tax on diesel fuel, which would cripple many more small businesses, farmers and other enterprises. That could only mean one thing—job losses.

At a time when we are working so hard to give young people an opportunity to develop new skills and new experiences in the workplace, you would think there would be bipartisan support for what is a very positive initiative. But what we see in the amendment before the House today is members opposite obstructing another great idea that primarily supports young
people in our community. I reflect on the youth unemployment rates in my city of Geelong. The figure for young people aged 15 to 24 is an alarming 14.3 per cent. We are delivering a program which will help young people to build pride and develop the skills that will lead them to many other opportunities. It is very disappointing to see some of the comments made by members opposite, by the Greens and even by the ACTU president, Ged Kearney, who has said:

This whole concept of the Green Army is the latest attempt by the Abbott Government to cut wages [and] cut conditions of working people in this country.

It is a pity that Ms Kearney, the Labor Party and the Greens simply do not appreciate this program. This program is creating new opportunities and a whole new pathway to employment. Her statement is frankly a load of absolute rubbish. What I would say to those opposite, to the ACTU and to the Greens is come to my region and see how destructive youth unemployment is in places like Geelong and Colac. I can tell them that this is a wonderful opportunity for so many young people and it is a particularly important part of our efforts to combat youth unemployment. We are doing something. We are giving young people a go. We are helping them to build pride in their work. We are making them feel valued and like they are part of a team, and we are helping them to move towards their next opportunity. We are also tackling important local environmental projects, which unfortunately were ignored by the Labor Party. This is a wonderfully positive scheme, a proud initiative of environment minister Greg Hunt and the coalition government, and I proudly commend this bill to the House.

Mr Watts (Gellibrand) (12:14): The Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014 claims to address the current crisis facing our unemployed youth. However, the bill unfortunately raises more questions than it answers. Today's labour market is tightening. In February 2014 our unemployment rate hit six per cent for the first time in recent memory. The Abbott government has promised one million new jobs, but that is little more than a mirage on the horizon.

In these circumstances, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find employment, particularly for Australia's youth. Figures released by the Brotherhood of St Laurence in February show that 12.4 per cent of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 were out of work in January of this year. The figures are even higher in Melbourne's west, where over 13 per cent of young people are not able to find work in the current job market—more than double the official unemployment rate. This is to say nothing of the ambitious young people who are underemployed or stuck in temporary work, unable to find the security of a permanent job. The first steps in starting a career are hard enough without a marketplace that will not give you a chance. It places these young people in an extremely vulnerable position, forcing them to trade away their work entitlements for any chance at employment. Youth unemployment rates are reaching crisis levels, and they look unlikely to ease any time soon in Melbourne's west.

There are tough times facing the manufacturing industry in my electorate. With 2½ thousand jobs gone at the Toyota plant in Altona and with more than 1,000 jobs at risk of disappearing at the BAE Systems shipyards in Williamstown, the traditional career path taken by many young people in Melbourne's west, into a world of manufacturing, will no longer be available. Jobs at the businesses who supply these two companies will also disappear,
making opportunities scarce for those trying to enter the working world. The jobs marketplace for the youth of Melbourne's west is not a promising one.

We need to do all that we can to get these young people into work. Through the right training, work experience, incentives and, most importantly, the right level of government support, Labor believe that we can help these young people to find jobs that are right for them. Labor support work and training programs as a pathway to get these young people into the workforce.

Work and training programs that are aimed at improving our environment will have an additional benefit, for we all know that the natural beauty that we find in our parks, reserves and beaches adds something immeasurable to the enjoyment of our life. They are places to gather with friends and family, to get active, to celebrate the most important events in our lives and to share our lives with others. Looking after these public places, which add so much to our lives, is essential for the soul of our nation. It is also a moral imperative. The words of Antoine de Saint Exupéry are often quoted, yet they still ring as true today as they ever did: 'We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.' So it is our obligation to care for our natural environment so that our descendants may enjoy it as much as we do.

The previous Labor government took these words to heart. It introduced a raft of both immediate and long-term measures to protect our nation's environment. It added new national parks to the World Heritage List, including the Ningaloo Reef, and it added the Koongarra area to Kakadu National Park, so that these parks would have domestic and international protections. Most significantly, the previous Labor government created the most comprehensive system of national marine parks in the world, covering thousands of miles of Australian coastline and sea, with the same protections given to our national parks.

Protecting the environment is a core Labor value. Unfortunately, however, this trait is not shared by our colleagues across the floor in the coalition. The Abbott government's environmental record after only six months in office is abysmal. It has disallowed the classification of the Murray River from the Darling to the sea as an 'endangered community'. It has abandoned efforts to have Queensland's Cape York added to the World Heritage List. It has approved every request for a development in one of Australia's brightest jewels, the Great Barrier Reef, despite UNESCO threatening to list the reef as being 'in danger'. It has secretly rolled back the marine system created under Labor by undoing the management plans that gave the system effect. This is a government that has approached the World Heritage Committee and asked it to delist 74,000 hectares of protected forests. This is a Prime Minister who has claimed: 'We have quite enough national parks. We have quite enough locked up forests already.' This is a government that cannot be trusted to look after our natural environment.

However, the Green Army Program in the bill under consideration is one of the few programs introduced by the Abbott government that could actually go some way to protecting the environment, even in Melbourne's west. Many of our parks, beaches and reserves would benefit from a team of young people to care for and maintain these valuable community areas. Indeed, many of the parks in Melbourne's west are already lucky enough to benefit from the support of the community. I applaud the work of voluntary organisations such as Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek and their president, Geoff Mitchelmore, as well as our Landcare...
volunteers who work throughout Melbourne's west. They work tirelessly to ensure that our parks and gardens are kept beautiful.

An employment program that provides even more resources for these public places to be cared for and provides our youth with training and work opportunities would clearly provide great benefit to my community. After all, programs like this are a part of Labor's heritage. The Landcare and Environment Action Program, LEAP, was introduced by the Keating government in 1992. It provided work opportunities for young people and fostered good environmental outcomes. This bill proposes to create a similar employment program, although this is hard to see from the grandiose statements of the environment minister. He is at pains to convince us that this is an environmental program, mainly because the government does not have any other coherent environmental policy. In his second reading speech, he touts the Green Army as, 'a central component of the government's cleaner environment plan,' and claims that it will, 'deliver tangible benefits for the environment'. In the explanatory memorandum too, the Green Army's credentials are vaunted. It is described as making, 'a real difference to the environment and local communities through projects such as restoring and protecting habitat, weeding, planting, cleaning up creeks and rivers and restoring cultural heritage places'.

But let me be clear: the bill under consideration before us is for an employment program. It is primarily designed not to look after the environment but to get young people back into work. This is clear from the program's explicit focus on young people between the ages of 17 to 24, even though there are people of all ages who have the time and passion to get involved in conservation work. It is clear from the environment minister's frequent references to the Green Army as a workforce, which is even contained in the explanatory memorandum to the bill before us today. There is nothing wrong with this. A program designed with skill can achieve the aims of both creating employment opportunities and caring for the environment. Labor has been proud to support this form of employment program throughout its various iterations, from the Landcare and Environment Action Program I mentioned before to bills like the one before us today.

As an employment program, the Green Army should give to its workers the rights and protections bestowed on all employees under Australian employment law. It is this aspect of the bill under consideration that is most concerning to me, for the bill before us explicitly excludes the Green Army workers from many of the protections awarded to Commonwealth employees. It excludes Green Army members from the definition of 'worker' under the Work Health and Safety Act. It excludes Green Army members from the definition of 'employee' under the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. Most importantly, it excludes Green Army members from the definition of 'employee' under the Fair Work Act.

Cutting out Green Army workers from these three crucial areas of employment protection has a significant impact on the legal rights of these workers. If excluded by the Work, Health and Safety Act, the registered training organisations running the Green Army program will not be required to follow the occupational health and safety requirements in relation to Green Army workers. Similarly, being excluded from the ambit of the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act means that, in the event of injury during the Green Army program, Green Army workers will not be covered by Commonwealth compensation. This could potentially
lead to the unjust situation where the supervisors of Green Army programs would be covered in the event of workplace injury, but the Green Army members they organise would not.

Of most concern is the exclusion of Green Army workers from the ambit of the Fair Work Act. The Fair Work Act provides crucial protections to workers. It protects them from unfair dismissal, allows them to request time off and ensures that they will be paid a minimum wage. If this bill is passed, however, none of these statutory protections will be available to Green Army workers. This would have significant implications for the rights of workers undertaking the program—the workers who, let us not forget, are young, inexperienced, eager for work and desperate to get a foot into the door of the employment market, and many of whom will be passionate about the environment and keen to do something that has an impact on the world but will not understand what the loss of these important workplace rights will entail.

This is a significant limitation on the rights of a particularly vulnerable group of people in our society, yet there is no detail contained in the bill on the implications of changes to workers' rights, benefits and protections. There is no detail given about the alternative wages that will be offered to Green Army workers. This is a significant issue that requires clarification. Unfortunately, the Green Army seems to be headed by Sergeant Schultz, in the form of the environment minister, who knows nothing about the details of these plans.

More discussion and analysis is required before we can be sure that the level of protection given to the Green Army workers is justifiable. For example, who sets the wage that workers will be receiving? Is it the government or the private service provider who is 'responsible for the disbursement of Green Army allowances', according to the explanatory memorandum? According to what criteria will these wages be justified? Will a 17-year-old Green Army worker be paid the same wages as a graduate with an environment degree? After all, the Abbott government is aiming to attract a large pool of graduates to the Green Army program.

This is not the only area where a startling lack of detail accompanies the government's claims. We only need to look to the Abbott government's promises about the training opportunities afforded by the Green Army program to see more sweeping statements and no precise detail. The Abbott government seems keen to highlight the training opportunities offered by the Green Army program. The explanatory memorandum frequently mentions the 'hands-on, practical skills, training and experience' that these young people will encounter. In the second reading speech too, the environment minister mentions that 'Green Army participants will have the opportunity to develop job-ready skills and to undertake training'. But what are these job-ready skills that these programs will teach? Will academic training programs be offered to workers, or will manual skills development be the focus? Which industries will the government be preparing these workers to enter? How much training will workers receive for their work?

It is even unclear whether training will be offered to every worker in the Green Army program. The draft statement of requirements outlines that 'the training component of the programme will be negotiated with each participant as part of the participant agreement'. It gives no guarantees that training will be offered to all participants in the program. It places the onus of negotiating this training on the people in the most vulnerable bargaining position—young people who are desperate for work. It is hard to believe such an unequal bargaining position will result in the best training outcomes for Green Army workers.
Another concern raised by the bill is its potential to displace existing workers. There are many hard-working environmental workers across our communities who fulfil important roles honed with years of experience. Many of these workers may not make much more than the minimum wage. Yet, with an army of workers on training allowances, the potential for these workers to be displaced is significant. How will the government ensure that the jobs of these workers will not be lost, or that in a time of shrinking budgets the skills of these workers will not have been cast off for Green Army trainees who are being paid below the minimum wage? How will the government design the program to prevent this from happening?

This bill poses far more questions than it answers. Unfortunately, it will be our young people who suffer the most from this lack of detail. The youth of Australia—and particularly the youth of Melbourne's west—are facing tough employment conditions. They will need help in navigating the continuing slide of the employment market to find secure, stable work. An employment program like the one this bill describes can help transition young people into this secure, stable work. It can do so while caring for the parks, rivers and beaches that are so important to us all, but it should not exclude our young people from basic employment protections with a vague sweep of its arm.

The government needs to justify why it is taking these employment protections away. It needs to outline what the consequences of this lack of protection will be, how it will mitigate these consequences and what the offsetting benefits are to the participants in these programs. It needs to specify what sort of wages and training benefits the Green Army program will offer to participants. It needs to detail the procedures in place to ensure that this program will not take away jobs from those already undertaking environmental works in our communities.

The Abbott government has failed to provide the level of detail in this bill. It needs to stop acting like an opposition who cannot think past three-second sound bites and provide some detail about how the Green Army program will support and protect workers in practice.

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (12:28): I rise to talk about the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014. It is a fantastic program and initiative being launched by the government in July this year. The policy covers two things that I am very passionate about: one is the environment, and the other is youth welfare. In my electorate of La Trobe, we are now committed to four Green Army projects: a nature reserve mountain biking network, National Rhododendron Gardens in Olinda, the south-eastern Dandenong Ranges protection program and Shangri-La Wildlife Shelter. I will now look at each of those programs separately.

First of all is the nature reserve mountain biking network. Mountain bike trails attract a large group of enthusiastic participants, and the Green Army proposal will look at developing crown land in La Trobe to make environmentally sensitive changes for this to happen.

The Beaconsfield Nature Conservation Reserve is one location being considered, along with other crown land in Cockatoo and Gembrook. The project will see the construction of sustainable trails as well as weed control and the preservation of heritage. We will work with the Cardinia Environmental Coalition and the wider community to build an internationally approved, staggered-loop design mountain bike track system. The community will benefit in many ways from this—improved fitness and health of local residents, improved level of wellbeing as the people connect to nature, and benefits to local traders from the influx of trail users.
The environment will also benefit in many ways, as building sustainable trails will guarantee long-term protection of the land. Mountain bike riders have shown themselves to be highly motivated and willing to put many volunteer hours back into the areas they ride. Weed control will also be improved and regulated with maintenance on the trail. I would like to thank Malcolm Doswell for submitting this proposal and hope that other organisations—like the local Friends group, the Fat Tyre Flyers Mountain Bike Club, Full Gas Pedallers, Yarra Ranges Mountain Bikers, the Dirtriders Mountain Bike Club and the Cardinia Environmental Coalition will also greatly benefit from this Green Army project.

Another planned Green Army project is for the National Rhododendron Gardens in Olinda. The lovely town of Olinda is in the Dandenong Ranges, and nearby are the iconic National Rhododendron Gardens—and I love these gardens. There are more than 15,000 rhododendrons in the gardens, and they share the stage with 12,000 azaleas, 3,000 camellias and, amazingly, 250,000 daffodils. Located only a short distance from Olinda, the 100-acre gardens offer a fantastic opportunity to see one of the region's premier garden sites. Thousands of people visit these gardens each year, especially since the Liberal state government was elected and removed the entry fee for admission. The Green Army project will assist the rhododendron society to maintain and further develop the 100 acres of botanical gardens, the main focus being on weeding of invasive species, care and protection of native fauna through the construction of bird breeding boxes and the construction of walking paths or boardwalks. The community will benefit by making this unique asset in La Trobe even better. In October each year we have the internationally recognised Blossom Festival. A number of Japanese and Chinese tourists attend the gardens for this, and it is quite spectacular. I would like to thank Mike Hammer, who initially put this application in back in 2010 and has been a great ambassador for the gardens. I would also like to thank all of the other committee members and all of the volunteers who help in the rhododendron gardens.

The next project is the south-eastern Dandenong Ranges protection program, which will greatly benefit from the Green Army project. This project will focus around the Dandenong Ranges, in the southern and eastern areas surrounding the iconic Puffing Billy corridor. This corridor provides an opportunity to establish a significant biolink stretching from the Dandenong Ranges to the west to the Bunyip State Park in the east. These works will complement works already being undertaken by environmental volunteer groups, including the community weed alliance in the Dandenongs, the Southern Ranges Environment Alliance and Puffing Billy. It will build on the works of the Urban Fringe Weed Management Initiative, which combines the efforts of council, Melbourne Water, and Parks Victoria. Tasks will include revegetation, woody weed control, wandering trad control—and I will talk a bit more about that later—nest box insulation, and monitoring and treatment of climbing ivy. It will encapsulate a range of awareness and training opportunities for private landowners.

The project will improve the tourism and the amenity values of the iconic Dandenong Ranges and will support the work of many environmental groups, providing valuable ground assistance. It will also improve connectivity of multiple-use trails in the parks, bushland reserves and trackside properties of the Puffing Billy railway. The project will begin to deliver a consistent and effective weed management program for private landowners adjacent to public land managers. I would like to thank the following people for their continued efforts in weed control in the area and support of the Green Army proposal: Bill Incoll, Jane
Hollands, Darcy Duggan, Xander Groverland and Glenn Brooks-MacMillan. Glenn is the facilitator of the Southern Ranges Environmental Alliance. I recently had a great meeting with the team up in Ferny Creek, off Jacka Street, where a great initiative took place. They would approach landowners saying that they had, for example, holly or sycamores or wandering trad or ivy on their properties, and the group then worked with the private residents to remove those weeds. Why did this take place? If it had not, the weeds would have flourished into the Sherbrooke Forest next door.

I had a good chat to Phil Hastings, a local resident in Ferny Creek, who knows a lot about weeds. Phil is also a member of the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society, and he had a fence of ivy in his backyard. Each year he would do the right thing and cut back all of the ivy before it flowered, but the problem is that you cannot get every bud—and then it goes into the forest. So Phil allowed the group to remove this ivy from his fence, and it is looking fantastic. The next project is the Shangri-La Wildlife Shelter, run by Rodney and Tina Hudson-Davies, with whom I have shared a great number of years of friendship and work. When I hear the opposition say that the Abbott government does not care about the environment, can I say that in my past experience in La Trobe, the Labor Party has done nothing for the environment. A classic example is the Shangri-La Wildlife Shelter, which had never received any state, council or federal funding until Malcolm Turnbull became the environmental minister and we announced $25,000, I think it was, to help build shelters and fences up there. The shelters provide rehabilitation services for injured animals, and this project will focus on stopping dog attacks, which have sadly killed kangaroos and other animals. A brush fence is to be built, and some more pens for the injured animals are to be constructed.

The Green Army will not only make significant contributions to the betterment of our environment but will assist our young to gain hands-on practical experience that will improve their employment prospects. The coalition Green Army policies plan to bring 15,000 people—the largest-standing environmental workforce in Australia's history—to provide real and practical solutions to cleaning up river banks and creeks and revegetating sand dunes and mangrove habitats, among the other environmental conservation work being carried out.

The Green Army is also about training for young people. Aside from improving the environment—and that is obviously the message in La Trobe—participants will receive a training wage, invaluable work skills and formal training. In Year 12 I completed my outdoor education course at Boronia Secondary College. I learned a lot of environmental skills—in fact, I remember working on the ground at Ferntree Gully in Dandenong Ranges National Park pulling out weeds and caring for the environment. The group I worked with ended up doing very well. I think training in the environment, and getting hands-on experience, is a great initiative, and the minister must be congratulated for that.

The program will commence from July 2014 with the rollout of 250 Green Army projects and approximately 2,500 people undertaking on the ground environmental activities in 2014-15. I cannot see why the Labor Party are so strongly opposed to this. Up to nine eligible participants and at least one team supervisor will constitute a Green Army. Participants will be eligible to receive a Green Army allowance while participating in the program, and will have the opportunity to undertake training.

Again, when the Labor Party implemented their pink batts scheme it was an absolute disaster. I find it quite ironic that the Labor Party, in opposition, has the audacity to lecture us
on workplace training, when under their pink batts scheme four young people sadly had their lives taken and there were over 250 house fires. Why? It was through sheer incompetence. We now have a royal commission looking at this. The pink batts scheme was such a bad program. I know they may be trying to cover their tracks by blaming the Abbott government for this Green Army project, but remember this: they cannot look themselves in the mirror without judging themselves for completely failing on the pink batts program.

The Green Army Program will initially target participants between the ages of 17 and 24 years. Why would the Labor Party be strongly opposed to seeing young people get jobs? To me that is so important.

I will now briefly talk about Labor's environmental record in La Trobe. I mentioned wandering trad earlier. For those who do not know, it is a weed that grows in the creeks. In fact, it is in up to 50 kilometres of creeks in the Dandenong Ranges. It stops any wildlife from moving and it sucks up an amazing amount of water. Back in 2007, when Malcolm Turnbull was the environment minister, prior to the election being called we made an election commitment for $450,000 to find a biological control for wandering trad. The local environmentalists were exceptionally excited and really appreciated it.

During the same election campaign, Peter Garrett, I believe it was, bizarrely came down to La Trobe to make an announcement about the Great Barrier Reef. Unfortunately we do not have the Great Barrier Reef in La Trobe, but we would love to have it. Our big issues are fire management and weed control in the Dandenong Ranges. So what happened when the Rudd government was elected in 2007? One of the first things they did was to cut the wandering trad funding, and sadly this weed has caused a great deal of damage ever since. In 2010 I again committed to funding of $450,000, this time under Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt, who has been an absolute ambassador and supporter of the Dandenong Ranges. Again, Labor did not match this. They are all talk when it comes to the environment. The same was true of the Greens, who just kept their mouth shut during the election campaign.

In the 2013 election campaign what did we do? We announced further funding for wandering trad amounting to $450,000. The Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, knows how bad this problem is in the Dandenong Ranges. Remember that this is one of Victoria's top 10 tourist attractions. It is a disgrace that our creeks do not flow because of this weed. Greg Hunt, and I think Ian Macfarlane also, committed that the CSIRO will continue to look at finding a biological control. In New Zealand this weed is devastating their national forest and they have committed to a biological control.

The other announcement we made was $2.4 million dollars to be spent on bushfire and fuel reduction in the Dandenong Ranges. I made similar announcements back in 2010 and 2007. Again, the Labor Party talks about doing great work for the environment and how passionate they are, but would they match this commitment? No. The only true supporters of the environment in the Dandenong Ranges, in the electorate of La Trobe, have been the Liberal Party and the Nationals.

We see that Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt has been a great supporter of La Trobe, the Dandenong Ranges and of the environment. This program, put together with the Prime Minister Tony Abbott, is all good. It is all about the environment, it is all about finding jobs for young people. I do not understand why we have this criticism and lack of support...
from the Labor Party. They should bow their heads in shame, especially if they venture into La Trobe.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (12:42): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this legislation, because Labor believes in helping job seekers enter the workforce. We believe in providing young people with the appropriate training, skills and work experience they need to help them enter employment—especially as they make that difficult transition from school to work. We believe that environmentally based work and training programs can be an effective pathway for job seekers, and also provide some real environmental benefits.

We support the Green Army, just as we supported its previous incarnations; the National Green Jobs Corps; the Green Corps program; and the original incarnation, Paul Keating’s 1992 Landcare and Environment Action Program. However, although we support the principles of the program, we remain significantly concerned at the lack of detail that is being provided by the Abbott government about how this program will actually work, and about the exemptions from the workplace health and safety laws, compensation laws, and industrial relations laws that the government is seeking to put in place.

As they always do, the wonderful staff of the Parliamentary Library have prepared a comprehensive Bills Digest on this legislation. It is very much worth a read, and I recommend it. It was published last week on 18 March. The reason I mention it now is that in the very first section of this digest, on the first page out of nine pages of text, the library has provided a caveat. It says:

It is worth noting that, beyond the basics, there is not a great deal of publicly available information about the programme. This program is meant to begin on 1 July this year. That is just over three months away, and we are still without any significant detail about how it will run. I note that the Green Army has been a policy of the Liberal Party since the 2010 election, so it is quite surprising that they have not worked out the detail yet. But this is just further evidence that the Prime Minister is a Prime Minister of slogans and not of substance.

Some of the details that we are missing include what, if any, training will be provided to participants. It is by no means clear that training for participants is to be guaranteed or that any training that is provided is to be accredited training. The explanatory memorandum merely states that Green Army participants will have the opportunity to undertake training. Who will provide this training? Will it be accredited training? What level of training will be provided? What qualifications will participants have at the end of this training? Will they have a certificate I? Will they have a certificate II? Will they have a certificate III? Will they have a certificate IV?

Similarly, we do not know what, if any, processes are going to be put in place to support participants to transition into the workforce after they have completed the program. We also do not have any great detail about the environmental objectives of the program. Any environmental outcomes the program might provide would be greatly enhanced if the program were more clearly focused on strategically targeted long-term projects that met a clear set of environmental objectives. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

We also do not know what, if any, safeguards are being put in place to ensure the program does not lead to the displacement or reduction of employment opportunities for existing
workers. The Abbott government must assure those hardworking Australians in local government and other organisations and authorities that employers will not be able to displace them and rely upon Green Army participants to do their work. There is simply no justification for a program like the Green Army that can provide employment pathways if the participants then go on to displace existing workers. This potential displacement needs to be addressed by the Abbott government in its design of the program. We currently have no detail to give us any confidence that this will not occur.

Of greater concern to Labor than what we do not know about this policy is what we do know—that there will be exemptions from work health and safety, compensation and industrial relations laws for participants. Labor is gravely concerned that this bill does not provide adequate protections for participants in the Green Army scheme, namely in the areas of occupational health and safety, workers compensation and rehabilitation. Proposed section 38J of this legislation provides that a participant in the Green Army Program is not a worker for the Commonwealth and is not an employee of the Commonwealth for the purposes of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, nor an employee within the meaning of section 5 of the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 and is not an employee for the purposes of the Fair Work Act 2009. Because they are not an employee, they are not entitled to the benefits that an employee would be entitled to, including workers compensation.

In defence of this, the Minister for the Environment says that the arrangements would be similar to the Howard government's Green Corps program. That is all very well, but the workplace relations environment has changed since the days of the Green Corps. Under previous schemes, participants could have been covered by state and territory employment laws, but this will no longer be the case, since most states and territories referred their industrial relations powers to the Commonwealth in 2010.

Nothing in the bill addresses the issue of the extent to which Green Army service providers will be required to provide suitable insurance. However, even when suitable insurance is in place, it differs from workers compensation cover in that an injured participant is likely to have to demonstrate negligence. There have been successful claims of this sort, but they can take many years to settle, and young volunteers may not have the resources to pursue such claims.

What we have here is a program where young and inexperienced workers will be undertaking physical work in outdoor, unpredictable environments but will be offered a lower standard of workplace protection. Labor finds this entirely unacceptable. If the Abbott government were at all committed to workplace safety and entitlements or at all concerned about the wellbeing of the Green Army participants, it would ensure that participants are deemed employees so that they are covered by a range of Commonwealth laws, including the Fair Work Act, the Work Health and Safety Act and the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act.

So far I have outlined a range of concerns with the detail of this program, but perhaps the biggest problem with the policy, the thing that causes me the most concern, is that those opposite think that the Green Army is a solution to climate change. The Green Army section of the Liberal's policy document says the Green Army will 'make a real difference to improving the environment in our own backyard and addressing climate change'. Of course, those opposite intend for the Green Army to complement the Abbott government's biggest
policy disaster, which is Direct Action. But, no matter how many young Australians join the Green Army, no matter how much the Abbott government is prepared to pay to big polluters, these policies will not be as effective as a market based solution to cap carbon pollution. That is why Labor is united in support for an emissions trading scheme.

We have known for some time that our sea levels are rising as a result of human induced global warming. The advice from climate scientists is clear on this. Most recently, the fifth report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, released last year, told us that warming of the climate system is unequivocal and that the sea level has risen. We know, too, that extreme weather events are increasing in intensity and frequency as a result of climate change. In Australia, we do not need to be reminded about the devastation that extreme weather events can cause. It is something we all know. It is something we all fear. It is something, therefore, that we should be united in tackling. I heard on the radio just this morning that Oxfam was warning about the fact that potentially 100 million people in the next 50 years could be facing starvation if there is not appropriate action taken on climate change in the near future.

Those opposite agree on the need to reduce carbon pollution. What we disagree on is how we should go about that. Labor will support the repeal of the fixed carbon price in order to replace it with an emissions trading scheme. What we will not support is the removal of the fixed price on carbon if it is not going to be replaced by a carbon pricing scheme that puts a cap on carbon pollution, that guarantees a reduction in carbon pollution.

The fact is that economies all over the world are putting a price on carbon right now or they have already done so. There are over one billion people currently living in carbon constrained economies. They live in a country, a state, a province or a union that has initiated some form of carbon pricing, such as a carbon tax or an emissions trading scheme.

The European Union, of course, has had an ETS since 2005. The EU ETS is now the largest carbon market in the world, operating in 30 countries, including the 27 EU member states plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The EU is Australia's second largest trading bloc, which is why linking Australia's ETS with the EU's ETS was a long-term goal of the Labor government. When in August last year the then Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency announced that when the Australian carbon price moved to a floating price ETS it would be linked with the European Union ETS, it was applauded as the best possible outcome for Australia.

However, the EU is not alone—far from it. California, which is the ninth largest economy in the world in its own right, has introduced an emissions trading scheme around the $20 mark. In China alone, 200 million people are living in provinces where there is an ETS either in place or in development. Most significantly, there are plans for a nationwide emissions trading scheme in China later this decade. Closer to home, our friend and neighbour New Zealand has had an ETS in place since 2009 with bipartisan support.

I mention the bipartisan support because, in the debate on carbon pricing over the last few years since I had the honour of being elected the member for Canberra, in the discussions that I have had with the community and also the diplomatic community here in Canberra one thing that has particularly staggered the European members of the diplomatic corps is the fact that this has become such a partisan issue. In the UK and throughout Europe, action on climate change has been seen as a bipartisan issue, requiring, therefore, bipartisan support. I have to
say that the European diplomatic corps, particularly, have been absolutely astonished about the level of partisanship that has embraced this issue in Australia, given the fact that it has enjoyed such strong bipartisan support in the EU and in each of those countries throughout the EU for such a long time. It is quite breathtaking when our neighbour and friend New Zealand have had this ETS in place since 2009 with bipartisan support.

By 2016, over three billion people will be living in countries where there are emissions trading schemes or carbon taxes. That is three billion people. But, if the Abbott government has its way, Australians will not be among those three billion. The fact is that the Abbott government's so-called Direct Action Plan will take very little action at all. Direct Action does not put a cap on carbon pollution and it does not provide the price signal—the market based imperative that is required to move away from carbon intensive actions. Direct Action is a system of taxpayer funded subsidies to polluters. It asks ordinary, working, taxpaying Australians to subsidise big polluters. It is a policy that is rejected by climate scientists and economists alike. Direct Action does not guarantee a reduction in carbon pollution. The simple truth is that without a cap on carbon there cannot be any such guarantee. It is an expensive system that pays taxpayer funded subsidies to polluters with no guarantee of success.

I know that there are members opposite who agree that an ETS is the most efficient and effective way to reduce carbon pollution. The fact is that in 2007 there was bipartisan support for an ETS. It was the policy that both parties took to the 2007 election and was supported beyond the 2007 election.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Order! Member for Canberra, I am happy to have a wide-ranging debate, but this bill is the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill. I request that you be as relevant as you can to the bill.

Ms BRODTMANN: The Green Army is designed to tackle climate change, and I am talking about tackling climate change. On tackling climate change, then Prime Minister John Howard said:

Australia will more than play its part to address climate change but will do it in a practical and balanced way in full knowledge of the economic consequences for our nation.

He was not talking about Direct Action; he was not talking about using taxpayers' money to subsidise polluters; he was talking about the introduction of an ETS. Following the election, then Leader of the Opposition Brendan Nelson also put the coalition support behind an ETS. He said:

We believe in an emissions trading scheme. We believe in a cap and trade system.

Of course, famously, Dr Nelson's successor as Leader of the Opposition, the member for Wentworth, is the No. 1 fan of the ETS. He put it very succinctly when he said:

You won't find an economist anywhere that will tell you anything other than that the most efficient and effective way to cut emissions is by putting a price on carbon

Sadly, the most recent change in leadership heralded a policy backflip and, for reasons unknown, an ETS has fallen out of favour with the coalition. Today, I ask those opposite to consider whether they really believe that the policy combination of the Green Army and Direct Action is a sufficient response to climate change. I ask them to listen to the experts, the
scientists and the economists, to remember their own comments made not so long ago and to commit to a market based solution to climate change—a cap-and-trade ETS.

I also urge those opposite to wake up to the fact that, no matter how much merit this program might have as a vocational training program, it is no solution to climate change. An emissions trading system is the only way forward. (Time expired)

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (12:57): I rise today to speak on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014, which resurrects and expands on the Howard years' Green Corps, which was an outstanding program proving time and time again to be a great opportunity for young people, especially those about to enter the workforce. It gave them a sense of belonging in the community, as well as having positive environmental outcomes. Unfortunately, under the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments, the successful Green Corps program was replaced with the National Green Jobs Corps, which effectively reclassified unemployed people, who continued to receive an income support payment, and was then abolished altogether.

Over the life of the Green Corps program, participants propagated and planted more than 14 million trees, erected more than 8,000 kilometres of fencing, cleared more than 50,000 hectares of weeds, collected more than 9,500 kilograms of seeds and constructed and maintained more than 5,000 kilometres of walking tracks and boardwalks. I am proud that the coalition government will not follow the way of the previous government, which repealed a program that helped to develop the skills of young people, helped communities to take responsibility for their local patch and helped to directly fix or mitigate local environment issues. Indeed, it was a program that actually worked. No wonder Labor did away with it! It was a program that actually worked—in stark contrast to the Labor government’s extensive list of failures.

On this side of the chamber, we are creating a standing Green Army, which will gradually build to a 15,000-strong environmental workforce. This will provide real and practical solutions to cleaning up riverbanks and creek beds, revegetating sand dunes, revegetating mangrove habitat, and a host of other environmental conservation projects. The Green Army will work with, and complement the work undertaken by, local and care groups, bush care groups, foreshore communities, natural resource management groups, local catchment authorities and councils in their work restoring and protecting the local environment. This will be particularly beneficial in my electorate as Ryan is home to part of Brisbane River, which is facing issues of sedimentation and bank degradation, and we also have Mount Coot-tha and its surrounding national parks and forests, Mount Crosby, parts of Mount Nebo, Walkabout Creek and the Enoggera Dam.

When the Minister for the Environment visited my electorate before the last election, to launch the Ryan Green Army Program, I was pleased to see such a strong turnout from local environmental groups and interested members of the community—all coming together united by their interest in and dedication to caring for our environment. Mount Coot-tha is a popular bushland destination for many people from all over Brisbane. It includes the Brisbane Botanic Gardens and Sir Thomas Brisbane Planetarium, as well as a mountain drive, bike tracks, walking trails and parks. There are several popular walking tracks around Mount Coot-tha, with most involving some uphill sections or steps. These tracks are often used by hikers
training to walk the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea as the terrain and climate are considered similar.

Recently I attended a neighbourhood planning forum, hosted by Premier Newman, for The Gap community works, including upgrades to Walkabout Creek in my electorate. The upgrades would give residents better access to the Enoggera Dam, allowing for kayaking and other water sports; an expansion of the Walkabout Creek centre, making it a community hub, with animal enclosures, educational sessions and a treetop boardwalk; and the creation of new walking tracks, high ropes courses and infrastructure for local scouts and guides groups. The scouting movement have expressed their desire to see this work carried out as it would mean a new area to train groups in outdoor exploration. Community leaders have found that there is a missing stepping stone between teaching scout groups the theory of outdoor exploration, camping and bushwalking, and then going and having an adventure in national bushland. These new upgrades will fill that gap, enabling young adventure groups to ease into the more difficult outdoor exploration.

Walkabout Park, part of the larger nature reserve lying on the western boundary of Brisbane, in the Enoggera Reservoir, is home to many rare native plants and animals. It was evident at the neighbourhood family meeting, with more than 100 people turning up on a Sunday morning to discuss upgrades in their local environment, that the national park is of huge significance to the local community. There were representatives from some of the many community green groups in the area, who work on local waterways, rehabilitation, weed eradication and the protection of local endangered species.

I am delighted to stand in this place legislating for a stronger, more lasting version of the former Green Corps by way of the coalition government's Green Army. My office has already received a number of Green Army grant applications, and I look forward to seeing the army grow and develop within my electorate. The electorate of Ryan is home to the University of Queensland, one of the leading research universities in the Southern Hemisphere. The researchers at University of Queensland are investigating a range of projects to protect and rehabilitate the environment, and to create a more sustainable way of living. I have previously spoken in this place about the work of Professor Ben Hankamer at the Institute for Molecular Bioscience on using genetically modified algae to rehabilitate creeks and waterways that have been affected by the nutrient run-off from farms or from the waste created by mine sites.

The University of Queensland is preparing the future of the hydrogen economy by looking at ways to sustainably produce hydrogen from genetically modified hydrogen, and on more efficient hydrogen fuel cells, to eventually replace our dependence on fossil fuels. There is also research into increasing the efficiency of traditional solar panels, as well as manufacturing lighter and more flexible and transportable solar panels. These new solar strips could be used along skirting boards and around windows in office buildings to capture light to reduce the energy demands of the building. There is a great deal of research in these fields not just at the University of Queensland but also internationally. However, in most cases the research is exactly that, research, and is not quite viable for mass production or mass implementation yet. Until such a time as the research becomes a viable alternative to our current practice, direct action from community groups to better their local environment is one of our best options.
When local community members work together to solve a problem, the sky is the limit. I would like to give special mention to some of the many green groups in my electorate and highlight all the good work they do: Save Our Waterways Now, Kenmore Transition Town, Yarrabee Road Bushcare Group, Barnett Road Bushcare Group, Men of the Trees, Freer's Farm Bushcare Group, Ferny Grove Transition Town, Glen Harding Park Bushcare Group, Toowong Creek Roving Rehabilitators, Birds Queensland, Protect Long Pocket Action Group, St Lucia Esplanade Bushcare Group, Indooroopilly Woods Residents Group, Moore Park Bushcare Group, Taringa Parade Bushcare Group, Rainbow Forest Experimental Rehabilitation Group, Brookfield Showground Bushcare Group, Brushbox Bushcare Group, Merri Merri Park Bushcare Park, Cubberla Creek Revegetation Group, Kimba Street Bushcare Group, Greenhill Regenerators, Wandering Weeder's, Mandalay Progress Association, Manaton Park Bushcare Group, Manaton Habitat Group, McKay Brook Bushcare Group, Pullen Pullen Catchments Group, Guardians of Little Gubberley, Gap Creek Bushcare Group, Cubberla-Witton Catchment Network, Huntington Bushcare Group, Rural Environmental Planning Association, Upper Gold Creek Bushcare Group, Upper Brookfield Bush Regeneration, Anstead Park Bushcare Group, Moggill Creek Catchment Group, Lions Nature Trail Bushcare Group and my local group, The Hut Environmental and Community Association. All these groups will benefit from the Green Army Program and I look forward to working with them in the future.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:06): I rise today to support the amendment moved by the member for Port Adelaide to the second reading debate on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014. Labor has always believed in the need for people in our society to work and in the dignity it brings to the individual and to the community. We also know that the vast majority of people in our society want to work. They want to earn money. They want to make a contribution. Having meaningful work is integral to one's sense of self.

This is why Labor are focused on creating the conditions for low unemployment and for fair work conditions and why we fight to keep workers in their jobs. This is why we have moved this amendment. This discussion needs to address how participants in this program will be protected if they are injured, sick or mistreated. We need to address what training will be given to the participants. What will be provided to help them transition to full-time work? What are the risks for the displacement of existing workers? These are all questions that need to be asked and answered.

Labor agrees that we need to do everything we can to get people into work, but we need more than a thought bubble here. The implications of this legislation need to be carefully and rigorously thought through. Given that this is a Green Army, the government's environmental record seems to be a good place to start—and I mean on the big environmental issues. This government already has an unenviable reputation as a retrograde administration when it comes to the environment. It is the only government in the world that has asked the World Heritage Committee to delist a currently listed wilderness area. It has a radical anti-environment agenda—from disallowing the endangered community listing of the Murray from the Darling to the sea, to the marine park stretching from Cape York to Fraser Island, to the reserve in the great Alpine National Park. In six months this government has conducted a relentless, destructive campaign when it comes to the environment. I have not yet mentioned...
its flat-earth-society approach to climate change or the oxymoron that is this government having a Minister for Environment.

The Australian government, regardless of which party is in power, has a sacred duty to protect and maintain our Great Southern Land's unique and magnificent natural assets. Those opposite must realise that they are stewards. They have been entrusted by the people of Australia, and by our children and children's children, to take care of this fragile place. At the moment, those opposite are failing in this duty. In fact, they actively and shamefully neglect it.

It is worth looking, too, at their record in protecting and supporting the vulnerable, given this bill will impact on our vulnerable young people. In the six months since they took office, they have abolished the Council on Homelessness, followed soon after by axing the National Housing Supply Council. More recently, they have refused to commit to the National Affordable Housing Agreement and to the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

Their record on workers is also instructive. They have abandoned manufacturing workers at Toyota, Alcoa and Holden, giving no guarantees of assistance despite the time elapsed since these heartless decisions were made.

There is a theme that has developed in the short time this government has been in power. The Prime Minister has told us that there are goodies and baddies. In this case, market is good, regulation is bad. It is here again in this bill—a failure to do the hard work that will ensure positive outcomes for the young people involved with an eye only on the prize of less regulation, as though less regulation is an end in itself—a value. This government know the cost of everything but the value of nothing.

However, the government are good at a few things. They are good at spin. They are great sloganeers. They excel at reducing debate to nonsensical repetitive sentences. Their three word slogans are becoming legendary—'cutting red tape'. We all know this is a euphemism for removing protections. Just this week I heard an argument from the member for Farrer that childcare workers should not monitor and record children's progress as part of their duties—that somehow this was an example of evil red tape and a waste of time. Again, the cost is highlighted rather than the value—the value of early detection of learning, health or social issues that would lead to better outcomes for the child, the family and the community.

We see it here again with the Green Army legislation. The purpose of the bill is unclear. Is it about getting young people into work? Is it about developing work-ready skills? Is it about long-term outcomes through training and experience? Or is it about the market and this government wrapping itself in green and pretending it cares about the environment and the vulnerable? This bill provides exemptions from the Fair Work Act 2009, Work Health and Safety Act 2011, and the Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988. This is alarming. These acts cover occupational health and safety, workers compensation and rehabilitation.

Labor is concerned that this bill does not provide adequate protections for participants in the Green Army scheme. Participants will not be treated as employees, and so they will be denied the rights and protections normally afforded to employees. These pretty basic rights are quite important for the smooth running of our society. They are there to ensure that unwarranted risks are not taken on the job site, to ensure workers are trained appropriately to minimise injury and to ensure that, where this fails, workers are rehabilitated and
compensated for their injuries. They are hallmarks of a civilised society. They are what a First World country expects. They are about risk and harm minimisation. It seems they are the one cost that this government does not understand—the cost of a young person who works too hard to impress the boss and damages his or her back, who is then judged to have a permanent injury that will prevent them from ever joining our armed forces. Where there is smoke, there is fire.

As I said earlier, cutting red tape is a euphemism for removing worker protections. It is not credible that any government would introduce a scheme that did not provide these basic protections. This legislation raises more questions than answers. Why do participants not have employee status even though they are being removed from social security and paid an equivalent training wage? The government is attempting to take an employment program, rebadge it as an environmental program and abdicate from their responsibility as an employer—all at the same time.

It kind of sums up the Abbott Government—mad policy alchemists trying to conjure solutions to difficult problems out of thin air, while doing none of the hard work required. It is irresponsible, it is dangerous and it is not on. This government does not have an environmental policy. This is why it is forced to take from employment policy and dress it up as environment policy. But let us be clear: it is an employment program and, as such, participants should be treated as employees. It is a good thing that the Green Army participants will be paid the equivalent of the training wage. It is not a lot of money, but it is more than Newstart pays. These payments will also be similar to the training wages received by thousands of other young Australians who are in vocational training or education. What is troubling though is that, while they are being paid by the Commonwealth, they will not be treated as Commonwealth employees. This leaves them in an undefined place—a place without standard worker protections and entitlements, yet with the same risks as workers in the workplace.

A further concern for Labor is the concept of additionality or the potential to displace existing workers. There is no point training people for roles that are already filled. Robbing Peter to pay Paul is no way to govern. This is another example of the government trying to conjure solutions out of thin air without doing the hard work required. The thing about governing is that it is hard work. I am not certain those opposite have fully comprehended this fact. It is not all swanning around parliament and cutting ribbons. It is certainly not about taking the reins of government and then slinking back to the office or the restaurant and leaving the market to do the work. It is about working with and for the community. It is about working with business, workers and people to build the economy together.

Sometimes in question time, when I hear the cries 'Get out of the way!', I wonder what would happen if we did just get out of the way and let this government put the markets in charge of our lives. What would happen to the young people who set off to the job site without protection under the law? When I read this bill I know the answers. While this amendment bill omits much of the detail related to workers’ rights, benefits and protections, the associated statement of requirements is equally bereft of detail. Unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, causes great hardship to workers, their families and their communities. Entrenched unemployment is a cancer on the economic strength of our nation.
Those on this side of the House believe that some people need help getting work and that there is a role for government in this process. People need the right training, work experience, incentives and, most importantly, the appropriate level of support. A close reading reveals that access to the formally recognised training requirements delivered by RTOs are an optional part of this program. What then will compel those charged with delivering the program to include this training in it? We all know that training costs money. What impetus will drive the delivery of training within the program? And, if the training is to be delivered, of what nature will it be? What vocations and skills will be provided within the program? Have they been identified by the Australian Workplace and Productivity Authority as areas of emerging and future skill needs? There are many questions to answer because there is so little detail. If we look at the decisions and choices this government has made, we get an insight and again we get bad news—this time for our youth. This government has cut trade training centre funding and will cut the Youth Connections program funding—two initiatives that assist our young people in becoming contributors to our society through education and work preparation.

Environment-based training and employment programs are an effective way of getting people to work whilst at the same time training them up in skills that our country needs to remain economically strong. This country cannot afford to look for shortcuts. We need to invest in training now, but that is not in this government's plan. Their plan is to cut and cut and cut again. You cannot cut your way to prosperity. We need to invest in training now, but that is not in this government's plan. Their plan is to cut and cut and cut again. You cannot cut your way to prosperity. The Green Army scheme, if delivered as intended, not only will help train young people and the unemployed in skills our nation requires but will also go ways to conserving our natural environment at a local level. However, if we leave out the training, those in the Green Army will become little more than gangers with no pathway to a better future and few skills to help our economy.

Youth unemployment must be addressed. It must be addressed for the sake of the youth in question—a citizen, an Australian, someone's son or daughter. It must be addressed for the sake of the workforce. There is a skills shortage. Training our youth is an obvious solution. It must be addressed for the sake of our economy. The unemployed not only cost the economy in terms of benefits but also deny the government revenue in the form of taxes and productivity when they are not taking part in the workforce. This government needs to show a commitment to fair wages, meaningful work, training and the opportunity for people to progress in the workforce. It is now time they look the problem of youth unemployment in the eye, roll up their sleeves and start doing the hard yards required to solve this complex problem.

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (13:18): I am very pleased to speak to the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014 today. It is an example of the Abbott government delivering on yet another key election commitment through legislation to establish the Green Army. The Green Army Programme is a key plank in the government's cleaner environment plan under the clean land pillar. The Green Army is a voluntary program that encourages hands-on, practical, grassroots action to support local environment and heritage conservation projects in Australia. It is an opportunity for young people in my electorate of Brisbane aged between 17 and 24 to gain very valuable training experience in environmental and heritage conservation fields and to explore careers further in the conservation management area.
In my electorate of Brisbane the Abbott government has committed to two Green Army projects on the Brisbane north side. Enoggera Creek, Ithaca Creek and Kedron Brook Creek will benefit from the two Green Army teams improving the local environment and amenity through practical and real action. I want to provide some further detail on one of the areas of my electorate that will benefit from this work being done by the Green Army. I am specifically referring to Kedron Brook, which stretches a total of 29 kilometres, starting at the D'Aguilar National Park and ending in the Schulz Canal in Moreton Bay. The creek is a very valuable part of the north side of Brisbane. Many families walk alongside the many pathways and bikeways on a regular basis. I want to commend the work that has been done by the Brisbane City Council as well. The environment along the creek has some of the last remaining remnants of riparian rainforest and includes the remnants of the locally uncommon flood gum Eucalyptus grandis along the Kedron Brook floodway. Mangroves and exotic grasses are the dominant vegetation. It is these wonderful natural gems, not just in my electorate but all over Australia, that this bill will protect.

Once in place the Green Army teams will focus on revegetation, installing ecological signage, upgrading walkways and cycling paths, mapping wildlife, planting trees, and installing measures to minimise flooding and reduce its impact on the local environment. This is a very real and practical way to make a difference to our environment and to complement our direct action approach to climate change. I am currently working with the Minister for the Environment in having this project rolled out as soon as possible.

The Green Army Program will provide benefits to both the environment and the community through projects such as restoring and protecting habitat, weeding, planting, cleaning up creeks and rivers, and restoring cultural heritage places. In addition to all of the great environmental work that will be done, the Green Army participants will be paid an allowance and gain valuable experience in conservation management, teamwork, discipline and waking up every morning and being committed to doing the job that needs to be done. The Australian government will shortly be undertaking a tender process for service providers who will engage the Green Army teams and supervisors and manage the activities to ensure that projects are completed safely, are reported regularly on and are on time. Projects may be carried out across urban, and regional and remote Australia, or on public land, Indigenous-held land or private land where there is a clear community, environmental and heritage benefit.

The Green Army will become Australia's largest ever environmental workforce, building to 15,000 participants by 2018 and capable of delivering real results. Those real results will be 1,500 on-the-ground environmental projects. It should be noted that this bill builds on the very strong history the coalition has in delivering for the environment. In particular it will build on the Howard government's successful Green Corps program, which was established in 1996. I saw the evidence of that and what a huge impact it made not just to the environment but to the lives of many people who participated and who then went further and continued their studies in this area or went on to technical and training education or to university education.

Over the life of the Green Corps program, participants delivered the following outcomes: they propagated and planted more than 14 million trees, they erected more than 8,000
kilometres of fencing, they cleared more than 50,000 hectares of weeds and they constructed or maintained more than 5,000 kilometres of walking track or boardwalks.

The Abbott government's approach can be contrasted quite starkly with those on the other side. Under Labor's watch, and solely on the basis of small-minded political reasons, the Howard government's Green Corps program was torn apart, was rebadged and it failed to improve the environment. Then it was terminated in 2012. Young people no longer had the opportunity to gain practical skills and to improve their local environment. But then again, no one really should have been surprised. After all, Labor's approach to the environment is to hit families, businesses and the economy with a carbon tax. The carbon tax is an attack on the entire Australian economy. What is worse is that it does not even work. Despite a $7.6 billion tax, emissions for the first 12 months barely changed by 0.1 per cent.

The Abbott government will provide $300 million over four years, and a further $222 million in 2017-18 and $289.2 million in 2018-19 to establish the Green Army. The measure was announced in the 2013-14 MYEFO. The request for tender will be released shortly. The request for tender will be open for tender applications for at least four weeks. The Australian government will be running sessions for potential tenderers, and details of these sessions will be provided as part of the RFT.

The key components to the program will be that service providers will be contracted by the Australian government to engage the Green Army teams, deliver training and wage payments, manage activities to ensure projects are completed and report regularly on progress. There will be project sponsors, and they will be organisations such as local councils, community groups or natural resource management organisations that will develop project proposals. The sponsors will submit proposals to the Australian government through an application round. They will be assessed, and recommendations will be made to the Minister for the Environment for successful projects in each round.

Then, of course, there are the wonderful participants themselves. The Green Army Program will target participants aged between 17 and 24. Participants may be Indigenous people, school leavers, gap-year students, graduates and the unemployed. The program in future years will expand to people of all ages.

Unlike previous programs that were rushed through with unholy haste by the previous Labor government, the work, health and safety of Green Army participants is of particular importance to the Abbott government. The Department of the Environment will work with the service providers on an agreed risk-management framework for the delivery of this project. They will be informed by the experience of the Department of Employment and external expertise relating to work, health and safety issues.

Service providers will be required to work with the project sponsors on risk plans for each individual project. They will regularly report to the Australian government on the management of participants and project delivery, and audit and compliance schemes will manage any contractual breaches.

In addition to the on-the-job training, a key element of the program is the provision of opportunities for vocationally-oriented accredited training delivered by registered training organisations under the Australian Qualifications Framework. Training may be undertaken in areas such as work readiness, conservation, land management, heritage conservation,
leadership, project and human resource management and trades. As such, on-the-job training activities need not be exclusively outdoors. The service providers will be responsible for ensuring that the training satisfies the requirements under the Australian Qualifications Framework in a format that best meets the need of each of the participants.

An individual training plan will be negotiated with each participant. Participants will be given an opportunity to undertake training for a certificate I or certificate II qualification or nationally endorsed skill sets.

Training in first aid and work, health and safety must all be completed by the participants prior to the commencement of Green Army activities. The participants without these basic training requirements must not commence project activities until they complete the relevant training.

In terms of funding that will be provided to the project sponsors proposing Green Army projects, the Green Army Program provides costs to support the Green Army teams that will be undertaking the project activities. The particular sponsors will be expected to provide specific equipment, materials and expertise to deliver the Green Army projects. No cash funding will be provided to the project sponsors. It is really important to note that the Green Army Program is an environmental programme and not considered an employment program. The engagement of a participant in a Green Army team for 20–26 weeks is not considered full-time employment. It is a voluntary opt-in program where participants will receive work-like experience and will be paid an allowance that is higher than income support, such as youth allowance or Newstart allowance.

The approach of not paying superannuation is consistent with the previous approach used for the Green Corps programs. It is consistent with the approach applied for income-support recipients undertaking existing approved programs of work activities, such as the Work for the Dole and the Remote Jobs and Communities Program.

The Green Army Program will be considered an approved program of work of participants who elect to stay on income support. Minister Hunt is to be congratulated on this bill. He has a big job unravelling the mess left behind by six years of Labor in office, but he has hit the ground running and this bill is ample proof of his application to the task.

I look forward to seeing the wonderful benefits of the Green Army projects he has approved for my electorate.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Banknotes

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (13:30): I am pleased to rise to speak about a remarkable boy, Connor McLeod, from Oakhurst in Sydney. Connor, his mum, Ally, and the member for Chifley came to see me this week with their idea to introduce tactile bank notes to Australia.

Connor is visually impaired. He told me about the significant difference tactile banknotes would make in his life. He is frequently forced to pay for things using only coins because these are easier to distinguish. Connor told me how he received money from his relatives for
Christmas last year but was unable to determine for himself how generous his relatives had been. Tactile banknotes would make a major difference to the lives of more than 300,000 Australians with a visual impairment. Connor showed me an example of a tactile banknote from Canada. Many other countries have adopted tactile banknotes. It is possible.

I urge the government to instruct the Reserve Bank of Australia to introduce tactile banknotes to Australia as soon as possible. Most Australians take for granted the ability to tell the difference between banknotes. Visually impaired Australians deserve to be as independent as they possibly can be. I will continue to work with Connor and his mother, Ally, to make sure this important advance for visually impaired Australians becomes a reality.

Schools Industry Partnership

Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (13:31): Two weeks ago, I hosted two very important forums for the Schools Industry Partnership to discuss how the community can help create better pathways for young people transitioning from school to work. One forum was held in Hawkesbury and another in the Blue Mountains. The forums were attended by industry and employment stakeholders from across the region and were the result of discussions I had with Ian Palmer, CEO of Schools Industry Partnership. The Schools Industry Partnership works across the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Nepean. It is a not-for-profit organisation that facilitates partnerships with schools, businesses and the broader community to help young people reach their full potential.

Ian Palmer has played an integral role in this area for many years, working always with passion and dedication for our young people. The two key questions addressed were: how well prepared are our young people for the world of work; and, how can the community best work together to support and prepare all young people for successful careers post-school. The forums presented an opportunity to facilitate connections with key industry figures and schools.

We all recognise that the workforce has changed substantially over the past 10 to 15 years, and some young people are having difficulty transitioning to work. Both forums were well attended by key stakeholders, including Bart Bassett, the member for Londonderry; Roza Sage, the member for Blue Mountains; Dr Jane Cavanagh of the University of Western Sydney; Brett Collimore, careers adviser at Bede Polding College; Amy Bond from the Hawkesbury City Council; Katrina Middlebrook from Winmalee High School; and Stephen Tucker from the Hotel Management Institute. Ian Palmer highlighted that the forum opened up a dialogue and renewed attention on this critical topic. (Time expired)

Greste, Mr Peter

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (13:33): I rise to add my voice to that of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition today concerning the disturbing arrest and ongoing detention in Egypt of Australian journalist Peter Greste and two of his Al Jazeera colleagues for allegedly airing false news and supporting a terrorist organisation, the Muslim Brotherhood. Yesterday, despite there being no evidence produced in court that could justify the charges and prosecution witnesses being unable to recall any details of the case, there was a further decision to deny them bail. This came just hours after an Egyptian court sentenced 529 members of the Muslim Brotherhood to death.
Journalism is not a crime. To paraphrase Peter Greste, he is caught in the middle of a political struggle that is not his own and in a nation-state that will not tolerate any critical voices. I understand that a few days ago, Peter Greste's family received a letter from Egypt's interim President, Adly Mansour, in which he said:

I would like to assure you in my capacity as president of Egypt that I will spare no effort to work towards the speedy resolution of the case in a fashion consistent with the law and that guarantees the resumption of the family in the near future.

This is a heartening development, but the fact remains that Peter Greste and his colleagues are still detained and media freedom continues to be severely curtailed in Egypt. We call on the Prime Minister and the government to exhaust every avenue to secure the release of Peter Greste and stand up for freedom of the press everywhere to report the news without fear or favour.

Moore Electorate: Yellagonga Regional Park

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (13:34): The Yellagonga Regional Park is a pristine environmental asset, forming part of my electorate of Moore. It conserves 1,400 hectares of land, which includes 550 hectares of wetlands—Lake Joondalup, Beenup Swamp, Walluburnup Swamp and Lake Goollelal.

I wish to place on record my appreciation for the outstanding contribution made by the Friends of Yellagonga Regional Park, a group of local environmental volunteers who undertake valuable conservation and rehabilitation work in the reserve. Since 1993, the group has worked closely with the Department of Parks and Wildlife to protect and restore biodiversity and ensure the long-term environmental sustainability of Yellagonga for current and future generations to enjoy.

Over the years, encroaching urban development has brought with it the challenges of nutrient run-off, introduced species and pedestrian traffic. The Friends of Yellagonga Regional Park care for a number of sites within the park through regular workdays to plant local native endemic species, remove introduced weeds and conduct site maintenance. The group also operates an office and a nursery to propagate native seedlings, and participates in wildlife conservation programs. The ongoing environmental work by the volunteers of the Friends of Yellagonga Regional Park is worthy of recognition by this parliament.

Broadband

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (13:36): The delusions of Turnbullistan continue to the detriment of Western Australia. Recently, Turnbullistani Senator Dean Smith claimed credit for the 5,000 premises passed by the NBN in the beautiful coastal city of Geraldton between September 2013 and January 2014. They were contracts met and advanced before the Emperor of Turnbullistan had the chance to halt the introduction of 21st century infrastructure. What has happened, however, since Geraldton has been annexed into Turnbullistan, is that their NBN map has been radically changed. Like the Ukraine, the people of Geraldton awoke to find that their map had been chopped up, with four FSAM areas deleted from the fibre-to-the-node plan and placed into the land of copper wire. Thousands of households in Geraldton will now not be able to take part in the digital future that the city of Geraldton has worked so hard to carve out. Geraldton is one of only two cities in Australia that has qualified for the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge. The city has done an extraordinary
job. The needs of the world have changed. Unfortunately that seems to have escaped the Emperor of Turnbullistan.

Anzac Centenary

Mr WILSON (O'Connor) (13:37): On the 25 October 2013, I was privileged to be present when the first sod was turned for the new Anzac interpretive centre at Albany, in my electorate of O'Connor. This was a very significant moment for the commencement of and lead-up to the Centenary of Anzac commemorations. On 11 March 2014, I was again present at the unveiling of the logo and naming of the interpretive centre, now known as the National Anzac Centre. The logo is a nine-pointed star representing each of the Australian states and territories and New Zealand. Following the unveiling, I took a tour of the National Anzac Centre with the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of Anzac, Senator Michael Ronaldson; the state Minister for Veterans, the Hon. Joe Francis; and the Mayor of the City of Albany, Dennis Wellington.

Astonishing progress has been made with the building structure, which is fully enclosed and on target to be at lock-up stage by 5 April. The progress that has been made is testament to the skills and professionalism of the Albany Anzac Centre Implementation Committee, chaired by Richard Muirhead, and the other five members of the committee; the builders, BGC Construction; the WA government’s Building Management Authority; and the works department of the City of Albany. It is envisaged that Albany will become a centrepiece and launching pad for the pilgrimage of Australians and New Zealanders retracing the footsteps of their ancestors to the battlefields of the First World War.

Greste, Mr Peter

Mr CLARE (Blaxland) (13:39): John Curtin was once asked why he held so many press conferences. Why, despite his waning health at the height of World War II, did he feel the need to feed the chooks as regularly as he did, when all the journalists did was ask him unwelcome questions? Curtin replied, because the press is the voice of democracy. He was right. When that voice is threatened, here or around the world, we have to do more than just talk about freedom of the press—we have to act to defend it. That brings me to the case of Peter Greste.

Peter is an award-winning Australian journalist who right now is sitting in a three-metre by four-metre cell in Cairo, Egypt. He spends 23 hours a day in the cell. He has been there for three months, charged with allegedly spreading false news. Peter and his two Al Jazeera colleagues have not been presented with a single piece of evidence to justify the charges. Being an international journalist is often a dangerous job. More than 2,000 journalists and media staff have been killed in the last 20 years. They face these risks willingly, but they should not also have to fear being arrested for just doing the job. Being a journalist is not a crime. I take this opportunity to urge the Prime Minister and the government to do everything they can to help secure Peter's immediate release.

Sport

Mr IRONS (Swan) (13:41): There is one thing coming up in Western Australia that is dividing us—the Senate election—but there is another thing in Western Australia that does unite us, and that is sport. We have just heard an amazing speech from the member for Perth, which we could refer to as ‘Alannah in Wonderland’, talking about the NBN. Both the
The Western Australian Football League kicked off on the weekend. As I am the patron of the Perth Football Club, which is in my electorate, I thought I would attend their first game. I must admit that Perth have been rather starved of success over the last 20 or 30 years, but it is great to announce that Perth Football Club are on top of the ladder. It is the first time they have been on top of the ladder after round one since 2002, so they have broken a 12-year drought. Some were saying that we should call the season to an end right now. I saw the member for Fremantle make a contribution earlier, and the Fremantle Football Club are on top of the AFL ladder, with West Coast Eagles close behind them in second position. Good luck to all the Western Australian football clubs in the AFL and to all the West Australian Football League clubs who are feeders to the AFL. If there are any members in the House who want to join the Parliamentary Friends of the AFL, contact me or Richard Marles.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (13:42): Today I pay tribute to Her Excellency the Hon. Quentin Bryce, the Governor-General of Australia, whose five-year term ends this week. Ms Bryce has served with dignity and will leave having earned the respect and reverence of monarchists and republicans alike. Quentin Bryce has had an extraordinary career, with a string of firsts. Over the last five years, Ms Bryce has managed a delicate balance of accepting the advice of the government of the day while speaking on issues that have been close to her heart for most of her career, including human rights and the promotion of equality particularly for women. In this, as in so many things, Ms Bryce has been a role model. She was the first woman to become a barrister in Queensland and the first woman to be a faculty member of her law school. She was the first director of the Queensland Women's Information Service, the Queensland director of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and the Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner. She was only the second female Governor of Queensland, before being appointed as the first female Governor-General of Australia in 2008.

Ms Bryce has shown that our head of state should not be the hostage of conservatism. Sometimes it is easier for those above the political fray to give voice to shifts in national sentiment. In her Boyer Lecture last year, Ms Bryce said she supported same-sex marriage, and envisaged an Australia where people are able to love and marry whom they choose. She promoted the idea of an Australian republic, where every child would be able to aspire to the highest office in the land as our nation's first head of state. (Time expired)

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (13:44): I am making a call today for NBN Co to change its style in the way it engages with communities. Last Friday, we had an NBN question-and-answer in my electorate of Herbert, in Townsville. Over 150 residents turned up, and ninety per cent of them were over 60 years of age. A lot of residents were simply unaware of the 23 May switch-off date for the first rollout of the NBN. Confusion remains—and it is total confusion—as to why they have to move to the NBN, because most of the residents thought that the NBN was just about the internet. This is about the phone as well. The name National Broadband Network was associated all the way through, as it insinuates, with being just the internet. So, all the way through the process, the NBN is not getting its message across. A lot
of residents became irate and simply walked out. My office staff were there and have been inundated with phone calls, emails and handwritten letters in relation to the NBN and the lack of service that residents are experiencing at the moment.

The NBN can learn from these things. It can change from that big market, high-end, high-town, high-street rollout to become more of a community-style organisation. This has to be organised as a community. We have to have street captains. We have to make sure that people are going door to door and looking after people, especially our older citizens, when it comes to making these basic changes. Thank goodness Malcolm Turnbull has the sense to turn this organisation around and make it point in the right direction. (Time expired)

Workplace Relations

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:45): The government's red-tape stunt will see cuts to the wages and conditions of some of the lowest paid workers in Australia as the government plans to axe the Commonwealth Cleaning Services Guidelines, which regulate minimum pay and conditions for our cleaners. The guidelines apply to cleaners working in government agencies and offices, including Parliament House, government departments and your own electorate offices. This includes Western Australian MP offices like those of the member for Swan, the member for Hasluck and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I ask these members: do you know that the wages of your cleaners are about to be cut? Are you going to actually let this happen? Do you even know the names of your cleaners? Jan cleans the Bendigo office and she does an amazing job. She is a vital member of the team. She is also the lowest paid member of the team.

The Minister for Employment believes the award is good enough for these hardworking Australians. But the difference between the award and the Commonwealth Cleaning Services Guidelines is about $200 per week. I know that, for some of our backbenchers, $200 a week is not a lot of money, but when you are a cleaner earning as little as $400 per week, a $200 pay cut is half your salary. Hiding this attack on minimum conditions for cleaners amongst 800 other regulatory changes demonstrates how sneaky this government is. This is another example of how Work Choices— (Time expired)

Goods and Services Tax

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (13:47): I rise today to draw attention to the serious infrastructure shortfalls that exist in the Northern Territory and my desire for my home jurisdiction to receive the fair cut of GST revenues being discussed at this week's Council on Federal Financial Relations meeting. In terms of its development and in terms of the infrastructure that exists, in particular outside of the major centres, the Northern Territory is at least 100 years behind other jurisdictions in the country. Many of our roads fall well short of the mark, with the vast majority of public access roads still unsealed. The problems are not just around non-existent infrastructure. The facilities that are already there are under ever-increasing pressure as a result of our growing population.

Last year the federal Labor government slashed more than $100 million from the Territory budget, affecting the capacity to deliver education, child protection and health services. The coalition has a much better understanding of the Territory's needs than Labor does. That is why I know this slashing of funds will not be repeated.
I look forward to a positive outcome for Friday's meeting, when the former member for Solomon and the current Treasurer for the Northern Territory, Dave Tollner, will put the case forward for the Northern Territory.

Ministry of Food Program

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (13:48): I am pleased to report to the House that Jamie Oliver will bring his fourth Australian Ministry of Food pop-up kitchen to southern Adelaide this year, which is a huge win for my local community.

I would like to congratulate Colonnades Shopping Centre and the Onkaparinga Council, who partnered to host the kitchen. They were among eight finalists. I am pleased to have the member for Gellibrand in the chamber today, because there was fierce competition between his electorate and my electorate. Fortunately for me, and unfortunately for him, the better application won. Colonnades and the Onkaparinga Council put forward a compelling case to Jamie by offering a rent-free space, arguing the benefits that this kitchen would bring to our community.

Jamie's Ministry of Food initiative has the potential to improve the health and eating habits of many people in our community by empowering people with the skills and knowledge to change their eating and cooking behaviour. The five-week course is open to people who want to learn the basics of cooking. During the 90-minute classes, participants will learn to cook simple, healthy and tasty meals using fresh ingredients. I hope that organisers do look to our local produce, which is excellent, in the regional area. The course will also cover meal planning, budgeting, shopping tips and nutritional education. This really builds on great work done in this area by the Onkaparinga Community Foodies and the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program running in my schools, funded by Labor in the previous government. I congratulate everyone involved. (Time expired)

Espie, Colonel Nell, AM, RRC, FRCNA

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (13:50): Colonel Nell Espie AM, RRC, FRCNA lives in Oatlands, a country town in the Southern Midlands municipality of my electorate of Lyons. Nell was born and grew up at Oatlands but travelled far to become one of Australia's most highly decorated nurses, before she returned home to live after her retirement. She trained as a nurse during the 1940s and followed her ambition to be an army nurse by enlisting when the Korean War broke out. She was 26.

Nell was commissioned as a lieutenant with the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps and posted as ward sister and charge sister in Japan, Korea, Duntroon, Malaya, Queensland and Victoria. However, she describes her service at Vung Tau, in Southern Vietnam, during the Vietnam War, as the most rewarding experience of a distinguished career. She was matron of the field hospital, with only a handful of nursing officers, where swift helicopter evacuation meant injured soldiers would often arrive only 10 minutes after battle, still carrying their loaded weapons and grenades.

After her retirement, she served as President of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps Association and was later honoured as a life member. A driving force behind the Florence Nightingale Trust, she worked for many years to help veterans, war widows and their children. Her many awards include the Australian Red Cross (1978), Member of the Order of Australia (1992) and the Centenary Medal (2001).
She recently celebrated her 90th birthday at the Oatlands multipurpose centre, surrounded by family and friends. Happy Birthday Colonel Nell Espie.

**Workplace Relations**

**Mr NEUMANN** (Blair) (13:51): There are over 14,000 aged-care nurses, workers, clerks, carers and others in Western Australia who want to know what the Abbott coalition government is going to do with the $1.1 billion in funding the previous Labor government set aside for the workforce supplement in its $3.7 billion Living Longer Living Better package. The Labor government set this funding aside to improve wages, working conditions, training and career paths for some of the nation's lowest paid workers. I challenge the Minister for Social Services to visit WA in any area outside Perth and explain to the aged-care workers how they can afford—or should be able afford—to live on low wages when the price of housing, mortgage payments and rents have risen so steeply. It is callous, cruel and unfair to deny these workers additional wage support, but that is the choice that the Abbott coalition government has made.

It is time to tell the aged-care workers in WA—and, indeed, across Australia—what the coalition government intends to do with $1.1 billion which it stripped out of the aged-care sector in December 2013. Is this funding going to be another victim of the Prime Minister's commission of cuts? I call on the minister to come clean with the workers and providers in the aged-care sectors and with older Western Australian people: will this funding be used constructively to support aged-care workers? Will this funding remain in the sector at all? It is time for the Abbott coalition government to come clean with the aged-care sector and their workers.

**O'Shea, Ms Sarah**

**Mr BROADBENT** (McMillan) (13:53): I received this email in my office today:

Dear Jenny,

Without wasting your precious time too much, I wanted to tell you some of my news. It's nothing to do with my visa, but I wanted to share it with you, as it is all part of this hard struggle we have been through to try and settle here.

Tomorrow night is the graduation ceremony for my college, Chisholm. I hadn't planned on going, as it is a costly affair, but was most surprised to be contacted last week by someone from the CEO's office, and invited to attend as one of their Guest Speakers! They want me to stand up and speak about all my 'achievements', to an audience of about 1000 people.(I think it will be a great achievement if I can simply get through the evening!!!)

Back home, there were no TAFEs or choices of university's to attend. There was just one, the University of Zimbabwe. I never had the opportunity to go there as my mother just didn't have the funds. In more recent years, it has now almost closed down.

Who would ever have dreamed that 25 years later, I am here in one of the greatest countries in the world, and although had not planned on attending my own graduation, I am now going as a guest. Does life get any better than that! What an honour. It will be held at Monash University, and with a well-known sportswoman, Nicole Livingstone as the M.C for the night. She is an ex Olympian swimmer, with two gold medals to her name. What an occasion for me. All I wish is that my dear Mum could be here to see all this.

I hope that I can stand up there and give credit and gratitude to all those who have made our struggle here more bearable and so worthwhile.

---

**CHAMBER**
No, Sarah has not got a permanent visa to this country, but it is not bad for a Zimbabwe squash champion who lost everything in Zimbabwe and is now here in this country. We will do our best to get you a visa, Sarah.

Gellibrand Electorate: Crime

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (13:54): On Wednesday last week, I received a letter from Casey, Jovilyn, Reily, Sharneece, Harvey, Peter and Robert on behalf of the grade 5 and 6 students at St Theresa's Primary School in Albion. They wrote to me as they are concerned about safety in their local community in Sunshine. They know of the petty crime and vandalism that has occurred near Sunshine station, and they know this can be remedied by installing CCTV cameras. They wrote to me upset that the funding for their CCTV cameras had been shelved by the Abbott government.

They know the benefits these cameras will have in preventing crime and promoting community safety in Sunshine. I spoke to them today via Skype and was impressed at their knowledge and ideas, and the passion that they felt for this issue. These students are also engaging with the community around them. They have spoken with the Sunshine Business Association, launched a petition and written a letter to the Brimbank leading newspaper to raise awareness of this issue in their community. They are even planning to go to the Sunshine railway station to ask commuters for their opinions on the cameras.

I am proud of these students for taking their roles as citizens in the community so seriously, and I want to make sure that their voices are heard in this place. The parliament should hear their call to get these CCTV cameras installed in Sunshine. I am looking forward to working with these passionate and proactive students who want to make the community of Sunshine a safer place. We will do everything we can to get these cameras switched on, and I congratulate the students and their teachers for playing an active part in our local community.

Greek Independence Day

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (13:56): I rise today to wish Greek Australians a happy Greek Independence Day. Greece and Australia enjoy a close and constructive relationship based on strong community ties. I have the honour of representing one of the most multiculturally diverse seats in Australia, and the Greek community within my electorate is one of the most active and engaged groups.

Like many migrant communities who have travelled to this country, Greek Australians have played an important part in its success. Greece has been going through severe economic hardship in recent years, and it has been amazing to see this community maintaining such strong links with Greece and the resilience of the Greek people throughout this time.

Although large numbers of Greeks migrated to Australia during the 1950s and 1960s, Greek Australians have been here since the earliest days of European settlement. In fact, in a true Australian story, the first recorded arrival of Greeks to Australia was in 1829 as convicts sentenced to transportation to New South Wales. This migrant population has grown over the following generations, and in 2011 nearly 100,000 Greek-born individuals were recorded as living in Australia and 378,300 Australians claimed Greek ancestry.

Greek Australians in our community epitomise the incredible work ethic and the greatest community values that have helped to build our nation. I note that hundreds of people marched in Sydney on Sunday in celebration of Greek Independence Day, proudly displaying
the Greek and Australian flags side by side. I salute the Greek community of Reid and thank them for their invaluable contribution. Happy Greek Independence Day.

**Kingsford Smith Electorate: Medicare**

**Mr THISTLETHWAITE** (Kingsford Smith) (13:57): Last week, the Minister for Human Services contacted my office to let me know that our local Medicare office at Eastgardens would no longer be open to deliver services to the public on Saturdays. The reason they gave was that the office was quiet and was not well patronised on a Saturday, so last Saturday I visited the Medicare office at Eastgardens and this is what I saw: a line out the door at 10.30 in the morning of people waiting to receive healthcare services.

I spoke to many community members and asked their views on the closure of the Medicare office on Saturdays, and to say that they were angry—that they saw the decision as unjustified and that it proves how out of touch this Abbott government is when it comes to the delivery of health services—is an understatement. 'I work all week. How am I going to get to a Medicare office under these circumstances?' was a common refrain that I saw from members of the public. Where are members of my community supposed to go to receive Medicare services when they work all week?

I met a family who were there to change the name on their Medicare card. I looked up on the Medicare website whether you could do this online. The Medicare website says, 'Changes to your Medicare card details must be done in person at your local Medicare office.' How are members of our community going to do that when they work during the week? I call on the Abbott government to reverse this disgraceful decision to cut off healthcare services for my community.

**Page Electorate: Agriculture**

**Mr HOGAN** (Page) (13:59): Tomorrow, farmers in Page will have the opportunity to have their say on how Australia can build an agricultural sector that grows and delivers greater return to our nation and the farm gate. The government's white paper on agriculture competitiveness will hold a stakeholder meeting in Lismore tomorrow, to which I have invited members of every agricultural sector in my community.

The stakeholder meetings will allow our local farmers and food producers to have significant input into the development of the white paper, which develops many issues so that agricultural producers can get better policies. As I am told, one issue with the past government was that policies such as banning live cattle exports can do great harm to our agricultural sector. One of the reasons for this white paper is to make sure that this government develops better policy for all sectors. *(Time expired)*

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

**STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE**

**Malaysia: Missing Aircraft**

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00): If I may, I will give the House a brief update on ill-fated flight MH370. As members may have noticed, based on the accumulation of evidence, late last night Prime Minister Najib Razak of Malaysia declared that the plane must be presumed lost in the southern Indian Ocean. That means that what up
until now has been a search moves into a recovery and investigation phase. I have this morning spoken to Prime Minister Najib Razak. I have offered Malaysia—as the country legally responsible for this—every assistance and cooperation from Australia.

This plane is lost in one of the most inaccessible parts of our globe. It is a long way from anywhere. But the closest land is Australia, and we are the best placed country to assist. It is highly likely that in coming days and weeks many of the relatives of passengers on ill-fated flight 370 will wish to come to Australia. I want them all to know that should they come here they will be in the arms of a decent country. I should also let the House know that the government has decided to waive visa fees for any relatives wishing to come to Australia. I should at this point express my condolences and the House's condolences regarding the Australian passengers on that flight, and I propose that we might have a formal condolence motion for them tomorrow.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): I rise to associate the opposition with the remarks of the Prime Minister. Our thoughts today are with all the families and friends of the passengers and crew of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370. The pain of not knowing what has happened to one's family has now given way to the agony of loss. We too offer our sympathies to all of those whose worst fears have been realised. These matters are never easy to deal with, but to have to wear a very public loss when perhaps you would seek to mourn in peace and privacy must have been very difficult. The disappearance of MH370 is a mystery that has captured global attention. Unlike perhaps some disasters that occur around the world, because all of the citizens of the world fly, this disaster is one that touches all of us.

Australia can be rightly proud of the leading effort it has played in the international search effort. Our service men and women have taken on an extremely difficult task with determination and dedication. This search has brought nations together. Australia is proud of the Australian contribution, and I believe the world is grateful to the m. We may never know the full story of MH370, but we do know that there will be families consumed by grief today and in the years to come. Our hearts go out to them.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Racial Discrimination Act 1975**

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:03): My question is to the Prime Minister. Today the Attorney-General announced that the Abbott government wants to give a green light to bigotry in Australia. Is it the intention of the government to allow a person to be racially insulted and offended at a community event and have no recourse?

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, a point of order: I regard that as a personally offensive question, as I am sure all on this side of the House do. The idea that anyone on this side of the House would condone bigotry is a disgraceful slur, and I would demand that the member withdraw the assertion and reword the question to be more appropriate in the parliament of Australia.

Mr Burke: It would be better if we were able to accept what the Leader of the House has just put to the parliament. But what was said in the Senate yesterday and endorsed here by the Prime Minister yesterday—
The SPEAKER: This is now going to argument.

Mr Burke: No, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Yes, Manager of Opposition Business, it is going to argument. You will resume your seat. The question did have an offensive nature about it, but I will let it stand.

Mr Abbott (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:05): I accept that this is a difficult issue; I accept that it is an issue that arouses strong passions in our community, on both sides. And I think it should be treated with seriousness and with balance in this parliament. What the government is attempting to do—as carefully, as collegially and as consultatively as we can—is to get the balance right.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will desist.

Mr Abbott: What we want to do is to maintain the red light for bigotry—to use the metaphor of the member who asked the question—but we want to remove the amber light for free speech.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will desist, or leave—one or the other.

Mr Abbott: We want to remove the amber light for free speech. That is what we are attempting to do. All of us deplore racism, we abhor bigotry. All of us in this country want to be our best selves. Australians at their best are a decent and welcoming people who are also a people who can engage in very robust free speech without fear of prosecution.

Carbon Pricing

Mr Ewen Jones (Herbert) (14:06): My question is to the Prime Minister. How is the government easing cost-of-living pressures on Australian families? How much money would the average Australian family save with the repeal of the carbon tax?

Mr Abbott (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:06): I thank the member for Herbert for his question, and I do appreciate his concerns to ensure that the ordinary working families—indeed, under the former government, the ordinary forgotten families of our country—get a fair go. If there is one figure that should reverberate around this House every day until the carbon tax is finally repealed, it is $550 a year. That is the additional burden that the families and households of Australia face because of members opposite and their carbon tax.

What this government wants to do and what we are being prevented from doing by members opposite is to scrap the carbon tax but keep the compensation the families and households of Australia got. We want to do the right thing by the families of Australia. I just cannot understand why, after everything that has happened, after the election last year that was so bitterly contested, members opposite are still siding with the Greens, and against the people, in supporting this toxic tax. I just cannot understand it, because members opposite know just how bad this tax is.

Labor members of the Senate by-election team were proclaiming loudly in Perth last Thursday that they were 'scrapping the carbon tax'. Well, on the very day they said they were scrapping the carbon tax in Perth, they were supporting the carbon tax here in Canberra. You just cannot trust them.
This is a government that is determined to ease the cost of living pressures on families. We will do this not just by scrapping bad taxes and not just by eliminating unnecessary regulation, but by boosting economic growth through sensible free trade agreements with our major trading partners. We are pursuing a free trade agreement with Japan and a free trade agreement with China to complement the free trade agreement we have already secured with Korea. We are doing so for this reason: trade means jobs. Freer trade benefits both countries. It benefits the buyer, it benefits the seller and it is good for workers and families in both countries, and that is what we want. We want a strong and more prosperous Australia, in a stronger and more prosperous world.

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (14:09): My question is to the Prime Minister. Today the Attorney-General has announced that the Abbott government wants to remove important protections against bigotry. Is it the intention of this legislation to allow a person to be verbally attacked, on the basis of their race, on social networking sites?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:10): I accept that this is a very important question, and I will do my best to deal with the question of the member opposite with the respect that it deserves. Of course none of us want to see bigotry.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The question has been asked and the Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: The proposed change to section 18C contains a very strong prohibition on racial vilification. It contains a very strong prohibition on inciting racial hatred. It contains a very strong prohibition on any attempt to engage in racial intimidation, as it should. But it also provides for the appropriate protection of free speech. That is not racial abuse. It just means that if we are having a legitimate discussion, as we are entitled to in a free and robust democracy such as ours, then contributions to that discussion will not be proscribed by law. That is the balance that this government is attempting, in good faith, to get right—the important balance between protections, which people are entitled to, and free speech, which people are also entitled to.

Carbon Pricing

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (14:11): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline the impact of the carbon tax on Western Australia? How will repealing the carbon tax help Western Australia’s key industries?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:11): I thank the member for Forrest for her question. Like the Prime Minister I do not understand why the Labor Party, in opposition, would try to defend the carbon tax. After promising before the 2010 election not to introduce a carbon tax, they then introduced a carbon tax after the election. Before the last election they said they were going to terminate the carbon tax, but now they are voting to keep it. They are entirely inconsistent with whatever they say before an election. The impact on the people of Western Australia is significant. Last year alone—

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: That is right, it is consistency. I take the interjection. It is consistent to be inconsistent. That is the Labor Party’s approach, because last year alone the carbon tax cost
Western Australians $600 million. Even economic modelling commissioned from Treasury by the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments identified that the negative impact on the Western Australian economy would be significant. Manufacturing output would be hit. In fact, if you get rid of the carbon tax, manufacturing output in Western Australia will increase by nearly 3.5 per cent over the next 16 years. On the same basis, construction output in Western Australia will improve by nearly one per cent. Gross state product in Western Australia will improve by nearly one per cent—all because you get rid of the carbon tax. Keeping the carbon tax actually hurts Western Australia, just as keeping the carbon tax hurts Australia. It detracts from economic growth, and of course GDP would be 0.3 per cent lower than otherwise in 2020 as a result of the carbon tax. It will cost the Australian economy $1 trillion by 2050 if the carbon tax remains in place.

So why does the Labor Party not want to get rid of the carbon tax? They go to Western Australia and say to the people of Western Australia, 'We are getting rid of the carbon tax. We are opposed to the carbon tax.' Then they come back to Canberra and they vote to keep it. Only today, just an hour ago, the Labor Party was so appalled about the impact of the mining tax on Western Australia that a few minutes ago in the Senate they voted to keep the mining tax. They really care about Western Australia, because every time they come to Canberra they do everything they possibly can to make life harder for the people of Western Australia.

**Racial Discrimination Act 1975**

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (14:14): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Attorney-General has today announced that the Abbott government wants to give bigotry its blessing in Australia. Is it the intention of the government to allow a person to publish or broadcast racially derogatory comments which offend, insult and humiliate?

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understand that you are giving licence to the opposition because the Prime Minister is also generously prepared to answer these questions, but the simple truth of the matter is: it is not acceptable for the member for Werriwa to call members of the opposition bigots. For decades, as a Catholic, the people of my faith were subjected to bigotry—and

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

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat.

Mr Pyne: and it is particularly insulting to me, let alone new members of the House from races that have come to Australia more recently who also must find it galling, and I will not put up with it personally. I ask you to have him withdraw it.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House is making a strong point, but I believe there is a stronger one, and in the interests of free speech I will let the question stand.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:16): Fair enough. We are capable of robust debate in this place. I think Australians are capable of robust debate, and that is what I want to facilitate in this country.

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: I want it to be civil—of course I want it to be civil—but in the end the truth is that, when people are arguing things that they feel passionately about, it will
inevitably be at times offensive, at times insulting, and I do not believe that the mere fact that someone might be put off by what is being said should mean that the person speaking should feel the full sanction of law against them. That is our position. I reject any suggestion from the member who asked the question that Australia is a bigoted country. We are not. We are a decent and a fair country. Yes, occasionally people give in to unworthy impulse in this country, as in others, but we are the freest, the fairest and the most decent country on earth.

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

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The tactics have clearly been provocative, using the term 'bigot' constantly. In the interests of free speech, I let the question stand. We will move to the next question.

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

The SPEAKER: On what?

Mr Burke: First of all, on my right to take a point of order.

The SPEAKER: Please do not shout.

Mr Burke: Well, Madam Speaker, as you have noted, there is some noise within the chamber.

The SPEAKER: Usually coming from that direction.

Mr Burke: That does not change the fact that I need to make sure I am heard. Under standing order 86, when someone stands they have a right to be heard on a point of order, and to have the practice whereby you allow the Prime Minister to conclude—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat.

Mr Burke: Can I not conclude my point of order?

The SPEAKER: No, you may not, and I will tell you why. Resume your seat. I would suggest that the Manager of Opposition Business reads the Practice a little more carefully. He will find a whole section in there which will inform him as to when I may ignore someone who stands on a point of order or cut them short because there is a presumption about what is being done and how it is being used. So I would refer you to the Practice for further reading. I call the honourable member for Petrie.

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

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has not completed his answer? The member for Petrie will resume his seat. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If he has not concluded his answer, this might be the one occasion I can take a point of order.

The SPEAKER: If you do it properly.

Mr Burke: On the issue of the way the word 'bigotry' has been used—

The SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mr Burke: The point of order is on proper conduct of this chamber, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Prime Minister has the call.
Mr ABBOTT: I conclude with this observation. No-one wants to see bigotry or intolerance in our society, but I say this: the best counter to a bad argument is a good one, and the best antidote to bigotry is decency, proclaimed by people engaging in a free and fair debate.

Aged Care

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (14:19): My question is to the Minister for Social Services and it concerns support for aged-care residents in rural communities. From 1 July 2014, a higher accommodation supplement will be paid for supported accommodation, provided that the service is newly built, has met the criteria for refurbishment and has a supported residents ratio of 40 per cent. Minister, can you please tell the House what arrangements are in place where population density prevents providers such as Glenview Community Service in Rutherglen from meeting the 40 per cent ratio?

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Social Services) (14:20): I thank the member for Indi for her question. I am a frequent visitor to the seat of Indi. I was there, in Mansfield, over the weekend. Having grown up in rural Victoria and having family in rural Victoria, I share her concerns about the plight of the residents, and particularly the aged residents, of rural parts of Australia.

To come to her question: it is true that the government pays an accommodation supplement to assist low-wealth residents who cannot meet the normal costs of aged care. In order to encourage aged-care providers to take more low-wealth residents into their homes, it pays that supplement where, as the member for Indi pointed out, 40 per cent of the residents are of low wealth, as defined by the legislation and the regulations. In those situations which the member for Indi alludes to where less than 40 per cent of the residents of a particular aged-care home are deemed to be low-wealth individuals, rather than 100 per cent of the aged-care supplement being paid, 75 per cent of the aged-care supplement is paid. As I understand from the latest data, that 75 per cent amounts to about $25 per person per day. So, in addition to the other payments which are received by the aged-care provider, where less than 40 per cent of the residents are deemed to be low-wealth individuals, then a payment of approximately $25 per person per day is paid.

Now, it is true that there are some further changes coming in from 1 July which reflect upgrading of particular residential accommodation in various parts of Australia. Can I simply add, to what I have explained of the way in which the system works, that the government has asked the Australian Aged Care Financial Authority to advise it on the support of low-wealth individuals—not only in rural areas of Australia but, indeed, right across Australia—in terms of their accommodation in aged care. Finally, we are also examining the needs of rural aged-care services in relation to the election commitment we made to re-purpose the aged-care workforce supplement. The government has that matter under consideration at the present time. But I can advise the member for Indi, and, indeed, all other representatives of rural and regional parts of Australia, that that is under active consideration at the present time.

Finally, as the member for Indi raised matters concerning her electorate, I am not sure if she knows, but the Deputy Prime Minister recently approved a community development grant for the Bright Hospital to look at the feasibility of the redevelopment of that hospital. (Time expired)
DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:23): I wish to advise the House that we have visiting with us currently the Rt Hon. David Carter, Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives. We also have present with us the Clerk of the New Zealand parliament, Ms Mary Harris. We make you both very welcome. We also have the Hon. Chris Pearce, the former member for Aston and former parliamentary secretary and shadow minister. Delightfully, we have Mr Gerard Neesham, the CEO, and Ross Kelly, the Chairman, of the Clontarf Foundation, and with them are Tai Gordan, Nathan Johnson and Charlie McKew from Brewarrina. We make you very welcome on this day. Welcome to this House.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:24): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer please outline the outlook for the coming budget? How will repairing the budget help everyday Australians?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:24): I thank the honourable member for Petrie for his question and I note that the only way we can start strengthening the Australian economy is to start strengthening the Australian budget—we inherited from Labor $123 billion of deficits and $667 billion of debt. We will be unable to fix this problem unless we actually are allowed to get on with the job of strengthening the budget. The budget is presented for a four-year period. That has been happening for some period of time. At the last election, the Labor Party said that the deficit this year would be $47 billion and, subsequently, $34 billion in the second year, a $24 billion deficit in the third year and a $18 billion deficit in the fourth year.

In the upcoming budget in May, for the first time, the fifth year comes in. When we were in opposition, we continually pointed out that Labor were pushing a tsunami of new spending into the fifth year. For the first time, we are starting to get a picture of it. In the fifth year, we have in real terms an increase in education expenditure of 3½ per cent. Labor said it would not be more than two per cent. In health, we see an increase of 4.2 per cent. Labor said it would not be more than two per cent. In defence, we see an increase of 13 per cent in one year—back ended expenditure by Labor. They said it would not be more than two per cent. For overseas aid, foreign aid, Labor back loaded in the fifth year a 66 per cent increase in foreign aid. And, of course, in disability spending, there will be a 125 per cent increase as the NDIS comes into play. And it was not properly paid for.

There is no surprise here that Labor engaged in insidious activity to hide the fact that they were burying in the out years, burying beyond the election, a massive tsunami of increases in expenditure, and they have no shame. There is no sense of embarrassment.

The IMF surveyed 17 leading countries and identified that the Labor Party left the biggest increase in expenditure of the 17 top IMF countries in the world. It was the biggest increase in expenditure and the fastest increase in debt of the 17 surveyed nations. That is the Labor legacy. I say to the people of Australia, and I say to all the members of the House: we are going to set about fixing this problem in the best interests of the Australian people.
Tuesday, 25 March 2014

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

3025

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:27): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister explain whether the following racist bigotry would be prohibited under the government's proposal? I refer to the case of Jones and Toben in which infamous holocaust denier Fredrick Toben stated that there is serious doubt that the Holocaust occurred, that it is unlikely that there were homicidal gas chambers at Auschwitz, that Jewish people who are offended by and challenge Holocaust deniers are of limited intelligence, and other matters that I will not repeat. Toben said he was engaging in discussion of the Holocaust. Is the PM aware these statements breached section 18C?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:28): I make the point that the statements that are being quoted across this chamber by the shadow minister are abhorrent, they are offensive and they are wrong.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The question has been asked. There will be silence while the Prime Minister answers.

Mr ABBOTT: What the government are proposing to do is to maintain the red light on inciting racial hatred, but we are removing the amber light on free speech, which section 18C, in its current form, maintains. That is what we are doing. We are also attempting to engage the community in this, as you would expect. I point out to the member opposite that what we have proposed today is an exposure draft of legislation. We are looking forward to further engagement with the community. Based on the engagement that we have with the community, over the next 30 days we will finalise the legislation and bring it into the parliament in the budget session.

Road Infrastructure

Mr WILSON (O'Connor) (14:29): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the minister update the House on what support is available to assist councils with local road upgrades and maintenance, particularly in my electorate of O'Connor? Is the minister aware of any impediments to this assistance being delivered?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:30): I thank the honourable member for his question. He represents an electorate almost the size of New South Wales. I was there over the weekend and appreciated how important it is to have a road network that is able to deliver the services and take away the exports from that highly productive region.

In particular, the local roads are very, very important to electorates like Kalgoorlie. Indeed, the Roads to Recovery program has been one of the most popular programs, particularly amongst all local governments, since it was instituted by the Howard-Anderson government. It was a program that was carried through the Rudd, Gillard and Rudd governments—one of the few programs that was carried through. And now the coalition government is committed to funding a further $1.75 billion for the Roads to Recovery program to help local councils with their roads and streets right across the nation. It is a popular program, and I have heard Labor members saying how valuable it is and how they support it.
I was amazed, therefore, that yesterday in the House of Representatives the Labor Party voted against the legislation to continue the Roads to Recovery program for another five years. They voted against the legislation that will enable the vital road and local street works to continue. What we have to remember is that if this particular legislation is not passed through the Senate then the Roads to Recovery program will end. Labor and Greens combined: they voted against it in the House of Representatives and certainly have indicated their intention to also vote against it in the Senate.

What the people of O'Connor need to realise—and the people of Western Australia, which will receive about $55 million every year for local roads and streets under this program—is that if they vote in senators who are not prepared to support the land transport bill that went through the House of Representatives yesterday, if they are not prepared to support that bill, then this much-loved program right across the nation will end. Without the Greens and the Labor Party voting for this in the Senate—unless there are senators there who will support the Roads to Recovery program—this program will come to an end.

And so there is a very clear message again: Labor candidates, Labor members and Labor senators say one thing in Western Australia, say one thing when they are visiting regional councils—when they had the opportunity yesterday to declare their support for the Roads to Recovery program, they actually voted to terminate the program. They voted that it should not proceed. What is essential for regional Australians, people who live in the suburbs of Australia, is that they elect senators who will vote this legislation in.

**Racial Discrimination Act 1975**

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:33): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister name which ethnic community organisations support the government’s proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:33): As I said, this is draft legislation which has gone out for consultation with the community. We think that the legislation gets the balance right. We think that the legislation preserves protections while removing any element of—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on direct relevance. The question had no preamble, and the only organisation the Prime Minister is referring to is his own cabinet at the moment. The question was asking for something broader than that.

The SPEAKER: You have made your point of order. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: Madam Speaker, let us see what various community organisations say in response to the exposure legislation that we are making available. But I will say this: I know the migrant communities of Australia pretty well, and I know that they have voted for this country with their feet. I know that they have embraced our way of life, they have embraced our Australian system, and part of our system is robust freedom of speech.

**Mining**

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (14:35): Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the Treasurer. How will abolishing the mining tax assist to grow the economy and create jobs?
Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:35): I thank the honourable member for the question, and I note that from day one he has been opposed to the mining tax. And from day one the coalition has been opposed to the mining tax. And what a horrible birth this tax had. I well recall Colin Barnett, the Liberal Premier of Western Australia, ringing up Prime Minister Rudd and asking him what could he possibly be thinking to introduce a tax like that. And Kevin Rudd responded that it was all Wayne Swan's idea. And so the architect of the tax, which has been a complete, unmitigated disaster for the Labor Party, is still in the Labor Party, is still in opposition, is still in parliament and is still supporting upholding a tax that has been an abject failure. In 100 years' time when tax classes are taught at university they will look back and ask, 'Mr Professor, what was the worst tax that was ever designed?' And the professor will respond, 'It was the five versions of the mining tax'.

Mr Abbott: What about the carbon tax?

Mr HOCKEY: The carbon tax is close, but there was only one version of the carbon tax. There are five versions of a mining tax that originally was meant to raise $12½ billion next year and at the end of the day is hardly raising anything. The problem is Labor spent the money that they never got: $16 billion of expenditure; $16 billion they precommitted, pre-spent against a tax that barely raises a dollar. That is irresponsible budgeting. You would not do it in your home, let alone for the nation. But Labor did, because that is the Labor way.

And the other part of the Labor way is this unholy partnership with the Greens. It was the Greens that they relied on to get passage of the mining tax. It was the Greens who they relied upon an hour ago in the Senate to oppose the repeal of the mining tax. It was the Greens who supported them to deliver a carbon tax and it was the Greens who supported Labor to uphold the carbon tax. The only way to get rid of the mining tax is to vote for the Liberals and the Nationals in the upcoming Senate election in Western Australia. The only way to get rid of the carbon tax is to vote for the Liberals and the Nationals in the upcoming Senate election in Western Australia. The only way to send a message to the Labor Party is: never vote for them and never support them. But even then, Labor still stands by bad policies that cost jobs and cost families' their income.

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:38): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Attorney-General today has announced that the Abbott government wants to change laws which protect Australians from bigotry and hate speech. Prime Minister, why is removing antiracism laws, which have protected Australians for almost 20 years, such a high priority of the Abbott government?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:38): It is certainly not the only priority of this government. Our priorities are scrapping the carbon tax and boosting the families' incomes, scrapping the mining tax and boosting investment in jobs, cutting red tape and boosting productivity and economic activity, and getting freer trade agreements in place so that our agricultural exporters will get a fair go at last in the wider world. We are advancing on a wide front to the rescue of this nation. That is what we are doing, but part of what we are doing—

Mr Shorten interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will desist!
Mr ABBOTT: Let me point out to the Leader of the Opposition that the repeal of section 18C in its current form was a policy and a position that we took to the last election. It was in place for at least 12 months, before the last election, and now the Leader of Opposition is choosing to play politics—in an attempt to engage in a bit of dog whistling on this issue, just like they engaged in a bit of dog whistling on 457 visas.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. That comment should be withdrawn. The people who are giving permission for racism should not be using terms like that.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are not going to be lectured by the party of the Carolyn Habib leaflet in the South Australian state election campaign. The hypocrites on the other side should withdraw the statements they made earlier in question time.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence! The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: Let me make it absolutely crystal clear. I believe that the members opposite are serious about wanting to protect and preserve free speech, but I hope they will also believe that members on this side of the chamber are serious about wanting to ensure that there is no place for racism in our society. That is why what we are doing with the exposure draft legislation, which was released today, is clearly prohibiting racial vilification and racial intimidation by providing for reasonable debate in the robust democracy that is this country.

Former Member for Dobell

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (14:41): My question is to the Minister of Education, representing the Minister for Employment. I refer to the sentence handed down against the former Labor member for Dobell Craig Thomson in the Melbourne Magistrate's Court today after he was found guilty of defrauding members of the Health Services Union. What is the government doing to combat fraud, corruption and other illegal activity in the union movement?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:42): I thank the member for Corangamite for her question. I can inform the House, more in sorrow than in anger, that the former member for Dobell Mr Craig Thomson has been sentenced in the Melbourne Magistrate's Court today to 12 months imprisonment with nine months suspension, so he will serve three months in jail, with a two-year good behaviour bond for the theft of $24,000 from members of the Health Services Union.

This is a very sad day for the parliament. It is a sad day that one of the former members of this place has fallen so far in the estimation of its society that he is going to jail for theft. It is a particularly sad day for the once-great Labor Party and the Labor movement that one of their own—whom they nurtured, brought into parliament and then protected until April 2012—has been sentenced to jail today. It is great sadness that the once-great party of Chifley and Curtin is now the party of Obeid, Macdonald, Williamson and Thomson. But it also represents an opportunity for the Leader of the Opposition to join the government in passing the registered organisations commission bill in the Senate, which he is currently blocking, to pass the Australian building and construction commission bill in the Senate, which he is
currently blocking, and to full-throatedly support the royal commission into union corruption and thuggery.

Perhaps members opposite should take some advice from Martin Ferguson, from another great family of the Labor movement, one of whom still sits in this place. Martin Ferguson said on 28 February, 'The Labor Party has got to change and our relationship with the union movement has got to change, both internally and externally—it is not the union movement I grew up in.'

If the Leader of the Opposition took that advice and the advice of Paul Howes, who is also known to support severing the ties between the union movement and the Labor Party, he would be able to show that he was standing on his own two feet, that he was not just a puppet of the union movement. He should sever his ties with the union movement, as advised by Paul Howes and Martin Ferguson, and make a clean break from people like Williamson and Thomson from the Health Services Union and from the Obeid and Macdonald stain that sits on the Labor Party. While he is at it, to really prove that he has separated himself from the dodgy aspects of the union movement, he should pay back the $267,000 of Health Service Union members' money that was used to elect Craig Thomson in 2007 to this place. It would be cheap for him to do that. It would be a sign of good faith with those members of the HSU. I call on him to do so and to be a big enough man to do so.

International Development Assistance

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:45): My question is to the Prime Minister. What is the government's policy on increasing official development assistance to 0.5 per cent of gross national income and when will the government reach that target?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The question has been asked. We will have silence on my right as well!

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:46): That particular aspiration was pushed out every year by members opposite when they were in government. It remains the aspiration of this government. The first duty of this government is to bring the budget back into sustainable surplus. Once the budget is back into sustainable surplus, then we will reconsider this matter of 0.5 per cent of GNI. In the meantime we will generally be increasing foreign aid by CPI.

Child Care

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (14:47): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Education. Will the minister outline how the administration of the Early Years Quality Fund impacted on childcare centres in Western Australia? What is the government doing to make child care affordable, flexible and available in my home state?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Assistant Minister for Education) (14:47): I thank the member for Tangney for his question and his concern about childcare affordability in Western Australia. I am sure he is also interested in the Auditor-General confirming that his office will officially examine and scrutinise Labor's $300 million Early Years Quality Fund. That was the fund that was not about the early years and was not about quality; it was about $300 million of hijacked taxpayers' money in pursuit of union recruitment. The independent PricewaterhouseCoopers
report said many things, including that Labor's EYQF was inherently unfair, inequitable and
drove a greater pay divide in the sector.

Ms Kate Ellis: Just cut all their wages!

Ms LEY: The member for Adelaide is quite welcome to ask me questions without notice
any question time.

Ms Kate Ellis: I know the answer: you will cut their wages!

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide will desist or leave!

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide is warned!

Ms LEY: In Western Australia there are 1,348 childcare centres, of those 510 are long day
care centres. So, under the member for Adelaide's policy, 838 were out in the cold from the
word go. They could never have applied. They were not grounds for union recruitment drives.

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith will desist or leave!

Ms LEY: Only five per cent of the workforce was even allocated a slice of the action
under Labor's so-called Early Years Quality Fund. Interestingly enough, the unions were front
and centre of this, Member for Adelaide. They were also front and centre for the member for
Adelaide's re-election campaign because in a Daily Telegraph report—

Mr Thistlethwaite interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingsford Smith is warned!

Mr Thistlethwaite interjecting—

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

The member for Kingsford Smith then left the chamber.

Ms LEY: I refer to a report in The Daily Telegraph in August 2013, which said:

A confidential email intended for members of United Voice this week demanded child care workers
join Ms Ellis' campaign team this weekend and door knock residents.

But that was not all, in a shameful misuse of the member for Adelaide's ministerial position in
the dying days of the 2013 campaign, she sent home flyers—

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide is warned. Does she wish to leave now?

Ms Kate Ellis: Oh, no; I am quite enjoying this.

The SPEAKER: Then she will leave right now under standing order 94(a).

The member for Adelaide then left the chamber.

Mr Dreyfus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am just trying to work out the
ruling you just gave. You asked a member of parliament if they would like to leave, they
answered your question and then you threw them out for interjecting when the interjection—

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat now.
He will resume his seat or leave himself!

Mr Dreyfus: Madam Speaker—
The SPEAKER: This better not be just to interrupt proceedings.

Mr Dreyfus: Madam Speaker, you have not heard me. You cannot possibly tell what I am going to say.

The SPEAKER: Speak to your point of order.

Mr Dreyfus: And you do need to listen. It is your job.

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

The member for Isaacs then left the chamber.

Ms LEY: From the member for Adelaide to childcare centres on the eve of the election: 'Please print this flyer. Put it in parents' pigeon holes. Stick it up in your centre before pick-up time'—a shameful misuse of her ministerial position.

International Development Assistance

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:51): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to the Prime Minister's answer a moment ago when the Prime Minister said that official development assistance would reach 0.5 per cent of GNI when the budget returns to surplus and referred to this as 'an aspiration'. If this is the case, why did the Treasurer's mid-year economic forecast say that official development assistance would reach this target in 2017? Is this another example of the Treasurer cooking the books to artificially inflate debt and deficit?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my right and on my left! The Treasurer has the call.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:52): Talk about cooking the books! It is like an episode of Masterchef over there! Fair dinkum. There, you've got some of the best. The member for Lilley, he really cooked them—he overcooked them. He promised a surplus. Three hundred times he promised a surplus! I have heard of a souffle rising twice, but not 300 times! And then along comes another chef.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr Fitzgibbon: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order, on relevance. The question was clearly about the Treasurer's MYEFO and not about anything that is happening on this side of the House.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. I am afraid that when a question is asked about 'cooking the books' that is the sort of answer you will get.

Mr HOCKEY: Of course, then along came the member for McMahon. And the books were so cooked that he piled on the mustard, he piled on the horseradish, he piled on the barbecue sauce—

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Hunter on a point of order that is not about relevance.

Mr Fitzgibbon: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In my view—

The SPEAKER: I did not ask for your view. I asked for the standing order.
Mr FITZGIBBON: and I think you would agree, the term 'cooking the books' brings certain imputations, and I ask you to bring the Treasurer back to the subject he has been asked about.

The SPEAKER: The member for Hunter is good spirited. He is having a sense of fun.

Mr HOCKEY: The problem is, the Labor party cooked the books and the rest of Australia got food poisoning! Talk about cooking the books—Labor was adept at it. And they still do not understand how to put the recipe together.

Mr HOCKEY: The member for McMahon does not understand the recipe! He came into this place all indignant about debt. The member for McMahon does not even know the difference between net debt and gross debt.

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith!

Mr HOCKEY: He does not even understand the recipe! And yet the Labor Party has the gall to come in and say we have cooked the books!

Ms Butler interjecting—

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

The member for Griffith then left the chamber.

Mr HOCKEY: It was the Labor Party that kept promising a surplus. It was the Labor Party that kept making big heroic promises about the economy that were never delivered. Every single number Labor published for six years was wrong. Every single number! And it was not just their own incompetence, it was Labor Party deceit. Shuffling payments and shuffling revenue from year to year in order to try and manufacture a surplus. And they believed their own cooking! They went out there and said, 'We've delivered a surplus'. They did not even pretend! They actually went out there and told the Australian people—and paid for it using taxpayers' money—'We have delivered a surplus.' The fact is, they were just $123 billion short. That is a big number for you—

Mr Bowen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Is the Treasurer intending to mention overseas development assistance at any point in relation to the question?

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon will resume his seat. There is no point of order. That is an abuse of the standing orders.

Mr HOCKEY: I would say to the member for McMahon that no matter how much he cries out he will not find any aid overseas.

Mining

Mr PORTER (Pearce) (14:56): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. How is the government building a stronger and more prosperous Western Australia without relying on a mining tax?

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:56): Thank you to the member for Pearce, and what a terrific addition he is to our side of the House from Western Australia. He has a great background and we are sure that he will make a significant contribution on this side of House.
I can say to the member for Pearce that the infrastructure Prime Minister is going to help you with your seat because he is ensuring that the Swan Valley Bypass will be built, with money out of the budget—not out of an imaginary mining tax revenue which does not exist. The Great Northern Highway upgrade, which will benefit his electorate, will also be built. Those projects will go ahead because they are important projects for Western Australia's future. They will deliver higher economic performance and ensure that our mining industry can be as successful as those of us on our side of the House wanted to be.

We do not think that continuing to put pressure on the mining industry by additional taxes, whether those be the mining tax or the carbon tax, is the best way to run an economy. We think that taking pressure off business by taking red tape off business and taking unnecessary taxes off business will help us to deliver the infrastructure of the 21st century so we can grow more quickly.

Of course, it is the other side of the House who think that putting a mining tax that does not raise any revenue in place and then allocating it against projects is the best way to run an economy. Today is the three-year anniversary since the designer-in-chief of the mining tax, the brains behind the operation on that side of the House, came up with the mining tax with this quote, 'If you don't have the revenue from the mining tax'—this is the member for Lilley—'then you can't make the investments.' That is what he said, three years ago today, on 25 March 2011—'If you don't have the revenue from the tax then you can't make the investments.'

Well, we do not have the revenue from the tax—the $12 billion estimated next year and the trickle that will come into the budget—but we are delivering the infrastructure because the infrastructure Prime Minister knows that you need to put in place the infrastructure of the 21st century so that you have a stronger economy.

The member for Lilley was responsible for the mining tax. He was responsible for the debt and deficit that our country is now burdened under and he was responsible for the deal on the carbon tax that left the Labor Party in opposition. On this side we are going to ensure that we have an economy which is growing; an economy which has the least amount of tax that need be applied to it, and we are going to get rid of unnecessary taxes.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

Mr BRIGGS: You are very excited, Tanya. The superclinics question is coming. Don't worry; it is on its way!

The SPEAKER: The member will refer to members by their correct titles.

Mr BRIGGS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course the government will abolish the mining tax. It is necessary for us to abolish the mining tax, but we need the Labor Party to listen to the Australian people and get out of the way so that we can continue to deliver infrastructure projects for the member for Pearce and for Western Australia. That is what we were elected to do and that is what the infrastructure Prime Minister will deliver.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:59): Before I call the honourable member for McMahon, earlier today I welcomed the Speaker of the House of Representatives of New Zealand. He was at that stage not in the House, but I am delighted to say he is now on the floor of the House. We
extend to you and the Clerk of the New Zealand House of Representatives, who is in the gallery, a very warm welcome.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Economy

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:00): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to his recent statements that there are $123 billion in cumulative deficits over the forward estimates. Can the Treasurer confirm that more than half this figure—or $68 billion—has actually occurred due to spending decisions or changes in economic assumptions made on his watch?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (15:00): Our budget, as released in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, was right; the numbers were right. Every number Labor produced for six years was wrong. A little bit earlier, the member for McMahon—before I ran out of time—asked me about foreign aid. The Labor Party cut $5.7 billion out of foreign aid in the last 15 months in government—

Mr Bowen interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon will desist.

Mr HOCKEY: And the reason why the member for McMahon wants to look at whether he would be the beneficiary of foreign aid is that, under Labor, Australia became the third-biggest beneficiary of its own foreign aid program. Can you believe that? They were spending foreign aid in Australia. We became the third-biggest recipient of our own foreign aid program under Labor.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney will desist.

Mr HOCKEY: So please spare us and spare the Australian people the rank hypocrisy of the Labor Party. Australians have had enough. The Labor Party got every number wrong. They engaged in deceit and deception when it came to the budget. Our numbers are fair dinkum, and we are being fair dinkum with the Australian people.

Broadband

Ms PRICE (Durack) (15:01): My question is to the Minister for Communications. What challenges does the government face in delivering broadband to the people of remote Western Australia, including the people in my electorate of Durack?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (15:02): I thank the honourable member for her question. The Labor Party promised 250,000 Australians that they would be eligible for the Interim Satellite Service but only bought capacity to service 48,000. They promised the service would deliver six megs down and one meg up for the same price as a city ADSL service. As the honourable member for Durack knows, most of the 5,600 interim satellite users in Western Australia are now getting no better—and often worse—than dial-up speeds. Kids cannot do their homework, and farmers cannot access the online National Livestock Identification System, real-time prices or weather services.
The $351-million Interim Satellite Service of Labor has been a train wreck. The 45,000 unhappy current customers are costing the taxpayers of this nation $7,300 each in direct subsidies. That is nearly three times the level of the old Howard-era Australian Broadband Guarantee subsidy, and for a much worse service. It is our job to clean up Labor's messes, including the Conrovian ones. But I have to say that many, including this one, do not lend themselves to an easy or obvious solution. Indeed, the previous minister washed his hands of this in the last few months of his ministry.

Here are the measures that we are announcing today: first, at a cost of $18.4 million, the NBN Co will upgrade the current capacity to all users on this satellite service by one third; and, second, we will introduce a new stringent fair use policy to ensure a minority of very heavy users cannot crowd out the majority. The NBN Co's trials of these changes demonstrate that even in busy periods families will be able to answer their emails, surf the web, do their banking and see their kids complete their homework. It will not be as fast as the speeds promised but never delivered by Labor, but it will be broadband at much higher speeds and certainly not anywhere near the anaemic dial-up speeds experienced at present.

We are also working on additional measures to provide new services so that at least some of those customers—about 9,000 in total—who have not been able to get on, will be able to do so, and we will have more to say about that in coming days when the arrangements are complete.

You might well ask why these changes—these measures—were not undertaken by the previous minister. Maybe they were suggested to him, but as the former deputy chair of NBN Co, Diane Smith-Gander, said today when asked whether the board had ever suggested to Stephen Conroy that he should conduct a cost-benefit analysis, 'Think about—'(Time expired)

Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Treasurer's December comments that the government will have to make difficult choices in the budget. Which is more important to the Prime Minister: giving four high-income earners an extra $75,000 in PPL or giving $211 to the children of war veterans? Why is the government prioritising cutting the payments of the children of war veterans, including orphans?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:06): This is a government that will repair the budget, but it is also a government that will keep its commitments. Some of the commitments that we made were quite tough and uncompromising commitments that involved making serious savings, including savings that a lot of people would not like. Even though the income support bonus goes to some 1.3 million Australians, we had the courage to say, pre-election, that it would not be continued under a coalition government, because a coalition government does not believe in spending what it does not have. You cannot give people benefits endlessly on the nation's credit card, and that is the problem with members opposite. They have engaged in a species of intergenerational theft. That is what they have engaged in. Under members opposite, there was $123 billion of cumulative debt, $667 billion of debt, $123 billion of accumulated deficits—that is the problem that we are wrestling with. We will not shirk the difficult decisions needed to engage in the job of fiscal repair, because we understand and we believe the Australian people understand that, if you want to fix the
economy, you have got to fix the budget first, and that is exactly what this government will do.

**BUSINESS**

**Rearrangement**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:07): I seek leave to move the following motion:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent notices Nos 1 and 2 private members' business, relating to the disallowance of the following, being called on immediately and considered together, with separate questions being put on each at the conclusion of the debate:

(1) the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme (Income Support Bonus) Repeal Determination 2014 made under subsections 258(4) and (5) of the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*, and

(2) the Veterans' Children Education Scheme (Income Support Bonus) Repeal Instrument 2014 made under subsections 117(2) and (3) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*.

Leave not granted.

Mr SHORTEN: I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent notices Nos 1 and 2 private members' business, relating to the disallowance of the following, being called on immediately and considered together, with separate questions being put on each at the conclusion of the debate:

(1) the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme (Income Support Bonus) Repeal Determination 2014 made under subsections 258(4) and (5) of the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*, and

(2) the Veterans' Children Education Scheme (Income Support Bonus) Repeal Instrument 2014 made under subsections 117(2) and (3) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*.

The proposal of the government to target cuts to the orphans of veterans is a terrible mistake, and this is an arrogant government which can never admit that it is ever wrong. I understand that deep down there would be many members of the government who probably think: 'My goodness! Why are we doing this to a group of 1,200 orphans?'

The Prime Minister used an expression earlier today about 'the figures which reverberate around the House'. Well, let me talk about some figures which reverberate around this House: $211 going to 1,239 orphans or children whose parents have either been severely incapacitated or died in the service of this country. That is the number that matters to this side of the House: $211 going to 1,239 people, kids, which would cost the government $260,000.

And the number which reverberates around that side of the House shows that they are a government of the wrong priorities. They would say, and they would have you believe, that somehow there is more integrity in providing millionaires with $75,000 each extra, which they have not asked for, rather than giving the children of veterans $211.

The reasons that we seek that this be disallowed are (1) the decision is just not worth the pain you are inflicting on people and (2) it is a shifty decision. It is a decision which, despite too much protestation of the Prime Minister, who could not be bothered staying in the parliament to defend his attack on veterans' orphans—too busy, no doubt, looking for more gold plated schemes for people who do not need the money—is a shifty measure. The third thing is—
Ms Henderson interjecting—

Mr SHORTEN: Oh, there is the member for Corangamite. She has not fought for the job of any worker at Alcoa or Blue Circle; now she has plenty of advice to give. You just wait till the next election. The third reason why this is a bad decision is that it is poor priorities.

Ms Henderson interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Corangamite will desist!

Mr SHORTEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. These are poor priorities. What I do not understand is what sort of twisted priorities could come up with the idea—and I can just imagine them high-fiving in their depleted Expenditure Review Committee. Why on earth are we making a decision where we will give $5.5 billion in a paid parental leave scheme which—

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. This is a debate about why standing orders should be suspended—in other words, why there should be no more debate on the government's program until this matter has been dealt with. This is a debate about a suspension of standing orders; it is not a debate about the actual measure that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about. I have been very generous for the last four minutes, but he needs to actually explain why standing orders should be suspended.

Mr SHORTEN: I thank the Leader of the House for the point. When we look at why—

The SPEAKER: Well, that is good, because I am upholding it.

Mr SHORTEN: we should be suspending standing orders, it is because the decision to go after veterans' orphans is shifty, because the figures do not add up and because it reflects poor priorities, and it also is not the desired position of all of the people who, day by day, stand by veterans' orphans. This is not just a question of Labor being critical of the government. I look at what the Prime Minister said to Legacy on 18 October. That champion, then, of orphans said 'the orphans of those who have paid the highest possible price in the service of our country' should be cared for. And then he said, later on: 'But we were prepared to put tough policies up front.' Where on earth did the government, when they were in opposition, ever say that they were necking the benefits to go to veterans' orphans? That document does not exist. They know they never spelled it out.

But I do quote here Don Rowe, the president of the New South Wales RSL. He captures it articulately in two or three words: 'absolutely disgusted', 'mean-spirited', 'penny-pinching exercise'. Then I look at the Defence Force Welfare Association spokesperson, who said he was—and I quote him—'bloody stunned'. He said:

There's a lot of things that can be ripped away—

and he does not even like the mining tax. 'But,' he said:

... to target kids, and only about 1,200 of them, over something that costs so little, seems a bit petty to us ...

That is why we should suspend standing orders. Legacy Australia, who could not shake Tony Abbott before the election, said:

Legacy would be disappointed if any of the welfare payments are cut to the families of deceased or incapacitated veterans.
Dave Spillman, president of the Kwinana branch of the RSL, said: 'We're shocked that our Prime Minister would cut something that helps the kids of RSL members.' That is why standing orders should be suspended.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I rise a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition is making no attempt whatsoever to explain why standing orders should be suspended. Instead he is debating the substance of the motion that he wants to debate if standing orders are suspended. He is putting the cart before the horse.

The SPEAKER: I say to the Leader of the House that it has become a tradition in this place that a wider interpretation is given on suspension motions. But there is still a requirement on the person moving the motion to refer to the suspension and the reason for the need for the suspension. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to do so.

Mr Shorten: This decision to suspend standing orders is important because we believe fundamentally that veterans' orphans should not be political targets of this government. I get that the government has different priorities from those of many Australians. I get that. But when this government can dream up a scheme which takes $260,000 from 1,200 veterans' orphans, this is a government who know the price of everything and the value of nothing. The reason we should suspend standing orders is that this proposition on veterans' orphans that the government is carrying out is a sign of a bigger malaise in this government. This is a soulless government who will undermine everything that we hold dear in this country. That is why we should suspend standing orders. They have never seen a group of the vulnerable that they are not interested in kicking. They will pick on the unemployed, they will pick on the disability pensioners. They will undermine Medicare, they will attack the minimum wage. This is why standing orders should be suspended. They are not interested in equal pay for women, they are not interested in supporting a more positive relationship with our near neighbours. This is a government who deserve to have this motion disallowed, and that is why we should suspend standing orders.

We all know that they have got 900 pages of cuts which they will not reveal to us—900 pages of the same DNA as that which will see the government attack veterans' orphans. That is why standing orders should be suspended. The real problem with this issue is that we have a government who is not interested in standing up for all Australians. They are only interested in standing up for some Australians. On the issue of the veterans' orphans they say that veterans' children will be receiving payments anyway and they will not notice this $211 gone. The only people who could say that are people who have never tried to make ends meet on the existing pensions and entitlements and who believe that $211 is nothing at all. They are wrong. It is something.

I believe that when Australia's defence personnel serve overseas they should have the peace of mind of knowing that when they come home—or if they come home severely injured or totally and permanently disabled or, indeed, if they make the supreme sacrifice—that they have a government and a parliament who have their back. There is no test in this country which this government can pass about priorities when it says, 'We've got your back but, by the way, we're going to chop $211 from your children who you love very much.' This is not adequate policy from this government. That is why we should suspend standing orders.

I make this point: if the children of parents who have made significant and supreme sacrifices for this country cannot trust a government, how can the rest of us? The problem
with this government, and the reason we should suspend standing orders, is that they have the wrong priorities. They want to whittle this country down, they want to divide this country, they want to attack the vulnerable, and they are too arrogant to admit when they get it wrong. (Time expired)

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr Burke: I second the motion.

The SPEAKER: I give the member for Watson the call.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:18): Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is important that we suspend standing orders on this issue, because it is important that every member opposite is forced to vote personally on whether or not they want orphans of veterans to be able to receive this payment. We have heard time and again that somehow this was an election commitment but not one of them has been able to produce the brochure they provided to their electorate telling people that this is what they had in store for the orphans of veterans. It is important that we set aside the time in the parliament to force people into the parliament who have walked out. The Prime Minister is so proud of his policy on this that he left the chamber the moment the debate commenced. Almost all of the front bench made sure that they cleared out the moment this debate started to take place. By suspending standing orders and by making sure that this comes to a vote, we will make sure that they come back into this chamber in a way that will stand on their record forever, in a way that their electorate will know about and in a way that they will not be able to hide from the veterans communities in each of the electorates that are represented on the other side of this chamber.

The priorities here are breathtaking, and it is important that we set aside the business of the House to bring this issue to a head. Never once during the election campaign did any of those members opposite say—there is not a quote that anyone has been able to refer to—that they were going to cut the entitlements for orphans of veterans. We are talking about people whose parents have died defending this nation and they are going to have their benefits cut—for an amount of money that equals four highly-paid women receiving paid parental leave under the Prime Minister's gold-plated scheme. You will not find a more breathtaking error in priorities than what the government is doing here. Those opposite must not be allowed to avoid the situation where their name has this issue attached to it on the record of this parliament. Hansard records everybody who votes each way and it is recorded forever. Those opposite will never again, after today, be able to claim that somehow they are friends of veterans.

Mr Robert: And you can talk! You are a disgrace!

Mr BURKE: And to hear that minister opposite laughing! I will tell you: there is not one orphan receiving this payment who is laughing. There is not one member of the veterans community who is laughing about this issue. Not one person who is actually hurt by this issue would see the humour that the minister opposite sees in this issue. I cannot think of an issue of priorities more outrageous than this. In the scheme of the total budget we are talking about a payment of around a couple of hundred dollars for each person affected. We are talking about a total of 1,200 Australians who are impacted on by this. Of the decisions that are made by the Expenditure Review Committee this is not one that is going to make a significant difference to the bottom line. But if it were to make a significant difference then the Paid
Parental Leave scheme, the gold-plated Paid Parental Leave scheme of the Prime Minister, is there waiting to provide the savings measure. Only four people affected would provide the savings which would allow this measure to continue.

We see those opposite try to wrap themselves in the flag and claim that they are the patriots of this parliament. Those opposite should be willing to publicise what they are doing on this issue, and no-one should pretend that this is somehow wrapped up in the same decision as the mining tax. The fact that there is the disallowance motion on the Notice Paper right now means that this issue can be dealt with in isolation and those opposite when they vote will have the opportunity to deal with this issue and this issue alone. If they still want to pursue what they want on the mining tax, this debate will not make a difference to that. But it will make an extraordinary difference in the message that this parliament sends to the veterans community of Australia and will make a very significant difference to the record that hangs around the heads of those opposite for the rest of their parliamentary careers.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:23): Standing orders should not be suspended and the government's agenda and program for the day should be allowed to continue as was planned, for a number of very important reasons. Firstly, this motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition and seconded by the Manager of Opposition Business is a sheer stunt. Secondly, there was absolutely no preparation for this motion whatsoever in question time. Labor spent the entire question time talking about every other subject until the final question. You would have thought if it was so important that standing orders be suspended that this was a subject that would have taken up the entirety of question time from the Labor Party. You would have thought that if they were so outraged and so offended and regarded this as the No. 1 issue that requires the government's agenda to be put on hold for the rest of the afternoon, they would spend all of question time building for the suspension motion, as we used to in opposition when we thought something was that important. Instead, Labor waited until about 3.04 pm to ask their first question about this subject and then, trying to gather the necessary outrage within a matter of about a minute and a half, the Leader of the Opposition launched this extraordinary suspension motion. It is not my responsibility to give the opposition advice on how to run tactics from opposition, but I would give them some advice. I think the Manager of Opposition Business is not serving them very well—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker—

Mr PYNE: I am talking directly to the suspension of standing orders, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.

Mr Burke: I respect your ruling earlier, Madam Speaker, that there is some leeway given during suspension of standing orders. Notwithstanding that, the Leader of the House has strayed far and wide and is now reverting to issues—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: I asked the Manager of Opposition Business to resume his seat. I said there is no point of order. The minister has the call.
Mr PYNE: He cannot simply try to disrupt the debate with constant points of order. It is quite clear to the House and anybody listening, though I note we are not broadcasting, that what I am explaining to the House is the context in which the suspension of standing orders should be moved if it was so important that the opposition believe that the government's program should be suspended for the rest of the afternoon. Quite obviously if the Labor Party thought that this was the most important issue of the day it should have been the subject of question time, building to a suspension of standing orders. I make the point that Labor's tactics have never been good but on this particular day are spectacularly bad.

Why should standing orders not be suspended? Because there are very important matters that need to be debated this afternoon in the House. I for one was looking forward to the speech from the member for McMahon on the government's attempts to wind back investor protection for consumers seeking financial advice, which he regarded apparently as a matter of public importance needing to be debated. Instead, the Manager of Opposition Business thinks that the member for McMahon's speech is not as interesting as I was looking forward to listening to it because he wants to suspend standing orders to delay our attempts to get to that matter of public importance.

On the program for the afternoon are bills like the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014. What a spectacular own goal for the Labor Party to move a suspension motion today to stop that bill being debated—to delay it further, potentially to delay it too long for it to be properly implemented—which would benefit 57,000 veterans in Australia, who stand to gain the same indexation mechanism as that which exists for the age pension. We think that is very important and that is why we put it on the agenda to be debated today. But the Labor Party does not think so. The Labor Party thinks a stunt such as this is more important than the 57,000 veterans who have waited four years for this measure to be passed. They think it is more important than debating the DFRDB (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014. It speaks volumes for the priorities of the opposition that they always elevate politics above good policy. For the 57,000 veterans waiting to hear that this bill has been passed and gone to the Senate and for every one of those people listening or reading the Hansard in the future, know this: Labor wanted to delay the DFRDB (Fair Indexation) Bill; in fact, they wanted to stop it from happening today and potentially never happen. So a spectacular own goal.

They also want to delay the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014. The Green Army is a very good public policy measure by this government promised before the election. It is being looked forward to in the community and will be a tremendous asset to repairing our environment in a very practical way. It is one of the measures the government has introduced as a direct action part of our policy for better environmental outcomes, for combating climate change, for improving the area in which we live, the environment in which we live. But Labor think that this stunt they have moved today is a more important priority. That is why they want to suspend standing orders to delay the government's program for the rest of the afternoon. I happen to think that we should get on with introducing the DFRDB bill on fair indexation.

I think we should get on with debating the Green Army Program, because I know many of my colleagues on this side of the House, who were proud to promise the Green Army Program before the election, are looking forward to debating it, to allowing their colleagues to
have a go as well on that subject, and to passing that bill and sending it to the Senate. Labor want to delay that bill further, because they would prefer to elevate politics over good policy.

Finally, the other example I will give is the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth and Other Measures) Bill 2014, which we also want to debate and pass, because we want to take a hard line with people who gain their wealth through unexplained measures. We want to take a firm line to ensure that law and order is elevated in this country—but not Labor; Labor think political stunts should be elevated, that political stunts are more important than ensuring that the unexplained wealth and other measures bill is passed through this House.

Ms Macklin: It is Labor's bill.

Mr PYNE: If it is Labor's bill, Member for Jagajaga, why don't you support it and pass it through the House?

Ms Macklin: We do.

Mr PYNE: You have just confirmed how hopeless your tactics are. If you are still supporting that bill—in spite of all of your own policies from the last parliament that you are rejecting and the ones you are rejecting in the Senate—why are you continuing to delay it through these kinds of stunts and pathetic tactics?

We cannot be lectured by the Labor Party on issues to do with veterans or anything to do with their families or their children. The member for Fadden has provided me with a very useful book, The Little Book of Labor's Defence Backflips. Let me just go through them, because they highlight why this motion for a suspension of standing orders should not be carried.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is no way in the world a member of the opposition would get away with this.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. I was very, very lenient indeed with both the mover and the seconder of the suspension order, and the Leader of the House has been exemplary in the way that he has dealt with the motion.

Mr PYNE: Madam Speaker, that is absolutely true. In fact, I have tried to show the opposition how to do a motion to suspend standing orders—of which I did many in the last parliament. I am trying to give you a master class on how to do it, because you need a bit of help. I allowed the Leader of the Opposition much latitude in ranging over this subject. I would say to the opposition that the Rudd Labor government said that they would 'maintain a generous military superannuation system in recognition of the importance of the ADF and the immense responsibility placed on personnel in securing and defending Australia'—but 'Labor has never, and will never, fairly index military superannuation pensions.' I am showing how the hypocrisy of the Labor Party should not be rewarded by—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Leader of the House is not being relevant to the resolution before us.

The SPEAKER: He is being entirely relevant to the motion.

Mr PYNE: Madam Speaker, I am explaining why this suspension should not be carried—because of the rank hypocrisy of the Labor Party. For example, they said:

Federal Labor will continue to focus on maintaining high recruitment and retention levels in the ADF.
Only problem is: Labor entirely cut the ADF Gap Year Program, a program which was particularly successful in recruiting women into the ADF. Labor said that they placed a high demand on people and their families and:

A Rudd Labor Government will reduce this burden and assist ADF personnel to manage the unique challenges they and their families face in serving the nation.

Only problem is: Labor cut trips home to single soldiers to see their families at Christmas. And on and on it goes. That is why standing orders should not be suspended.

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

The House divided. [15:38]

The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ayes</th>
<th></th>
<th>Noes</th>
<th></th>
<th>Majority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### AYES

Bandt, AP  
Bowen, CE  
Burke, AE  
Butler, MC  
Chalmers, JE  
Chesters, LM  
Claydon, SC  
Conroy, PM  
Elliot, MJ  
Ferguson, LDT  
Griffin, AP  
Hayes, CP  
Jones, SP  
King, CF  
Macklin, JL  
Marles, RD  
Mitchell, RG  
O'Neil, CE  
Parke, M  
Pilberserk, TJ  
Rishworth, AL  
Ryan, JC (teller)  
Snowdon, WE  
Thomson, KJ  
Watts, TG  
Zappia, A  

### NOES

Alexander, JG  
Andrews, KL  
Billson, BF  
Broad, AJ  
Brough, MT  
Chester, D  
Ciobo, SM  

Andrews, KJ  
Baldwin, RC  
Briggs, JE  
Broadbent, RE  
Buchholz, S (teller)  
Christensen, GR  
Cobb, JK  

CHAMBER
Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:43): I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

DOCUMENTS
Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:44): A document is tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the document will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Future of Financial Advice

The SPEAKER (15:44): I have received a letter from the honourable member for McMahon proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The government’s attempts to wind back investor protections for consumers seeking financial advice.

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

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

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:45): Of all the policy mistakes of this new government it is hard to find a worse example of policy dysfunction, of policy on the run and of policy that will put ordinary Australians in danger of grave financial loss than the debacle that is this government's changes to financial advice. These changes are the brainchild of the now departed Assistant Treasurer—the Assistant Treasurer who has been stood aside. He is responsible for their design and for their implementation.

There was a glimmer of hope last week, when the Assistant Treasurer stood aside, that maybe sanity would prevail. We thought that maybe a new minister might step in and undo the Assistant Treasurer's changes. But yesterday we saw an article, in the Financial Review, which said that the government was going to 'aggressively defend' its financial advice changes. The article was entitled:

Cormann grabs his FoFA laws from fallen Sinodinos.

It gets better. There is a very large opinion piece on the inside-back page defending the changes to financial advice. You can see it in the copy I am holding. I thought—

An opposition member interjecting—

Mr BOWEN: They are still on there! This was yesterday. That policy position did not last the day, because around five o'clock the Minister for Finance announced that he was freezing the changes. What a difference a day makes!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The member for McMahon will not use props. He knows it is disorderly. I will have to deal with him if he does not desist from using props.

Mr BOWEN: I was just ensuring that the House was aware of Senator Cormann's statements, Mr Deputy Speaker. We need to establish what actually went on yesterday. I think we know what went on. It was that during the day the Minister for Finance actually started to understand his own policy. I think he actually started to get what was going on. He certainly did not understand it in the morning, because he took to Twitter, the old finance minister, and said:

Our FOFA reforms do not re-introduce commissions.

He also said:

You should read my piece in AFR. Decision to pause regs taken last Friday.
I will deal with the last part first. It is a very strange media management strategy to take a decision on Friday to pause a government policy, be out defending it on the front page of the Financial Review and writing op-eds in its defence on Monday. It is a very strange media strategy, indeed.

I will turn to the substance. He said:

Our FoFA reforms do not reintroduce commissions.

That is pretty clear. I would have thought it pretty clear that commissions were being reintroduced, but maybe I misunderstood. We will go to what other people think. What does Alan Kohler think? He says:

... Minister, you are reintroducing sales commissions for general advice. The proposed amendment, and Coalition policy, is perfectly clear on that score.

Mr Kohler is correct. But it is not just Mr Kohler who thinks that. The people who actually know something about financial planning—that would be the financial planners—think commissions are being under government policy. And they do not like it. They do not support the reintroduction of commissions. On 19 March, the chair of the Financial Planning Association put out a bulletin to his members. He said, 'There is one glaring change which has been heavily lobbied for that we cannot support—the so-called general advice exemption. The Financial Planning Association strongly opposes the payment of commissions under general exemption. This is a retrograde policy that would allow remuneration by commission on the sale of investment and superannuation products to Australian consumers and to open the door to a bygone era of mis-selling and inappropriate advice.

Mr Van Manen: Rubbish!

Mr BOWEN: Rubbish, says the member for Forde. The financial planners do not know about financial planning, says the member for Forde! They do not understand what this policy does. The member for Forde should get his facts straight, as should the Minister for Finance. Very clearly this policy reintroduces commissions, and very clearly this is a retrograde step.

It is not just about general advice; it is about personal advice. Their changes reintroduce commissions on personal advice. The Minister for Finance says, 'Well, no, they could introduce bonuses if you happen to sell a lot of products. That is not a commission.' Apparently that is not a commission. If it walks like a commission and talks like a commission, guess what? It is a commission. The Minister for Finance slowly worked this out during the course of yesterday. It slowly dawned on him what his policy actually was. By five o'clock he had decided that he could not proceed with this policy at this point.

This would be amusing if it wasn't so serious. But there is a lot at stake here. These reforms were introduced in response to a catastrophe for Australia's investors, a catastrophe for normal investors who were following the advice of financial planners. Tomorrow is the fifth anniversary of the collapse of Storm Financial. What an arrogant sense of irony it takes for this government to rip up changes to financial laws that provide protection to ordinary investors right across the country on the fifth anniversary of the collapse of Storm Financial. It was not just Storm Financial that led the previous government to make these changes. There was Trio. The member for Cunningham and the member for Throsby, in particular, remember the damage caused to their communities by the collapse of Trio. The Minister for Finance indicated before the election that he would consider compensation for those people.
Ms Bird interjecting—

Mr BOWEN: In fact, they are going the other way, as the member for Cunningham correctly points out. We had the collapse of Westpoint, based in Western Australia, in which 4,300 investors, primarily Western Australians lost $310 million. Why were they investing, by and large, in Westpoint? Because their financial advisers told them it was a good investment—they advised them to invest in Westpoint.

Why would anybody advise that an investment in what was in effect a Ponzi scheme was a good idea? The commissions being paid for the advice to invest in Westpoint amounted, on average, to 10 per cent of the amount invested. This government thinks that is just fine. This government wants to bring back laws which will enable that to happen, and that is nothing short of a disgrace. In the Westpoint case, ASIC concluded that advisers had ‘negligently advised Group Members to invest in certain Westpoint products and engaged in misleading and deceptive conduct.’ The vast majority of Australia's financial planners are very professional people who give very good advice. But, Australian consumers deserve protection from those who are not. The Prime Minister, in response, said on 17 March:

It is a given of ethical practice if you are a professional that you are taking the best interests of your client, your patient, your customer into account and regulatory burdens around what are ethical givens are, I think, a classic case of regulatory overkill.

Well, the Prime Minister should face the victims of Trio, the victims of Westpoint and the victims of Storm and tell them that this is regulatory overreach; tell them that these reforms go too far. They know, more than anybody else, why these reforms were introduced and they know why this government is wrong. When you have a government which has got it so wrong that the Financial Planning Association, Choice and National Seniors have all said they have gone too far, then they know that they have a problem. Choice CEO Alan Kirkland said:

It’s important to remember that the need for widespread reform followed the catastrophic effects of major financial advice scandals … These are the problems that FoFA was designed to fix, and we urge the Government to reconsider its changes.

Michael O'Neill, National Seniors Australia CEO, said:

If cutting red tape means creating a murky environment in which the hard-earned savings of working Australians end up in the hands of financial advisers, you can leave it

People are onto this government. What is particularly galling about this government's approach is the dodgy and sneaky way they have gone about doing it. There is a way you can change the law in Australia and it is called the parliament—you introduce legislation, you go through a parliamentary process and you put the legislation before a committee. What did the former Assistant Treasurer seek to do? He tried to introduce these changes by regulation and, what is worse, he was proposing to introduce the regulation on a Thursday afternoon, after the House had risen, and the parliament could not disallow it for six weeks. What a dodgy and sneaky way to go about the administration of this nation.

It is just as well that the Minister for Finance has stepped back and paused these reforms. If the Minister for Finance thinks that he can get away with putting off these reforms off until 5 April and continue their dodgy and sneaky approach and mislead the people of Western Australia, he is wrong. *(Time expired)*
Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (15:55): I rise to speak on this matter of public importance about investor protections for consumers seeking financial advice. Our Future of Financial Advice reforms will make financial advice more accessible and more affordable. Let us be clear about exactly what the coalition is doing and why things have been put on hold for now. But, first, we can take on board some of the experts have to say about this delay. The Financial Services Council, which represents wealth managers, says that the break will help the government better communicate the changes. Its chief executive, John Brogden—a good man—supports the delay and says he will use it to lobby for a better outcome. Industry Super Australia chief executive, David Whiteley, also welcomes the delay, and the seniors' consumer group, the Council on the Ageing, also welcome the decision. Ian Yates, chief executive of COTA Australia, says 'retirees cannot afford poor financial advice.' Frankly, there was a lot of hysteria about what people thought was in the legislation but here we have industry experts saying that the delay is a good thing. We heard the member for McMahon raving on about the government being dodgy and sneaky. We are not dodgy and sneaky. We consult and we take on board what stakeholders tell us. That is one of the reasons why these reforms have been put on hold for now.

We are not proposing to water down important protections. Reducing the compliance and regulatory burden for the financial advice sector, as for all sectors, has always been a top priority for the coalition. All these reforms to FoFA were clearly outlined prior to the last election. We released our detail and our comprehensive plan to boost productivity and reduce red tape in July last year, more than three months before the election. The coalition's concerns with the current laws go back to 2012 when these laws were first introduced. The coalition participated in the Senate inquiry and wrote a dissenting report. There was nothing dodgy and sneaky there. We committed to implementing all 16 recommendations of the dissenting report, if we won government. It might be news to those opposite that we did win government on 7 September. They seem to deny it, but it was us who won. The FoFA bill before the parliament, which is currently being considered by a Senate committee, was put out for consultation in the form of an exposure draft, and the bill reflects this. Particularly in relation to this policy we have been as accountable, transparent, open and consultative as any government could be.

We have been clear that a better balance needs to be struck. Some of the specific measures outlined in our FoFA changes included clarifying and not removing the catch-all best interests duty. The catch-all best interests duty as proposed by Labor led to uncertainty and confusion amongst advisers. Advisers would not know, under Labor's rules, whether or not their advice satisfied the best interests duty. The coalition is simply looking to remove the catch-all requirement in order to give the adviser confidence that their advice is compliant and will be in the best interests of their clients. We are removing the opt-in requirement, which forces clients to complete unnecessary paperwork—Labor loves paperwork—every two years simply to continue their arrangements with their financial advisers. The government will also streamline the current requirement so that fee disclosure statements need to be provided only to new clients. Under Labor's proposals, advisers were required to provide such statements for all of their clients, going back indefinitely—more paperwork which would undoubtedly put a significant financial burden on financial advisers.
We are cutting through the regulation; cutting through the red tape. A good regulatory regime is one in which those being regulated know what compliance looks like. You should not need a law degree or a tome on regulation to know your requirements and you should not need to look over your shoulder every time you sit down to conduct legitimate business. But those opposite do not understand business—they do not get it. The changes we are proposing—which were well-known and flagged well before the last election—are very pragmatic and well considered. Labor did not want to do a cost-benefit analysis because it knew it would not add up—I do not think that Labor knows what a cost-benefit analysis actually is.

Former Prime Minister Gillard gave the Leader of the Opposition, then Assistant Treasurer, an exemption from having to rigorously assess the costs and benefits of Labor's FoFA reforms. No scrutiny, no accountability, just full steam ahead—wham, bam, in you go. It is just like with the National Broadband Network, and we are now cleaning up the mess of that monumental disaster and trying to deliver the NBN sensibly and sustainably. It is just like the recent capability review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which revealed that Labor stubbornly pressed ahead, ignoring the recommendations of the Productivity Commission.

We have a number of very valid concerns with FoFA which we are seeking to address. The changes that we have flagged will certainly do just that. Under Labor's FoFA reforms, the up-front implementation costs to industry are conservatively estimated to be well in excess of $1 billion, with ongoing annual costs of at least $350 million. This is simply ludicrous. The current FoFA laws simply go too far, imposing excessive regulatory burdens on advisers, at huge cost to clients but for limited benefit to everyone.

It is worth noting that these laws would have never prevented a Storm Financial collapse. So, not only do these changes fail to achieve one of their main objectives; they also impose significant red tape and costs, which will hurt the industry and ultimately prohibit ordinary mum and dad investors or retirees from accessing affordable financial advice.

The government acknowledges that there is inherent risk involved in investing in financial markets and in financial products. Of course, we are committed to maintaining confidence in the sector and ensuring that consumers are adequately protected. However, Labor's FoFA laws just went too far. They do not strike a balance; they tip the scales. Consumers and the industry are equally the losers, and they know it. They are wise to this Labor opposition.

The government is quite sensible in drawing breath on the planned FoFA regulations. The minister has taken the right approach in postponing these reforms. Minister Cormann is precisely right to do just what he did yesterday. Given the complexity and the level of detail contained in the regulations, and the ongoing confusion and uncertainty by many in our community in relation to these reforms, this pause will give Minister Cormann the opportunity to undertake consultations with relevant stakeholders in good faith. Labor could never locate the pause button; they could only ever locate fast forward in relation to any legislation that they introduced over the last six years. That is why it is so important that we as a government are doing things pragmatically, methodically and sensibly.

During the last six years, those opposite just rushed everything through without any thought about its possible implications. Labor lurched from one policy disaster to another: between pink batts and overpriced school halls, between boat arrivals and the broken carbon...
tax promise. The coalition is actually committed to methodically and calmly implementing
the agenda that we took to the people last September and is delivering on our commitments to
the Australian people.

The coalition is absolutely committed to delivering these FoFA reforms, but we want to
bring the people with us. We do not want to have policy by social media or to have policy by
knee-jerk reactions—like those opposite did whilst they were in government under Rudd, then
Gillard and then Rudd again. We do not change government policies in response to a
television show, as with the live cattle fiasco, or to a Facebook post—we can only think of the
supertrawler fiasco. We do not switch leaders. We do not haphazardly switch leaders in
response to opinion polls. There is one opinion poll that matters and it was taken on 7
September last year. The voters voted overwhelmingly to put the coalition—the sensible
people in politics—back into power. As I say, there is one opinion poll which Labor should
listen to and that was the result of last year's election. The people spoke and the people now
want the mandate that they gave to the coalition to be enacted. They want the Senate to get
out of the way and remove the mining tax and the carbon tax, which are destroying Western
Australia. The people in Western Australia can certainly get on board on 5 April and vote in
the Nationals through Shane Van Styn and certainly the Liberals.

We will not be lectured by those opposite about financial management or financial
priorities. Those opposite left us with $123 billion in deficits and, if left unchecked, $667
billion in debt, so they cannot lecture us about financial reforms. The International Monetary
Fund survey found that Australia topped the list of 17 countries, with the largest increase in
expenditure. How dare those opposite lecture us on financial performance. The IMF also
reported that Australia has the third-highest growth in debt of any nation in the top 17
countries. What a disgrace Labor has left us. What an absolute mess we have inherited, but
we will fix it up. You can laugh all you like, member for Fraser, but we will fix it up because
we are the mature, sensible and methodical people in this parliament.

These reforms came on the back of Labor imposing a job-destroying carbon tax and a
farcical mining tax which raised hardly a dollar, yet which Labor precommitted $16 billion
worth of spending against. What a disgrace! When these FoFA reforms are ready, after we
have taken due consultation with the people, they will certainly be brought in, but not until
they are properly planned and properly thought out. Those opposite should take a lesson from
how we do things.

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (16:05): Tomorrow is the fifth anniversary of the collapse of Storm
Financial. It is the fifth anniversary of thousands of ordinary investors losing their life
savings, many of them left with no opportunity to start again. It is important to keep this in
mind as we consider the government's extraordinary and shambolic attempts at dismantling
Labor's Future of Financial Advice laws. When it comes to financial advice, it is the classic
story of David and Goliath: the consumers and retirees versus the big banks and institutions in
the race to access the growing pile of $1.8 trillion in retirement savings and the many billions
of dollars in fees and charges that brings in. It is a lot of money straight out of the accounts of
ordinary retail clients who can least afford it, but it is never enough for the big end of town,
who want more. To make matters worse, it is not just the fees and charges up for the taking; it
is the culture it breeds of selling products instead of the more honourable task of actually
providing quality advice and the impact that may have over a lifetime of saving for retirement.

No matter how hard they press the pause button, the government and the new minister replacing the former Assistant Treasurer Arthur Sinodinos will not alter the fear and uncertainty created by the proposals to roll back the FoFA laws—laws that only came into full effect nine months ago and have barely had time to be fully appreciated by the sector or the consumer. This comes after business models have changed and systems have been updated and modernised. Given either the complete misunderstanding by the minister of his own legislation and new regulations, or the minister's hope that no-one will read what the proposed legislation actually states in black and white, let us clear up a few details. Commissions are squarely back on the table, best interest survives in name only and a sales focus on financial products is the new push, with costs foisted onto retirees while the sector gets to pocket a few extra dollars in cost reductions as well as reaping hundreds of millions in extra charges.

Claims by the minister that this is all about efficiency, transparency and competition are laughable. Paragraph 2.27 of their proposed changes to fee disclosure statements explicitly details that a change to the existing fees charged, the terms of the agreement, or if the provider changes ownership, will not constitute a new arrangement and therefore no disclosure is required. That is a lot of change right there that blows a hole in the minister's transparency argument and in the pockets of retirees and consumers, and here the central problem remains that none of us get a choice.

When we consider commissions, page 28 of the explanatory memorandum of the bill sets out that commissions can be paid for general advice and provides the clarity the minister refers to on how it is done. Unfortunately for investors, the goal posts are set so wide you could drive a truck through them literally sideways. The minister claims that conflicted remuneration for personal advice is still banned. But this is not correct at all, because the proposed changes alter the definition of what is not considered conflicted remuneration on personal advice to include volume-based sales bonuses when they are part of a balanced scorecard approach. The minister can try all the tricks or call it what you will but it just does not pass the pub test. Providing quality personal advice and getting paid a sales volume bonus or a commission are incompatible.

One of the most important parts of FoFA are the best interest obligations through the safe harbour provisions in section 961B that provide a range of tests to ensure a balanced approach, with best interest part G being the catch-all provision that ties it all together and makes sense of going beyond the flick-through, simple, tick-a-box compliance cop out. This provision, perhaps more than any other, is driving a cultural change in the industry and lifting the standard of quality advice—something the sector wants and something the sector has been asking for for perhaps more than a decade. It is hard to explain why the minister thinks it is acceptable to remove a provision that a provider should take 'any other step that would reasonably be regarded as being in the best interest of the client'—and yet it is specifically removed by the minister. It might be fair to say that every once in a while the little guy gets a small win, even if only a temporary pause, while the question remains as to what caused the minister to stumble and rethink.
The government's FoFA roll-back process has been in shambles from the beginning and is now in disarray, with no-one sure of what happens next, not even the minister. The answer is clear, though. When you realise that you are travelling down a one-way street the wrong way, the best policy is to pause, think, and then turn around. This government has absolutely got it wrong on dismantling FoFA and the consumer protections that it provides, and there is no-one left that supports the government on these changes. Whether it is that over the weekend that changed the minister's mind or the Western Australian elections, I do not care.

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (16:10): Only the Labor Party could believe that they know how to define professionalism, and only Labor could think it wise to legislate every aspect of a professional's behaviour. Perhaps this is because of their own failures of professionalism which are so widespread. Indeed the failures of professionalism amongst union officials have been truly extraordinary. But I have bad news for those on the other side of the House: the character and conduct of a professional cannot be defined by legislation that regulates every aspect of their behaviour.

The overriding requirement for all professionals is that they act in the best interest of their clients. I have spent 20 years working in management consulting and I know this. Every professional knows that conflicts of interest emerge almost every day, and no set of rules will ever resolve those conflicts. Whether it is the temptation to sell unnecessary time to clients or to try to sell them the wrong product or service, there are myriad reasons to do wrong. Professionalism takes common sense and a mindset which puts the clients' interests above all else.

Those of us—particularly on this side of the House—who have worked as professionals over long periods of time have learnt those skills and that mindset, but the truth is that you cannot legislate for every circumstance. It is no secret that financial planners have a less-than-ideal reputation in the public eye at times—they could take a little advice themselves and work on their PR. That said, the government is not about legislating to try and abolish all poor advice—you simply a cannot do it. The very whiff of an adviser taking a commission for a sale that goes against sound financial advice is wrong on anyone's ledger, but similar issues exist in all professions and you cannot—I repeat, cannot—legislate against all bad behaviour because there are too many ways to behave badly if you have built trust with a client.

Time and time again we see that Labor thinks it can legislate its way to nirvana, whether it is 18C, FoFA reforms or the 50,000 pages of legislation we have been left to repeal, but their attempt to control, you, me and every other Australian will never cease. From this starting point, the government is making amendments to existing FoFA laws.

In recent weeks, there has been either deliberate or misguided smearing of the government's objectives in reference to the reforms. It is worth restating what we are not doing. We are not repealing the FoFA laws; we are improving them. We are not getting rid of the best-interest duty, the most important part of this legislation; we are ensuring there is certainty about the obligations facing financial advisers to act in the best interests of their clients. That is sacrosanct. We are not reintroducing product specific sales commissions for financial advisers; that is totally misleading. The government is not reintroducing sales commissions, as I said; incentives for volume sales that do not conflict with sound advice from a financial adviser should be permissible. That is all we are saying.
The government is wholly committed to protecting consumers, but we do not need Labor's legislation to do this. In principle, we support the underlying goals of the FoFA reforms, but Labor's FoFA laws were bad for consumers. They went too far and they will cost too much. Do not just take our word for it. Listen to the Chief Executive of the AMP, Craig Meller. He says:

Some of the issues with the legislation as it went through first time added an awful lot of bureaucracy to the system and made it difficult for providers to work out exactly whether something was in someone's best interests or not.

He goes on to say:

We think the policy adjustments proposed by the new government significantly reduce red tape and make it much clearer to Australians and their advisers that the advice being given is absolutely in their best interests. We're very much supportive and in agreement with the changes that the government is proposing.

Thank you, Mr Meller. We agree.

What this country needs now, what our consumers need now, is more freedom to move, not more regulation. The government has undertaken extensive consultation on the FoFA bill, and the bill reflects the feedback we have received. In the interests of consumers, the government is committed to amending the FoFA legislation to reduce costs and to make financial advice more affordable for all Australians. These are fine goals, and I support them wholeheartedly.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (16:15): I do not think anyone should be surprised that we see the Liberal government trying to unwind these important consumer protections in the finance area, because the Liberal Party has extraordinary form in betraying small investors while protecting their mates. And West Australians, of all people, are acutely aware of that, having been on the receiving end of unscrupulous conduct from finance scammers and having witnessed the blatant refusal of Liberal governments—both state and federal—to take action. And now we see that the Liberal government is trying to undo the good work that was done by a Labor government.

I want to take you back to something that is still very present in the minds of Western Australians—the finance brokers' scandal of the late 1990s. I first alerted the WA parliament to this systematic abuse of the pooled mortgage schemes in Western Australia in, I think, around 1999. Week after week for two years we were explaining and exposing in parliament and through the media the profound consequences that were occurring from the failure of the then-Court government to regulate what was going on with a range of finance professionals engaged in what can only be described as a great fraud. It was a fraud that saw many, many thousands of Western Australians—self-funded retirees, families—lose almost their entire life savings. And day after day we would get the same response that we have got here—that people need the freedom, that it is 'buyer beware', that we do not need to do anything about that. The finance broking industry in Western Australia had very powerful friends in the Court government, and they simply refused to act.

What we finally saw with the state election in 2001 was the minister who was leading the charge lose his seat and indeed the Court government lose the election. So scandalous was that behaviour, so scandalous was their refusal and failure to act that this ended up in a royal commission. The taxpayers of Western Australia ended up paying tens of millions of dollars in compensation. Quite clearly there was a major regulatory failure.
In Western Australia we had a heightened sensitivity to this, so when we saw a new scheme developing in 2002 we were very concerned. This was a mezzanine finance scheme—one that has been described here today as something of a Ponzi scheme. The first company to be involved in this was Westminster Finance. Basically investors thought they had an investment secured by property. They did not. In August 2002, the consumer protection department wrote to ASIC, and it also raised it at ministerial meetings. It was trying to get action. But nothing happened. They could not get the federal government or federal agencies to act. So in May 2003, the then minister for consumer protection, John Kobelke, wrote to his counterpart, Senator Ian Campbell, who was Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, alerting him to this particular problem. I will just quote John here, because it really goes to the heart of it:

I expressed concern at the level of risk posed to inexperienced investors, many of whom are self-funded retirees who were approached by the company. The fact that the company was soliciting people to invest in it was a new element that I will expand upon in a moment.

Accordingly, he went and raised with Senator Campbell the need for urgent action. Nothing happened. So in June he wrote again and said, 'We have received your letter, but this requires urgent attention.' And over the following years the department of consumer protection continued to take this matter up, and nothing happened. Then in 2006, lo and behold, the whole scheme collapsed. You must take responsibility for it—you have form on this matter.

(Time expired)

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (16:20): It is interesting when we have been talking about the financial planning industry today that there have been all sorts of references to finance brokers and others who are not even covered by this legislation, so it is wonderful to see that, again, Labor is on the job and actually knows what it is talking about—not!

Let us have a look at the proposed changes and some of the history of FoFA, because I think it is important to reflect on that. In its original form, FoFA was designed to improve the trust and confidence of Australian retail investors in the financial advice industry, which I think is a very noble goal, and we support that fully on this side of the House. That goal was to be achieved by specifically tackling conflicts of interest that were seen to pervade the financial planning industry at that point in time. The government supports the principles of FoFA but has concerns about the regulatory burden imposed on the financial planning industry. And we have seen from feedback from the industry that they were looking at costs of some $90 million per year in implementation costs and another $190 million in further savings. When speaking to local financial planners, they have assured me that these cost savings will be passed on to their customers. I was speaking to one of our local planners this afternoon, and he made the point to me that one of the by-products of the current FoFA regime is that some 10 per cent of potential clients are declining advice because of cost. In an area like Beenleigh this is a significant concern as many of these people actually need assistance and advice.

The sad thing about this is that it is the very thing the FoFA regulations promoted by the previous government were supposed to deal with. They were supposed to make it more cost effective for people. As usual with what the previous government has put in place, the reality ends up being far from what was originally envisaged.
I also took the opportunity to speak to others in the financial planning industry to seek feedback on their views on these proposed changes. One of the key points they make with respect to these proposals is that they will provide clarity in regard to the provisions relating to the best interests of clients. We as a government see no reason whatsoever to water those down, but we do see great value in ensuring clarity so that both planners and clients understand what they are being protected for. In their view, the objective of these changes will place the financial planning profession on an equal footing with other professions, such as solicitors, doctors and accountants.

There are also claims by some that the proposed changes will result in another Storm Financial type of collapse. There is nothing in FoFA, or these proposed changes, that would result in the protection of another Storm Financial collapse. That is ASIC's responsibility, and ASIC needs to shoulder some of the responsibility for what has happened in this industry due to their not enforcing regulations that are already in place.

I have also had feedback from industry that the present FoFA laws have also created confusion. For example, advisors report that when they send out the fee disclosure statements some clients see that as a bill and have actually sent in a cheque, without realising it was just a statement for fees and services that have already been paid. Further, some of the over-the-top negativity from certain stakeholders with vested interests in this sector has certainly not helped with this confusion and uncertainty.

As we sit down to look at the shambles left by those opposite, we see that it is only this government that can start to sort out this mess. Only we can provide clarity for the long-term future of not only the financial planning industry but more importantly for the millions of Australians who will require that advice as their superannuation and other investment balances continue to grow, thanks to our wonderful superannuation system. I fully support the changes that we are bringing to provide that clarity and certainty to everyone in our community.

Mr Watts (Gellibrand) (16:25): A core role of government is to protect the vulnerable members of our community. It is to ensure that people placed in a vulnerable situation are not exploited by those they seek advice from. A key example of one of these vulnerable situations is the provision of financial services. Most Australians seeking to invest their money are not used to the ups and downs of the financial market. They need independent, impartial advice on where their money is best placed so they can enjoy a secure future.

When advisers are incentivised through targets and commissions to recommend a certain financial product, despite the product's quality, it is hard for this independent advice to occur. In these circumstances there is a considerable risk of exploitation of these vulnerable investors. We saw this occur recently with the collapse of Storm Financial and other investment companies, where the savings of thousands of Australians around the country was lost as the questionable financial instruments they had invested in collapsed.

After the global financial crisis it was recognised that protections needed to be put in place for these vulnerable investors, so the previous Labor government initiated a parliamentary inquiry into financial advice, products and services. This inquiry produced the Future of Financial Advice Act to strengthen the protections for inexperienced investors. FoFA required that advisers providing personal financial advice must act in the best interest of their client. It required advisers to ask their clients to 'opt in' if they wished to receive ongoing service every
two years. Most importantly it put a ban on conflicted remuneration. This meant that advisers selling a certain financial product were not able to receive a commission for the sale of that product to the investor. This ensured that financial investors would provide the impartial advice that retail investors so badly needed.

The Abbott government has wasted no time in attempting to role back these crucial protections for consumers who are seeking financial advice. Their attempts so far have been a classic example of how not to execute legislative change. This demonstrates to the Australian people once again the inability of the Abbott government to switch from opposition to government.

Firstly, they announced in the last few days before Christmas that they would make changes to the legislation. Like many Abbott government policy moves, this was done without any consultation with interested stakeholders. They did it without talking about the changes with consumer groups, or industry groups, or seniors groups. Clearly, former Assistant Treasurer Arthur Sinodinos pled that consulting his previous colleagues in the banking world was sufficient. Nothing else was needed to strip protections away from a vulnerable group of investors.

The Abbott government pulled out the usual tactic in relation to this legislation, which was to not talk about it in the hope nobody would notice it until it was passed. They did not count on the community backlash from industry experts, consumer advocates, seniors groups, and previous victims of dodgy financial practises, who all condemned the governments actions. Even those within their own party disowned the reforms.

Peter Collins, the former leader of the New South Wales Liberal Party, and now the head of Industry Super Australia, was unequivocal in condemning these proposed changes. As pressure from the community mounted we saw the response of the Abbott government shift back and forth, from supporting the changes to abandoning them, with the schizophrenic attitude of a government that just does not know how to govern.

The former Assistant Treasurer Arthur Sinodinos was asked to resign, as his failure to answer questions in the Senate became a thorn in the Abbott government's side.

Government members interjecting—

A government member: He asked to resign.

Mr WATTS: Feel free to clarify: has he resigned or not? The Abbott government took this as an opportunity to use Minister Mathias Cormann to push the changes once more. It was reported to the *Australian Financial Review* only yesterday that the Abbott government would:

… aggressively defend its ambitious unwinding of Labor's future of financial advice (FoFA) laws …

Minister Cormann even wrote an editorial in the *Financial Review* expanding the merits of its recent reforms. The next day the attitude of the Abbott government had changed completely. The *Financial Review* reported this morning that the Abbott government:

… has frozen plans to immediately implement changes to laws banning commissions for financial advisers …

This was in direct contrast to Minister Cormann's statement on Twitter yesterday, when he claimed that this freeze had been in the work since Friday of last week. I find it unlikely that nobody in his office could get to the article before Monday to prevent his valiant defence of
the FoFA reforms being printed. This is if we are charitable, and assume the op-ed was not written after he had allegedly 'changed his mind'.

The Abbott government's eleventh-hour decision to freeze the changes in the FoFA act shows that they are a government that do not know how to govern. They think a three-word slogan, not stakeholder consultation, is what is needed to form government policy. When these policies do not hold up in the harsh light of day, the cohesion of the Abbott government crumbles under pressure. The Prime Minister needs to take responsibility for the botched way this policy has been handled. He needs to acknowledge to the Australian people that these reforms are both unwelcome and have been badly run. The Abbott government should not just freeze these reforms; they should throw them on the same bonfire that they claim to be throwing red tape onto in Australia and put an end to them once and for all.

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (16:30): It is disappointing to see members opposite engaging in this overblown rhetoric and hyperbole. We saw it from the member for McMahon at the beginning of the MPI. I can understand that the member for McMahon would have been very embarrassed by his two very ordinary questions in question time and probably sought to atone for that, but I think we just need to settle the debate and talk about the facts.

We are not proposing to repeal protections here. We are improving these rules in line with our election commitments, and 2014 is the year when the coalition government will deliver on each of those commitments that we made prior to the election. We are not proposing to get rid of the requirement that financial advisers act in the best interest of their clients—quite the contrary. As members on this side have said earlier today, we are focusing on the fiduciary duty that financial advisers owe their clients. It is very heroic for any government to assume that they can look into a crystal ball and see what each possible problem may be between a financial adviser and their client. But if we focus on the fiduciary duty that applies, and that is that the financial adviser always acts in the best interests of their client, then that is a good place to start.

We are not proposing to reintroduce commissions or other conflicted remuneration structures. That is just wrong, so the overblown rhetoric of those opposite is going to blow up in their faces, because when the facts come to light, as the review will ensure happens, all of the inaccuracies propagated by those opposite will come to light. Instead, we are restoring a level playing field across the whole financial services market, ensuring that everyday consumers of financial advice can continue to access robust financial advice, personal to their own circumstances and in their best interests. We agree there is a significant public interest in ensuring that financial advice laws are transparent and competitive in a financial services system, but we are also concerned that consumers actually have access to that advice. If we create a regulatory system around the access to financial advice that disenfranchises one consumer from getting personal advice for themselves, then we have done a disservice to them.

In ensuring that we provide that access to all consumers, we want to ensure that people who are saving for their retirement have certainty in the advice that they are receiving. We are not seeking to throw the baby out with the bathwater in that sense, but a balance has to be reached, and that is what the coalition's version of these rules will ensure. Do not take our word for it. Listen to some eminent people in the markets. Those opposite, who mostly have never worked in the private sector, should listen to this. Ian Narev, the CEO of the
Commonwealth Bank, said that Australia's financial planning industry is too heavily regulated and customers will be better served with fewer regulations. Steve Munchenberg, the chief executive of the Australian Bankers' Association, described the changes as sensible and claimed that their opponents—that is, the members opposite—had been circulating disinformation about their impact. These are eminent people in the financial services industry.

In my electorate of Deakin, I have spoken to many consumers and providers of financial advice, and, in these discussions, two prevailing themes have come through. For everyday investors, there was justifiable anxiety that the additional cost that they would face in accessing financial advice would mean that they were unable to afford it. The view of financial advice providers has been that FoFA is unworkable. One provider sent me an email this morning that said, 'I don't think any AFSL holder is ready for it’—being FoFA—‘and we are meant to be compliant already.' This observation is confirmed by the fact that the costs and disincentives of Labor's FoFA mean it just is not workable, and our changes are extremely important.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (16:35): Timing is everything, and it has been no surprise to see the coalition government throw the car into reverse when it comes to their plans to weaken investor protection on the eve of the Western Australian Senate re-run. The Labor government introduced the Future of Financial Advice reforms to ensure transparency and fairness, to ensure best practice and to ban conflicted remuneration. It was a step taken in response to clear evidence of established practices in the financial advice sector which were risky, harmful, improper and misleading. It included requirements that ordinary investors be provided with basic information about the fees attached to the advice they were receiving and a requirement that clients' consent be obtained rather than presumed in relation to ongoing fees. That is what sensible regulation in this space exists to do; it is what good government exists to do; and it is precisely what the wider community expects.

The government was clearly hoping that the weakening and watering-down of these long-needed protections could be done quietly, under the cover of the government's bizarre 'war on red tape'. The Senate re-run election in WA has spoiled those plans, and so now, out of the blue, we hear that the weakening and watering-down of financial protections is being delayed because suddenly it is all very complicated and technical. Let me tell you, there is nothing very complicated about it. Financial advisers are not, in essence, salespeople. Their expertise—for which each and every client is paying—goes to the quality of their financial advice, which in turn depends entirely on it being in the best interest of the client, with no interfering consideration such as a separate financial reward that an adviser might receive from the owner of a financial or investment product. Such a scenario presents the very definition of a conflict of interest. The financial self-interest of the adviser is in conflict with the financial interest of the person they are obliged to serve, and that cannot be tolerated as part of what should be a safe, fair and transparent financial services environment.

You can walk the streets in any community in this country and ask people whether they think financial advisers should be required to act in their client's best interest, and the only way you will find anyone who disagrees is if you happen to run into a dodgy financial adviser or else a member of this government's economic team. I assure you that in Western Australia there is a good understanding of what happens when the so-called red tape, the regulations
that exist to protect all of us in areas of life like investment where we are vulnerable, is ineffective.

Mr Pasin: I think they are more interested in the carbon tax.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): Order! The member for Barker will be silent.

Ms PARKE: We have seen in the Westpoint collapse precisely what happens to ordinary investors when corporate fraud and inadequate financial regulation mix. Indeed, the Westpoint fiasco is a perfect and terrible example of the need for the reforms that Labor introduced. Individuals were encouraged to invest in the Westpoint Group, a Western Australian property development outfit, on the basis of advice that was negligently given and as a result of large commissions paid to financial advisers by Westpoint. There were more than 4,000 people who invested in the company, including many Western Australians. Together their losses have been estimated in excess of $300 million. It is no good to simply say that the relevant advisers have been banned as a result of the Westpoint collapse. It is no good to say, as the Prime Minister has said, that you should not regulate for 'ethical givens', when there has been a steady flow of savage and large-scale losses as a result of shonky corporate and financial industry operators who are completely impervious to basic ethical considerations.

The whole rationale for effective regulation, for Labor's carefully designed and consulted financial advice reforms, is the need to prevent disasters from happening in the first place. It is so much easier and better to have a system that works to keep the frauds out and to resist the creep of self-interested advisory negligence than to come along afterwards when millions and millions of dollars have disappeared and thousands of people have suffered severe financial loss.

Today, the Prime Minister talked about the need for decency. It is not decent for this government to remove sensible protections for consumers and investors—many of whom are elderly, vulnerable people. It is not decent for this government to abolish the charities commission, which protects donors and acts as a watchdog against scammers and dodgy charities. The treatment by this government of consumers, patients, orphans of war veterans, asylum seekers, low-paid workers, unemployed people and people with disabilities is simply not decent. So please do not talk to us about decency, Prime Minister. If saving senior Australians from losing their life savings to financial spivs is what the government calls red tape, then we say, 'Bring it on.' It is only those barriers and disincentives to improper conduct in an industry with serious inherent risks that keep ordinary Australians and their investments safe. This government wants to throw away those protections and wants to leave investors in the dark. What is worse, it wants to do so without scrutiny by Western Australians as they approach the ballot box.

Ms SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (16:40): This government has always supported the need to protect the financial stability and investment for Australians. The underlying principles were established so that workers and families who have worked hard all their lives know that what they have saved—what is commonly referred to as their 'nest egg', or the funding for their well-deserved retirement years—is secure. It is at this point that I wish to digress in order to publicly compliment those amazing people who have done exactly this. So many of our wise Australians have become self-sufficient and are grouped together under the heading of self-funded retirees. They are fully deserving of our respect and compliments for being such
important role models for the next generation. These people come to me on my village visits and ask, with tears in their eyes, what they did wrong. They have worked hard and saved hard, and they are not taking benefits from the government. They ask that we help them to protect their investments. The crux of their issue at this point is that financial advice is becoming too expensive and that you need to be a solicitor to understand all the fine print in the booklets that they get sent in the post, not to mention needing a magnifying glass to read the font.

They know that we are not repealing the Future of Financial Advice laws, but, in line with the commitments that we made to so many groups, we are going to improve these laws, simplify them and ensure that investors are protected and that the legislation is less complicated. Most important is the introduction of best-interest duty to complement the common-law protections.

Let me take another moment to cite an occasion that has left an indelible impression. In the past, a licensed financial adviser during a time of world financial crisis—in fact, it was just prior to the recession in 1987—advised his clients that they should move their investments to safer portfolios, saving them from significant financial losses. You might wonder, apart from having a clear conscience, what other consequences occurred. That individual had his position declared vacant. But he was acting in their best interests. This introduction of best-practice duty is an honourable and well-overdue change. There is no intention of introducing landmine aspects, of financial advisers gaining commissions, or convoluted and difficult methods for seeing how they work and what the real costs to the investor are.

The most important proposals in the changes are to make sure investment advice is competitive, fair, efficient and transparent. The previous suite of legislative changes, which were aimed at protection, were complicated at best and anti-competitive at worst. Increased investment options means that different avenues can give a different range of benefits to the investors to suit their different needs. There are estimates surrounding the existing implementation regime that include a cost burden of around $350 million. Ultimately, this will be borne by the investor. The proposals being put forward have been assessed by the independent Office of Best Practice Regulation.

The previous parliament had bipartisan support to change this industry after the debacle of Storm Financial. Sustainable reform was the overall theme at that time, as recommended by the Ripoll inquiry. There were three key recommendations: the best-interest duty; that clients were fully aware of the conditions of their investments; and that difficult financial advice was made a whole lot clearer. However, there were unintended consequences for investors. They had to re-sign with their advisers, and this cost was part of their fee structure. Out of 400 submissions to the Storm Financial inquiry, only one—the industry super fund—recommended this step. Perhaps I am a cynic, but one wonders why only one from this source is supposed to be representing the best interest of the industry members, or, more simply, the workers they say they represent, when in effect they are gaining repetitive repayments at the disadvantage of the workers.

The best-practice duty requirement is an essential step for sound financial investment. It will provide security for those people who come to me and proudly—deservedly so—say, 'I am a self-funded retiree.' The proposed legislation does not reintroduce commissions. At the moment, investors are not ever able to opt out of a fund where they actually have no
investments. This is such a complicated industry, with most of us finding it difficult to navigate. Also, determining a trusted adviser is very concerning, as there are many perceptions around the commissions of the past, which, I emphasise again, are not being introduced with these amendments.

There is to be a $90 million saving on the current implementation costs, and who would have been sustaining these costs? Why, the investors of course. The Financial Services Council has estimated that the burden on this industry is in the order of $700 million. Those opposite have once again demonstrated a complete lack of economic depth or ability to analyse financial impacts on the very people they have endeavoured to assist—yet another Labor mess to be cleaned up. Our aim is to make financial advice more affordable and more effective. The window of opportunity here allows time for more consultation— (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The discussion is now concluded.

BILLS

Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013

Consideration of Senate Message

Message received from the Senate acquainting the House that the Senate does not insist on its amendments Nos 5 and 41 disagreed to by the House and has agreed to the amendments made by the House in place of them.

Marriage (Celebrant Registration Charge) Bill 2014

Marriage Amendment (Celebrant Administration and Fees) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (16:46): The Marriage Amendment (Celebrant Registration Charge) Bill 2014 and the Marriage Amendment (Celebrant Administration and Fees) Bill 2014 are bills which reflect the implementation of a 2011-12 budget decision of the Gillard Labor government to introduce cost recovery for Commonwealth registered marriage celebrants in Australia.

The member for Kooyong, in his second reading speech on these bills, rightly acknowledged that a couple's wedding day is one of the most important moments in their lives, and it is important that Australians can expect those tasked with solemnising marriages to discharge their responsibilities to a very high standard. I endorse the comments made by the member for Kooyong in the second reading speech. But this bill, it should be noted, concerns civil celebrants, and perhaps it could be added that celebrants in particular are an essential feature of many modern weddings.

Civil celebrants provide marrying couples with a meaningful alternative to a registry office wedding. The Marriage Celebrant Program was established under the Marriage Act in 1973 by the great modernising Whitlam Labor government. The program was one of many achievements of the reforming Labor Attorney-General Lionel Murphy. Despite vociferous
opposition to the idea of civil celebrants from conservative quarters, including from some parliamentary and party members within Labor, Lionel Murphy exercised his powers as Attorney-General under the Marriage Act to appoint the first civil celebrant in July 1973. One recent account of that event holds that, frustrated with opposition to the idea, Lionel Murphy returned to his office late one night and typed the first letter of appointment himself. He posted it from a nearby postbox to Lois D'Arcy, a 25-year-old Queenslander. Lois D'Arcy was a great success as a marriage celebrant, and in the following months Lionel Murphy appointed many others to this role.

The importance of the program and the number of celebrants have significantly increased as many people move away from traditional religious marriage ceremonies. Recent Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that in 2011 some 71 per cent of marriages were formalised by a celebrant. So common are marriages by celebrants that since 1973 I think most, if not perhaps all, Australians would have attended at least one ceremony performed by a civil celebrant. And the fact that a majority of marriages are now performed by civil celebrants tells us about the popularity of the measure introduced by Lionel Murphy in 1973. At the same time, not unexpectedly because of the steadily increasing popularity of civil celebrants to solemnise marriages, there has been an increase in the number of those celebrants. This was noted by the member for Kooyong in his second reading speech, where he pointed out:

The number of marriage celebrants has increased significantly in recent years from 3,334 in September 2003 to over 10,400 Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants administered by the program—by the officials in the Attorney-General's Department—
in 2014

Following on the long tradition of Labor's support for celebrants, the Gillard government developed these bills to ensure the ongoing integrity of the celebrant program and to make the administration of the program by the Attorney-General's Department financially sustainable. These are cost recovery charges that are being introduced. The government—that is, the previous Labor government—undertook an extensive consultation process and prepared stakeholders for the introduction of these changes.

It is somewhat saddening to see that, consistent with the approach that this government has taken to everything done by the former Labor government, the member for Kooyong could not bring himself to acknowledge that this very legislation was introduced in this parliament in March 2013. Indeed, he failed to acknowledge that I delivered a second reading speech, as Attorney-General, on this very legislation on the anniversary—that is, 20 March 2013—of the day on which the member for Kooyong delivered his second reading speech—that is, 20 March 2014. I am pleased to see the member for Kooyong following—literally—in my footsteps to such an extent that we see in the second reading speech that I delivered on 20 March 2013 the sentence:

We all know that a couple's wedding day is one of the most important moments in their lives.

Happily, the member for Kooyong agrees. He said:

A couple's wedding day is one of the most special and enduring moments in their lives.

And equally as I said last year in my second reading speech on this very legislation:

… the great majority of marriage celebrants perform this role to a very high standard.

Strangely the same phrase appears in the member for Kooyong's speech:
… the great majority of marriage celebrants perform this role to a very high standard.

The fees introduced are a $600 registration fee for aspiring marriage celebrants, a $240 annual celebrant registration charge imposed on all Commonwealth-registered celebrants, and a $30 processing fee for seeking an exemption from the annual celebrant registration charge—those of course being the exact fees contained in the bill I introduced to the parliament last year.

It is good to see the Abbott government continuing to implement these Labor reforms. With this particular prudent addition to the regulatory framework, which is the same as that introduced by the Labor government last year, I commend the bill to the House.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Chief Government Whip) (16:53): In the spirit of the speech just given and the general agreement about the legislation before us, I declare that the following bills are referred to the Federal Chamber for further consideration: Marriage (Celebrant Registration Charge) Bill 2014 and Marriage Amendment (Celebrant Administration and Fees) Bill 2014.

Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (Classification Tools and Other Measures) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (16:54): My remarks on this bill will follow very much in the vein of the previous speaker, the member for Isaacs. Once again, we see a fine piece of Labor legislation before the House, a piece of legislation which the Labor Party welcomes. The Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (Classification Tools and Other Measures) Bill 2014 will be supported by the Labor Party. It is also the latest instalment in what is plainly becoming a habit for Minister Keenan—that is, to bring Labor policy and Labor legislation into this House. Labor has a strong record of achievement in this policy area. The bill amends the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995—the classification act—and makes consequential amendments to the Broadcasting Services Act 1992.

As members will be aware, the classification act provides for the classification of publications, films and computer games. It forms part of a cooperative Commonwealth, state and territory scheme—the National Classification Scheme, the NCS. The NCS is designed to provide consumers with information about publications, films and computer games to allow them to make informed decisions about appropriate entertainment material for themselves and for those in their care. The NCS has not had a significant review since it was established in 1996. Since that time classifiable content and the way in which it is delivered to consumers has changed dramatically. For example, consumers now have ready access to classifiable content on a variety of platforms, such as the delivery of computer games on mobile and other online devices. It is easy to contemplate how in 20 years this space has been transformed by technology. In the context of ever-greater convergence of media technologies, platforms and services, and more media being accessed from the home through high-speed broadband networks, the need for a comprehensive review of classification laws and regulations became apparent to the former Labor government.
The major principles that have informed media classification in Australia—items such as adults being free to make their own informed media choices and children being protected from material that may cause harm—continue to be relevant and important. While a convergent media environment presents major new challenges, there continues to be a community expectation that certain media content will be accompanied by classification information, based on decisions that broadly reflect community standards.

In light of these changes and the broader developments in technology, media convergence and the availability of global content, the Australian Law Reform Commission, the ALRC, was asked by the former Labor government in March 2011 to inquire into and report on the framework for the classification of media content in Australia. The report, *Classification—content regulation and convergent media*, was tabled in parliament in March 2012. The ALRC report made a total of 57 recommendations for changes to the regulatory framework and structure of the NCS.

In February 2012, the former Minister for Justice and Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon. Jason Clare MP, introduced an act to implement recommendations found in the ALRC report, the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (R18+ Computer Games) Bill 2012. A number of the recommendations, which are limited in their application to content, currently regulated under the NCS, had been identified by the then Labor government for implementation as a 'first tranche' of reforms.

The bill before the House implements the first tranche of reforms and was based on those recommendations. This means that Labor in office, having identified the deficiencies in this legislation, in this framework—which were coming under ever-greater strain and pressure from technology change, such as the convergent media, the global content—sought and received in due course a report. This report made 57 recommendations and that reform process is well underway. Minister Keenan has brought a bill into this parliament which reflects that important work done by the former government.

Let me to speak very briefly about the reforms found in this legislation. Firstly, these reforms will broaden the scope of existing exempt film categories and streamline exemption arrangements for film festivals and cultural institutions. Secondly, they will enable certain content to be classified using classification tools, such as online questionnaires that deliver automated decisions. As an aside, when one contemplates the tsunami of work that the National Classification Scheme is required to deal with—online content, apps and material accessed from tablets and phones—that kind of tool is absolutely essential to there being a meaningful classification regime for those modes of information and content. Thirdly, this bill will create an explicit requirement in the classification act to display classification markings on all classified content.

Fourthly, this bill will expand the exemptions to the modifications rule so that films and computer games that are subject to certain types of modifications do not require classification again. That is simply a common-sense amendment that goes to the fact that every time the form of a film was changed, every time the form of content was changed, every time a game was amended slightly or significantly by patches or bug fixes then that in theory produced a new product requiring a new classification. It was something that was creating an onerous workload without actually achieving policy intent. This is a very practical reform to assist the NCS to get on top of its task.
Fifthly, it will enable the Attorney-General’s Department to notify law enforcement authorities of potential refused classification content without having the content classified first. This will help expedite the removal of extremely offensive or illegal content from distribution. Again, this is a common-sense measure that will assist our law enforcement authorities to get on with their job and their very important task in this space.

This bill delivers reforms that will benefit industry by streamlining processes while continuing to ensure that consumers receive useful and accurate classification information. It is worth again noting that that benefit to industry is also very important. Industry obviously manages its affairs to make sure it is serving its consumers, and the content is often prepared with particular markets in mind. This is a scheme that will save them money and time.

The former Labor government was responsible for securing the agreement of the Standing Council on Law and Justice in April 2013 for six of those 57 recommendations listed in the ALRC report. Minister Clare, then Minister for Home Affairs, did the hard yards by taking this report’s recommendations to that Standing Council on Law and Justice and doing the heavy lifting in terms of securing agreement from states and territories. This bill implements those six recommendations. It implements that accomplishment of Minister Clare. In addition, it will make a number of minor amendments to the classification act that will improve the clarity of certain provisions, address legislative anomalies and enhance the administrative efficiency of the NCS. These include providing an explicit power for the minister to determine the rules for the display of consumer advice, aligning the provisions relating to the computer games authorised assessor scheme with the newer provisions relating to additional content assessors, amending section 38(1) to address the ambiguity that exists in relation to the date that a classification decision is made because the provision currently refers to when a classification is done and, lastly, replacing the requirement that the classification board contains senior classifiers with discretion to appoint senior classifiers.

The former Labor government did all the heavy lifting to enable this bill. It was Labor that asked the Australian Law Reform Commission to inquire into Australia’s classification and censorship review—remarkably, the first such review in 20 years. It was Labor that took the recommendations of that report to the Standing Council on Law and Justice in April 2013, and it was Labor that secured the agreement of state and territory ministers that has borne fruit today in this bill.

In summary, Minister Keenan has found himself with a fine inheritance from the former Labor government. In fact, it is worth noting that the only legislation he has brought into this parliament has been Labor legislation. But we will never hear Minister Keenan acknowledge his inheritance. He has given his predecessor no credit for his work. Without blushing Minister Keenan issued a press release on 19 March titled ‘New bill streamlines Australia’s classification system’, notwithstanding the fact that this was a program that was well advanced and, indeed, virtually complete. But soon Minister Keenan will need to make his own mark in this important portfolio.

Mr Frydenberg: He’s doing it!

Mr FEENEY: He needs to bring legislation to this place that he might have conceived of himself, and we await that moment with bated breath. I am sure the member for Kooyong joins me with that sense of anticipation. Will Minister Keenan take on the challenge of developing a national unexplained wealth scheme or has he already concluded that that task is
too hard? Will Minister Keenan now move to enact the other 51 recommendations of ALRC report 118 or will he fail there too because of lack of will to persuade state and territory ministers to work with the Commonwealth to create effective national schemes? Soon Minister Keenan will have run out of ready-made Labor legislation and policy initiatives and then, alas, it will be plain that in the portfolio of justice this remains a government with no agenda and no idea.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (17:05): I am compelled to respond to that summary from the opposition, which effectively distils 6½ years of inaction into a claim that the work was all done long before the coalition took power. In reality, and on the ground, the new MP should have been dropping into supermarkets and shopping centres in his own electorate and talking to the staff at EB Games, as many of us do. There was great frustration expressed by young people that clear and simple classification was not available in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 or even 2013. The Labor government were so busy spending money that they never turned their minds to the important issue of classification. It is important because parents need to know, when purchasing online material for their children or purchasing games to take home to the living room, precisely what the content is. But, no, for seven years we had no progress apart from meeting after meeting.

It is interesting that the Labor government, once shameful for its fiscal responsibility, was caught in the act of never having come up with any solution for the gamers in my electorate after 6½ years of government. It was a long time coming. As you can see from the relative elegant simplicity of what is proposed in the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (Classification Tools and Other Measures) Bill 2014 today, it was not a terribly hard process to arrive at. With respect, there are not a lot of people running around saying, 'We don't need a better classification system.' There are not a lot of Australians marching in the street saying, 'We don't need a simpler, clearer and less burdensome classification system for games and online material.'

There is almost universal agreement. One of those rare occasions when you can count on state governments because it is not going to cost them a great deal of money, apart from enforcement, to actually sign off on the deal—long before the 6½ years when the now Labor opposition failed to while they were in government. I have already said that if you talk to people in the gaming industry, or if you talk to the customers who walk into those games stores, they want faster, simpler and clearer indications on the front of the packaging they are purchasing.

One of the things that is also important to acknowledge is that there is a significant group of people with great concerns about some of the more highly offensive gaming material that is available overseas and is finding its way to Australia. Whether it finds its way to Australia by illegal means is one situation, but the other is that one could, potentially, accidentally purchase it online or from a store without realising its content. That is why this topic today is so important.

What we do has to be reliable, it has to be trusted by the community and in the end it has to be cost effective. State governments have to be able to enforce it in a reasonable way. So now we have a modernised national classification system, 20 years after it was first developed in 1995, and the most notable thing in this first tranche of reforms is getting rid of ridiculous elements of red tape. I defy you to explain how a federal government in power for six years
could possibly sit around and not gain agreement in that time to fix the most basic stuff that we are bringing to this parliament after just six months in office. As has been pointed out here, if minor changes are made to a computer game or to your app, like fixing a bug or adding an image or something like that, that should be able to be done without having to go through a complete reclassification process.

Films that are modified for use on board an aircraft should not require a reclassification. But for six years under this Labor government it was just a problem that was too hard to fix—a mountain simply too high to climb. Lastly, for festivals and cultural organisations, one would have thought that after six years of turning up to Tropfest we would have had a federal Labor government that did not have a tin ear and could actually say, 'I can see how ridiculous this classification space is for you; let's pop down to Canberra, get the state governments together and come up with a solution.' But no, this was far too complex a process to be engaged by this Labor government.

So I am glad that in their final year of power, in the five minutes to midnight before losing a federal election, they came up with the concept of engaging the Australian Law Reform Commission to review that scheme and to look through the content of it. There is some credit in that as the past six years of government flashed before their eyes they finally took some action. But with respect, they deserve to have no credit because they could not bring it to fruition over six long years. People who love gaming are asking for nothing more than a chance to be able to pick up a box with a DVD in it and to see a classification score on. But oh no, that was just a bridge too far for this Labor government. What we need is a state government that can easily enforce a classification. We need a system that can be easily understood by people who are not deeply into gaming. And, lastly, we need confidence amongst retailers that when they put something on the shelf the customer will easily understand it.

In conclusion, this bill amends the classification act in ways that have been called for by my local constituents, by my gaming fraternity in the electorate of Bowman and by parents of minors—whether they have the games in their own homes or whether they travel to other homes to participate—who can know that the classification scheme is intact. They know that we have broadened the existing scope and that we have streamlined a whole range of exemptions. We have made sure that certain content can be classified using simpler tools, such as online checklists, to speed up that process. Of course, all of those classifications are now clearly displayed on the package.

I want to finish where I started. I do not claim that this was the most complex piece of legislation to pull together. But we have had six years of a Labor government that simply did not have the wit to do it. There is still some concern, particularly amongst some religious families in my electorate, that unconscionable video material in gaming material is still for sale. All I can say to those people is that within the law—of what is absolutely objectionable and banned—we simply need to classify clearly so that mature adults can make their own decisions on the gaming that they have at home. I have to be able to provide comfort to families that if their minors do go to another home they will know that there is, at least, a classification available. We have to trust adults to make sure that is done in a way where you can have faith with your own family and friends; if there is going to be gaming, then that it is done in a way that considers the age of those who participate.
After that, as a government, I am not able to tell people which classification they should use in the privacy of their own home. That is not what gamers wanted; all they wanted was clear information. For six years I had to look that fraternity and tell them that it was just too difficult for the Labor government. That is why, if you are a gamer out there, today is a very, very happy day. It took a coalition government to bring it to fruition, and I can tell you it is the first tranche of reforms with more to follow. Those I will look forward to and will support as well.

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (17:12): I rise to speak in support of the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (Classification Tools and Other Measures) Bill 2014, which contains the first significant steps in reforming our classification system under this government.

The importance of a classification system for books, movies and games should not be underestimated in our community. An effective classification system ensures that consumers can make an informed judgement before they decide how to best spend their leisure time. Adults can make the decision to steer clear of offensive material and children can be protected from content only suitable for people beyond their years by their parents.

Classification schemes can even be used to provoke debate. Consider the voluntary introduction of the Bechdel classification in some cinemas in Sweden. This classification system ranks films on how they depict women, sparking a broader discussion on the current portrayal of women in film. In contrast, an ineffective system can at best be misleading for consumers and at worst can actually interfere with the creative process.

Stories abound in Hollywood of movies being significantly rewritten in order to achieve a lower rating and so receive wider distribution. A notorious example of this is the film Bully, directed by Lee Hirsch and produced by The Weinstein Company. It contained an important educational lesson for school children about the emotional impact of bullying. However, the Motion Picture Association of America classified it with a restrictive rating and so it could not be shown to children under 17. It took months of negotiation before this classification was eventually overturned after the film had been re-edited. So an effective classification is one that informs but does not interfere. It must also be one that stays relevant to the types of media that it is classifying.

Our classification system is in need of an update. Over the past 20 years, we have seen an explosion in the types of entertainment content available to us as consumers and how they can be viewed. Movies and television are no longer just the domain of the movie theatre or the couch at home but can be viewed on iPads, mobile phones, in the seats of planes, in shopping centres and wherever a screen can be placed. The variety, complexity and quality of games are immense, as they range from games downloaded from an app store to entertainment systems that can be photo-realistic. Material like Heavy Rain blurs the line between movie and computer game, and Game of Thrones blurs the line between television show and movie. But our current National Classification Scheme has remained largely unchanged since 1996, which was an era when the digital revolution was only beginning to kick into gear. It was an era when watching a movie at home meant turning on the VCR and when the Nintendo 64 had just been released. If you compare the variety of forms of entertainment now to the variety then, the difference is tremendous. Many of these new forms fall between the cracks of our ageing classification system. A good example, mentioned in the explanatory
memorandum of the bill under consideration, is that of computer games on mobile phones, which are not currently classified online prior to their sale to Australian shoppers. These gaps create the potential not only for consumer harm but also for competitive distortions as certain media are subjected to lesser or greater levels of regulation than others.

The previous Labor government realised the importance of an effective classification system. It was committed to making the system more versatile and relevant for all who use it, but the entertainment world has many stakeholders with many competing interests. The Labor government realised the importance of having recommendations be made by an independent body. This would ensure that reforms were properly assessed and that the appropriate balance would be struck between these many stakeholders. That is why the then Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, referred the National Classification Scheme to the Australian Law Reform Commission in 2011 to assess the impact that technological changes were having on the Classification Scheme. This was the first review of the classification system since the ALRC report on censorship procedure in 1991, which led to the establishment of the classification act in 1996—a review that occurred, once again, under a Labor government.

The 2011 review of the National Classification Scheme undertook extensive consultation—it received almost 1,500 submissions for its issues paper alone—and produced a 400-page report. I was one of the participants in this review and can attest to its comprehensive nature. The report contained 57 recommendations for updating the current classification system. The Labor government took these recommendations and began the process to make them a reality. The former Minister for Justice and Minister for Home Affairs Jason Clare introduced an act to introduce a Restricted R18+ classification rating for computer games in Australia—one of the key recommendations of the report and a step that had been long discussed and long deferred and took the leadership of a bold minister to implement. This act has allowed for restricted games to be sold in Australia, meaning that those who are mature enough to experience these games have the freedom to purchase them legally. Labor also secured the agreement of the Standing Council on Law and Justice in April 2013 for six of the recommendations listed in the ALRC report to be implemented. It is these recommendations that we see in the bill before us today.

It is pleasing to see that the coalition has followed the good work of Labor in supporting the reform of our classification system. We are glad the coalition has realised the importance of ensuring we have a relevant and responsive classification system, and support the reforms included in the bill under consideration today. The reforms contained in the bill are an important response to the changes brought about by a contemporary digital world. They eliminate arbitrary legal distinctions between different forms of content that have no resemblance to the technological reality of our contemporary entertainment industry. They make it easier to ascertain classification arrangements for festivals and cultural institutions. They use the knowledge and expertise of content producers to make a more relevant and inexpensive classification system. They ensure that the classification of entertainment products is displayed upon the products, ensuring maximum awareness for consumers of the nature of the content contained within. They speed up the process of removing extremely offensive or illegal content from distribution.

The legal world often throws up ludicrous anomalies that cost time and money for the parties which they affect. We can see examples of such anomalies sprinkled throughout the
current classification act. These include the separate legal classifications of a film in 3D and a film in 2D, meaning both films have to be classified separately, even if they are the same film. I feel for the official at the Classification Board who had to watch *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* not once but twice because of this anomaly. Moreover, if slight alterations are made to an entertainment product's content, then the entire product must be reclassified, even if the modification does not affect the original classification. The bill under consideration before us today has eliminated these artificial legal constructs and nonsenses. It will result in a classification system that is more in line with reality, which will save considerable time and money for our creative minds trying to follow their legal obligations.

We also see the reality of our modern world reflected in the changes to the classification system for festivals and cultural institutions. Under the previous legal regime, festivals had to apply to the Classification Board for a formal exemption from the classification requirements. The reforms contained in the bill under consideration will first consolidate the various state and territory requirements by consolidating the rules in the Commonwealth classification act, which will then streamline requirements around Australia. The bill will then abolish the requirement for festivals to receive a formal exemption, giving festivals around the country more flexibility in their use of entertainment material. This will save time and money for thousands of festival organisers around the country, allowing them to focus on what they do best: organising the variety of festivals that make Australia's culture so great.

A move that is particularly forward thinking is a shift in the way that films undergo the classification process. Under the current act all applications are assessed by the Classification Board. With over 6,000 applications assessed only last year, this process was extremely lengthy and was a significant cost to content providers. These reforms pave the way for the use of the International Age Rating Coalition, a revolutionary new device where the legwork needed to classify publications, movies and games is taken away from the centralised body. The IARC allows the producers of entertainment products to fill in a questionnaire and classify material that clearly falls into one of several ratings categories. A movie or film that clearly falls into a certain category of rating will receive that rating automatically, but if there is disagreement, or if the content falls on the edge of two ratings systems, the entertainment material would be referred to the Classification Board and rated traditionally.

This is a worthy change to the way our classification system is run. It will significantly reduce the time and effort spent by a few individuals at the Classification Board, allowing them to focus on the cases where the rating of entertainment material is legitimately in doubt. It means the seventh season of *Dora the Explorer* does not need to undergo the full classification process before being given a 'General' rating. The cumulative effect is a classification system that will become more efficient, with lower costs. It is a system that is gathering support around the world in countries such as the US, UK, Brazil and New Zealand. If there is any concern about the rating of a piece of entertainment, all decisions are reviewable by the Classification Board, where ultimate power rests.

The reform that will be most obvious to everyday consumers is the requirement that all classified content have the relevant classification markings displayed. This will ensure that consumers are fully aware of the classification given to the content in question. It will make it clear if any content has slipped through the cracks and has not been classified, because no
markings will be displayed. This may seem to be a small change, but in enforcing this change a lot more information will become available to the consumers of Australia.

These reforms achieve significant benefits for the versatility and applicability of our classification system. They create a system that is responsive to new forms of entertainment but still contain sufficient powers to prevent offensive material from being accessed by those who do not wish to see it. These are merely the first tranche of reforms needed to bring our classification system firmly into the digital age. There are still 51 recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission's report on areas where our classification system could benefit from reform. The reforms in the bill under consideration today only address how entertainment is classified but they do not address what those classification standards are.

Labor believes the path to prosperity in the next century lies in the digital domain. The regulatory system surrounding this digital world must be flexible enough to encourage such prosperity. We must have a classification system flexible enough to encourage the imagination and creativity of our young entrepreneurs, and we must have a classification system that allows consumers to understand the content of the movie they are about to watch or the game they are about to play. A classification system that becomes more and more out of date will not only be a relic but also restrict the creativity of our young artists and filmmakers. We just need to look at the impact of the Hays code in the United States and the significant change in the nature of films produced in Hollywood once it was abandoned in the late 1960s. While the bill under consideration takes significant steps in the right direction, more work is needed to make sure that our classification system is ready for this digital future. I call on Minister Keenen and the Abbott government to implement the remainder of reforms found in the ALRC report on the National Classification Scheme. We must make sure that our classification system encourages the work of our artists, filmmakers and festival organisers.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (17:24): I would like to thank all members for their contributions to this debate on the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment (Classification Tools and Other Measures) Bill 2014. In particular, I would like to thank the member for Bowman, who always has a very sensible perspective on issues of classification. I noticed that although the members for Batman and Gellibrand were supportive of the legislation, they were keen to claim that it was Labor's legislation that we are now implementing. I seem to recall that the Labor Party was in government between 2007 and 2013, and yet they did not put this legislation into effect. If one of their priorities was streamlining the classification system, it would be reasonable to expect they could have found an opportunity within those two terms of government to progress the implementation of this legislation.

The member for Gellibrand has called upon me to implement other recommendations of the ALRC. We are going to do that. This is only the first tranche of reforms that we will be introducing. They are very sensible reforms. The parliamentary secretary at the table is well aware of them because they are part of our agenda to repeal regulation, to free up Australian society and stop people from being subservient to silly government legislation that does not add any particular value to community safety.

This bill introduces a number of changes that will provide consumers with more classification information and simplify elements of the National Classification Scheme by
removing complexity and reducing costs to business. This is a very important part of our agenda and, as I said, this is the sort of work that the parliamentary secretary has been doing, culminating in the very first repeal day we had in this parliament, just last week. Reform of the scheme has been approached in stages commencing with this first tranche of reforms that were agreed by classification ministers at the meeting of the Standing Council on Law and Justice. The bill implements the Commonwealth's commitment to the reforms. The first phase of agreed reforms includes broadening the scope of existing exempt film categories and simplifying exemption arrangements for festivals and cultural institutions; enabling the classification of certain content using classification tools such as online questionnaires that deliver automated decisions; creating an explicit requirement in the Commonwealth Classification Act to display classification markings on all classified content; expanding the exemptions to the modification rules so that films and computer games which are subject to certain types of modifications do not require classification again; and enabling the Attorney-General’s Department to notify law enforcement authorities of potential refused-classification content without having the content classified first, to help expedite the removal of extremely offensive or illegal content from distribution.

These reforms will deliver benefits to industry including streamlining administrative processes and reducing the regulatory burden, making it easier for industry to comply with classification requirements. This will ensure that consumers continue to receive useful and accurate classification information. The bill also makes a number of minor and technical amendments to the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act to improve the clarity of certain provisions, address legislative anomalies and enhance the administrative efficiency of the scheme.

This bill has the support of the state and territory ministers for classification, who agreed to these reforms at the Standing Council on Law and Justice meeting in April 2013, to answer the shadow minister's question from before. Following the passage of this legislation through the Senate, the states and territories will pass their own complementary legislation to ensure the new arrangements for the modification rules and exemption arrangements for festivals and cultural institutions are appropriately regulated. These are sensible reforms which remove some of the unnecessary burden of the existing classification regime. As members would be aware, when you are dealing with national reforms in conjunction with states and territories sometimes progress is a little slower than we would like, but this is the first tranche of reforms we will be introducing to make sure that the National Classification Scheme works as efficiently and sensibly as possible and takes into account the constant advances we have in technology and the changing ways in which Australians view content. On that note, I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (17:30): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (17:30): I am pleased to speak to the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014. This is a bill which has caused some political debate and angst, not only in recent times but indeed over a much longer time frame. So, I think it is useful to contextualise this bill, because this bill—for all of its virtues and indeed some of its challenges, and I will come to those—has been deployed by the coalition as a weapon against the Labor Party for the purposes of undermining the ALP's record in government, and indeed more generally, in terms of its support for veterans and veterans affairs. That political task is one that I think has brought the coalition little joy and little credit, because of course when it comes to defending veterans and their entitlements and indeed their place in our society it remains the Labor Party's view that that is an important and fundamental task. That is why, as recently as today's question time, you have seen the Labor Party speak so earnestly against the coalition government's resolve to cut benefits to orphans and children of veterans. Some facts will form a useful backdrop to the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014.

Let us first of all remember that, during the 11 long years of the Howard government, the coalition absolutely refused to countenance the measure that is being brought into this House today. Those 11 long years of the Howard government were a time of fiscal plenty, a time when surpluses were able to be organised by even the simplest of Treasury officials, so healthy were government receipts at the time. Even during this time of plenty, a boom was something that those opposite struggled to successfully manage, but they did. Even during this time of plenty, the coalition refused to countenance this measure.

Let me quote a letter, sent by Mr John Hevey, of a group called the Aussie Digger Forum, to the then Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Mr Bruce Billson MP, just before the 2007 election:

Bruce, it is long past the pale … that the Coalition Government refuse to acknowledge the injustices that have been perpetrated by the Coalition on the issue of Military Superannuation over the past eleven years, it is long past the pale that the Veteran Community and in particular Military Superannuates have been flagging with the Coalition this very issue for the past eleven years, and now on the eve of a federal election you tell us through a “spokesperson” that the report into this matter will not now be forthcoming until 2008 - the same report that has been in your possession since July.

So, this is not a field of endeavour in which the coalition has a track record to be proud of.

In fact, we can recall some of the champions of the Howard government who worked so vociferously against this measure becoming coalition policy. The most outstanding of those—and I might say my personal favourite—is former Senator Minchin, then finance minister, who of course made very plain the fact that he regarded this measure as fiscally irresponsible and refused to accede to the demands of the veterans community. Whether Mr Billson was right or wrong, it is plain that Senator Minchin had very strong views about the issue. In fact,
so strong were his views that, when Senator Ronaldson in another place brought a private member's bill to tackle this issue, in a stunt of a couple of years ago, Senator Minchin was motivated to launch himself out of retirement, make some comments and write a letter to the editor—all of which, you will be delighted to learn, I have kept. Senator Minchin said:

This claim (to change indexation) was properly rejected by the Howard Government, of which I was a member.

There is no inherent logic to the proposition that a public sector employment-related superannuation payment should be indexed in exactly the same fashion as a means-tested welfare benefit in this case, the age pension.

Senator Minchin was making the public policy case—in fact, he has never ceased to do so, notwithstanding the ebb and flow of policy amongst those opposite—that this measure was fiscally irresponsible and was not sound public policy. So, when the government seeks to cloak itself as being absolutely committed to the welfare of veterans, let us all remember that this was a measure long opposed by those opposite. This cloak does not change the fact that this road to Damascus conversion that you have had was purely an electoral device rather than a matter of longstanding coalition principle.

It is also true to say that the former Labor government had a plan to improve the DFRB and the DFRDB schemes. Indeed, that plan is only one part of a much longer and more expansive list of Labor accomplishments in veterans affairs—a list of accomplishments spanning the last six years, which has done extraordinary good in terms of improving the lot of our veterans, their families and dependants.

Let me talk very briefly about the plan Labor took to the last election with respect to the DFRB and DFRD. It was on 30 July 2013 that the then Minister for Defence, Science and Personnel, Warren Snowdon, and the then Minister for Defence Materiel, Mike Kelly, announced changes in the way in which military superannuation retirement pay will be indexed for the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Scheme and the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Scheme. It is worth also remembering that both of those schemes were closed respectively in 1972 and 1991—a point that those opposite often forget. These are changes to a scheme that has not admitted a new member since at least 1991 and so any soldier, sailor, airman or woman who has joined the ADF since 1992 is not someone who is a part of these schemes and whose lot is not being improved by this legislation today. That is an important point of detail those opposite like to constantly ignore and/or blur.

As at 30 June 2013, there were 3,349 DFRB superannuants, of which 92 per cent were aged 65 or over, and there were 53,242 DFRDB superannuants, of which 45 per cent were aged 65 or over. Then there were 2,968 DFRDB contributors and 314 DFRDB non-contributors—that is, recipients who returned to service for less than 12 months but who continued to receive payment. Those are the numbers of people we are talking about. Labor's plan was that from 1 July 2014, payments to military superannuants aged 65 and over within those two schemes—the DFRB and the DFRDB schemes—would be indexed to the higher of the Consumer Price Index or the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index—the PBLCI.

The Labor government at the time estimated that that measure would cost the Treasury some $34 million.

The PBLCI was developed to measure the changes in the prices of goods and services purchased by older retirees. It was first used as an indexation factor for the aged pension in
September of 2009, and the then Labor government decided to include it in the indexation of military superannuation and retirement pay for the two schemes—a very practical measure deploying a new public policy tool to a task for which it was perfectly suited.

Since coming to government in 2007, Labor had embarked on—as I said earlier—a comprehensive program of support and recognition for our veteran community. This is a very important set of points, because we see those opposite work assiduously to denigrate the Labor Party's commitment to veterans and the Labor Party's accomplishment in this very important space. Let the record be set very squarely here, because this is a record that Labor can be very proud of and we will enjoy watching those opposite flummox about as they struggle to match what is indeed a—

Mr Nikolic: I'll set the record straight.

Mr FEENEY: The member for Bass interjects, and I look forward to—

Mr Nikolic: I'll sort the record right out shortly.

Mr FEENEY: Very good. In the 2013-14 budget, over $12.5 billion in funding for the veteran community was assigned by the government including some $6.8 billion in pensions and income support and $5.6 billion in health services together with $85 million for commemorative activities, which everyone in this place agrees are of extraordinary and lasting importance. When you contemplate the fact that the Defence budget itself is something in the order of $25 billion per annum, you can see that $12.5 billion a year for veterans' affairs is, in fact, a very significant sum of money—one that is entirely appropriate, but it should be acknowledged that it is a significant undertaking by government.

Those moneys in the 2013-14 budget included an additional $26.4 million over the forward estimates to expand access to mental health services for current and former members of the ADF and their families. Expanded eligibility for treatment of certain mental health conditions on a non-liability basis was just one of the outstanding features of Labor's work in this area, and anyone familiar with the challenges in this space would know that PTSD and the scars that conflict can leave on our servicemen and women is going to be a growing challenge going forward. The dedicated staff from the Department of Veterans' Affairs On Base Advisory Service operating on more than 35 defence bases around Australia provide advice on and support for injury, physical and mental health and compensation issues as part of the support for the wounded, injured and ill, and all have their place on Labor's list of accomplishments in this area.

In February 2013, an MOU was signed between the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Department of Defence to facilitate even closer cooperation in the support for current and former military personnel veterans during the transition process. This was a very important accomplishment, because there we are able to see that as servicemen and women transition from Defence to DVA—from being soldiers to being former soldiers, sailors, airmen and women—it can often be a very difficult time, and there was very strong support from the two departments to make that as seamless as could be achieved.

The Veterans Pharmaceutical Reimbursement Scheme to help veterans with out-of-pocket expenses for medications for their war-caused conditions cost some $30 million over four years, with initial payments made in the first quarter of 2013. That was another Labor accomplishment. Veterans, partners, war widows and widowers were given a further boost to
their payments in March of 2013 for the Clean Energy Supplement, a regular payment made under the Household Assistance Package.

Labor initiated and completed the review into our military compensation and rehabilitation arrangements under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004. In doing that work, the former Labor government accepted 96 of the 108 recommendations. It implemented a number of changes to ensure compensation and health care for our veterans and their families continued to meet their needs—some $17.4 million over four years—and it brought legislation into this place to put into effect recommendations arising from that review on 27 June 2013.

As everyone will remember, more than $140 million in funding for the Anzac Centenary was assigned by the former government including $27 million for an upgrade of First World War galleries, $100,000 per federal electorate for the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program, $5 million for the Australian Memorial in Wellington, New Zealand, and $10 million for the Australian Remembrance Trail in France and Belgium. All of the arrangements surrounding the ballot arrangements for Anzac Day 2015 at Gallipoli were also put in place by Labor. This is all part of the very significant record.

But it continues, because from September 2011 there was some $500 per fortnight for the former Prisoners of War Recognition Supplement—$20 million over four years. There was a coordinated veterans' care program—$152.7 million over four years—led by a general practitioner with a nurse coordinator that provides ongoing planned and coordinated primary and community care to eligible Gold Card holders who have chronic conditions and complex care needs and who are at risk of unplanned hospitalisation.

In August 2011 the former Labor government instituted the 'graves of our bravest' program, which provided for the ongoing maintenance of the graves of recipients of the Victoria Cross, the Cross of Valour and the George Cross—all of these sacred places needing maintenance and the respect that they have earned. The graves of these recipients are now maintained by the Office of Australian War Graves, a team that does an extraordinarily good task right around the world.

From 1 July 2011 the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation, the CSC, became responsible for the investment and management of public sector and military superannuation schemes. The establishment of the CSC as the consolidated trustee was a Labor initiative that helped secure increased superannuation benefits for quite literally thousands of military and civilian superannuants.

In the 2011-12 budget additional funding of some $8 million per annum was provided to the Australian War Memorial—again, an extraordinary institution—and that injection of funds supported its enormous workload. In that same budget some $3.3 million was provided towards a world-first education centre in Washington DC that honours our Vietnam veterans.

In the 2010-11 budget the government provided $55 million over five years as part of its response to the recommendations of the parliamentary inquiry into the concerns of F-111 deseal-reseal maintenance workers. The parliamentary inquiry report was tabled on 25 June 2009. Also, in the 2010-11 budget the government provided $24.2 million over five years to provide the Australian Defence Force British nuclear test participants with access to compensation under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986—justice long awaited for those
servicemen. This measure recognised the unique nature of these tests and the fact that service in these operations involved hazards well beyond those of normal peacetime duties. Submariners who participated in certain special operations have also had the qualifying nature of that service recognised.

On 20 September 2009, as part of the government's commitment to secure and sustainable pensions, a one-off increase of $65 per fortnight was made to the single rate of service pension, available from the age of 60 to veterans with warlike or qualifying service and age pension. Smaller increases were given to couples, including the Partner Service Pension.

Since 2009, following the Dunt review, Defence and the DVA have undertaken significant reform in the mental health and rehabilitation programs available to Defence. The DVA provided some $9.5 million and Defence $83 million towards that program.

Another Labor accomplishment is that since 2008 the Department of Veterans' Affairs disability compensation pensions have been indexed in the same way as income support payments, with that legislation passing in September 2007. And in September 2009 an additional indexation factor—the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index, which I spoke of earlier, the PBLCI—was introduced for income support payments and for age and service pensions. In addition, the male total average weekly earnings benchmark was increased from 25 to 27.7 per cent at the single rate, and disability pensions and income support pensions continue to be indexed in the same way.

In 2008 Labor established an independent Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal which, having previously had the privilege of being the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence, I was responsible for. That body has since reviewed the Long Tan gallantry citations, the eligibility criteria for the Australian Defence Medal and recognition of service with issues as diverse as the 4th Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment in Malaya between 1966 and 1967. It is doing incredibly important work, making sure that the integrity of our Defence honours and awards system is maintained and also making sure that a whole plethora of issues of extraordinary importance to a whole range of different service men and women are given a proper hearing and a proper decision-making process.

Labor can also take credit for the review of unimplemented recommendations of the Clarke Review for memorials of national significance criteria being established, for the conduct of a Vietnam veterans' family study, and for the automatic grant of war widows' pension for widows of temporary, totally incapacitated and intermediate rate pensioners. Labor established a special claims unit within the Department of Veterans' Affairs to improve transaction times, significantly reducing processing times for compensation claims. It was Labor that established a Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters and Labor that provided a funding boost for ex-service organisations, the declaration of Battle for Australia Day on the first Wednesday in September, Bombing of Darwin Day on 19 February and Merchant Navy Day—one of particular significance for my family—on 3 September. And it was Labor that implemented the post-Armistice Korean Service Review recommendations, including the issue of the Australian General Service Medal Korea as well as the Returned from Active Service Badge for eligible ex-service men and women.

So while those opposite will continually seek to denigrate Labor's record, Labor's accomplishments, Labor's passion and Labor's commitment to our veterans and to our ex-service men and women, let that denigration be known for the furphy that it is. And let it be
understood that Labor can point to an extraordinary record of accomplishment in this very important area of public policy, because those opposite—try as they might—do not have the single claim to be the custodians and defenders of our former service men and women, our veterans community. As we have seen over 11 long years, the Howard government did precisely nothing. And under the zealotry of people like Senator Minchin they made sure that doing nothing in this space was a matter of high principle for them. Labor has in fact delivered a whole series of reforms in this important space—reforms that mean investment, mean stronger commemoration of our military history, and mean that there are practical solutions delivering real benefits for our veterans every single day of the year.

Turning to this bill that is before us, it is obviously one that Labor will be supporting through this place. It is a bill that the coalition went to the election with, and we accept the fact that it is building on Labor's record in the DFRB and DFRDB reforms page and in the commitments that Labor also took to the last election. But let me finish this debate by raising some questions that we would like to see the coalition answer in terms of making sure that this bill and the spendings it will realise are in fact sustainable. As we are voting for it in good faith, it is our absolute resolve that it should be sustainable.

This bill seeks to triple-index the closed military pension schemes, the DFRB and the DFRDB. These indexes are CPI, the PBLCI that I have spoken of, and the MTAWE. The indexing will be attached to these pensions from the age of 55. Recently, in response to a question asked in Senate estimates, the Abbott government disclosed that the financial impact of this bill would be a cash balance of $58.1 million, a fiscal balance of around $780 million over the 2013-14 budget forward estimates period, and it would reduce the government's net worth by around $4.4 billion dollars over the same period. These are very significant costs. While in government we estimated the cost of the coalition's scheme to be some $175 million over four years, and we estimated it would increase the Commonwealth's unfunded liability by $6.2 billion. So this is a very expensive measure. We would seek to get some comfort from those opposite when they speak to this issue, as to how on earth that is going to be maintained and sustained. I look forward to listening to their contribution.

It is also worth noting that the coalition, in supporting this bill, has encountered some criticism from various interest groups. This highlights that there are other pensioner groups and other superannuation groups who feel they are missing out. One of the most significant of these is another category of military pensions, the Military Superannuation Benefits Scheme. This is the scheme that remains open and includes most serving members of the ADF today. The DFRB and the DFRDB were closed in 1972 and 1991 respectively, so the great bulk of ADF members serving today are not covered by those schemes. For those on MSBS pensions, today's measure will provide them with no benefit, and it will be a continuing public policy sore for the coalition.

The other disaffected group are retired civilian public servants, who, through the Superannuated Commonwealth Officers’ Association, the SCOA, have been lobbying, together with ex-service organisations, for the same indexing arrangements, but, of course, they have been totally unsuccessful. It will be very interesting to watch over the coming days and weeks how the coalition deals with the question of why the DFRB and the DFRDB increases will not be extended to superannuated Commonwealth officers. With those
concluding remarks, I look forward to hearing those opposite deal with some of those issues. I am very pleased to say that we will be supporting this bill in the House.

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (17:55): A lot of questions were raised there by the member for Batman, but there certainly were no answers from him over the last six years when it came to redressing an issue of fundamental justice for our veterans. The Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014 simply seeks to address issues of gross inequity and unfairness, and it exactly matches our election promise. I am mindful of the significant number of people on the coalition side who want to speak to this bill, so I will keep my remarks relatively short.

As an army veteran with over 31 years of service I confirm that this amendment bill is both important and urgent. If successful, its passage through this parliament will practically redress the single greatest veteran community grievance in current times. The extent of veteran angst and frustration over this longstanding omission is difficult, if not impossible, to overstate. Such feeling is not only legitimate and widely held, but reflects shamefully on this parliament's inaction to date. Further delays on this matter would add salt to an open wound, noting in particular that for this legislation to take effect from 1 July 2014 it must first receive royal assent by 30 June.

Indexation of DFRB and DFRDB pensions is currently linked to movements in the Consumer Price Index only. Under the proposed changes DFRB and DFRDB pensions will be indexed in a way that mirrors the approach used in calculating age and service pensions. The change to the method of indexation is for superannuants aged 55 and over. If Labor and the Greens support it in the Senate, it will take effect from 1 July 2014. The provisions will also apply to reversionary spouses. I am talking here about widows or widowers who are aged 55 and over on the date of the indexation. The provisions do not apply retrospectively.

I am proud to say that, in meeting our promise via this bill, I understand around 57,000 DFRB and DFRDB superannuants and their families will finally get the fair go they deserve. The bill does not and will not give veterans a financial leg-up over other Australians, nor do they as a group want such an advantage. What this bill will do is align the calculation of their financial entitlements with and to those of other Australians, a majority of whom have not risked their lives in the service of this nation. As I speak, all too many Australians live in poverty or eke out a bare existence. That many of these Australian citizens are also veterans or defence retirees, with a minimum of 20 years military service to and for this nation, is doubly galling and deeply wrong.

The member for Batman wants to put facts on the record. Well, let me reciprocate. In opposition, and now in government, the coalition has been unrelenting in its pursuit of justice for the men and women who have served our nation so honourably. We put a private members' bill to the Senate that was designed to deliver fair indexation, but the Australian Greens and the Australian Labor Party voted it down. I understand the member for Batman was a senator at that time, and perhaps he should put on record how he voted in relation to that particular private members' bill.

Our motions to achieve justice in this House were also rejected by Labor and the Greens. Our mandate to make this change is abundantly clear. At the last federal election, veterans and their families were confronted with a choice between the government's long-held commitment to deliver fair indexation and Labor's eleventh-hour unfair and inferior
indexation commitment. On the eve of the election, Labor backflipped on nearly six years of shameful and dishonourable opposition to military superannuation reform. They only offered to change indexation arrangements for superannuants aged 65 and over, which is 10 years higher than in our policy, but did not include a wage based indexation method, the key legislative element for which veterans and their families have so long fought. We intend to keep our promise and the trust of the veteran community. As my former boss and soon-to-be Governor-General, Peter Cosgrove, used to say, 'Trust and integrity are the glue that bind the leader and the led.'

This bill has a darker side, which should be, for all of us, a spur to action. This darker side runs along these lines. If a nation as fortunate as Australia—fortunate in part because of the peace and stability that was hard earned by our veterans—elects to ignore and shun the veteran community, then what element of Australian society is immune from parliamentary ingratitude and indifference? I call on the Australian Labor Party and the Greens to put their previous opposition to this issue aside and pass this legislation immediately. Let it commence on 1 July—a promise that our veterans deserve and that the Australian people expect you to endorse. I commend this honourable and long overdue bill to the House.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (18:01): I welcome the opportunity to speak tonight on this very important piece of legislation, the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014. All Australians owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the men and women who serve in our defence forces. Our Defence Force personnel sacrifice their time and risk their lives for the benefit of our democracy. It is only right that they are treated with the appropriate respect and gratitude when they have finished their service. Ensuring that their superannuation pensions are fairly and adequately indexed is one way the government can show this respect and gratitude.

I have long advocated for reform to the indexation of military and Commonwealth superannuation benefits. As members will be aware, Canberra is home not only to many of our nation's current and former Commonwealth public servants but also to many of our nation's current and former Defence Force personnel. This is therefore an issue that is of great concern to the people of my electorate. Since I was elected in 2010 I have been contacted by many constituents about the issue of fairer indexation of superannuation. It has probably been the No. 1 issue that I have been contacted about, apart from local issues. I have attended many forums. I have had many one-on-one meetings. I have had lots of coffees with individuals and groups. I have spent a lot of time discussing this issue with my constituents, getting their views on it. Like most Canberrans, they are very well educated and forthright in their views and they always put a very well-argued case, and there are usually lots of graphs involved. These discussions have been incredibly fruitful. As I said, the arguments have been delivered very forcefully and articulately and they have been well constructed. So I am well and truly aware of the views of my constituents on the issue of fairer indexation for military superannuation and Commonwealth superannuation.

Here I would just like to single out two individuals whom I have spent a lot of time drinking a lot of coffees with over the last three or so years. The first is Peter Thornton, who is not well, but, despite that, he manages to come down to Tuggeranong and sit with me and very methodically go through charts and graphs and the research that he has done over many years in putting his case for fairer military superannuation indexation. I would also like to
single out Alf Jaugietis, who has also been terrific. There are a number of other constituents
who I will not mention by name but who have been terrific. They know who they are, and I
would just like to thank them for all the work they have been doing on this with me over the
years, making me well and truly aware of the strength of their views and their commitment to
seeing change.

I am proud of the progress made by the previous Labor government on this issue. A
number of Labor colleagues have been working on this. My colleague Senator Kate Lundy,
senator for the ACT, has been working on this tirelessly since she was elected. My
predecessor as member for Canberra, Annette Ellis, also worked on it tirelessly, and there are
a group of us in the Labor caucus who have been working on this for many years, with great
passion, and we have this great group of constituents who have been informing us all along
the way. We have advocated continuously on this issue.

As members will be aware, the Labor government engaged Trevor Matthews, a prominent
actuary, to conduct an independent review of the indexation method used to adjust
Commonwealth civilian and military superannuation pensions, and it has become known as
the Matthews review. I know that my constituents have very varied and strong views about
the Matthews review. And last year we announced significant reform to the indexation of the
DFRB and the DFRDB schemes. On 30 July 2013, the member for Lingiari, then the Minister
for Defence Science and Personnel, together with the former member for Eden-Monaro, then
the Minister for Defence Materiel, announced that from 1 July 2014 payments to military
superannuants within the DFRB and DFRDB schemes aged 65 and over would be indexed to
the higher of the consumer price index or the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index,
whereas previously they had only been indexed by CPI.

This announcement represented the most significant change to the indexation of military
superannuation for decades, with an estimated cost over four years of $34 million. I
welcomed this significant reform, as did so many of my fellow Canberrans. However, I
welcomed it as a great first step, acknowledging that there remained significant room for
reform within Commonwealth superannuation pensions.

Today I acknowledge this legislation that has furthered Labor's groundbreaking reforms.
This bill, which I am pleased to support, will allow for the triple indexation of the DFRB and
DFRDB for superannuants aged 55 and over, and I welcome this change of heart from the
coalition. As my colleague the member for Batman has pointed out, the Howard government
repeatedly rejected reform of indexation of military super, despite the strong economic and
fiscal position Australia was in at that time. So I welcome this development but acknowledge
there is still a long way to go. But it is a great first step.

DFRB and DFRDB are just two Commonwealth superannuation schemes that were
indexed only by CPI. Others include the MSBS, which my colleague the member for Batman
just mentioned, as well as the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme, the Public Sector
Superannuation Scheme, the scheme under the Superannuation Act 1922 and the scheme
under the Papua New Guinea (Staffing Assistance) (Superannuation) Regulations 1973. These
other schemes, including military schemes, remain indexed by CPI only. Labor is concerned
that in changing the method of indexation to some schemes and not others there is a potential
for inequality to arise. We will closely monitor the implementation of this legislation to
ensure that none of our veterans are worse off under these changes. I remain committed to
continuing the campaign to improve the indexation methods applying to all military and all civilian Commonwealth pensions where it is economically sound to do so. I will continue to work closely with the representative organisations in my electorate, such as the DFWA, SCOA and the ACPSRO.

While I have made it clear that I welcome the changes to indexation enabled by this legislation, I would like to now put a caveat on that by saying that I do not welcome these changes if they are to be paid for by cuts in other areas of Defence. In fact, I do not think there would be a single Defence superannuant who would welcome these changes if they thought they were to be paid for by, say, cutting payments to the children of ADF personnel who have been killed or wounded in action. Yet, we have every reason to suspect that this is, indeed, the case, because the Abbott government is intent on cutting an annual payment of about $215 to 1,200 children of veterans. The Prime Minister says the government cannot afford the $250,000 it would cost to ensure that children of war veterans receive this modest assistance, despite the fact that the cost of this payment is less than providing his paid parental leave scheme to just four high-income earners.

Veterans’ representatives have slammed the Prime Minister’s cuts. The New South Wales President of the RSL, Don Rowe, said he was absolutely disgusted with the government's mean-spirited decision. Legacy Australia said that Legacy would be disappointed if any of the welfare payments were cut to the families of deceased or incapacitated veterans.

Nor would I support this legislation if it were to be paid for by cuts to the pay and conditions of currently serving ADF personnel. But, yet again, we have every reason to be suspicious because one of the first decisions taken by the Abbott government in the area of Defence was to cut the pay and conditions of Australian Defence Force personnel serving in Afghanistan and the Middle East. These cuts announced by the Abbott government in January this year have left some ADF personnel facing a pay cut of as much as $19,000. The government used the draw-down of troops in Afghanistan as an excuse to cut ADF pay. But the draw-down has not affected the conditions faced by the ADF personnel remaining in Afghanistan, Australia's maritime operations in the Middle East or the support provided through the Al Minhad base in Dubai. Australia's troops in Afghanistan and the Middle East are doing tough, essential work fighting the Taliban, supporting the wider war on terror, as well as anti-piracy efforts. It is up to the Abbott government to fully explain why it has taken this decision and what has changed in these areas of operation to justify these cuts.

I am concerned, also, about the cuts the Abbott government has in store for the Department of Defence more broadly. I was particularly concerned when the Minister for Defence, Senator Johnston, commented on 7 October last year that the Department of Defence is 'too heavy' and needs to be 'trimmed'. These comments left Defence employees fearful of losing their jobs. Understandably, employees of the department wanted to know what these comments will mean for them. How does the minister plan on trimming the department? How much does he intend to trim the department by? How are jobs going to be cut? Are they only going to be cut through natural attrition, as promised prior to the election? Or can we expect to see redundancies? It is now five months since these comments were made and Defence employees are none the wiser.

Just last month, Minister Johnston was reported as saying that the Defence Materiel Organisation had 'shortcomings'. We have heard reports again and again that the Commission
of Audit will recommend at least partial privatisation of the Department of Defence's procurement arm. But all that DMO staff have been told is that no decision has yet been made about their futures. This uncertainty is wreaking havoc on staff morale. The Canberra Times has reported that DMO managers are complaining about private companies sniffing around their staff in anticipation of these job losses. DMO is home to highly-skilled specialist staff who are dedicated public servants choosing to serve their country and their government, rather than taking much higher paying jobs in the private sector. My real concern is that when the job cuts come we will lose these highly-skilled staff from the Public Service for good. Minister Johnston has said he wants to see excellence and cost-effectiveness in DMO, but how does he think it will achieve excellence if we lose our best staff?

Both Defence and DMO employees thought that they might get a better idea of their job security when the first report of the Commission of Audit was released in January. But, unfortunately for them, the report was not released in January. Instead, the report, along with the fate of their jobs, has been sitting on the Treasurer's desk for months. The Abbott government is intentionally leaving our public servants in the dark; public servants know that cuts are coming; small businesses here in Canberra know that cuts are coming; the region knows that the cuts are coming—but they do not know when or how deep.

Before the election, the then Abbott opposition promised that there would be no cuts to Defence. They have already broken promise. I would like a guarantee from those opposite that the changes introduced by this legislation will not be paid for by more cuts to Defence or, indeed, by cuts to other pension or superannuation schemes.

As I said at the start of this speech, ensuring that superannuation pensions are fairly and adequately indexed is one way the government can show this respect and gratitude to our service people. There are other ways, too—like providing free basic medical services for Defence families, which Labor introduced through the National Australian Defence Force Family Health Program. Government also has a central role in ensuring the relevant Defence agencies—Defence, Veterans' Affairs, DHA and ComSuper—work seamlessly together to ensure that the transition from service for our retiring or discharged ADF personnel is a seamless one. This becomes especially important when those personnel are medically discharged through injury or illness.

Last year, as a member of the Defence Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, I was a member of the inquiry into the care of ADF personnel wounded and injured on operations. The inquiry's report highlights a number of gaps of areas where we need to be doing more to support the health of our returned service people. These include mental health, and specifically female veterans’ mental health, improving communications between Defence and DVA in the management of post-service transition and also providing seamlessness between the services. I would like to take this opportunity to urge the Abbott government to respond as a matter of urgency to the recommendations outlined in the report. It is impossible to exaggerate what we owe to our service personnel. In thanking them for their efforts and showing our gratitude for the work they do in securing our nation and preserving the democracy we enjoy here, we have to ensure that we provide the highest standard of care for them upon their return. Of course, this includes superannuation, but there is more we can do.
In my first speech in this place I quoted George Orwell with the saying that we sleep soundly in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm. It is a tribute to those public servants called soldiers, but we also sleep soundly in our beds because invisible heroes ensure that our national interests are protected abroad. Others protect our borders or ensure that our children's toys are safe and our story is kept alive.

All public servants—military and civilian—deserve the respect and gratitude of this country. I congratulate the Abbott government on furthering Labor's reform of the indexation of military superannuation through this legislation. We welcome this further reform; after all, we are the party of superannuation. However, I remind the Abbott government that there are many more Commonwealth superannuants, including some in the military, who would also like fairer indexation of their schemes, so the job is not yet done. I strongly urge those opposite not to pay for this change with cuts in other areas of defence—(Time expired)

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (18:16): I am delighted to rise to speak on the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014. I will keep my comments relatively brief in order to allow as many of my coalition colleagues as possible to speak on the bill.

My seat of Eden-Monaro is not the biggest defence electorate in Australia, but it is nonetheless a very sizeable one. There are more than 2,000 defence related workers in the electorate, and there are around 3,500 defence veterans. When you add their dependants to that list, you can see that there is a very sizeable total. And I want to commend the Defence Force Welfare Association in my region, which has done a fantastic job representing its members.

One of the reasons the Liberal Party won the seat of Eden-Monaro at the last election was the shabby treatment meted out to this community by the last government over its dismal six years. And one of the biggest insults to the defence community was the failure to deliver Labor's 2007 election promise to improve indexation for defence super. The former member for Eden-Monaro was actually a frontbencher in the Defence portfolio for almost the whole of the last six years, and he abjectly failed in delivering for the defence community in this area. The poor old soul continues to haunt the corridors of Parliament House as the junior defence adviser for the Leader of the Opposition. The Labor Party has a lot to do to repair the relationship with the defence community. Senator Conroy and his vicious personal attacks on a distinguished general is totally incapable of doing it, and the former member for Eden-Monaro is also a dead weight for the ALP when it comes to the same community. And to imagine that Kevin Rudd thought that he was cabinet material defies belief.

During the last term of the previous parliament, we sought to introduce legislation and resolutions that would deliver on our promise for defence super indexation. Each time, it was rejected by Labor. I think the minister at the table, the member for Kooyong, will remember that famously on one occasion our attempts were defeated by just one vote on the floor of the House of Representatives. In fact, if the then member for Eden-Monaro had stood by his public statements to fight tooth and nail every day for this reform, his vote would have made the difference. And yet he voted against it. So much for fighting tooth and nail; just more empty rhetoric. And that also applies to the completely disingenuous speeches we have just heard on this bill from the other side. The member for Canberra also voted against that
resolution. If she had voted for the resolution, it would have got up in the last term of the previous parliament. And the current member for Batman, who was a senator in the upper house in the last parliament, also voted against a similar resolution in the Senate.

So what does this bill deliver that the Labor Party said they would do, but never did? This gives effect to this government's election commitment to fairly index Defence Force retirement benefits, DFRB, and Defence Force retirement and death benefits, DFRDB, pensions for recipients aged 55 and over from 1 July 2014. The measures extend fair indexation provisions to invalidity pensions, reversionary pensions and pensions for those associates in receipt of a pension as a result of a family law split who are aged 55 and over on the current relevant indexation date.

Under the new fairer indexation methodology, which mirrors the two-step indexation process for age and service pensions, the first step would be to calculate the pension that would result if it were increased in line with the better of the consumer price index—that is, the CPI—and the pensioner and beneficiary living cost index. The second step would be to compare the resulting pension to the male total average weekly earnings, often called MTAWE. If the calculated pension is greater than the specified floor percentage—that is, 27.7 per cent—of MTAWE for the single pension, then no further adjustment is made. If the resulting pension is less than the floor percentage of MTAWE, it is increased so that it equals the floor percentage of the MTAWE index.

The proposed changes will have an immediate impact on some 45,000 current DFRB and DFRDB pensioners where the originally entitled member was aged 55 or over at 1 July 2014. Overall, it should help some 57,000 pensioners. This bill gives effect to many years of advocacy by this government, this coalition, for fair indexation of DFRB and DFRDB superannuants and their families. It delivers a key election commitment in full and addresses a longstanding grievance of the veteran and ex-service community. It exactly matches our promises before the election. In Eden-Monaro, there will be 813 direct recipients and some 132 dependants. This legislation will directly benefit around 1,000 of my constituents. I am very proud of the fact that we have made this an early piece of legislation in the life of this parliament. It is a clear sign of the priority we are giving to the defence sector.

In conclusion, may I again appeal to Labor to actually support this bill. Despite the fact that they said it was their policy, they repeatedly voted against it during the last parliament. Indeed, earlier this afternoon they tried to suspend the standing orders to delay the debate on this very bill. I urge them to support it in the Senate and allow this much-needed reform to proceed.

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (18:23): Service in the Australian Defence Force is obviously a far from ordinary job. There are no other jobs in this country where people are trained to deal with being shot at and blown up, and are trained to shoot to kill, when they need to—hopefully not very often, hopefully never. It is not a normal job. It presents great difficulties for those who serve in the Defence Force. Being on operations is dangerous enough, but even in training it is very dangerous. Recently, we had the terrible news that three soldiers were injured, when training with an artillery piece, in the Shoalwater Bay training area.

Unsurprisingly, the people who serve in the military suffer all sorts of injuries and it is not uncommon for people to leave the military and carry those injuries for the rest of their lives. I did 20 years in the Army. I did not see operational service but, through the rigours of training,
by the time I left the military, I had had surgery on both knees and on both shoulders, and I had a hearing loss in both ears—and that was without going on operational service. I do not tell you my statistics about my joints and ears to big note myself but I think it highlights that it is a difficult line of work and it often leaves people with injuries they carry through their whole life. Even if they are not injured, just moving around all the time—every couple of years moving interstate or even overseas—places a great burden on soldiers and on their families, on children in particular. It is not uncommon for the children of soldiers to have to change schools on numerous occasions. Sometimes children even have to repeat a year or two as they move from state to state, country to country, and are required to deal with different curriculums in each of the education systems.

It is not surprising that there is a higher incidence of relationship problems in the military because of these absences and soldiers going overseas. We have heard about soldiers who served in Afghanistan two or three times—protracted absences. We have heard about soldiers who served in Iraq, who served in East Timor before that and more recently served in Afghanistan. I am labouring this point because I really do want all members to understand that the military is an extraordinary profession and that those who serve in our military genuinely deserve all the support we can give them. And when they leave the military, they should be looked after.

Regrettably, some of them have not been looked after, in particular because of the way the DFRB and the more recent DFRDB pension schemes have not been indexed properly. Those schemes have only been indexed against the consumer price index. We have probably all seen the charts which show clearly that the real value of their pensions has diminished over time and would continue to diminish over time if we did not fix the indexation. The fact that we need to index government payments and pensions properly is illustrated by the fact that other payments are already indexed better—for example, the age pension, which increases by the greater of the CPI or the pensioner and beneficiary living cost index. On one hand we have, for a long time, understood the deficiency of CPI indexation of government payments at any time, yet we have not addressed the inadequate forms of indexation for other sorts of payments. In other words, the government's move to remedy the indexation for DFRB and DFRDB is warranted and it is way beyond time that it is done.

I give credit where it is due, to the government, credit for finally acting on this. It is way beyond time that this action needed to be taken. It is a great shame that this positive reform has been surrounded by so much political argy bargy. We have the government saying that they are doing a wonderful job and the Labor opposition fighting a constant confrontational battle over every policy it seems. But do you know what? Neither side in this chamber is covered in any glory when it comes to the indexation of military superannuation. I am not letting the Liberal Party off the that hook here. Why was this not fixed during the Howard government? Why was this not fixed during the Keating government, the Hawke government, the Rudd government, the Gillard government? There has been a succession of governments, both Liberal-National coalition governments and Labor government, all of whom have not addressed this in the past when it should have been. So yes, I give credit where it is due—to the government tonight for finally acting. But I suggest the government should be a little more humble in crowing about its achievement, considering it could have fixed this during the many years of the Howard government and it decided not to.
I am also concerned that the bill does not go far enough. As we have heard already in the speeches in this place, the bill will remedy the indexation arrangement but only for DFRB and DFRDB recipients over the age of 55. In other words, those recipients who are younger than 55 will not enjoy the benefit of the enhanced indexation arrangements. That is quite a few people! There are about 56,000 recipients nationally of DFRB and DFRDB. A small number of DFRB recipients are under the age of 55 and, interestingly, 20 per cent of DFRDB recipients are under the age of 55, so they will not enjoy the benefits of these reforms before the House at the moment. I have an amendment that calls on the government to remove the age 55 threshold for people to enjoy the improved indexation arrangements. I move:

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House calls on the Government:

(1) to expand the scope of the bill to include all recipients of the Defence Force Retirement Benefits and Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits schemes, regardless of age; and

(2) that such a change exclude any Senator or Member of the House of Representatives currently in receipt of a DFRB or DFRDB pension.

Quite simply, this amendment removes the age 55 threshold. In essence, it calls on the government to apply this reform to all 56,000 DFRB and DFRDB recipients, so it will apply to the small number of DFRB recipients currently under age 55 and the 20 per cent of DFRDB recipients under age 55.

I hope this sensible amendment will be agreeable to the government and to the opposition.

I suggest that this amendment is fair and logical. There is no logical reason why you would apply this only from age 55 other than as a budget savings measure. Logically, if there is a problem with the indexation for these two forms of military superannuation and we are going to fix it—and it looks like we are trying to achieve that here tonight—then let us fix it properly. Let us not almost fix it; let us try and fix it properly. I suggest this is not going to be at any substantial additional cost to the government. I have heard figures bandied around that perhaps a total additional cost of—

Mr Ewen Jones interjecting—

Mr WILKIE: Let us put the politics to the side here.

Mr Ewen Jones: You're the one doing the politics!

Mr WILKIE: I am not trying to score political points; what I am trying to do is to cut a better deal.

Mr Ewen Jones: You're trying to promote yourself.

Mr WILKIE: I have applauded the government for what it is doing here. What I am saying is: spend that little bit of extra money and let us finish the job. I am not trying to score points. I am putting a request to the government to spend a little bit of extra money and to finish the job. The figure that I have heard bandied around—$40 million over this year and over the forward estimates—I think is a modest amount of money to pay in the circumstances to finally do the job properly.

I have previously declared this conflict of interest in this place and it is in the register of my interests, but I would like to make it absolutely clear that I am a DFRDB recipient myself and I am 52 years old. People like me are the sort of people who would benefit from my amendment if it were to be successful. For that reason, the change in my proposed
amendment excludes any serving senator or member of the House of Representatives who is in receipt of a DFRB or DFRDB pension, so there can be absolutely no suggestion whatsoever that I am trying to benefit from this personally.

I and others have tried in this place to bring about these reforms in the past. I was very pleased to second a bill by the member for Kennedy in the 43rd Parliament that did seek to fix the problem with the indexation of military superannuation. Unfortunately, that bill did not see the light of day. I do not even think it was debated, let alone voted on. However, it does illustrate that there has been an interest in this place for some time for this to be remedied. I call on the government to support my amendment. I call on the opposition to support my amendment. I ask them to understand that I have moved this amendment in good faith to genuinely try and improve what is mostly a very good move by the government, and I do give the government credit for that.

Of course, once we have dealt with this issue, there is the other issue of Commonwealth superannuation more broadly. I applaud the many lobbyists, defence welfare organisations and activists who have done a very good job over time of lobbying for this particular reform that is now being debated in the chamber. I have no criticism of them whatsoever. They have done a good job of lobbying for defence superannuants. I applaud them for the good job they have done, which is resulting directly in pressure being on us and us seeking to deal with it in the chamber tonight.

Regrettably, the broader Commonwealth superannuant community has been less vocal and perhaps less effective as lobbyists. When this matter is dealt with the focus will shift, as it should, to the government looking at the indexation arrangements for Commonwealth superannuants more broadly. They have a similar problem. Their pension is also only CPI indexed and it is falling behind in real value as well. Yes, that will have a bill and that will cost, but I think it is entirely reasonable that the people who served this country in the Defence Force and in the Commonwealth Public Service get a fair deal.

I make the point again that the federal budget this financial year is close to $400,000 million—an enormous amount of money—and that is more than enough money to pay for the things we really need to pay for, including our defence and Commonwealth superannuants. It is all about priorities. Yes, savings will have to be made, but it is all about priorities. If we cannot look after our Defence superannuants, if we cannot look after our Commonwealth superannuants, then I do not know what that $400,000 million dollars is there for.

I ask again for the government and the opposition to support my amendment. I will certainly support their bill, and I will certainly applaud the federal government for finally moving to fix the superannuation indexation for Defence retirees, but I call again on people to support my amendment which at the end of the day is logical, rational and affordable. Thank you.
state the question in the form that the amendment be agreed to. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Government Whip) (18:38): I rise to speak on the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014 which will deliver this government's election commitment to fairly index Defence Force retirement benefits, Defence Force retirement and death benefits and pensions for recipients aged 55 and over from 1 July 2014.

It would be remiss of me not to follow on from some of the comments, in particular the amendment that has been put forward by the member for Denison. I remind the House that the member, in the 43rd parliament—the parliament immediately preceding this parliament—was an influential player, as were most of the crossbenchers in a hung parliament. I put it to this parliament that if the intent of the member for Denison was truly honourable, if the intent of the member was to benefit the DFRDB recipients, then that would have been dealt with and pushed through on the back of his hearsay in the last parliament.

The reality is that there is a legacy that has been left behind not only by Labor but also by the crossbenchers in their inability to get this situation resolved. It is truly only the coalition who have been resolved in our capacity and resolved in our commitment to ensure that our brave men and women—who have served and who today provide us, as a nation, with a blanket of security that we sleep under every single night—are those who are honoured. It is they who we should not leave behind. It is they who need to be indexed fairly.

I would also like to acknowledge the advocacy work of Stuart Roberts, the member for Fadden. He has travelled the length and breadth of this country advocating. He has been the champion of the course not only in Queensland but also throughout my electorate. He was only there recently in his capacity as Assistant Minister for Defence, again, advocating for this very issue.

I am proud to say that there are over 1,300 eligible people in the electorate of Wright. In addition, there are nearly 19,000 people in Queensland who will be eligible as a result of this.

The coalition government first committed to delivering fair indexation on 27 June some 10 years ago. But at each step, we were blocked and there were hurdles in front of us. Despite losing the 2010 election, a private senator's bill was introduced, and in 2011 this bill was voted down by the Labor-Greens alliance—the very alliance that had power from the crossbenchers who are now seeking to move amendments to this bill.

In 2012, Prime Minister, Mr Tony Abbott, signed the coalition's Fair Indexation pledge—a pledge that today we have stood by and a pledge that we will deliver on, because that is the coalition way. When we say we are going to do something, we do it. It is a far cry from what we have seen time and time again from those on the other side of this place, who continually say one thing before an election and do another after.

There is still evidence of that misrepresentation even surrounding this bill. Let me take you to a time frame: on June 16 2011 Labor cemented its position as an anti-fair indexation party when it combined with the Greens in the Senate to vote down the coalition's fair indexation bill. Then on 22 August 2012, Labor again combined with the Greens to block the coalition's second attempt for fair legislation indexed to the military superannuation pensions. And on 13
March 2013, Labor yet again blocked the coalition's third attempt to legislate for fair indexation of military superannuation by blocking debate in the Senate.

But there was a last-ditch effort. The then Minister for Veterans' Affairs reaffirmed his fair indexation policy in a letter from his office dated 12 June, 2013 which stated, 'The government has no plans to change the current arrangements.' But at the 12th hour, we saw a private member's motion from the then Defence minister saying that he would have a look at fair indexation. But that private member's bill was far inferior—to the bill that is before us now. Today, in 2014, I stand before you proud that we are finally able to address the egregious inequities for men and women who served this nation.

I would also like to acknowledge, wholeheartedly, those RSL and sub branches in my area who have advocated tirelessly through my office for what they believe is a fair deal. It would be improper for me not to acknowledge their contributions: in particular, the Mudgeeraba-Robina President, Steve Boyle, who hosted the then shadow Defence minister, Senator Ronaldson, who came through and advocated when we were in opposition: 'Give us the chance of government and we will deliver for you.' We have done it, and we will continue to do it. There is also Tamborine Mountain president, John Brookes—thank you to all those guys; Kooralbyn Valley, John Forbe-Smith—a personal friend of mine; Jim Bumba; Sandy Lloyd, who I know from a previous life to this House—Sandy is an exceptional president; Laidley president, Brian Ranse; and Logan Village president, Terry Flanagan. All of these guys have been tireless in their pursuit of this endeavour.

I thank Errol Guilfoyle, from Beaudesert, who hosted a forum attended by Senator Ronaldson, who gave an overview of this issue. I thank the Helidon president, Neville Watterson; the Gatton president, Les Nash, who, during lunch after an Anzac Day ceremony, asked that if I do nothing else for the branch I should deliver this reform. Les, tonight I am proud to be able to stand in this House and implement these reforms that I gave a commitment to you that I would. I thank the Boonah president, Geoff Whittet; Grahame Drynan, in Rathdowney; Peter Prenzler in Kalbar; the Forest Lake president, Peter Foley; the Grantham Ma-Ma Creek President, Donnie Nielsen—none of these people get paid. They do it because they believe in the cause, and they believe in the position of the coalition. Thank you to all those guys.

Of course I extend my appreciation to the RSL branches, to Nerang president, Geoff Stephan, and to Canungra president, David Day; and to Ronny Smith in Withcott for the work that he does over there with the Withcott Progress Association, which is an outstanding monument. Ronny has enhanced an outstanding Anzac Day community spirit in that community. I also want to recognise the National Servicemen's Association in Beaudesert; Johnny Crauford, from the Springbrook War Memorial; and Veterans Support and Advocacy Service Australia, which operates throughout Wright. It would also be remiss to not acknowledge the advocacy work of those that have fallen, for whom we have attended funerals this year, who would be proud to know that we are producing on this.

In order to ensure that I do not consume time and to allow my colleagues to give their contribution, let me conclude by saying that this is a good day. We have delivered on a commitment that we have been steadfastly committed to for many years. It is a shame that we have been blocked at every step. It is somewhat disingenuous for a previous speaker to say that those on the other side of this House are proud of the work that they have done in this
space. All I remember of the work done in this space by those on the other side of the House is a defence budget which is as low as it has ever been since 1938. We will fix defence and we will fix indexation, because that is what we were elected to do. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (18:47): The opposition supports this legislation, and so do I. Before I get to my remarks about the legislation, I want to say that I listened to the contribution of the member for Eden-Monaro earlier in this debate. It is my view that the comments that the member for Eden-Monaro made about his predecessor—Dr Mike Kelly, the former member for Eden-Monaro, a man who served in the defence forces, and served this place very well—were in very poor taste. In fact, I thought they were very ungracious and derogatory. It is my view that they reflect adversely and poorly on the current member for Eden-Monaro.

I support this legislation and I have always supported fair indexation for our defence veterans. This legislation effectively does three things. It retains the current indexation methodology for pensions paid for persons under 55 years of age. It uses the triple indexation system of either the consumer price index, the pensioner and beneficiary living cost index, and the male total average weekly earnings in determining the amount by which DFRDB and DFRB pensions are increased. It also ensures that DFRDB and DFRB members with significant past service are not required to pay division 293 tax on the value of past service as a result of this legislation.

The legislation, as other members have quite rightly pointed out, is the result of a very long campaign by Australian defence veterans who have pursued this matter relentlessly. Their fighting spirit and their never say ‘die’ attitude, I believe, are testament to their military training. I know of no community group who have campaigned harder and longer over a single issue—certainly not in my time in this place. They have been one group that have been truly relentless and have persevered with the campaign that they embarked on. They have done so across all electorates—I have heard other members speak about that—but certainly in my own electorate of Makin. I have spoken with defence veterans to discuss this very issue at different functions. I have at all times supported them, by taking up their cause in writing to the relevant ministers of the day with arguments supporting their case. I am quite comfortable in saying that I have made representations on their behalf from the day that I was elected to this place. I did so because I saw merit in their arguments.

This is a complex matter. When reading the bills digest for this bill, I find that there are still matters in there that are not very clear. It is not as simple as it is sometimes portrayed by people who have spoken in respect of this legislation. Not surprisingly, the former Howard government—I make no criticism of them about this—did not accept the arguments being put to them at the time. Senator Nick Minchin, whom I know as a fellow South Australian, even after having left this place—from memory—still maintained that the position that his government took in respect to this matter was the correct position to take. I think that simply highlights that this was not a case of one side versus the other in this House, but rather that this is truly a complicated matter and that neither side was absolutely convinced that the change needed to be made. The current government have decided that they will bring in the legislation, and I support it, because I am of the view that the change did need to be made.
The Rudd government, on being elected in 2007, ordered a review of the current arrangements. The review was carried out by Trevor Matthews. There were four recommendations in that review and I am familiar with all four. The government chose not to make any changes as a result of that review. As the shadow minister quite rightly said in his comments on this matter today, the DFRB and DFRDB schemes ended in 1972 and 1991 respectively and so the consequential arrangements made with respect to this legislation relate to a very limited number of veterans.

Why have I supported the veterans in their campaign? I have done so because I have been persuaded by one very simple argument. It is my view, and always has been, that the sole purpose for indexing pensions—it does not matter what pensions we are talking about—is to ensure the purchasing value of those pensions is not eroded by inflation. That was reaffirmed by recommendation 1 of the Matthews review. Originally, the index used for pensions was the consumer price index. It was the index of the day and it was the index of the time. I assume that it served the scheme well for many years. As time passed, it became clear that the consumer price index no longer provided a fair representation of the actual living cost increases being incurred by the people on the various pensions. The Labor government acknowledged that point when it brought in a Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index. That index better reflected the cost increases affecting veterans and other pensioners or retired people, because where they spent their money was not necessarily the same as where the broader community expenditure occurred and, therefore, the CPI did not always accurately reflect the cost of living increases incurred by pensioners and retired people. The former Labor government also factored in the male total average weekly earnings as a third measure to help work out a fair income for people living on retirement incomes. Again, I believe it was the right move. This legislation takes in all three of those measures and as a result I support the legislation. The legislation takes into account a formula based on the best ingredients that we have available to us today to ensure that the increase in the pension granted reflects real purchasing value, taking into account the prices of today.

I represent an electorate that has a lot of veterans living within it and I have a very good relationship with all of the veterans groups in my electorate. I have the utmost respect for them. Over the years, I have been able to spend time with them, listen to their stories and look at the way they live their lives and integrate into the community, and I have come to truly respect what they have done for this country through their service. In this case, my support for them does not stem from my respect for them. Rather, it stems from my belief that the system we are currently using is not right. We have shown that is not right through the way we now treat other pensioners and, therefore, we accordingly need to change it for them as well.

I have been approached by Commonwealth superannuants and Commonwealth pensioners who argue the very same case. They argue that their pension, resulting from their service, should be treated in the same way as another person's pension. That is, if one indexing arrangement is fair for one group then it should be fair for others. I have taken up this cause for them because again I am persuaded by their argument, based on maintaining the purchasing value of the pension. This is a matter that the government needs to consider, as we, in opposition, will need to consider it. I accept the argument of these superannuants and pensioners and so I have taken up their case by making representations on their behalf, and I will continue to do so.
I want to finish on the matter that other Labor members have raised in recent days. We have been painted as a party that does not care for and has very little interest in the defence community of this country. Nothing is further from the truth. No-one in this House has greater support for the veterans of this country than we do. It is fair to say that everyone in this House genuinely supports our defence personnel, both serving and retired. But the decision by the Abbott government to take away the $215 payment to some 1,200 defence families was a low point in the decision making of this government. The amount of money is insignificant in the scheme of the total federal budget but for the families the money taken away is not insignificant. I have no doubt that, to them, $200 is worth $200. If the argument is that it will make so little difference to those families, then why take away the money in the first place. That argument works both ways. If it is such a minimal amount, why not leave it there? This is a decision that the government should reconsider, because I believe it was the wrong decision to make. The government will be judged on this decision harshly by the community at large and it will be judged harshly, as it has been, by the defence people of this country. I would certainly urge the government to reconsider that decision.

I conclude where I began. This legislation comes before us after a very long campaign. I am aware of the private members' bills that were bought into this place when Labor was in government and I am aware that they were rejected. I am also aware that the legislation probably was prompted by nothing more than the government thinking it was good political campaigning on their part. I do not criticise them for that; that is what good political campaigning is. But it took an election for this commitment to be made. Yes, our side of politics came back with an alternative which was somewhat different; nevertheless, we have finally got there with legislation that I believe satisfies most of the veterans' representations to me and other members of this parliament for years and years.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (19:00): To start with, let us pin down what qualifies a person to be a DFRDB recipient: 20 years of continuous service in the Defence Force. You have to shift around the country; you have to do a lot of things. There is a lot of inconvenience and a there is a lot of sacrifice. What we always say about defence brats is thank goodness for Facebook, because until then they lost friends every two years; and they end up with a great collection of school uniforms.

When I was a candidate in 2010, I was doorknocking in Kirwan, and there was a bloke in his front yard, mucking around in his tinny. I asked him what was bothering him. He said: 'Don't worry about bothering me, mate. I'll vote for the people that bring in DFRDB fair indexation.' Now, at that stage, I did not even know what DFRDB was, let alone fair indexation of it. I asked him about it and he said, 'In 2007 Kevin Rudd got our votes by saying that he was going to bring in fair indexation, and we believed him. He did not. He brought in the Matthews review and it is just the same old.'

I am not going to blame the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government for not bringing this about, because this problem started in the seventies with Whitlam. So Gough Whitlam and the Labor government in the 1970s could have fixed that up. Fraser in the 1970s and the 1980s could have fixed it up. Hawke could have fixed it up. Keating could have fixed it up. Howard could have fixed it up. Rudd-Gillard-Rudd could have fixed it up. We went to the 2010 election saying that we would bring about fair indexation for veterans who had done 20 years service. Of course, at the moment DFRDB is only indexed to the CPI. Fair indexation will bring it into
line with other Commonwealth pensions—that is, with male total average weekly earnings and the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index.

Even though we have brought this about, even though we signed the pledge, even though Tony Abbott said it must be done and even though Senator Ronaldson went around the country telling everyone that we would so this, there are still veterans out there saying that we are not going to do it. That is how far entrenched the feeling against us is when it comes to this issue.

I have to say thank you to my veterans. I have to say thank you to my veterans for educating me on what it is to be a proponent of fair indexation. I want to single out one person, because I know that he will deflect the blame to absolutely everyone else. The person probably most responsible for getting me up to speed on this and making sure I was passionate about it is Brigadier Neil Weekes. I see the member for Longman entering the chamber. Brigadier Weekes was a constituent of mine; he is now a constituent of the electorate of Longman.

My office organised a petition in favour of this reform. We got 14,000 signatures from people all around the world—even people from South America signed the petition. I am very proud that the policy we took to the electorate in 2010 was also the policy we took to the electorate in 2013. I am very proud that today we are bringing it to fruition. I am very proud of this moment in time. I will be going back to my veterans and saying, ‘We have done this.’

What I will not cop is the amendment from the member for Denison. I have here a press release from the member for Denison dated 30 July 2013. He stated in this chamber that he wants DFRB to be fair indexed for all recipients, and yet in July 2013, when Labor brought in their policy of fair indexation for recipients over age 65, the member for Denison sent out a press release congratulating the then Labor government, not once criticising the fact that the policy was limited to over 65s and contained no male total average weekly earnings indexation as part of the scheme. So the member for Denison comes in here with his pious amendment and stands up seeking another opportunity to put out a press release lionising himself as the person sticking up for all veterans. This should be seen for what it is: an act of shameless self-promotion. He should be ashamed. He should drag his backside back in here and withdraw the amendment. He should bring this to a head. In my entire time in this place, I have never seen a more flagrant display of self-promotion at the expense of others than that I have just witnessed with that amendment to this bill.

I stand by our commitment to veterans. I stand by Tony Abbott, the Prime Minister of this country, who just said to Senator Ronaldson, 'It is time; it is right.' We should be doing this. It is only right. Veterans are not asking for anything extra. All that my veterans and the veterans around Australia are asking for is what is fair. That is all they are asking for. Once we get this done, Neil Weekes can start coming at me on something else. I thank the House.

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (19:05): I rise to support the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014. This legislation implements the government's commitment to veterans and their families. This legislation will index the Defence Force Retirement Benefits, DFRB, scheme pensions and the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits, DFRDB, scheme pensions using the same methodology as age and service pensions. From 1 July 2014, these new arrangements will apply to superannuants aged 55 and over.
We are fulfilling our commitment because this government acknowledges the unique nature of military service. It is important that those who have served our nation not be treated differently from age and service pensioners. We have long believed in the need for fair indexation, first announcing our policy on 27 June 2010. We took fair indexation to the people at the 2010 election. Despite Labor retaining government, it was the coalition who introduced fair indexation legislation in the Senate on 18 November 2010. We did this because military superannuant recipients had waited too long for fair, just and equitable indexation. Unfortunately, our legislation was not supported by the Greens and Labor, who used a Senate inquiry to oppose the fair indexation and then voted to defeat the legislation on 16 June 2011. Since this time, members on this side of the House have remained committed to the introduction of fair indexation for military superannuants. As the then Leader of the Opposition, and now Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, rightly said in September 2011:

It has long been to me and my colleagues in the coalition, verging on the scandalous that defence retirees do not enjoy the same indexation arrangements as other people who have retired.

On 5 March 2012, Mr Abbott, together with the then shadow minister for veterans' affairs, signed the coalition's pledge to deliver fair indexation. In July 2013, I was honoured to join with the then shadow minister for veterans' affairs, Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson, and representatives from the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations—the ADSO—to sign the coalition's pledge to deliver fair indexation to 57,000 military superannuants and their families.

The ADSO has always been a staunch advocate for fair indexation. The ADSO was formed to protect and represent the Defence family's past and currently serving Australian Defence Force members and their immediate families. I am fortunate to have met and worked with the Central Coast ADSO members for over three years, and I commend them on their campaign and fight for fair indexation. I personally thank Robert Ihlein and Cliff Hobson of the Central Coast ADSO for taking the time to educate me on this important issue.

On 28 July 2010, the alliance launched the Fair Go Campaign, which championed the need for the fair indexation of military superannuation pensions. I would like to take a moment to share with the House the story of Robert Ihlein, the New South Wales ADSO state action group leader and a local resident of Dobell. Robert joined the Army in January 1968 and by October 1968 had completed his training and was posted to South Vietnam as a Sapper driver. Robert's career in the Army spanned 20 years, and in 1988 Robert took his discharge hoping that the DFRDB superannuation would keep pace with price increases over the following years. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

Robert first became involved in fighting for fair indexation of military superannuation in June 2011, shortly after the Senate rejected the coalition's bill. Robert remembers this time as quite an emotive one, after the betrayal of senators who had revoked their support for the legislation. In June 2012, the frustrations of Robert and the ADSO's fight for fair indexation was heightened when it was revealed that the DFRDB pension increase would be $0.81 per fortnight in line with the CPI increase. The ADSO has welcomed our legislation, and they have stated:

The Alliance of Defence Service Organisations (ADSO) thanks the Government for today introducing legislation to the House to restore fair indexation to DFRB and DFRDB military superannuation pensions.
They have also asked that all political parties and the Independents are encouraged to not block this long-awaited legislation.

In Dobell, this bill will benefit 329 individual recipients and their families. As the member for Dobell, I am honoured to be in this parliament representing members of the Central Coast community who committed their careers and lives to protect Australia’s freedom. Our veterans and their families deserve fair indexation. The government has made the pledge to deliver this legislation, and I have personally made the pledge to deliver fair indexation to my community. It is now incumbent on those opposite to back what is fair—to back fair indexation and to allow the parliament to confirm our commitment to our nation’s military superannuants. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (19:11): I am particularly proud to speak on the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014 this evening, because this legislation really goes to values and priorities. What this legislation says very clearly is that the government places a very high priority on those who have served us in the military.

We all know that the financial situation the government is confronted with is a very difficult one due to six years of flagrant mismanagement by those opposite. We do find ourselves in a very difficult financial situation. But the government made a very firm commitment back in 2010—and reaffirmed in 2013—that the veterans of Australia absolutely deserve fair indexation of their pensions. What the government has done in progressing this legislation is to keep faith with that commitment.

It is entirely appropriate because people who serve our military are often putting themselves at risk. They are often in dangerous situations and, by signing up in the first place, they are certainly accepting that potential eventuality. Most of us do not do that. Most of us do not serve in the military and most of us in our day-to-day jobs do not take any physical risk—we do not put ourselves at risk in that way. I know that in this job I do not do that, and I have not in previous jobs either, but the men and women of our military do that very frequently. That above all makes them, as a group, the greatest Australians, because in times of war and peace they are charged with our protection and security. We should always place the service that they provide us on a pedestal.

You would think it would be self-evident that fair indexation of the military pensions should be supported and that there should not be any discrimination in the way that these increases are calculated relative to those for aged pensioners and others. It is probably fair to say, based on comments from those opposite, that there is a widely held view that that is a fair proposition. The only reason not to do it—and it is not the right reason, but it is the only potential excuse—is that you have not got the money and you cannot afford the cost.

What we saw under six years of Labor was such extraordinary financial mismanagement that Labor was willing to spend hundreds of millions of dollars—billions of dollars—on different programs but could not find the much more modest—though significant—amount required for this indexation arrangement. When you have blown $6½ billion on your lack of border security, when you have spent $100 million because you closed down the live export industry overnight and when you have wasted literally billions of dollars on the tragic pink batts program, money is tight.
Labor, in failing to provide this indexation in those six years, really got its priorities all mixed up. It could find funds for all sorts of extraordinary government programs—very poorly managed programs with no operational or implementational skill whatsoever—but it could not find the money to do something as fundamentally right as indexing military pensions in a similar manner to age pensions. We said we would do that because it is the right thing to do. We said it consistently over a number of years. We even introduced legislation in the previous parliament to try to make it happen. Now that we are a government, we are able to do it. I am proud to speak in favour of this legislation and I commend it to the House.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (19:16): I really do welcome the opportunity to speak on this bill tonight. I spent 15 years in the Army and I have met so many veterans and ex-service men and women out there who really believe that this is a measure way past its time. This will be a historic moment. We often hear in this place people talking about a 'historic moment', but this is about a promise, a commitment and keeping faith with people who have pulled on the uniform and been prepared to put their lives on the line for this country. It is time that this job got done; it is going to get done now, and I am very pleased about that.

When we look at what is coming as part of this bill tonight, it is for DFRDB pensioners over the age of 55 and it is about fair indexation. I remember very clearly back in 2007 meeting with some peak veterans' and ex-service organisations in Perth, and they were talking and delighting in the fact that Kevin Rudd had promised them fair indexation. It was hard going to counter that. It was a point made very clearly to me. There were those in the veteran community who were still with us, but many decided that this was the point they would swap sides and go over to the other side—the Labor side—and they were betrayed. There is no doubt about it. They were told clearly what was going to happen, and Labor just never delivered for them.

I was very happy that we made that commitment to people in 2010 and were prepared to back it up. We bargained in good faith. We made commitments in good faith to the veteran community and, after 2010 when we did not quite get there, we came through. We had said we were going to do it and we came through with two bills in this place—one here and one in the other place—where we demonstrated our commitment to the cause.

We are keeping faith tonight with the veteran community. People like Mike Gilmore, the president of the Ballajura RSL, Graham Woodford of the Perth North branch of the Naval Association, and Wendy Tuffin of the Wanneroo-Joondalup RSL. We are keeping faith with those ex-service people, and I applaud the government for that and thank the Prime Minister for his strong support.

I said before that we had bargained in good faith when we had made that commitment in 2010 and that there were attempts to bring it in the House and then in the Senate. I contrast that to the lack of good faith shown by the member for Denison who came in here, attempted to highlight himself and tried to springboard some sort of political favour in the veteran community. If he were for this in good faith, committed to this and in doing the right thing, he would have gone to the minister and said, 'Minister, I am in favour of this, but I think it should be extended and I think it should be different,' but there is no evidence of that happening, and it did not happen. So what we have when he comes into this place is nothing but political grandstanding and self-promotion. I think it is very bizarre for a former serving officer to have those sorts of character problems. It is disappointing.
Again, this is legislation that is past its date. It is important that we do this. It is about keeping our commitments and keeping our promises, which is exactly what this government has done. We will be judged by what we say and do in the future. Tonight is a good night because this job is going to be done tonight in the House of Representatives. I thank the Prime Minister and the minister for their efforts for veterans and ex-service people.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (19:21): I am pleased to rise and speak on the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014. I am conscious of the long list of speakers who want to speak on this historic night as we pass this bill in the House of Representatives, so I will keep my remarks brief. This bill seeks to implement the coalition's strong commitment to Australia's veteran community that was pledged before the last election to those who served. This strong commitment was borne out of our recognition of the unique nature of military service and Australia's service personnel past and present. After giving so much to their nation, they deserve to live their lives out in the knowledge that they have financial security.

I note that, consistently with this belief, I and a long list of my coalition colleagues voted in favour of a similar bill in the last parliament, which unfortunately was not supported by the then Labor government. I spoke with many veterans, veterans groups and RSL sub-branches all across my electorate, and the reason that they were so disappointed with the Rudd and then Gillard and Greens government was not just their broken promises on the carbon tax; the one that really hurt them was their broken promise on giving them fair indexation on their veterans pensions.

I am proud to stand here tonight because this bill delivers on the coalition's commitment to our veterans community. We are here in this chamber tonight doing exactly what we said before the election that we would do, which is a very refreshing change from the previous six years. This government's commitment to this policy was so strong at the last election that the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, when he was in opposition, organised for the coalition MPs and candidates to sign a pledge that we would stick with this commitment. This pledge was first signed on 5 March 2012 in Bendigo by our now Prime Minister and our now Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

I was pleased to sign this coalition's pledge on 3 December 2013. I signed the pledge in the presence of the president and the vice president of the Australian Commando Association of New South Wales, the President of the Woronora River RSL, the President of the Sutherland and Districts Sub Branch of the National Servicemen's Association and the president of the Sutherland United Services Club, along with veterans from across the seat of Hughes. I am proud to stand here tonight. We are delivering on that pledge and that promise we signed.

Why is this commitment so important? I was at a memorial service on Sunday to rededicate a monument honouring the thousands of national servicemen who were conscripted between the years of 1951 and 1959. I must admit that I was not aware of the number. There were actually 287,000 Australians who were compulsorily called up for the Navy, Army and Air Force during the National Service Scheme we had between those years. It was their sacrifice and it was their commitment to their nation that gave us the freedom that allowed this economy to progress and allowed our society to progress as we have. The indexation to the CPI was not enough. It is because of the sacrifices that they made and the freedoms that we have today that, during the years of the Howard government, the Howard government
increased real wages by 21½ per cent. That is the pay-off that these people deserve to get in their annual pensions.

That is what we are delivering tonight. We are delivering fair indexation. I am very pleased to speak on this bill. I commend it to the House. I look forward to the contributions of my many colleagues who wish to speak on this bill tonight.

**WYATT ROY** (Longman) (19:25): As I rise to speak on the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014, I cannot let it pass that for the speakers list for this legislation the Labor Party have found three speakers. One is the former minister. To put it frankly, their silence says more than any of us ever can.

This legislation, the Defence Force retirement benefits legislation amendment bill before the House, is very close to my heart. But, far more importantly, it is close to the hearts of the 1,046 veterans in my community, who have spent years fighting for a fair go on their military superannuation pensions—a fair go which the Labor Party has refused to provide. This legislation represents a deserved victory, at long last, for these local veterans and their families.

The coalition has stood shoulder to shoulder with them. And now, in government, we are delighted to be able to deliver. The changes give effect to a key coalition election commitment and, on a personal level, come after a protracted campaign to secure Longman veterans a fair go, via correspondence, meetings, representations in parliament and veterans' forums with the then shadow minister and now Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Ronaldson. During one such event at the Bribie Island RSL last August, Senator Ronaldson and I signed a pledge that we would deliver rightful indexation after all those years of Labor shunning our ex-service men and women.

Currently, 57,000 veterans aged 55 and over have their Defence Force Retirement Benefits Scheme, or DFRB, and Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Scheme, or DFRDB, superannuation pension increases tied to the consumer price index only. Twice the coalition tried to pass legislation through the last parliament to achieve fair indexation for them. Each time, the Labor Party, the Greens and the Independents combined to stop that move.

But from 1 July we will index DFRB and DFRDB pensions for superannuants aged 55 and over in the same way as age and service pensions. That means a calculation based on a formula that factors in growth in the CPI, male total average weekly earnings and the pensioner and beneficiary living cost index. The fair indexation provisions will also extend to widow pensioners aged 55 and over.

This commitment recognises the unique nature of military service. It recognises that those who have served our nation should not be treated differently from age and service pensioners. And this commitment is yet another example so far as this government's record on trust is concerned. Making sure our veterans were treated with fairness and respect was an article of faith for us when we took up the treasury bench.

Caboolture-Morayfield and District RSL Sub Branch president Mr Bruce Miller told me, upon hearing that this legislation was a reality, that many veterans had been short-changed thousands of dollars by inadequate indexation. He said:

We're glad that the government has stuck to its election promise and carried through on this … … It's been a long time coming.
It has indeed. And yet the coalition has sustained the logical argument that, if it is inadequate to lift Centrelink pensions just by the consumer price index, it is even less fair to apply only that index to those who have risked their lives for our country.

In the lead-up to the 2007 election, prime ministerial candidate Kevin Rudd also promised fairness to the recipients of DFRB and DFRDB pensions. But instead, with Mr Rudd's election, veterans got nothing except another broken Labor promise.

We of the coalition have long acknowledged the unique nature of military service and the sacrifices military personnel and their families make on behalf of all Australians. We believe that Australia should protect and watch over its veterans and their future in the same way that our veterans have protected and watched over our country. We have stood by our pledge. We have kept our word. Australia's veterans, who have risked life and limb, deserve better than a government that says one thing before an election and does another thing after. We now call upon the opposition leader and the Labor Party to finally do what they should have done three years ago and support this legislation. It is an honour to commend this bill to the House.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (19:30): I rise today to speak on the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, noting that unlike those on the other side of the chamber, the coalition government is honouring its election commitment and following through on our pledge to support the brave men and women who have served our country and fought for our country. They have been prepared to sacrifice their lives for our freedom.

The previous Labor government promised back in 2007 to give a fair deal to ex-service men and women and subsequently had six years in which to deliver a fair go for our veterans. But yet again they simply chose to break their promise—refusing to repay the loyalty that veterans have given to all Australians. The coalition took to the 2010 election, and again to the 2013 election, a policy that would see the fair indexation of DFRDB and DFRB.

I have spoken several times in this place about the importance of fair indexation of Defence Forces Retirement Benefits and the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits military superannuation pensions. My office has been contacted by many members of the veteran community asking what the coalition is doing for military superannuants. In my electorate I represent many groups, including the Returned Services League with sub-branches at Gaythorne, Kenmore-Moggill, The Gap, Toowong, Bardon, and Indooroopilly-Sherwood, as well as the Australian Army Aviation Service Australia and the Veterans' Support Advocacy Service Toowong branch, the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam Association, and many members of the Australian Defence Force at Gallipoli Barracks in Enoggera.

The defence community and the veteran community want fair indexation, and I was honoured to be one of the many coalition members to sign the pledge in 2012 that says, 'The coalition will ensure DFRB and DFRDB military superannuation pensions are indexed in the same way as age and service pensions.' All DFRB and DFRDB superannuants aged 55 and over will benefit. I am proud to stand on this side of the chamber with my coalition colleagues, who understand and value the contribution by veterans to our great nation. We have pledged our commitment to the fair indexation of military superannuation.

Under the coalition government's policy for fair indexation, 57,000 military superannuants and their families will be better off. This is set to be delivered and funded in the government's first budget, with the new measures to be effective from 1 July 2014. In June 2012, veterans
received the news that military superannuation pensions would increase by just 0.1 percent, as opposed to the 0.9 percent increase announced in March 2012 for age and service pensions. Many veterans received an increase of less than $1 a fortnight—a shameful action as the cost of living increased and Labor introduced an economy-wide carbon tax. Sadly, Labor ignored the veteran community when they introduced the carbon tax. They provided a household assistance package to pensioners, low-income individuals and families and students; however, veterans—men and women who fought for our country—did not receive one single cent of assistance. How disgraceful is that?

As all Australians know, the coalition government is committed to the repeal of the carbon tax, having already introduced a bill—only to have it blocked by the Labor and Greens alliance. It is obvious that Labor and the Greens do not care about the high cost of living for Australian families and for Australia's veterans; otherwise they would respect the mandate the Australian people gave to the coalition government at the last election and support the repeal of the carbon tax.

The coalition government is determined to repeal the carbon tax, which will reduce the cost of living pressures for all Australians, veterans in particular. We are also committed to fairly indexing veterans' DFRB and DFRDB pensions, because that is the right and just thing to do. It is just and right because of the enormous contribution that these brave Australians have made. It is just and right because when a nation asks its service personnel to go to war, to put themselves in harm's way, we as a nation have an overwhelming obligation to provide proper support on their return. It is just and right because it is the Australian way.

I am proud of the commitment this government has made to our veterans. I am proud of our veterans—heroes all—who put themselves at serious risk in the defence of Australia and the freedom we all enjoy. We must never begrudge this support and never forget their sacrifice.

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry) (19:35): I rise today to speak to the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) bill 2014. This is about doing the right thing, the fair thing, for those who served our nation in a very unique way.

I apologise to the veterans in my community and, indeed, across Australia for the delays in implementing this policy. I know this policy well. It had its beginnings with the Podger review. The Podger review, the review into military superannuation arrangements, was commissioned by the Howard government but unfortunately we had to go to an election and did not have the opportunity to adequately implement the measures.

I remember the former shadow minister for veterans' affairs Bronwyn Bishop taking the Podger review and looking at what could be done. My colleague the member for Macquarie, Louise Markus, who is in the House now, was the subsequent shadow minister for veterans' affairs and I filled the role as the shadow minister for defence personnel. We worked on this policy. We built up a business case and we took it to the then Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott. It took a lot of convincing to get this through the ERC but Tony Abbott knew this was the right thing to do. We took this policy to the 2010 election. Nothing made me happier than that after 2010 the very first policy that the coalition recommitted to was the DFRDB policy, because it was about doing the right thing by those who had given so much to our nation.
By contrast, look at the Labor Party. In opposition with the Podger review they put out a commitment, and that commitment was in 2007 to prevent further erosion of veterans' pensions due to unfair indexation. But given each and every chance when in government to do something, whether it was coalition members, whether it was notices of motion, each and every time they walked away with feeble excuses: it was not affordable. If it was affordable to do pink batts, if it was affordable to spend excess money on BER programs, if it was affordable to blow budgets, then why couldn't they do it for our veterans? That is the biggest question. That is one of the reasons why I feel I need to apologise to the veterans in our community.

I think that Stewie Roberts and Michael Ronaldson in their ministerial roles have done a tremendous job in advocating this policy through to the last election and I congratulate them on their great efforts, particularly Michael Ronaldson with the pledges. When I was asked did I want to sign a pledge at my RSL club in front of hundreds of people, I jumped at the opportunity, because I, like other members of the coalition, was committed to this policy.

Through the process of time and development of this policy we worked very hard with people such as the Defence Force Welfare Association, the DFWA; the RSL; the Naval Association of Australia; the Royal Australian Air Force Association; the Royal Australian Regiment Association; the Australian Special Air Service Association; plus countless thousands of individuals who sent representations that had to be replied to, just questioning one thing: why is it that we as politicians sat here with the increases we had in our pensions when the greatest danger we had was falling off the chair at our desk when those who put their lives on the line were being treated this way? Quite frankly, I was embarrassed. So today with honour I put my pledge of support to this legislation, this legislation long overdue.

If members opposite had one ounce of moral fibre in their body, there would be no hesitation in supporting this policy, this legislation. At the end of the day it is about doing the right thing by your mates, and our soldiers, our sailors and our airmen are our mates who stood to defend our freedoms and democracy, to keep us out of harm's way. I think it has been a shambles the way they have been treated, particularly with broken promises. If we think the broken promise on the carbon tax was bad enough, can I tell you that the broken promise to them in not delivering on their DFRB increases cut an even harder rapier through their chest. It is with some pride and relief that I commend this bill to the House.

**Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (19:41):** It is with great pride that I rise to speak today on the Defence Force Retirement Benefits legislation. This legislation is the collaboration of years of hard work and an ongoing determination and commitment by many of my colleagues on our side to recognise the unique place of veterans in our nation. I rise with a tinge of sadness, though, because I look at the benches opposite and I look at the number of speakers and their numbers are few. I question their support of the veteran community in this nation.

This bill has a long and important history and is a firm statement of the coalition's commitment to veterans and their families. For me personally this legislation is of special significance. For anyone in this House or outside of this building, or indeed in the other place, that has any connection with our Defence Force, with our military personnel, whether they be Navy, Army, or Air Force, we understand the sacrifices, the commitment, the dedication, the risks that they take and indeed the sacrifice and the impact on their families.
I have always been a passionate advocate of our veterans and involve myself in every way possible to fight for the best outcomes for them locally and indeed across the nation. I was fortunate and privileged to serve in the shadow ministry for veterans’ affairs from 2008 to 2010. During this time I worked hard with my colleagues, the member for Paterson being one, to ensure that these changes were put at the front and centre of the coalition’s agenda. At this point I would like to acknowledge that there were many of my colleagues prior to me stepping into that particular position, during my time serving in that position and since who have fought for this legislation to become a reality.

This legislation is also the result of important contributions from key veterans organisations. In particular I would like to acknowledge the Returned Services League National President, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan AO RAN. I would also like to acknowledge the Defence Force Welfare Association, which worked tirelessly to advocate for their members, in particular Colonel David Jamison. This is not to exclude other ex-service organisations. They worked tirelessly as well to advocate and lobby various governments of the day for this change.

This legislation has been long awaited and the benefits will be felt by our veterans community immediately. The key part of this bill is that we will index the Defence Force Retirement Benefit, DFRB, scheme and Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefit, DFRDB, scheme pensions in the same way as age and service pensions are indexed. These new arrangements will apply to superannuants aged 55 and over from July this year. I am pleased to note that in the electorate of Macquarie, 604 DFRB and DFRDB superannuants aged over 55 will immediately benefit from these changes come July. In New South Wales alone there will be 13,699 veterans better off because of these changes.

While in government Labor made promise after promise to the veterans community but they never kept those promises. In fact, Labor are on the record as actually opposing the introduction of fair indexation on two occasions—in the Senate in 2011 and in the House of Representatives in 2012. The coalition has played no such games with the veterans community. The veterans community and their families deserve nothing less than the facts. They want it straight. They want you to keep your word—if you say it, do it; if you are not going to do it, do not promise it.

I was proud to be in attendance in Penrith when we first announced this measure prior to 2010 with the then Leader of the Opposition. We took this commitment to the 2010 election and once again to the 2013 election. It is such a privilege and an honour to be able to stand in this place and speak of the commitment of this side of the House to keeping our promise. We are committed to ensuring that the people who serve and have served our nation will get the utmost respect and honour in a tangible and real way. They, more than anyone else in this nation, deserve to live out their lives in the knowledge that they have financial security.

This bill recognises overall that military service is unique—there is no other service and no other job in this nation like it—and, as such, deserves unique solutions to ensure that Australia’s service personnel, past and present, are looked after in their retirement. I commend this bill to the House.

Ms SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (19:46): I rise on the matter of the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014 because for a period of almost two years prior to the 2013 federal election I have been in meetings; talking to veterans;
hosting forums with the shadow minister, now Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Ronaldson; and talking to members of my local RSLs, Legacy and many families of men and women who have served our nation. It is with a great sense of national pride that I attend functions at HMAS Albatross and HMAS Creswell in the seat of Gilmore, but my sense of patriotism must be miniscule when compared to the emotion and sense of service I detect when speaking to our veterans.

We committed to this legislation well before the election. In fact, the Kiama-Jamberoo RSL has a large A3-size poster signed by Senator Ronaldson and myself on this very commitment. There are 57,000 military superannuants and their families who will now be better off. Members of the defence forces already receiving DFRB and DFRDB aged over 55 years will finally get the indexing they deserve. From the many veterans in Gilmore who have emailed me, I have learned of the high level of anxiety surrounding this issue. We have made this commitment and we will follow through. Despite some very erroneous and emotionally charged emails being shot around our veterans’ communication systems, we are firm in our commitment to bring this legislation through. This indexing will help our veteran community. More importantly, this is recognition of the part they have played in war theatres around the world. It is proposed to have these pensions indexed twice a year—March and September—and to take into account the changes in the consumer price index, the beneficiary living cost index and male total average weekly earnings.

I have been working closely with our most famous veteran, Nobby Hall OAM and the many members of the local RSL sub branches: Stuart Christmas of Berry; Bob O’Grady of Bomaderry; Mrs Iris Selby of Callala Beach; Mr Ron Sheldon of Culburra Beach-Orient Point; Mr Bill Poppel of Gerringong; Mr Don Handley and Barry Edwards of Huskisson; retired Colonel Ian Pullar and Dennis Seige of Kiama-Jamberoo; Rick Gallagher of Milton-Ulladulla; Rick Meehan and Fred Dawson of Nowra-Greenwell Point; Max Flohr of Shoalhaven Heads; Lorraine Bament of St Georges Basin; Alan Beasley of Sussex Inlet; Peter Vincent and Clyde Poulton of the Vietnam Veterans; and Bob and Mavis Morris and Alice Burns, working with the Korean War Veterans. They will all welcome this legislative change.

Most importantly, I have been in close discussion with ‘Dingo’ Glen Chamberlain, ‘Deekay’ Danny Kennedy and ‘Trapper’ Gary Fittel. They will be delighted to have this legislation passed. I thank the Veterans Angels for protecting Trapper, who was in a recent motorcycle accident. His bike is trashed, but he survived with 17 breaks in one leg, a break in the other, a broken arm and a dislocated shoulder. I wish Trapper a speedy recovery. This legislation will be well received by him and his family, as well as his mates—the Vietnam Vets. There is something particularly special about these young men, and I am proud to support this bill in the House on their behalf.

There is one other most significant supporter of this legislation, and that is Keith Payne VC. The last visit he made to Gilmore was to celebrate the traditional Anzac rugby match called ‘Digger Day Rugby’. Keith is the recipient of a VC. He is quiet yet authoritative. He came up to me in 2013 at the game and said, ‘You will of course be supporting the DFRB and the DFRDB, won’t you? I will be coming after you if you don’t.’ I acknowledge that he was joking—but I am not. I fully support this legislation that will benefit almost 1,000 veterans in Gilmore. I commend this bill.
Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (19:51): This is about keeping faith with the veterans—the people who look after us, who laid their lives on the line to look after Australian people—and I am very pleased and proud to support this important legislation in the House tonight. The Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014 will finally deliver fair indexation to our veterans and deliver on the promises made by this government prior to the 2010 and 2013 federal elections.

Fair indexation was an article of faith by the now Prime Minister and indeed the entire coalition going into the past two elections. Six months prior to the last election, Tony Abbott, as well as the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, signed a pledge unambiguously committing the coalition to delivering this reform for veterans and their families. The pledge headed ‘The coalition’s clear commitment to our veterans’ read:

A Coalition Government will deliver fair indexation to 57,000 military superannuants and their families.

The Coalition will ensure DFRB and DFRDB military superannuation pensions are indexed in the same way as aged and service pensions. All DFRB and DFRDB superannuants aged 55 and over will benefit.

Only a Coalition Government will deliver fair, just and equitable indexation for DFRB and DFRDB pensions.

With your support, Australia’s veterans and their families will get the fair go they deserve.

As many in the veteran community and the wider community would be well aware, this particular issue has been fought for long and hard by a number of people over many years. I have spoken numerous times in this place on the need to provide fair indexation, and this is a significant issue for the people of the Riverina—especially in Wagga Wagga, a tri-service city where many veterans reside.

Providing fair indexation to our veterans so that military pensions adequately reflect increases in cost of living is absolutely the right thing to do. After all, veterans and their families sacrifice so much in our hours of need and for this nation—this really is the least we can do for them. Fair indexation for our veterans acknowledges that military service is unique and forces demands on our service women and men, and their families, in a way that other types of service simply do not do.

Last Thursday, I had the privilege of seeing a joint Sydney Theatre and Australian Defence Force production, The Long Way Home, here in Canberra. It is a moving story based on the real lives and experiences of our service men and women. This story tells of how our injured and wounded veterans recover from the scars of war and post-traumatic stress syndrome, and tells of the challenges to and the sacrifices made for us by many veterans and their families. It tells the real life story of servicemen such as James Duncan, who was injured by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan in February 2011, and the story of Sarah Webster of the Royal Australian Signal Corps, deployed to Baghdad in 2006, who was severely injured by the blast impact of a missile hitting the wall of her concrete barrier while she slept. This is the story of our veterans, and, whilst the production is confronting, I would urge everybody here to see it if they get the opportunity.

I am therefore proud to be part of a government actually delivering this important and necessary reform—in fact, to be from the only side in this parliament to have made this commitment and actually delivered it. Every member and senator, and certainly every veteran
I have met with, remembers Labor's campaign promises in 2007 to deliver fair indexation prior to that election. And we all know what happened after the election: how Labor shamelessly scurried away from and broke this solemn promise—like they did with many of the other promises they made.

The coalition has been committed to introducing this reform since 27 June 2010. We made the announcement in support of fair indexation before the election that year. Despite not forming government, the coalition nonetheless remained firmly committed to this important initiative. In line with that commitment, we introduced legislation into the Senate on 18 November 2010.

Rather than grasp the opportunity to finally deliver much needed fair indexation to our veterans, as their own election policies promised, Labor and the Greens delayed, dithered—and then called for yet another Senate inquiry into this issue. This was despite more than half a dozen parliamentary inquiries conducted previously supporting fair indexation.

But that Labor-Greens inquiry was never really a genuine inquiry designed to objectively consider the merits of fair indexation as a policy. The conclusions and single recommendation of this inquiry, being run by a Labor-Greens stacked committee, were already predetermined and foregone before the inquiry even started. The committee made parliamentary history by recommending against fair indexation—disgraceful! This Senate inquiry was nothing short of an unprecedented attack on Australia's veterans by Labor and the Greens. Well, what could you expect?

On 16 June 2011 the Labor-Greens alliance in the Senate voted down the coalition's fair indexation legislation. This legislation, this particular bill, when enacted will change the way the Defence Forces Retirement Benefits and the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits schemes are indexed—as it should. This measure will benefit 57,000 veterans and their families across Australia, 13,699 in New South Wales and 512 in the Riverina. I commend it to the House.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (19:56): Tonight will be remembered as a day of shame, a day of dishonour, for the Australian Labor Party, when they evacuated the scene on this bill, the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014. It has history. The coalition fought for this. Ever since John Howard introduced fair indexation for pensioners, the momentum began—to look after our veterans. Consistently, the coalition has argued for this. We put it to the Australian people in 2009 and 2010. It was defeated on 16 June 2011—a shabby display from the Labor government.

And tonight, none but three have come down to this chamber to defend their actions. Tonight I was going to criticise those who spoke on the Labor side, but they were the ones who had the courage. Tonight I want to read into Hansard a dishonour roll of shame: those Australian Labor Party members who were not here, those who did not show, and those who did not stand up for their veteran communities.

Let us start with the no-show: Sharon Bird, member for Cunningham, who will be recorded in Hansard—and found, for eternity, by searching Hansard—as not showing up tonight. Yes, her name does now appear in Hansard under this bill, for all of her voters to see. The did-not-attend was Anna Burke. The did-not-arrive was Terri Butler, member for Griffith. The sick-leave was Jim Chalmers, member for Rankin. The special-leave: Nick Champion, member for...
Wakefield. Someone got a pairing, perhaps! There was Lisa Chesters from Bendigo. We have Sharon Claydon, on tour somewhere; Julie Collins—classified information; we don't know where the member for Franklin is—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Order! I request the member to refer to the member's correct parliamentary title.

Mr LAMING: We are including the correct parliamentary titles, Mr Deputy Speaker. In the dining room, presumably, is the member for Melbourne Ports; detained somewhere else, the member for Isaacs; distracted somewhere, the member for Richmond; diverted somewhere, the member for Werriwa; redeployed somewhere, the member for Hunter; somewhere else when he needed to be here, the member for Scullin; taking a tea-break somewhere, the member for Bruce; having smoko, the member for Shortland; gone fishing, the member for Fowler; navel-gazing, the member for Chifley; simply nowhere to be seen is the member for Throsby; running away, the member for Ballarat; fleeing, the member for Fraser; retreating, the member for Jagajaga; surrendering, the member for Perth; folding, the member for McEwen; flailing, the member for Blair, who you can normally not shut up; floundering, the member for Gorton; fading, the member for Hotham; vanishing, the member for Parramatta; in hiding somewhere, the member for Fremantle; limping away, the member for Oxley and the member for Sydney; scurrying away, the member for Moreton; dithering somewhere, the member for Greenway; dissembling somewhere else, the member for Lalor; dodging somewhere else, that member for Lingiari, who should be down here to defend his actions in the last six years; ducking away, the member for Lilley, who held up this entire process; running away, the member for Wills; weaving somewhere else, the member for Kingsford Smith. Member for Calwell, Member for Gellibrand, you are just so lucky—I have run out of alibis.

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (19:59): I would like to thank the member for Leichhardt for his good grace. I rise to speak in support of this bill to fairly index Defence Force retirement and death benefits. This bill will benefit more than 56,000 ex-service men and women across Australia, including 556 in my own electorate of Hinkler. During the 2013 federal election, the Palmer United candidate, Rob Messenger, told Hinkler constituents that the coalition would never deliver on its commitments to fairly index DFRB and DFRDB pensions. But today we are doing exactly what we said we would do. We are addressing the longstanding grievance of the veteran and ex-service community about differing and inequitable indexation arrangements that apply to these pensions—that is, compared with the age and service pensions.

We first announced our policy in June 2010. We have not flip-flopped or made unrealistic promises, like our opponents have. There have already been more than half a dozen inquiries, all of which supported fair indexation. So my message to the veterans of Hinkler is this: the time for inquiries is over. Australia's veterans and their families are finally getting the fair go that they deserve. Countless constituents in my electorate have been requesting these changes for years. However, I acknowledge that some veterans argue that these changes will not benefit every age group concerned. This has been an ongoing issue for decades and, despite numerous changes in government during that time, little has been achieved. No piece of legislation will ever keep every person happy, but this bill is a hell of a good start.

Under the legislation there will be no change to the way these pensions are indexed for those the under age of 55, until they reach the age of 55. And as part of the DFRB and
DFRDB pension that is currently unindexed, it will continue to be unindexed. Members with significant past service, but modest superannuation pensions, will not incur a taxation liability resulting from the changes to indexation. At the end of the day, this bill recognises the unique nature of military service, and it ensures that recipients have their pensions indexed in the same way as the age and service pensions. This means more money in the pockets of people who have proudly served this nation.

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (20:01): I certainly welcome the opportunity to speak on this bill today. Australia's veterans have waited a long time for this reform. This government was elected with a four-pillar policy for veterans and their families, which included recognising the unique nature of military service, maintaining a stand-alone Department of Veterans' Affairs, tackling mental health challenges faced by veterans and their families, and providing adequate welfare and advocacy support. Underpinning this was our commitment to deliver fair indexation for the Defence Forces Retirement Benefit and the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefit for military superannuants aged 55 and over.

In Leichhardt we have 588 recipients who can take advantage of the new arrangements from 1 July. This bill recognises that those who have served our nation should not be treated differently from age and service pensioners. Our determination to introduce our fair indexation policy delivers on a very legitimate grievance of the veteran and ex-service community and is a significant win for them. Mark Cernaz from Bayview Heights wrote to me yesterday and thanked the government for finally correcting this long-running issue but cautioned that there is a need to continually monitor Defence superannuation schemes to ensure that they comply with the intent of the original legislation and that appropriate and fair indexation methods always remain in place. I would like to emphasise to Mark and others that this will continue to be a work in progress, particularly with the number of younger veterans returning from areas of conflict.

Unfortunately the past six years have demonstrated Labor's lack of commitment to the veteran community, together with a legacy in the form of a budgetary mess. By ending the previous government's wasteful spending, paying off debt and restoring the economy to a robust position, we will be in a far stronger place to consider better support for veterans and their families in the future. We are also undertaking a range of other measures now to show our support for veterans and ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen.

Firstly, the provision of mental health services is an issue that is very close to my heart. Each year the DVA spends about $166 million on dedicated mental health services. We have also reconstituted the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters, with renewed focus on veterans' mental health. Secondly, we will restore Labor's $1 million funding cut from the BEST program, meaning that, as of 1 July, veteran and ex-service organisations will have up to $3.75 million to support advocacy and welfare services. Thirdly, maintaining a stand-alone Department of Veterans' Affairs is critical. The DVA is actively working to change the way it operates so that it better meets the needs of younger clients as well as its traditional clients. Fourthly, the government remains committed to the Veterans' Children Education Scheme and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme.

Lastly, we are fast approaching the 2014-18 Anzac centenary. I know there has been commentary in the media that the Anzac remembrances are coming at the expense of care for
our veterans and their families. This is certainly not the case. Over the four years of the centenary of Anzac we will spend $650 million on dedicated mental health services and $50 billion on providing support for veterans and their families. This is a very significant investment and certainly one that has been very well earned. Over that same time, financial commitments to the centenary of Anzac amount to $145 million. As the veterans' affairs minister, Michael Ronaldson, said recently:

By 2018, we must have left a legacy in the minds of younger Australians, in particular, about the service and sacrifice of past generations, of the responsibilities to care for those who have defended our rights and way of life.

He goes on to say:

… we must ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past, particularly the appalling manner in which Vietnam veterans were treated upon their return.

Here it is timely for me to mention that, as an ex-serviceman and a patron of the Vietnam Veterans' Motorcycle Club in Far North Queensland, I have a very good knowledge of the needs of our older veterans, particularly our Vietnam veterans. I am also the patron of the Avenue of Honour at Yungaburra, which was recently dedicated by Gordon Chuck and his wife in commemoration of their son, Ben, who lost his life in Afghanistan. Ben was one of the 40 of our wonderful soldiers who lost their lives over there. It is a beautiful place of reflection and something very, very special. And I am very proud to say that I was a significant financial contributor to the establishment of this memorial on Lake Tinaroo. I have got to say that Gordon and Susan Chuck have done a fabulous job in leading the campaign to have this established, and I am very proud to now be the patron of the Avenue of Honour at Yungaburra. It also provides me with an opportunity to work with and talk to a lot of our younger veterans.

For many of our veterans it is not about money; it is about recognition of service. That is why this bill is so important. We must never stop looking at ways to improve the support that we provide to those who have served our nation. I certainly commend this bill.

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (20:07): The Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014 addresses a serious anomaly that Labor tried to hide and talk around for six years. That anomaly is the unfair, non-indexed retirement benefit situation constraining our aged veterans. Fair indexation is something that I have personally championed for many years, including in the party room during my first term in the Howard government.

Labor broke its 2007 election promise to fix the issue of military superannuation indexation. Labor lost its way on reform of military superannuation. In 2007 Labor promised to release the findings of the previous coalition government's review into military superannuation arrangements, otherwise known as the Podger review. Labor's release of the Podger review was seen by Labor as the end of their commitment to reform. Their consultation produced no outcomes. Labor's wasteful and reckless spending in so many other areas left them unable to meet their 2007 commitment to prevent the further erosion of veterans' pensions due to unfair indexation.

After spending so much money on pink batts, green loans and the failed BER school halls program, Labor was unable and unwilling to find the funds necessary to meet their commitment to veterans on military superannuation reform. It is very easy to talk of nominal
increases, or gross increases, or even annual increases. Viewed in a vacuum all of the above are very helpful and welcome for veterans. However, life does not operate in a vacuum. Any increase must be viewed in the context of the rising cost of living pressures and the threat of relative deprivation. The key question is: is my quality of life at least as good as it was last year? The question then becomes: what is the real increase or net gain?

I will not indulge the members opposite by providing them with a basic education in economics. Suffice to say that when costs of inflation are taken away, and the relative increase in purchasing power is factored in, the unfair CPI fat lady is very much exposed. Labor lies can never hide the truth that the previous Labor government never prioritised the military or defence personnel in any way. If it was so, how could they have cut defence spending back to levels which, when measured as a percentage of GDP, were last seen in 1938?

The coalition listens to expert advice and acts. The original DFRDB scheme contained a wage based indexation element that was removed in the mid-1970s when the government decided to apply the CPI to a wide range of social security and superannuation pensions. In recent years, the government has changed indexation arrangements for social security pensions to include a wage based component. CPI indexation does not maintain relativity with community incomes. As the federal member of the seat of Tangney in Western Australia, this aspect is of particular concern to my constituents.

The effects of the mining industry in WA are far and away positive. However, one significant drawback is the effect of a two-speed economy on wage growth. The bill is good for WA, and especially good for veterans and defence personnel in my electorate of Tangney. Labor have been saying since 2011 that CPI is not a good measure, and that the current system is broken. Yet, typical of Labor, they saw a problem but were incapable of fixing it. Like the budget, not only did they fail to fix it but they actually made it worse. In 2010 the coalition promised fair indexation. Before the 2013 federal election this commitment was restated, and from 1 July 2014 57,000 DFRB and DFRDB superannuants aged 55 and over will have their benefits indexed in line with age and service pensions.

As promised the fair indexation provisions will also extend to reversionary pensioners aged 55 and over. The government has long recognised the unique nature of military service and the sacrifices military personnel and their families make on behalf of all Australians. In summary, it comes down to real versus nominal, trickery versus delivery, Liberal versus Labor.

Mrs Andrews (McPherson) (20:13): I am very pleased to outline my strong support for the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014, which delivers on a key coalition election commitment to provide fair indexation to the members of the Defence Forces Retirement Benefits scheme, the DFRB, and the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits scheme, the DFRDB. As we methodically work through delivering our election commitments, it is a reflection of our values that we have put this promise high on the list of priorities.

The coalition has a very proud history of advocating on behalf of our defence personnel and of affording the utmost respect to those who have served our nation in this noble way. We are very proud of the job our defence forces do. As a result we are determined to strengthen our nation's defence forces rather than weaken them, as Labor did in office. It is a national
shame that under the Gillard and Rudd governments defence force spending as a proportion of GDP fell to just 1.59 per cent, the lowest level since 1938.

We are committed to stopping the defence budget cuts and to putting forward legislation like this bill where we ensure our ex-service men and women are treated fairly. Put simply, this legislation will ensure that indexation for DFRB and DFRDB pensions is calculated in the same way that age pensions currently are. Linking the indexation not only to CPI but to the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index and male total average weekly earnings will mean a better deal for some 57,000 military superannuants.

Some of those listening at home might consider it an odd quirk that this has not already occurred. Why would you change age pension calculations to make them fairer and not extend that to military superannuants? But there is quite a history to this issue. I note that it was actually Labor that promised to introduce fair indexation for DFRB and DFRDB recipients, before they were first elected in 2007. But, as was to become their style, they did not actually deliver on their promise.

So the coalition made a commitment at the 2010 election to deliver indexation fairness if elected. Even after we narrowly lost the 2010 election, we introduced legislation to the Senate in November 2010 to provide fair, just and equitable indexation for DFRB and DFRDB military superannuants. And what was the Greens and Labor's response? In March 2011, they called for a Senate inquiry into the legislation, in typical Labor style, when there had already been more than half-a-dozen inquiries, all of which supported fair indexation. The Greens and Labor then used the inquiry to oppose fair indexation, the first time the parliament has ever opposed fair indexation. Then in June 2011, with Labor and the Greens voting it down in the Senate, the coalition's fair indexation legislation was defeated. So there is quite a history, and this bill finally reverses the injustice of that very shabby episode. There is a long list of what Labor did wrong during their terms in office, but the decision to oppose fair indexation of veterans' pensions was really a low point. And yet they stand up in this place and move an MPI like they did today and expect us to forget the shabby treatment they meted out to our veterans.

My electorate of McPherson is home to a very strong and active ex-service and veterans community. I note that some 483 McPherson residents are DFRB or DFRDB recipients. It is one of the most rewarding aspects of this job to be able to deliver just benefits and make our system fairer. I am very proud to support this legislation, just as I am always proud to support the work of my local RSLs and other veterans organisations. It is something very dear to my heart. My late father was a World War II veteran and became a tireless advocate as National Secretary and Treasurer of the Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex Servicemen and Women. As someone who believed in a fair go, he would have been very pleased and proud that I have the opportunity to support this legislation today, to provide a better deal for deserving military superannuants. I wholeheartedly commend this bill to the House.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (20:17): I rise to support this bill which honours this government's election commitment to aged pensioners who have made the most selfless of decisions, to serve in our nation's defence forces. I am conscious of a very long list of coalition members who wish to speak on this important issue and will therefore keep my
comments very brief. In contrast, I note a total of just two opposition speakers have taken an interest in this important issue.

This bill amends the Defence Forces Retirement Benefits Act 1948 and the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Act 1973 to deliver the government's commitment to fairly index Defence Forces Retirement Benefits and Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits pensions for recipients aged 55 and over from 1 July 2014. The veteran and ex-service community have long been advocating for governments to implement this change. This was an election commitment made by the previous Labor government in 2007. Yet, after the Labor government was elected, this commitment, like so many promises made by those on the other side, was not honoured. This represented a major slap in the face to those who have served our nation. In 2010 the coalition adopted this policy and, despite not winning government, we twice presented bills in this place to implement this change, only to be rejected by the Labor government. It is a pity it has taken this long to finally get to this point we are at here today, but it is not a surprise that it took the election of a coalition government to implement fair indexation for DFRB and DFRDB recipients.

I was honoured to sign a pledge that I would ensure, if elected, that this change would be presented to parliament. We have kept our word. Australia's veterans have risked all for our nation and they deserve better than the previous government, who said one thing before an election and another after. This bill shows that the coalition government understands the unique nature of military service. The bill will ensure recipients with significant past service but modest superannuation pensions will not incur a taxation liability resulting from these changes. Those on high annual incomes will not be excluded from an ongoing annual liability. The new measures extend fair indexation provisions to invalidity pensions, reversionary pensions and pensions for those associates in receipt of a pension as a result of a family law split who are aged 55 and over on the current relevant indexation date. From 1 July this year the proposed changes will immediately impact approximately 45,000 current DFRB and DFRDB pensioners aged 55 or over.

On behalf of all those Bennelong residents who have served our nation, and those who currently serve, I applaud the minister and this government for acting so quickly in our first term to honour this commitment. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Minister for Defence) (20:21): In summing up the debate on the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Legislation Amendment (Fair Indexation) Bill 2014, let me thank all the honourable members for their contributions to the debate and for supporting this important and groundbreaking piece of legislation. It is an article of faith for the government. We promised we would deliver this reform, and, together, this side of parliament collectively has delivered it. This side recognises the unique nature of military service. It is for this reason that all of us on this side have maintained a consistent and principled position on the fair indexation of DFRDB and DFRB military superannuation pensions. We first committed to providing indexation for DFRB and DFRDB scheme members on 27 June 2010, and we have been unwavering since that date in delivering this important piece of justice. Since this commitment, we have committed time and time again. We reaffirmed our belief in providing fair indexation at both the 2010 and the 2013 elections. This unwavering support to veterans and ex-service personnel and their families has not
diminished with time. We have not been disingenuous like those opposite; we have stood firm. This is clear proof that this government says what it does and does what it says.

This bill gives effect to the government's election commitment to fairly index Defence Force retirement benefits for DFRB and DFRDB pension recipients aged 55 and over from 1 July 2014. The government's fair indexation commitment addresses a longstanding grievance of the veteran and ex-service community about differing and inequitable indexation arrangements as applied to DFRB and DFRDB pensions compared to age and service pensions. The bill recognises the government's commitment to ensure that age and service pension indexation arrangements apply to pension recipients of the DFRB and DFRDB aged 55 and over at 1 July. As I have said, it is a direct reflection that the government recognises the unique nature of military service. Our commitment to addressing this longstanding grievance is underpinned by this belief.

The new fair indexation methodology calculation mirrors the two-step indexation process for age and service pensions. But it is important to note, for everyone's benefit, that the new fairer indexation methodology will not result in DFRB and DFRDB pensions that are currently less than the MTAWE floor percentage increasing to the floor percentage, or, conversely, a pension that is currently in excess of the floor percentage reducing to the floor percentage. As mentioned in my second reading speech, the bill will exempt DFRB and DFRDB members from the division 293 tax for the one-off capitalised value of the benefit improvement relating to past service as at 1 July 2014.

This will ensure that members with significant past service but modest superannuation pensions will not incur a taxation liability resulting from the changes to indexation. However, superannuants on high annual incomes will not be excluded from an ongoing annual liability under this provision. This government's policy will help approximately 57,000 DFRB and DFRDB members and their families. It will have an immediate impact on some 45,000 current DFRB and DFRDB pensioners aged 55 or over at 1 July.

Those opposite have stood in the way of this important piece of legislation. It is important that the record clearly states the matters they have raised. Before doing so, it is instructive—indeed, it is necessary—to look at the history of Labor's position on the fair indexation of military pensions. During the 2007 election, Kevin Rudd and Labor promised that they would deliver fair indexation. Page 12 of their document said:

A Rudd Labor government will maintain a generous military superannuation system …

But did they? The answer is a resounding 'no'. In fact, those opposite spent their entire six years in government using every excuse in the book to deny veterans and their families the fair go that they deserve. Not once, not twice, but on three separate occasions the former, Labor government voted against, or blocked, the coalition's attempt to legislate for fair indexation. Then there is the discredited Matthews report—a report commissioned by the Labor government in 2008 for the sole purpose of supporting their post-election position of staunchly opposing fair indexation. At 10 seconds to midnight, literally, right before the 2013 election, Labor pulled off one of the most staggering backflips in recent memory and decided, after six long years, to support fair indexation. The only problem, of course, is that they failed to deliver that backflip. Their policy, as all those in the veteran and ex-service community know, was deficient. Labor's new-found road-to-Damascus position was nothing more than a quick fix. In fact, their policy was vastly inferior to the coalition's policy. It was anything but
fair; indeed, it was unfair indexation that they proposed, failing to include the critical wages based component—MTAWE—as part of their indexation arrangements.

In response to comments made by the member for Batman, I would first say that it is entirely time for you, too, to remove your rose-tinted glasses. To speak of your party's supposed high stewardship of Defence is to ignore the grand farce of $25 billion worth of cuts that the last six years saw imposed upon Defence. There is no higher hypocrisy than the inflation of one's own history by Labor at the expense of the lived reality of our Defence Force and military capabilities. So I say to the member for Batman: the next time you speak about your passion for Defence, perhaps enlighten us all and have the courage to explain why you sat idly by and watched $25 billion ripped out of the Defence budget. Perhaps the member for Batman could spend more time speaking to the nature of the bill than attempting to rewrite Labor's appalling history.

Then, of course, there is the member for Canberra, who highlighted her achievements in talking to the veteran community and speaking at forums. I say to the member for Canberra: you also, ma'am, were complicit with your colleagues in thrice voting against fair indexation. No degree of engagement will cover that unfortunate truth. The actions of those opposite are telling. Words are cheap; actions tell the truth.

Member for Denison, I note the media release you distributed welcomed the policy from government. I thank you for your support. I also thank you, sir, for your contribution to the debate. The government, as you and I have discussed privately, will not support your amendment. We made a commitment before the 2013 election to provide fair indexation for those DFRB and DFRDB members aged 55 and over. We will keep to our election commitment. It is important to remember that those aged under 55 do not miss out. They will have their pensions indexed under the government's new scheme when they turn 55, which is appropriate.

Before concluding, let me thank many people who have campaigned tirelessly for this historic peace of justice. Let me thank the ex-service community for their support. Organisations like the RSL, DFWA and ADSO have argued fiercely but fairly for this change. I thank them for their ongoing support of past and present members of the Australian Defence Force. Let me thank my colleagues, many of who are in the chamber, who have advocated fiercely and fought rightly over half a decade for the justice delivered tonight.

This bill gives effect to many years of advocacy by colleagues from the Liberal and National parties on this side of politics. Their many years of advocacy lets this government legislate for fair indexation for superannuants and their families. It delivers a key election commitment and addresses a long-standing grievance of the veteran and ex-service community. I am pleased to have introduced this bill into the House on behalf of my good friend and colleague Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson, someone whom I have fought long and hard with together to achieve this important historic reform—as in we have fought together to achieve it. I look forward to seeing this pass in the Senate soon so that its full effect can come into force from 1 July this year. I heartily commend this bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): The question is that the member for Denison's amendment be agreed to.

A division having been called and the bells having been rung—
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: As there are fewer than five members on the side for the ayes in this division, I declare the question resolved in the negative in accordance with standing order 127. The names of those members who are in the minority will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

Question negatived, Mr Wilkie, Ms McGowan, Mr Bandt and Mr Katter voting aye.

Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Minister for Defence) (20:36): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

(1) program will be deeply flawed in its design and implementation given the poor environmental record of the current Government;

(2) bill provides insufficient protections for participants in the areas of occupational health and safety, workers compensation and rehabilitation;

(3) Government should clarify why participants do not have employee status even though they are to be removed from the social security system and paid an equivalent training wage;

(4) Government must provide assurance that the Green Army Program will not displace or reduce employment opportunities for existing workers;

(5) lack of detail of the training provisions in the program, namely specified minimum hours, provision of accredited recognised training and opportunities for ongoing training and career pathways; and

(6) importance of supporting young people to make the transition to meaningful work and further training opportunities.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (20:37): I rise to speak on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014 before the House and also to support the amendment moved by the member for Port Adelaide. This bill will amend the Social Security Act 1991 and the Social Security Administration Act 1999 to enable payment of the green army allowance. The bill will commence on 1 July this year. The bill provides for an insertion of the definition of both 'program' and 'allowance'. I must say that I would like that to be a little bit tighter and more concrete, but that is the situation we have before us tonight.
The bill provides that participants on the Green Army Program cannot receive a social security benefit or payment, rather they will be paid an allowance. There is precedent for this with the LEAP program, which was introduced under the Keating government and was quite successful. This program was for 16- to 20-year-olds and was once again an environmental program. The allowance is aligned with the national training wage. However—and this is another area of uncertainty—the explanatory memorandum notes that some participants may be able to choose to continue to receive their social security benefits. But the circumstances for being able to make this choice and the reasons that will allow a person to continue to receive social security benefit are not outlined.

It is important to note that participants in the Green Army Program will not be considered as employees under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and the Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988. I think that has some issues for those people who are involved in the program. This concept was first implemented under the Howard government in 1997 where they had the Green Corp, a work for the dole program for long-term unemployed, which also included volunteers. There is a little bit of a difference in this program. When that program was first in force, the participants worked 134 hours. They also had access to $500 payment during the six months post completing additional training and that included early removal. That was later replaced—the payment was abolished and replaced by another smaller payment.

Whilst the concept of a Green Army working throughout the country, improving our environment, may appear attractive, it may be the government's one and only environmental policy that they put before this parliament. I do not believe it is truly an environmental policy, one to change the face of the environment in Australia and one to lead to the people involved gaining the skills needed to work long-term in that area. It is unfortunate that those on the other side of this House seem to be devoid of any ideas when it comes to the environment, to commitment to protecting our environment, to programs which give ongoing guaranty with very set objectives that each program needs to fulfil. Rather we have a thought bubble that if you create a Green Army, as it marches cross-country, it is going to create a wonderful environment within Australia. Unfortunately, it will not work like that. If you are going to improve the environment of the country, you need to have commitment to environmental protection, good planning laws and to ensuring that endangered species survive. I must say that on none of those counts this policy comes across as an environmental policy.

On that first area this legislation fails. But there are other aspects of this legislation. It does provide environmental based work and training and that can be a very effective pathway for many young job seekers. Unlike many of the other policies which the other side of this House have introduced into the parliament, it will not be detrimental to the environment. That is provided that those people involved have proper training and support while they are working in their Green Army. It does have that aspect of being able to provide on-the-job training for young people in a work training area that has some potential. But it must be well-designed and implemented to achieve that goal.

So if it is a proposal that is just thrown together, is not properly evaluated, and is just a rollout that creates an impression that the government is actually contributing to improving our environment, then it will fail. We need a greater commitment than just froth and bubbles,
or smoke and mirrors, to convince people that this parliament is committed to improving our environment.

I think—and Labor agrees—we need to do everything we can to help people get into work. If people have the skills, the training and the knowledge then they can attain employment. You have many more opportunities in life if you have a job. A job is the key to success. We on this side of the House believe it is important to help people get jobs through the right kind of training, work experience, incentives and, most importantly, the appropriate level of support. I question whether this legislation will provide the appropriate level of support.

I am also worried because the legislation omits the details related to workers' rights, benefits and protection. No matter how you look at it, the people involved in the Green Army are workers—they are getting work experience and performing jobs—and we need to make sure that they have the appropriate benefits and protection. This legislation is very light on providing that information. I really need to highlight the fact that this was an issue with the Green Corps program and Work for the Dole. Those areas were not properly taken into account and it did lead to some problems. Given the fact that many of the people involved in this program will be vulnerable, it is even more important that the proper protections are in place. Some of these people may have just left school and they should be trained properly and given the right protection in the workplace. The minimum requirements are a first aid certificate and workplace safety training. There are no minimum hours and there are no other training requirements.

I referred earlier to the LEAP Program. That program was introduced by the Keating government. It provided benefits to a number of young people. The LEAP Program was introduced in 1992 and it was for young people aged between 15 and 20. It worked on a similar basis by providing an allowance. That program had some difficulties, and I suspect this program will also have difficulties because of the nature of the people who will be involved in the program. There is another aspect of the LEAP Program that I think is lacking in this program. When people finished the LEAP Program they had not only on-the-job training work experience but also some formal qualifications. To be ready to go on to full employment you need to have experience and you need to have qualifications. Without those two components I think it would be really difficult for young people to maintain employment.

I do not think there is a member in this House who is not committed to seeing young people get the opportunity to obtain jobs and maintain those jobs, to get the skills they need to develop their knowledge base and to undertake the learning needed so they can then enjoy a decent standard of living. My real concern is that this program will not deliver in that area. On the one hand, it is being put across as environmental policy. I have already shared with the House my thoughts on how the government is deceiving the Australian people, because it is not really environmental policy; it is a work participation program. On the other hand, it will fail in that area because the people passing through the program will not achieve their ultimate goal of obtaining full-time employment. I know this is a difficult area for governments to address, but the rate of youth unemployment in Australia is unacceptable and under this government it has increased. If the government were truly committed to improving employment for young people then it would adopt a holistic approach.

They need to also ensure that the participants have some sort of occupational health and safety cover. The simple fact that they are not considered to be workers or employees under
the act creates a problem. I have worked in the past with people involved in these types of programs and I know that that can create enormous problems and make it very hard for people to move on, particularly if they get injured in the workplace. This is a really important implication. I think more thought should have been given to how the people involved in the programs are connected to mainstream employment.

Whilst I support the member for Port Adelaide's second reading amendment and do not find this legislation odious, I have some real problems with it, particularly in relation to the protection of the people involved in the scheme and the fact that the government is trying to dupe the Australian people into thinking it is doing something about the environment when in reality it is not.

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (20:52): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme) Bill 2014, a policy that will achieve some key outcomes in my electorate of Bass. It addresses much-needed environmental works in my community, it delivers skills, knowledge, attitudes, experience, a training wage and supervision—vital, given the unacceptably high unemployment rate we have in Northern Tasmania, sadly the highest in the country. Also, it enhances not only the environmental values of some of these beautiful parts of my community but also—perhaps equally importantly—enhances the social, recreational and business amenity of many of these areas.

My electorate of Bass will become part of a 15,000-strong Green Army across the country, building on the Howard government's successful Green Corps, which was established, as we know, in 1996. And, as we know, the Green Corps was torn up under Labor, rebadged and, like so many other Labor policies, failed to achieve the intended effects. By terminating the Green Corps, Labor terminated opportunities for young people to upskill and take pride in their environment and themselves. We will restore those opportunities.

The Green Army, the cleaner environment plan and the coalition's Direct Action Plan for climate change are not discrete programs. They represent the restoration of some key ideas central to a 21st century sustainable development policy. Let me state for the record that sustainable development is not a policy objective that is the property of any party. Certainly not of the Greens, who self-righteously and unjustifiably claim a monopoly on environmental matters.

The Green Army puts the triple bottom-line objectives of sustainable development at the forefront of outcomes. It seeks local solutions to environmental, community and economic challenges. The Green Army projects will turn those challenges into opportunities that add social and economic value to the immediacy of environmental restoration work. The Green Army will demonstrate, in a practical way—an irony that should not be lost on the Greens—that there are tangible linkages between economic, social and environmental issues. These projects will deliver enhanced-skills training for young people fully engaged in the aspirations of their communities, to secure real sustainable development outcomes.

The Green Corps demonstrated real benefits for young people beyond better skills. It improved their sense of worth; their potential to be leaders and mentors within their peer group; their sense of having a purpose and a plan for a day, a week and a month ahead; the absolute rewards of engaging with community-based projects where they lived, worked and played; being part of a team; developing a sense of mateship; and, most importantly, being
valued as a contributor to a project that brings pride to a community. The Green Army will replicate those attributes.

The coalition's election commitments to Bass demonstrate an awareness of how the three pillars of sustainable development can produce integrated approaches to social, economic and environmental challenges. This approach is best identified by the coalition's commitment to the Tamar River Recovery Plan. It is the centrepiece of a range of other project commitments centred on what is a magnificent estuary. The environmental restoration will, in turn, enable and support economic investment. The Tamar River Recovery Plan, ostensibly an environmental project, is in fact central to northern Tasmania's capacity to attract people to visit, work and invest in our region. It is a critical, social and economic enabler for the Northern Tasmanian region.

The associated projects funded by the coalition include the $6 million I have secured for the North Bank project that will turn an unattractive industrial estate on the river into beautiful parkland with a playground, a sound shell and a range of family-friendly amenities. It incorporates a hotel development on a disused silo site, with a potential bridge walkway link over and along the banks of the Tamar estuary into the existing sea port development—a showpiece for the city of Launceston—through to the magnificent Launceston Cataract Gorge.

The Tamar River Recovery Plan has a number of major components. Importantly, it targets long-neglected environmental degradation of the Tamar estuary, especially the sediment build-up and the unsightly mudflats that develop in the upper catchment within sight of the CBD. This has restricted access and use of the estuary, and a range of nutrient pollutants flow into the catchment from the ageing combined stormwater-sewerage system. I am very proud to have secured the resources needed for the Tamar River Recovery Plan, because strategy without resources is illusion.

We have $2.2 million to be invested in the activities of the Launceston Flood Authority—sediment raking and bathymetric surveying of sediment removal. We will succeed where Labor failed. Prior to the 2010 election, the then state environment minister, Michelle O'Byrne, promised $6.65 million for the Tamar River over three years to undertake a dredging program. She ensured that there would be an immediate start to remove 100,000 cubic metres of silt, supported by an ongoing annual maintenance regime to shift an extra 50,000 cubic metres of silt. The Labor government in Tasmania failed to support a healthier river. They did not deliver on that promise. We will deliver on that promise, and we will support a healthier Tamar River.

We have also secured $300,000 in resources for important repair works and preventing riverbank degradation. We have $500,000 to invest in quick wins to prevent sewage inflows into the Tamar River during heavy rain events, and also to fund scoping works to determine how best to modernise the archaic sewerage infrastructure system in Launceston.

The Green Army projects approved for Bass will provide opportunities for young people in northern Tasmania aged 17 to 24 to gain training and experience in environmental and heritage conservation fields and to explore careers in those areas. As I often say to our young people during school and other presentations, 'It does not matter where you start, providing you make a start.' The Green Army Program will help many young people to start work.
In Bass, the government is committed to Green Army projects in two areas: Kings Bridge to Duck Reach and Kings Bridge to the Tailrace. I have also prepared a number of new project proposals, and will be fighting for these projects to be delivered for our community.

A number of those opposite have made some mendacious claims about payments to Green Army participants. Let me put some facts on the record: the Green Army allowance is higher than Labor's National Green Jobs Corps, the Green Corps program, Newstart and youth allowance. For example, under the Green Army Program a 21-year-old participant will receive a fortnightly allowance of between $885.60 and—

**ADJOURNMENT**

The SPEAKER (21:00): It being 9 pm, I interrupt the speaker and I propose the question: That the House do now adjourn.

**Qantas**

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (21:00): This afternoon, members of the Transport Workers' Union came to Parliament House to talk about the current state of the Australian aviation industry. In 2013 Australia's aviation industry generated over $35 billion in revenue, yet wages cost the industry only one-seventh of that. The House will be aware that, following the release of their recent financial results, Qantas asked for government assistance in the form of financial support and alterations to Australian airline ownership regulations, while at the same time announcing the axing of 5,000 jobs. However, many of Qantas's arguments for these measures do not address the central issues that have led the airline to its current position.

In December last year, Qantas management met with officials of the Transport Workers' Union. In that meeting, Qantas's major complaint to unions was that Virgin was running a loss-leading strategy to increase its market share and that the Qantas response was to protect its 65 per cent domestic market share by lowering fares and expanding capacity by double that of Virgin. Qantas management conceded at the time that air fares were unsustainably low. The capacity battle between these two competitors places downward pressure on fares and, hence, revenue and profit margins. Qantas's 65 per cent strategy compounds this, because it triples capacity growth and intensifies the downward pressure on fares and at the same time increases capital costs. In short, there are too many empty seats and too many cheap seats. Qantas maintain that they will continue to increase domestic capacity this year by three to four per cent on 2013 levels. This is simply a continuation of a failed, high-risk, high-cost strategy which looks as if it is seeking to induce industry-wide losses in the hope of destroying its only domestic competitor and achieving a monopoly on domestic air services.

Furthermore, the Transport Workers' Union advised us that the Qantas group have been using loopholes in Australia's special purpose visa program to employ Thai based flight attendants on domestic routes for as little as $257 per month. The House will be aware that, recently, the federal government changed the requirements for the 457 visa program, including the removal on the number of 457 workers a company can bring in without market testing or adequate protection. This is only likely to exacerbate the vulnerability of this group of workers.
The Qantas Sale Act was enacted in 1992 to ensure that Qantas remained an Australian airline serving the national interest. Yet, the wholesale outsourcing and offshoring of jobs, the reduction of full-time positions in favour of part-time and casual workforce structures, the flouting of migration laws and the reduction of employment standards do not serve the national interest. A repeal of part 3 of the Qantas Sale Act will not address core strategic and planning decisions that have contributed to the situation that Qantas now finds itself in. In fact, it is more likely to see a replication by Qantas of their domestic capacity war in the international arena.

The Transport Workers' Union point out that Australian aviation is vital to our economy and the Australian way of life and that aviation workers have a right to a decent, safe and secure job. To achieve this, aviation employers must stop outsourcing and offshoring aviation jobs with lower wages and conditions, stop exploiting foreign workers using legal loopholes to undermine Australian wages and conditions and stop bringing down standards in the aviation industry through cutthroat and unsustainable levels of competition. The Transport Workers' Union also make the point that a debt guarantee will not serve to improve decision making by Qantas management. The Australian public could find itself funding outcomes that are costly and inefficient without having had the opportunity to contribute to better planning strategy and decision making. All risk will be transferred to the public sector, while rewards—if any—will be the exclusive domain of the private sector. The TWU think that consideration of a government equity stake should be conditional on the provision of quality Australian jobs, on a commitment to skills development and innovation, on the ability to scrutinise and contribute to the strategic direction and growth plans for the airline, on the prioritisation of national aviation security and on the service of the national interest. Qantas management needs to accept responsibility for what has been a failed strategy.

Climate Change

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (21:05): Climate change science relates fundamentally to two issues: feedbacks and data. The issue of data is critical. Without accurate data, the testing of various hypotheses relating to feedbacks becomes moot. It would appear that, to an extent, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, and the Bureau of Meteorology, or BOM, play fast and loose with the data. I have recent correspondence with the BOM where they state, when questioned about temperatures in Australia, that the temperature data prior to 1910 was unreliable. While this may be true, it is also true that the IPCC, in their reports, use global average data that goes back to 1850. We are asked to believe that the IPCC, of which the BOM is a very active participant, is rigorous in their science, data and fact-checking. So the question is: how do we reconcile unreliable Australian data prior to 1910 with supposedly reliable global data going back to 1850?

Let us assume that Australia prior to 1910 had the most unreliable data on the planet, inferior to that in Antarctica, the world's oceans, South America, Africa, much of Asia and so on. Even then, you still have this large chunk of the planet's area covered by Australia for which the data is unreliable. How then can global average temperatures going back 60 years prior to the 1910 Australian cut-off be reliable? I asked the BOM this very question, and they did not respond to it at all. Given this problem, I would ask the BOM when they advised the IPCC, in writing, that Australian temperature data prior to 1910 was unreliable, hence the IPCC global average temperature data prior to 1910 was similarly unreliable. What was the
IPCC’s response to this information? These are critical questions. Taking data from 1910, there was a warming period from 1910 to around 1945 which was of similar magnitude and rate to that of the period 1975 to 1998, after which, contrary to the models used by the IPCC, and by the IPCC’s own admission, there has been a hiatus—a halt to the warming. Leaving aside the unexplained cooling that occurred from 1945 to 1975, the simple fact is the warming from 1910 to 1945 cannot be blamed on CO₂. What of the manipulation of data by the BOM? Stations such as Darwin, which cooled over the last century when raw data was used, suddenly appeared to have more than a degree of heating when massaged data was used.

I have read the transcript of a recent panel discussion that took place under the auspices of the American Physical Society, the body representing American physicists, on the drafting of an APS position statement on climate change. Those discussions led to some very interesting questions. I would urge anyone interested in climate science to read the transcript; it gives a very good idea of where the science is. They also make the point that accurate data is critical and that many sources of data, such as the oceans, are inadequate. The reason I mention this is that the lack of warming in over a decade is said by alarmists to be due to an unpredicted take-up of this missing heat in the oceans. Why did this mechanism only become operative in the last decade and a half, and not between 1975 and 1998? What is this mysterious mechanism? Why is the supposed heating not demonstrated by an acceleration of sea level rise, as would be expected? Why is there a lack of an upper tropospheric tropical hotspot that would be predicted by a positive water cycle feedback and related to a moist adiabatic process? Why is it that, over a long period of time, global temperature trends can only be explained and understood if feedbacks were negative? These are questions that need to be explained before we spend a fortune on mitigation policy. There needs to be a formal audit of the BOM’s and CSIRO’s data handling processes as a first step, to be conducted by the Bureau of Statistics.

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (21:10): I rise to talk about the importance of tertiary education in rural and regional communities. Indi is blessed by the presence of two branches of universities—La Trobe has a campus in Wodonga and CSU has a small branch in Wangaratta. We also have two TAFE colleges, GOTAFE in Wangaratta and Wodonga Institute of TAFE. La Trobe University is the largest provider of tertiary education in regional Victoria. Tonight, I would like to concentrate my remarks on the Albury-Wodonga campus of La Trobe. It employs 85 staff, has an enrolment of around 900 undergraduate and postgraduate students and offers programs in health sciences, business, science, arts and education. La Trobe's Albury-Wodonga campus hosts three research centres: the Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre; the Centre for Water Policy and Management; and the John Richards Research Initiative into Aged Care in Rural Communities, which is working on ground breaking research on rural wellness. It is funded by the Australian Research Council and has undertaken research in Victoria, Queensland and Canada. La Trobe University sponsors the very popular and erudite Kerferd Oration, which is held annually in the beautiful town of Beechworth.

For the people of Indi, access to tertiary education is a key priority. Sadly, there is a gap between the aspiration and the reality. In the Hume region, which covers a large percentage of Indi, tertiary education participation rates are low. In 2012 they were at 30 per cent, when the
Victorian state average was closer to, and sometimes predicted to be over, 40 per cent. The reasons are many, but they can be summarised under a number of headings. One heading is cost—the cost of courses, of living away from home and of accessing study. A second heading is geography, which includes the related issues of distance, lack of public transport and the need to live away from home. A third heading is limited provisions, with only two campuses both of which are situated in the northern part of the electorate. A fourth heading is poor communication networks, which makes distance education problematic. The final heading is that of class, as many believe that 'Going to university is not for me; it is not what our family does.'

La Trobe University in Albury-Wodonga is working hard to address these barriers. Approximately 65 per cent of its students are the first in their families to go to university, 85 per cent are from low SES backgrounds and 65 per cent are commencing university for the first time and are over 20 years old. One effective program to bring closer engagement between the university and the community is the Commonwealth government funded Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program. HEPPP supports La Trobe University to work with school students to build aspirations and identify achievable pathways to tertiary education. This work is paying dividends. One of the greatest outcomes is that 90 per cent of 2012 graduates from La Trobe's Albury-Wodonga campus are employed in our local area, with only 10 per cent going away to the city following graduation. I see and experience the impact of these graduates every day.

Research into rural community development shows that, where educational institutions exist in rural communities, they provide a focus for the arts, for community renewal, for entrepreneurship and for business. We know that education is both a public good and a private asset, we know that rural communities benefit where there are strong regional educational institutions and we know that the public good of an educated and skilled workforce brings with it high levels of capacity and capability, especially for innovation. But not all is well in the area of tertiary education. Where we need growth, development and innovation, we are facing contraction and reduction. One of the causes is the efficiency dividend, which will severely reduce funding to La Trobe by $30 million between 2014 and 2017. These cuts will have a significant impact on teaching, learning and research grants. It is a most worrying development.

In closing, it is my belief that, of all the investments a community can make, investment in education gives some of the best returns. Tonight I would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to the staff, students and families who support the work of La Trobe University. We, as a community, are grateful for your work and dedication.

Western Australia Senate Election

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (21:15): The coalition government has the capacity and determination to take Australia into a better future. We will provide a better deal for all of Australia, and in particular a better deal for my home state of Western Australia.

We will end the debt and deficit binges of the Labor Party in government and provide sound financial management. We will pick up the tattered pieces of fiscal responsibility that the Labor Party has dropped and left scattered upon the ground and put them back together. We will address the intergenerational debt left for our children, and perhaps even for their children, but the Labor Party refuse to take responsibility for their poor decisions and
consistently leave others to pick up their mess. We will wind back the red tape that binds business and strangles their productivity.

A coalition government will get this great nation back to business and get workers back to a job. An active business sector means jobs, and that is where our focus needs to be. During the recent campaign, we released a range of policies that will boost the economy and create jobs. These include: the coalition's policy to create jobs by boosting productivity, our 2030 Vision for Developing Northern Australia, our policy for boosting productivity and reducing regulation, our policy for jobs and growth in critical small business and our policy to boost manufacturing.

But the fight to get Australia back to work and balance our books is not over. Western Australia will soon play host to that battle once again. On 5 April the Western Australian people must again make a choice about the future of our entire nation, and it is a choice not to be taken lightly.

The task of getting Australia back into a sound fiscal position is no small one, as we on this side of the House understand only too well. And it is made all the harder by a Senate which refuses to recognise the need for change or accept the will of the Australian people as expressed in September last year. The Rudd and Gillard governments have left a legacy of budget mismanagement, budget deficits and intergenerational fiscal debt. Let no-one be in any doubt that that is intergenerational fiscal debt. We are told that gross debt will peak at over $667 billion thanks to $123 billion in accumulated deficits.

As we know, the Labor Party could never achieve a budget surplus—even though they said they did. They certainly never ever provided a credible pathway back to a surplus. Instead we saw, as we know now, back-ended spending beyond the forward estimates period. As is the habit of Labor, they have left the heavy lifting to the coalition, who once again have no choice but to clean up the Labor mess.

The Labor and Green collaboration in the Senate has defied the will of the people long enough. Western Australia will soon have an opportunity to change this impasse. People in Western Australia will have an opportunity to say to Labor and to the Greens that enough is enough, and that they should get out of the way of important reforms that this country needs.

**Qantas**

Mr GILES (Scullin) (21:19): Last week I met with Qantas employees Catherine Moller, Bill Herford and George Panos. They, along with other Qantas staff, were in parliament to discuss the future of Qantas but also their future as employees of Qantas. I was struck by their passion for their work, their commitment and their professionalism. Catherine is a telephone sales representative from Queensland; Bill and George are store workers in freight from New South Wales.

While the economic and statutory issues surrounding Qantas get plenty of air-time in this place and elsewhere, there is precious little heard about the employees whose livelihoods are at stake, including those in the Scullin electorate, which is so close to Melbourne airport. Hearing personal accounts from these workers is essential for anyone participating in the discussion about Qantas's future in Australia. These workers are Qantas.
Qantas has a slogan it likes to repeat, 'You are the reason we fly'. This is half true. The other half of this is truth is, of course, that the workers of Qantas are the reason we fly. We simply could not fly without people like Catherine, Bill and George.

Qantas workers came to parliament, most for the first time, to meet with politicians across the political spectrum, but particularly with the Prime Minister. I am pleased that the Prime Minister met with these employees, but I was struck by the indifference of his response to them: 'No-one's job is safe, including my own.' These employees desire more than this. They are genuinely worried about their jobs being offshored, and the Prime Minister did nothing to allay these concerns. Qantas has already confirmed the sacking of at least 5,000 employees. If the government succeeds with its intention to cut Qantas and its employees adrift, their uncertainty will only increase. Instead of a plan for Australia's aviation industry, all we have heard from the government is its shameless attempt to blame Qantas's woes on the carbon tax. I note for the record that Qantas's domestic operations make a profit. It is Qantas's international operations that currently run at a loss, but of course the carbon price only applies to domestic flights. This attempt at blame is built on a falsehood. When Qantas issued a statement stating, 'The major issues facing Qantas are not related to the carbon tax', it was telling the truth. This prompted the Treasurer to have conversations with Qantas' management to recant those thought crimes.

By way of contrast to the Treasurer's enthusiasm for politically motivated conversations with Qantas' management, we see his reluctance to have conversations or meetings with the employees of Qantas. Fairfax Media reported that senior Qantas management, 'Felt, through general public statements and private communications, that the government wanted it to make more of the carbon tax's part in its $252 million half-year loss'. Clearly, this is a government preoccupied with the politics of the situation and not at all concerned with the policy of ensuring the ongoing viability of Australia's aviation industry.

We saw this most starkly in the way the government gagged debate in this place. We saw this in the refusal of members opposite to meet with workers from Qantas. Employees of the car industry have experienced the effect of this government's hostility to their interests and concerns. We seem to be witnessing the same, unfortunately, in aviation. Catherine, Bill and George, and all the other Qantas employees, simply cannot figure out what this government has against their jobs, their mortgages and their children's education and future. Their presence in parliament was their way of showing that they are more than just statistics on a balance sheet.

I suspect those opposite only want to see Qantas employees when they are smiling and serving food and drinks. Otherwise, it is out of sight and out of mind. Catherine, Bill and George—and thousands like them—deserve to be seen, heard and listened to. Catherine described the very human situation she and her co-workers face:

We will be waiting now on the who, what and when of the impending job losses. We need a plan, an idea of how the future might look for us, for our families and the rest of our working life. It's hard to know what is around the corner each morning. That's no way to be at work.

She deserves better, and so do her colleagues. I want to thank Catherine, Bill and George for telling me their stories so I can tell them in this place. I also want to thank Linda White, Ingrid Stitt and Julie Bignell of the Australian Services Union and Susie Allison from the
National Union of Workers for bringing these employees to Parliament House and including them in this important process.

Through various mechanisms and structures, governments of other countries provide relative certainty to their employees working in the aviation sector; this government refuses to even countenance debate on the matter. Instead of the proposed amendments to the Qantas Sale Act, the government should be exploring measures to create jobs in aviation. The government held out a range of options to help Qantas, but ultimately chose the option that it knew would not succeed—it has no plan B. The employees of Qantas want to be part of the solution in securing a viable future. The government has a role in ensuring our national carrier is strong and able to deliver services in the national interest. (Time expired)

Western Australia Senate Election

Mr IRONS (Swan) (21:24): Tonight I rise to talk about the upcoming Senate election in WA. This is the fourth election in WA in 12 months, and who would have thought it after the coalition had such a resounding and decisive victory on 7 September last year? This is just another impost upon the Western Australian electors. This is an election we are having due to the incompetence of the AEC, and as much as they want to blame the courts for this rerun, the responsibility lies squarely at the feet of the AEC.

I thank the electors of WA for their vote of confidence in the Liberal Party in September last year, which strengthened the result from the 2010 and 2007 elections. The electors of WA have confirmed their confidence—not once, not twice, but for the last three elections—and the WA Liberal members of parliament have not failed them. This is the fourth opportunity for WA electors to confirm those three previous votes. To them I say: you have been correct the last three times, please place your trust in us again. We will be a strong voice for WA in the Senate.

The Leader of the Opposition would have WA voters believe that this is an election about anything but the ALP and their six years of misery and malfunction they visited upon the Australia economy and its good people. The Abbott coalition government is getting on with the job of building a stronger economy so that everyone can get ahead, abolishing the carbon tax, ending the waste, stopping the boats, and building the roads of the 21st century.

Labor's legacy to Australians is 200,000 more unemployed, gross debt projected to rise to $667 billion, $123 billion in cumulative deficits, more than 50,000 illegal arrivals by boat and the world's biggest carbon tax. The coalition is focusing on the economic fundamentals: lower taxes, less red tape, better infrastructure and more trade. That means more growth, higher productivity, more jobs and a fair go for everyone.

Labor voted to keep the carbon tax and is insulting West Australians. Labor betrayed the people of WA when they introduced the carbon tax—and they continue that betrayal by flouting the mandate from Western Australians to get rid of the carbon tax and the mining tax—and continue to join forces with the Greens to keep the carbon tax and the $550 per annum hit on families. Labor Senate candidates in WA are trying to claim that Labor is scrapping the carbon tax. We know that is false.

Labor is out to spoil Western Australians' benefits from the coalition implementing the people's mandate, and we know Labor will make it as hard as possible for the government to
implement its mandate. The carbon and mining taxes are anti-WA taxes, and it is only Labor that is clinging to the past.

A *Crikey* article last year with the heading of, 'Louise Pratt Shafted in WA Labor Senate Battle' clearly sets out the dysfunction of the Labor Party in WA. I quote from that article:

Louise Pratt is set to descend from one to two on WA Labor's Senate ticket as a factional fight for the soul of the party ratchets up. West Australian Shop Assistants czar Joe Bullock is set to assume the top spot on Labor’s WA senate ticket — consigning sitting Senator Louise Pratt to a potentially dicey number two position — when the party's state executive meets on Monday to rule on her future.

It goes on to say:

Thanks to a 14-month-old deal hatched between United Voice and the WA Shop Assistants during the Fremantle preselection, state executive is almost certain to vote up Bullock at number one, Pratt at two and consign Mark Bishop to premature retirement.

Not before time. It also goes on to say:

The senior source attacked Pratt's social media intervention: 'Louise is right in saying that no deal has been done. She's absolutely right. Joe rejected them outright. The fact that they were shopping it around for a month appears to have slipped her notice in her Facebook post.

It also says — which is a clue for Western Australians of how the unions operate:

MUA state secretary Christy Cain has pledged to seize control of the state party.

I am sure having the MUA in charge of the WA Labor state party is an exciting outcome for all Western Australians.

The Labor Party, through their incompetence, created a demand for good government, which the coalition has filled. The only thing blocking the coalition from implementing our promises at the election is the Labor-Greens alliance in the Senate. I say to the people of WA: send that alliance a message and vote for the coalition like you did last September, and tell the Labor-Greens alliance that you do not trust them.

I noticed the Prime Minister reaffirmed the Queen's honours tonight, and at some time in the future I would love to hear the name Dame Bronwyn Bishop.

**House adjourned at 21:30**

**NOTICES**

**Mr Dutton:** To present a Bill for an Act to amend legislation in relation to dental benefits, and for other purposes.

**Mr Dutton:** To present a Bill for an Act to provide for the regulation of the use for commercial purposes.

**Mr Dutton:** To present a Bill for an Act to amend the *Health Insurance Act 1973*, and for related purposes.

**Mr Pyne:** To move:

That, in respect of the proceedings on the Omnibus Repeal Day (Autumn 2014) Bill 2014, the Amending Acts 1901 to 1969 Repeal Bill 2014, and the Statute Law Revision (No. 1) Bill 2014, so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the following from occurring:

1. the resumption of debate on the second readings of the bills being called on together;
2. at the conclusion of the second reading debate or at 5.30 pm on Wednesday, 26 March 2014, whichever is the earlier, a Minister being called to sum up the second reading debate, then without
delay, (a) any necessary questions being put on any amendments moved to motions for the second readings by non-Government Members, and (b) one question being put on the second readings of the bills together;

(3) the consideration in detail stages, if required, on all the bills being taken together for a period not exceeding 60 minutes at which time any Government amendments that have been circulated in respect of any of the bills shall be treated as if they have been moved together with (a) one question being put on all the Government amendments, (b) one question being put on any amendments which have been moved by non-Government Members, and (c) any further questions necessary to complete the detail stage being put;

(4) at the conclusion of the detail stage, one question being put on the remaining stages of all the bills together; and

(5) any variation to this arrangement to be made only by a motion moved by a Minister.

Mr A. S. Burke: To move:

That this House:

(1) endorses the following statements by Coalition members about the importance of the independence of the Speaker:

   (a) the now Prime Minister on 21 September 2010 on 2GB: ‘I’ve always supported an independent speakership’;

   (b) the now Prime Minister on 25 August 2010 during a press conference: ‘I also want to make it very clear that we discussed the issue of a Westminster style speakership to which I have always been extremely attracted’;

   (c) the now Prime Minister on 9 October 2012 in the House of Representatives: ‘Be you the newest member, be you the father of the House, the Speaker is charged with upholding the standing orders impartially for and against all members of this parliament’;

   (d) the now Deputy Prime Minister on 9 October 2012 in the House of Representatives: ‘Despite political differences, the Speaker must be an impartial umpire over the people and the proceedings of the House’;

   (e) the now Minister for Foreign Affairs on 9 October 2012 in the House of Representatives: ‘All nations that have adopted the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy have a Speaker, playing a critical role as an impartial judge, whose foremost duty is to uphold the dignity of the House, to enforce standards of behaviour and to represent the House and the parliament in the traditional and ceremonial roles that are required of the Speaker’;

   (f) the now Leader of the House and Minister for Education on 30 January 2013 in a speech to the Institute of Public Affairs: ‘Upon election, as Leader of the House, I will seek to...support an independent Speaker’; and

   (g) in addition, the now Leader of the House and Minister for Education in the same speech: ‘The Speaker should be independent, they should abstain from their respective party rooms and when the Speaker is taken from one Party, the Deputy should be taken from the other’;

(2) endorses in principle the:

   (a) utmost importance of the independence of the Speaker; and

   (b) importance of the Speaker interpreting the Standing Orders of the House correctly, consistently and impartially; and

(3) supports a practice whereby the Speaker refrains from attending his or her party room.

Ms Parke: To move:

That this House:
(1) notes that:

(a) Western Australia is experiencing a period of rapid growth associated with its strong economic and employment conditions, and this growth is in turn putting pressure on Perth’s transport network capacity;

(b) Perth is facing growing congestion with serious consequences in terms of delays and safety for both passenger and freight transport;

(c) the former Western Australian Labor government had the foresight, vision and persistence to implement one of the most successful and transformative public transport projects in recent Australian history in the form of the Perth-Mandurah rail line;

(d) the former Labor Australian government invested more in metropolitan public transport than all previous Australian governments combined, and also made significant contributions to essential strategic road projects;

(e) these Labor government public transport and road funding contributions have enabled Perth City Link, the Gateway WA Perth Airport and Freight Access Project, and the widening of the Kwinana Freeway between the Leach and Roe Highways, among others;

(f) the new Western Australia Minister for Transport misled the public on Monday 24 March 2014, when he issued a media statement suggesting that the widening of the Kwinana Freeway between the Roe Highway and Armadale Road would go ahead as a result of a decision taken by the Australian Government when in fact the project was announced in August 2013 by then Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the Hon. Anthony Albanese;

(g) the Australian Government has failed to match Labor’s election commitment of providing a further $500 million for the delivery of additional transport projects to be agreed with the Western Australian Government;

(h) the Prime Minister has made it clear that a Coalition government will not fund urban rail projects; and

(i) within a year of its re-election the Western Australian Government has already broken its election promise to commence the delivery of much-needed light rail infrastructure by 2016; and

(2) calls on the Australian Government to:

(a) identify and support key public transport and road projects in Western Australia as a matter of urgency, with the priority being urban rail and genuine second-tier public transport; and

(b) encourage the Western Australian Government to keep its election promise in relation to the delivery of light rail.

Mr Shorten: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Australian Education Act 2013, and for related purposes.
QUESTIONs IN WRITING

Richmond Electorate: 2013 Election Commitments
(Question No. 49)

Mrs Elliot asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 12 February 2014:

In respect of the Government's election commitment to allocate $200,000 to enhance security in Byron Bay by installing CCTV cameras, (a) will the funds be allocated in the 2013-14 budget as promised; if so, from which funding program will they come, (b) what additional funding requirements will be imposed on funding recipients for them to receive the funding, and (c) what is the status of the National Party's progress on meeting its remaining 2013 election commitments in the electoral division of Richmond.

Mr Truss: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) Funds to meet this commitment are expected to be available in 2014-15 from the Safer Streets Programme, which will be administered by the Attorney-General's Department.

(b) Funding recipients will be required to demonstrate that they meet the requirements of the Safer Streets Programme before funding can be provided. Requirements include how the proposed project fulfils the identified election commitment, whether the proposed project is cost-effective and represents good value for money, and the organisation's capacity to deliver the project and administer grant funds.

Decisions on the provision of grants will be made by the Minister for Justice.

(c) The Government is funding its election commitments through the Community Development Grants (CDG) programme, with $342 million provided for a range of community projects to support economic growth and liveability. The Government has allocated $435,000 from the CDG to the electorate of Richmond through the Tweed Shire Council including $185,000 for the Murwillumbah Football Club upgrade, and $250,000 for the Joan Nicoll Tennis Centre - Stage 1 and 2. My Department is working with the Tweed Shire Council to ensure that sufficient information on the projects is provided to allow a value for public money assessment to be undertaken prior to entering into a Funding Agreement with the Tweed Shire Council.

Regional Development Australia Fund
(Question No. 53)

Mr Stephen Jones asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 12 February 2014:

In respect of Regional Development Australia Fund Round 5 projects approved by the previous Minister but not contracted prior to 5 August 2013, what total number have subsequently been approved for funding under (a) Round 5A, (b) Round 5B, what are their names, what criteria did the Government use to determine which Round 5 projects would be approved, and when will a list be made publicly available on the status of all Round 5 projects.

Mr Truss: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

I wrote to all Mayors on 9 December 2013 advising of the Government's decision not to proceed with funding for projects under Rounds Five and Five B of the Regional Development Australia Fund. These projects were election commitments of the former government which were announced during or just before the election campaign, and are not binding on the Government. They were to be funded by the Minerals Resource Rent Tax (MRRT), however as the MRRT did not raise significant funds, these projects were unfunded.