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SITTING DAYS—2016

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FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office Holders
Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith MP
Deputy Speaker—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Hon. Sharon Leah Bird MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mr Andrew William Hastie MP, Mr Kevin John Hogan MP and Ms Maria Vanvakinou MP
Leader of the House—Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Darren Chester MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Malcolm Bligh Turnbull MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP
Government Whips—Mr Albertus Johannes van Manen MP and Mr Rowan Eric Ramsey MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard Joyce MP
Deputy Leader—Senator the Hon Fiona Nash
Chief Whip—Mr George Robert Christenson MP
Deputy Whip—Ms Michelle Leanne Landry 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 Joanne Catherine Ryan MP and Mr Graham Douglas Perrett MP

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Members of the House of Representatives

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<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O’Connor, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Timothy Robert</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Hon. 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>
<tr>
<td>Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; AUS—Katter’s Australia Party; IND—Independent; LNP—Liberal National Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals; NXT—Nick Xenophon Team

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- Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
- Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
- Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefani
- Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter-Terrorism</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security</td>
<td>Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>Senator the Hon James McGrath</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation</td>
<td>Hon Angus Taylor MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</td>
<td>Hon Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
<td>Hon Steve Ciobo MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
<td>Hon Keith Pitt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Revenue and Financial Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<td>Minister for Small Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Development</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Local Government and Territories</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Industry</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Personnel</td>
<td>Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Hon Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Hon Alex Hawke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science</td>
<td>Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Resources and Northern Australia</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Matt Canavan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science</td>
<td>Hon Craig Laundy MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Health and Aged Care</td>
<td>Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Sport</td>
<td>Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care</td>
<td>Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Rural Health</td>
<td>Hon Dr David Gillespie MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Communications</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Arts</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Social Services</td>
<td>Hon Christian Porter MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Social Services and Disability Services</td>
<td>Hon Jane Prentice MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Zed Seselja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Education and Training</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills</td>
<td>Hon Karen Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Environment and Energy</td>
<td>Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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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. Assistant Ministers in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the *Ministers of State Act 1952.*
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<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</td>
<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</td>
<td>Senator Patrick Dodson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Preventing Family Violence</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader (Tasmania)</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Schools</td>
<td>Andrew Giles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition and Productivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Charities and Not-for-Profits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy</td>
<td>Ed Husic MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs</td>
<td>Tim Hammond MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Treasury</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney-General</td>
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<td>Clare O’Neil MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Participation and Future of Work</td>
<td>Hon Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Services, Workforce</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Cyber Security and Defence</td>
<td>Gai Brodtmann MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence Industry and Support</td>
<td>Hon Mike Kelly AM MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Manufacturing and Science</td>
<td>Hon Nick Champion MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health and Medicare</td>
<td>Hon Catherine King MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Medicare</td>
<td>Tony Zappa MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Development(1)</td>
<td>Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for TAFE and Vocational Education</td>
<td>Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Doug Cameron</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Early Childhood</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Rural and Regional Australia</td>
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<td>Lisa Chesters MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
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<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<td>Senator Katy Gallagher</td>
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<td>Stephen Jones MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Mental Health(3)</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>Senator Deborah O’Neill</td>
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</table>

Each box represents a portfolio except for (1) which is in the Education portfolio, (2) which is in Treasury portfolio and (3) which is in the Health portfolio. **Shadow Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.**
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  Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2016-2017—
  Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017—
    Second Reading............................................................................................................. 1964

ADJOURNMENT—
  Shipping ........................................................................................................................... 1988
  Dunkley Electorate: Langwarrin ....................................................................................... 1989
  Human Rights: The Philippines ....................................................................................... 1990
  Western Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative .................................................. 1991
  Gellibrand Electorate: Australian Islamic Centre............................................................. 1992
  Murray Electorate: Aged Care......................................................................................... 1994
The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 09:30, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

MOTIONS

Coalition Government

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (09:31): I seek leave to move the following motion, which may well have the unanimous support of the House:

That the House:
(1) notes that in the first 10 sitting days of the 45th Parliament:
   (a) the Government lost control of the floor of the House of Representatives;
   (b) the Treasurer introduced legislation containing a $107 million black hole;
   (c) the Senate ran out of legislation to debate; and
   (d) for the first time in the history of the Federation, an Opposition second reading amendment passed the House of Representatives, meaning the House, and all Government Members, voted unanimously that the Government has failed to close tax loopholes and increase transparency in Australia; and

(2) given the House has resolved the Government must explain these failures, therefore calls on the Minister for Revenue to attend the House to explain why the Government has failed to close tax loopholes and increase transparency in Australia.

Leave not granted.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga is warned!

Mr BURKE: I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Manager of Opposition Business from moving the following motion forthwith—

That the House:
(1) notes that in the first 10 sitting days of the 45th Parliament:
   (a) the Government lost control of the floor of the House of Representatives;
   (b) the Treasurer introduced legislation containing a $107 million black hole;
   (c) the Senate ran out of legislation to debate; and
   (d) for the first time in the history of the Federation, an Opposition second reading amendment passed the House of Representatives, meaning the House, and all Government Members, voted unanimously that the Government has failed to close tax loopholes and increase transparency in Australia; and

(2) given the House has resolved the Government must explain these failures, therefore calls on the Minister for Revenue to attend the House to explain why the Government has failed to close tax loopholes and increase transparency in Australia.

If you cannot manage the parliament, you cannot govern the country—and they cannot govern the country.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (09:33): I move:
That the Member be no longer heard.

**The SPEAKER:** The question is that the Manager of Opposition Business be no longer heard.

The House divided. [09:38]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 74
Noes ...................... 70
Majority ............... 4

**AYES**

Abbott, AJ  
Andrews, KJ  
Banks, J  
Broad, AJ  
Buchholz, S  
Christensen, GR (teller)  
Coleman, DB  
Crewther, CJ  
Dutton, PC  
Evans, TM  
Fletcher, PW  
Frydenberg, JA  
Gillespie, DA  
Hartseyker, L  
Hawke, AG  
Hogan, KJ  
Hunt, GA  
Joyce, BT  
Kelly, C  
Landry, ML  
Leeser, J  
Littleproud, D  
McCormack, MF  
Morrison, SJ  
O'Brien, LS  
O'Dowd, KD  
Pasin, A  
Porter, CC  
Price, ML  
Ramsey, RE (teller)  
Sudmalis, AE  
Taylor, AJ  
Tudge, AE  
Vasta, RX  
Wicks, LE  
Wilson, TR  
Wyatt, KG

**NOES**

Albanese, AN  
Bird, SL  

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1842  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Thursday, 13 October 2016  

**CHAMBER**
Thursday, 13 October 2016  HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  1843

NOES


Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (09:43): Is the motion seconded?

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (09:43): It is. The Australian people worked out long ago that the Turnbull government—

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon will resume his seat. The Leader of the House?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (09:43): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER (09:44): The question is that the member for McMahon be not further heard.

The House divided. [09:44]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)
Ayes .................... 74
Noes .................... 70
Majority............... 4

**AYES**

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**NOES**

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The question now is that the motion be agreed to.

Mr Albanese: Point of order, Mr Speaker. Standing order 67 says a member may request that the Speaker state the question or matter under discussion. I do that, Mr Speaker, so that we can be informed of what we are now voting on. It is good practice.

The SPEAKER: As the member for Grayndler well knows, we are now voting on the question that the motion moved by the Manager of Opposition Business be agreed to.

Mr Albanese: Point of order, Mr Speaker. Under standing order—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will resume his seat. I am not of the view that that requires me to state the entire question. Otherwise, that would have been happening in this House for a long period of time.

Mr Burke interjecting—

The SPEAKER: No, I am sorry. The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (09:47): I move:

That the question be now put.

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

The House divided. [09:48]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................... 77
Noes ..................... 67
Majority............... 10

**AYES**

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**CHAMBER**
The question now is that the motion moved by the Manager of Opposition Business be agreed to.

The House divided. [09:52]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 67
Noes ...................... 77
Majority ................. 10

AYES

Albanese, AN .................. Aly, A
Bird, SL ......................... Bowen, CE
Brodie, G ....................... Burke, AS
Burney, LJ ..................... Butler, MC
Butler, TM ..................... Byrne, AM
Chalmers, JE .................. Champion, ND
Chesters, LM .................. Clare, JD
Claydon, SC ................... Collins, JM
Conroy, PM ................... Danby, M
Dick, JD ....................... Dreyfus, MA
Elliot, MJ ...................... Ellis, KM

CHAMBER
AYS

Feeney, D
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hammond, TJ
Hayes, CP
Husar, E
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khailil, P
Lamb, S
Macklin, JL
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Watts, TG
Zappia, A

Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gosling, LJ
Hart, RA
Hill, JC
Husic, EN
Keay, JT
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Neumann, SK
O'Toole, C
Perrett, GD (teller)
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM
Templeman, SR
Vamvakinou, M
Wilson, JH

NOES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Banks, J
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR (teller)
Coleman, DB
Crewther, CJ
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
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Laundy, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
McGowan, C
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O'Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Question negatived.

COMMITTEES

National Broadband Network - Joint Standing

Membership

The SPEAKER (09:58): I have received a message from the Senate informing the House that Senator Williams has been appointed as a participating member of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Broadband Network.

BILLS

Fair Work Amendment (Respect for Emergency Services Volunteers) Bill 2016

Assent

Message from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bill.

Social Services Legislation Amendment (Transition Mobility Allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill 2016

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Porter.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (10:00): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Social Services Legislation Amendment (Transition Mobility Allowance to the National Disability Insurance Scheme) Bill 2016 introduces the 2016-17 budget measure to transition the Mobility Allowance program into the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Mobility Allowance is being transitioned into the NDIS to ensure that the NDIS is the main program of support for people with a disability who need assistance to enable them to fully engage in the workforce and other economic activities.

The NDIS is the new way of providing individualised support for eligible people with a permanent disability or a significant functional impairment. The NDIS will provide about
460,000 Australians under the age of 65 with a disability with the reasonable and necessary supports they need to live fruitful and successful lives.

As part of the previous Labor government's decision to commit to the NDIS in the 2013-14 budget, it was agreed at that time that the Mobility Allowance would be one of 17 commonwealth programs that would be transferred to the NDIS to assist in funding its implementation. The implementation of this decision would have required the progressive closing of Mobility Allowance in NDIS sites from 2016-17 in order to align the Mobility Allowance payment settings with the NDIS funding estimates.

There are currently around 60,000 Mobility Allowance recipients. However, the NDIS trials have demonstrated that around 30 per cent (18,000) of these Mobility Allowance recipients will likely be ineligible to receive an NDIS package of support. This group includes around 4,000 recipients who would be aged 65 years or older and approximately 14,000 recipients who would be aged under 65 years.

This is in large part due to Mobility Allowance having a much broader eligibility criteria than the NDIS. The group of recipients aged under 65 who are expected not to transition to the NDIS includes recipients who have mild to moderate or non-permanent disability and would therefore not qualify for a package of support under the NDIS eligibility rules.

Without additional funding, the closure of the Mobility Allowance would have resulted in current recipients of Mobility Allowance that are ineligible for the NDIS not being provided with continuity of support as agreed by governments.

This government is working to ensure that those not expected to transition into the NDIS continue to receive the support they need.

This bill presents amendments to the Social Security Act 1991 and related legislation as part of the transitioning of Mobility Allowance to the NDIS. It will ensure that continuity of support is provided to current recipients of Mobility Allowance who may not be eligible for the NDIS.

As a first step, the government has provided $46½ million in the 2016-17 budget to ensure that such people continue to receive support through the Mobility Allowance program in the short to medium term.

The government is also considering how such people, including participants in any of the other transitioning programs who are assessed to be ineligible for an NDIS package, will be supported over the long term under continuity of support arrangements.

To support the transition of Mobility Allowance funding into the NDIS, this bill will align eligibility rules for new claimants from 1 January 2017 with the NDIS eligibility rules, to ensure that the program is targeted to those who need support the most while they wait to be transitioned into the NDIS.

Under current arrangements, Mobility Allowance is a very broad program which is not particularly well targeted. The payment has not led to any significant increase in the workforce participation of recipients. This is partly because, despite its policy objectives, there is no requirement for Mobility Allowance payments to actually be spent on transport needs or in ways that directly assist a recipient's workforce participation.
There are several differences in the eligibility requirements for assistance through Mobility Allowance and the NDIS, including age of eligibility and the disability requirements. Access to the NDIS is limited to those who apply before turning 65 years, whereas there is no current upper age limit for Mobility Allowance.

NDIS eligibility requires that a person's disability is likely to be permanent and substantially affect an individual's capacity for social and economic participation. Mobility Allowance eligibility requirements are far broader, requiring merely a disability that affects an individual's ability to use public transport for an extended period of one year or more.

To support the transition of Mobility Allowance funding to the NDIS, Mobility Allowance will only be available to new claimants aged under 65 years—that is, it will become consistent with the NDIS rules.

The disability criteria will also be aligned with the NDIS disability criteria, which means that new claimants must have a permanent or significant disability which prevents them from using public transport without substantial assistance, and be undertaking paid work or vocational training.

These changes will ensure that those who become eligible for the payment from 1 January 2017 are people who are more likely to be eligible for NDIS support.

These changes to eligibility will not apply to existing Mobility Allowance recipients. However, recipients who lose entitlement to the payment and wish to reclaim Mobility Allowance will be assessed under the new rules.

Consistent with the practice implemented during the NDIS trials, a person who receives an NDIS package of support will not be eligible to receive Mobility Allowance payments at the same time.

In addition, and to ensure that eligible participants fully utilise the range of services that will be available to them in the NDIS, this bill introduces amendments to prevent a person who receives a package of NDIS supports from being able to opt out of the NDIS in order to claim Mobility Allowance. This means that once a recipient transfers into the NDIS, Mobility Allowance will no longer be an available option for them, even if they discontinue their program of support.

Mobility allowance recipients currently receive a 12-week continuation period, during which they may continue to receive a payment while not participating in a qualifying activity. For example, a recipient whose casual employment is completed can continue to receive the payment for 12 weeks while they look for another job or seek to engage in another activity. However, the existence of the 12-week continuation period has not led to any appreciable increase in the level of workforce participation of mobility allowance recipients.

This bill will reduce the continuation period during which a recipient continues to receive mobility allowance while they are no longer engaged in a qualifying activity, from 12 weeks to four weeks.

Through aligning eligibility of mobility allowance with the NDIS and these other additional measures, the vast majority of mobility allowance recipients will be receiving individualised supports through the NDIS when it reaches full scheme in 2019-20.
The amendments in this bill will result in the closure of the mobility allowance program from 1 July 2020, following the full rollout of the NDIS. The closure of the mobility allowance program will also be another step towards this government's commitment to simplifying the welfare payment system.

As mobility allowance is a supplementary payment designed to assist with transport costs for eligible recipients undertaking approved activities, closing the program will not disadvantage most recipients as the payment will be replaced with individualised supports provided through the NDIS.

Current recipients of mobility allowance who are still in receipt of the payment as at 30 June 2020, as they have been found to be ineligible for the NDIS, will continue to receive support in the longer term pursuant to a commitment to provide continuity of support for existing Commonwealth clients.

It is important to note that there is also a range of other assistance programs available to help individuals who will no longer have access to mobility allowance and who are found to be ineligible for the NDIS. Some of these assistance programs provide services to address mobility issues faced by individuals. Assistance programs available to these individuals include:

- GST exempt purchase of cars for work use, where the individual has a disability affecting to the extent they cannot use public transport;
- the Employment Assistance Fund, providing financial assistance for people with disability or their workforce modification equipment or services;
- Employment services, through jobactive, Disability Employment Services and the Community Development Program assisting jobseekers (including those with disability) to become job ready and find work, including through providing wage subsidies;
- Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support Program, providing wage and mentoring support for the employers hiring apprentices and trainees with disability;
- State and territory transport, vehicle modification and parking subsidies.

Eligibility for social security pensions or benefits will also not be affected by these amendments. The majority (notably, 90 per cent) of mobility allowance recipients are currently eligible to receive a primary income support payment, such as disability support pension. Most of these recipients also have automatic access to concession cards and a range of supports employment services and training opportunities through their jobactive and Disability Employment Services providers.

The objectives of this bill are consistent with the government's commitment to the full implementation of the NDIS. Together with the transition of other programs, this bill ensures that the NDIS is the main program of support for people with a disability who need assistance to enable them to fully engage in the workforce and other economic activities. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.
VET Student Loans Bill 2016

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mrs Andrews.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills)

(10:10): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Vocational education and training plays a critical role in ensuring Australia has the skilled workforce it needs to drive innovation and economic growth.

Last year, around 4.5 million people participated in the Australian vocational education and training system.

Australia’s economic prosperity depends upon the quality of our graduates, the outcomes of the training they receive and whether they are skilled in the way employers need them to be skilled.

That is why supporting high-quality vocational education and training is central to the Turnbull government’s economic growth and jobs plan.

Around 45 per cent of the financial assistance the Commonwealth invested in vocational education and training in 2015 supported income contingent loans for students undertaking diplomas and above qualifications, through the VET FEE-HELP scheme.

The government supports income contingent loans. Without them, thousands of students who could not afford to pay up-front fees to do a tertiary qualification would miss out. And Australian businesses and the Australian economy would also miss out on the skills that those graduates would bring.

But it is also true that there are many students who are being enrolled in courses and taking out VET FEE-HELP loans that deliver no benefit, either to them, or to the economy.

Labor’s record

The disastrous VET FEE-HELP scheme will go down in history as one of the great policy failures of the Rudd-Gillard years.

Labor introduced VET FEE-HELP and opened up the scheme in 2012 in a way that allowed unscrupulous providers and brokers in to take advantage of vulnerable students, to rip off taxpayers, and to tarnish the reputation of Australia’s high-quality training providers and VET system.

Under Labor’s scheme, students were signed up for thousands of dollars in loans for courses they did not need or could never complete, or which had no link to employer or skills needs in the economy.

VET FEE-HELP has come with immense human cost, particularly to those Indigenous Australians in remote communities, older Australians in retirement villages and Australians with disability, who are amongst the many vulnerable people who have been targeted by unscrupulous providers or brokers who have been rorting the VET FEE-HELP system.
VET FEE-HELP has tarnished the reputations of high-quality vocational education and training providers. And VET FEE-HELP has come at an enormous cost to the budget.

As a result of Labor's scheme, between 2009 and 2015:

• The numbers of students accessing VET FEE-HELP jumped by 5,000 per cent, from 5,262 to 272,000.
• Average course costs more than tripled, from around $4,000 to $14,000.
• The value of loans landing as debts to students, and as Commonwealth borrowings, blew out from $26 million to $2.9 billion.

Reforms to date

As the scale of Labor's failings in VET FEE-HELP became apparent, the coalition government has taken strong action.

In 2015, the government banned inducements being offered to students to enrol in courses for which they needed a loan, and tightened recruitment and marketing practices to make it clear to students what they were signing up for.

On 1 January of this year, we brought in a student entry requirement for access to loans to ensure that prospective students are academically suited for their higher level vocational training, required loans to be levied along with the students' progression in the course rather than in one hit up-front and instituted civil penalties for providers that breached requirements.

We increased protections for students under the age of 18 and introduced a two-day gap to separate a student's enrolment decision from their application for a loan.

And we introduced a loan freeze to stop escalating growth while we undertook consultation to design a new student loan arrangement that had students and their training and employment outcomes at its centre.

All of those actions have made an impact.

It is expected that the value of loans in 2016 will be several hundreds of millions of dollars less than the equivalent in 2015.

However, it is clear that to truly fix the VET FEE-HELP scheme we first need to axe it and build a new program that supports high-quality training, for genuine students, aligned with workplace needs.

The VET Student Loans Bill 2016, along with the two supporting bills in the package—the VET Student Loans (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2016 and the VET Student Loans (Charges) Bill 2016—delivers a new program to give students who are interested in a high-level VET qualification the best opportunity to access the training they need to improve their employment outcomes.

The VET Student Loans Bill 2016

Higher bar to entry

The introduction of VET Student Loans from 1 January 2017 gives us a chance to reset expectations for students, providers, employers and taxpayers.

Unscrupulous behaviour will not be tolerated.
Providers will need to meet tougher entry criteria to become, and to remain, an approved course provider.

These include being a 'fit and proper person' and having to satisfy provider suitability requirements around stronger governance, industry engagement and quality training, which will be specified in the rules.

The bill enables the government to charge an application fee to providers.

**Tougher compliance measures**

Approved providers will be subjected to much tougher compliance measures and ongoing reporting requirements.

The bill triggers all the powers under the Regulatory Powers (Standard Provisions) Act 2014, including monitoring and investigation powers and enforcement provisions such as civil penalties, infringement notices, enforceable undertakings and injunctions.

Importantly, the bill will also provide a new power to immediately suspend a provider in urgent circumstances.

The bill also expands the monitoring provisions by applying them to all of the bill and not just the civil penalty provisions, as is the current position.

Civil penalties will apply to more contraventions and the amounts of the penalties will, in many instances, increase to be more commensurate with the nature of the contravention.

The bill imposes personal liability on executive officers of providers in relation to contravention of civil penalty provisions or the commission of any offences.

The bill also introduces new measures to allow the Commonwealth to cap an individual provider's loan amounts or restrict a provider's scope of delivery to control non-genuine growth in enrolments or unreasonable fee increases.

**Banning brokers and limiting third parties providing training**

Providers will be banned from using brokers or marketing agents to interact or engage with students in relation to VET Student Loans.

Enrolment processes and student engagement relating to VET Student Loans should be the sole responsibility of approved providers that have met the higher benchmark.

The bill introduces new limitations on the use of third-party training providers.

Approved providers may only subcontract training to other approved VET Student Loan providers or higher education providers registered by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency.

Individual subcontractors engaged to provide specialist expertise for part of a course will be allowed on a case by case basis.

This will help redress issues that have occurred with the VET FEE-HELP scheme where some approved providers have been delivering minimal or no training themselves but, rather, have been selling access to the scheme to those that were not approved.

**Course eligibility**

The new VET Student Loans program will limit courses eligible for a loan.
The focus will be on courses that have a high national priority, align with industry needs, contribute to addressing skills shortages and lead to employment outcomes.

The minister will have the power to approve a course list by legislative instrument—the courses and loan caps determination.

The list of 347 courses proposed to be eligible for a VET Student Loan from 1 January 2017 is currently open for consultation.

The determination will give the minister the power to change the list and ensure that it remains flexible to meet changing workplace skills needs.

**Loan caps**

The bill provides the power for the minister to set loan caps, to help protect students from rapidly rising course costs and set a ceiling on the maximum loan amount the government is willing to loan to a student for a specific course.

Three maximum loan caps are proposed for the start of the program: $5,000, $10,000 and $15,000 per course.

These levels are derived from actual VET FEE-HELP tuition fee data and the New South Wales Smart and Skilled program.

The bill provides for the caps to be indexed annually in line with the government's other student loan programs.

Importantly, the government has recognised that there are some courses which cost more to deliver than the proposed caps, such as aviation.

The bill will therefore enable the minister to amend the caps to provide exemptions where needed.

The government has made clear this will be the exception rather than the rule.

**Students—engagement**

From 1 July 2017, a student engagement and progression requirement for continued access to the loan will apply.

Students will be required to progressively log in to confirm their continued engagement in the course. The detail of the student engagement measures will be set out in the rules.

**Ensuring students get what they pay for**

Greater protections will be provided for students by shifting the ability to access a loan away from the provider to the student.

Student loans will be approved by the Commonwealth but only if the student is eligible and it is for a course that is an approved course.

Flexibility is given to the Commonwealth as to when loan payments may be made, enabling payments to providers to be spread across the duration of a course, and paid in arrears.

The bill provides the Commonwealth with the discretion not to pay a loan where it is satisfied a student is non-genuine or where it suspects the approved provider is not complying with the conditions on its approval or the provisions in the bill.
The bill also expands the circumstances in which debts can be remitted and explicitly prevents providers from pursuing outstanding debts from students where their loans have been cancelled.

In circumstances such as unacceptable conduct by a provider, or if the provider's noncompliance has adversely affected the student, or if it is shown that the student is not eligible or not genuine, the secretary has the discretion to recredit the student's FEE-HELP balance without the student having to apply.

In all cases where a debt is reccredited, the provider will be required to pay this amount to the Commonwealth.

The bill will retain the provisions to allow the sharing of information with other Commonwealth agencies, such as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (the ACCC) and national and state based regulators, to ensure action taken in relation to VET student loans is considered for breaches of other regulatory arrangements.

Tuition assurance arrangements will be strengthened and will continue to be a requirement for approval as a provider.

The bill provides greater protection to students in the event of a provider ceasing to provide a course by imposing obligations on the body that has agreed to provide the tuition assurance.

To further strengthen student protections, the government intends to establish a VET student loans ombudsman, and will provide further information on this in due course.

Repaying loans

Ensuring cohesion between the shared elements of the Higher Education Loan Program, or HELP, is critical as students move between the higher education and VET sectors throughout their education experience.

That is why the bill retains the repayment measures in the Higher Education Support Act 2003 to maintain repayment consistency with the rest of the Commonwealth's Higher Education Loan Programs.

The current student's lifetime loan limit, repayment thresholds and rates, and the loan fee will continue to apply to VET student loans and will be considered in the totality of HELP reform.

Any future changes to either of these arrangements are expected to be applied consistently to both FEE-HELP and the new loan program.

VET Student Loans (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2016

The package of VET student loans legislation also includes the VET Student Loans (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2016.

This bill effectively closes off the VET FEE-HELP loan scheme for new student loans from 1 January 2017, and new VET FEE-HELP provider approvals after 4 October 2016.

It also establishes transitional arrangements for existing VET FEE-HELP students, and currently approved VET FEE-HELP providers.

Arrangements for existing students
Genuine students with existing VET FEE-HELP loans for courses they have yet to complete will be given the opportunity to continue their studies with existing providers under their existing VET FEE-HELP arrangements until the end of 2017.

These students will need to confirm they are active in their courses and wish to continue during 2017 with access to VET FEE-HELP.

Over the coming months the department will be contacting all existing students to advise them of the required arrangements by which they can opt in to be 'grandfathered'.

The student must have enrolled in the VET course of study and accessed VET FEE-HELP for a unit of that course before 1 January 2017, and the secretary of the Department of Education and Training must be satisfied that the student is a genuine student.

The bill sets out that a student is not entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance on or after 1 January 2018 and it is expected that after this time, students who have yet to complete their course will need to transfer to the new VET student loan scheme to complete it, or to another provider if their current provider is not approved to offer VET student loans.

Following the government's changes to VET FEE-HELP to limit debts being levied in line with student progression, students should be paying using a VET FEE-HELP loan only for units which have a census date by the end of 2017. No VET FEE-HELP liabilities will be incurred by students after 2017.

**Arrangements for providers**

The consequential and transitional bill sets out that the minister (or delegate) is precluded from approving any new VET FEE-HELP providers after 4 October 2016.

The Commonwealth will cease the assessment of current applications for VET FEE-HELP provider approvals.

The bill also provides that universities (table A providers and table B providers under the HESA), as well as TAFEs and other publicly-owned registered training organisations (RTOs), that are currently approved as VET FEE-HELP providers, will be automatically approved for the purposes of the VET student loans program from 1 January 2017, enabling students enrolled in approved courses at those providers to access VET student loans from the start of next year.

Other RTOs that are currently approved as VET FEE-HELP providers can be approved for the purposes of the VET student loans program for the provisional period from 1 January to 30 June 2017, if the secretary is satisfied that they meet transitional suitability requirements.

Current VET providers that do not meet these criteria will not be approved for the purposes of the VET student loans program from 1 January 2017, and will have to seek approval under the VET Student Loans Act 2016 as normal—with any such approval not commencing before 1 July 2017.

This will ensure that provisional approval is provided only to suitable providers during the transition period.

Current approved VET FEE-HELP providers may continue to deliver training with access to VET FEE-HELP for existing students until 31 December 2017. This applies regardless of whether they are entering the new program, and is in place to ensure continuity and minimal disruption to existing students at those providers.
Other consequential amendments

The bill also makes consequential amendments to the Higher Education Support Act 2003, the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011, or the NVETR Act, and the Student Identifiers Act 2014 to assist in the administration and enforcement of the VET Student Loans program.

Amendments to HESA are required to provide for loan debt calculation and repayments arising from the granting of VET student loans under the VET Student Loans Act.

The NVETR Act is amended to make it clear that it is a condition of a provider's registration under that act that it comply with the HESA and the VET Student Loans Act.

This will clarify the capacity of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (the Australian Skills Quality Authority) to take action under the NVETR Act for breaches of the HESA and the VET Student Loans Act.

The Student Identifiers Act is amended to make it clear that student identifiers can be collected, used and disclosed for the purposes of the VET Student Loans Act.

VET Student Loans (Charges) Bill 2016

The package of VET Student Loans legislation also includes the VET Student Loans (Charges) Bill 2016.

The bill establishes an annual charge on providers as a tax, to help recover some of the costs associated with administering the new VET Student Loans program.

Conclusion

The waste, rorting and damage to vocational education simply cannot continue.

The government calls on its parliamentary colleagues to work with us to help ensure the new VET Student Loans program is legislated as quickly as possible to enable it to start as intended on 1 January 2017.

In getting us to this point I want to thank the member for Cowper and Senator Scott Ryan, both of whom worked tirelessly in their former roles as ministers for vocational education and skills.

I commend this bill.

Debate adjourned.
package of bills implementing new vocational education student loan arrangements. Its measures include effectively ending the VET FEE-HELP scheme, establishing transition arrangements for current VET FEE-HELP students and currently approved VET FEE-HELP providers, and consequential amendments to the Higher Education Support Act 2003, the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 and the Student Identifiers Act 2014.

I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

**VET Student Loans (Charges) Bill 2016**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mrs Andrews.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

**Mrs ANDREWS** (McPherson—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills) (10:35): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As outlined in the second reading speech for the VET Student Loans Bill 2016, the VET Student Loans (Charges) Bill 2016 enables the Commonwealth to charge approved VET Student Loans program providers an annual charge.

I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

**Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2016**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Tehan.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

**Mr TEHAN** (Wannon—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security and Minister for Defence Personnel) (10:36): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The government is pleased to present legislation that will give effect to three Veterans' Affairs' 2016-17 budget measures.

This government continues to honour its strong commitment to veterans and the veteran community by recognising the unique nature of military service.

The Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Budget & Other Measures) Bill 2016 contains three important measures to support veterans. It:

- expands access to non-liability health care
- enables interim incapacity payments to be paid at 100 per cent of normal earnings, and
aligns the cut-off age for incapacity payments to 'pension age'. **Schedule 1—interim incapacity payments**

In the 2016-17 budget, our government committed $0.2 million for this measure. It will allow interim incapacity payments to be paid to former ADF members immediately upon discharge at a level that matches their regular salary.

This is important because, currently, when a member discharges from the ADF there can be a period of time—sometimes several months—before incapacity payment amounts can be determined while superannuation entitlements are finalised.

Some members can experience financial hardship during this period. These amendments will enable veterans to receive their pre-discharge salary during this period and the Department of Veterans' Affairs will make an adjustment to a person's incapacity payments after the superannuation component has been finalised.

**Schedule 2—non-liability health care**

Expanding access to non-liability health care is a very important component of mental health treatment for current and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). In the 2016-17 budget, this government committed $37.9 million to extend eligibility for non-liability health care to all current and former permanent members of the ADF for five mental health conditions:

- post-traumatic stress disorder
- anxiety
- depression
- alcohol use disorder, and
- substance use disorder

In addition to expanding the range of conditions for which non-liability health care may be provided, accessing this treatment has also become easier:

- firstly, a veteran can simply telephone or email the Department of Veterans' Affairs and ask for treatment—there is no need to lodge a formal application
- secondly, there is no longer the requirement for a person to have had either three years' continuous full-time service or operational service to be eligible for non-liability health care—just one day of continuous full-time service means a person can access this treatment
- thirdly, there is no need for a formal diagnosis at the time of requesting treatment.

The treatment is known as non-liability health care because it need not be linked to a condition arising from the service of the eligible person. Further, it is completely separate from any claim for compensation.

Non-liability health care is available via a legislative instrument made under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986. This has been in place since 1 July 2016 and I am encouraged by reports from the Department of Veterans' Affairs that there has been a marked increase in the number of requests for non-liability health care between July and September 2016. This is to be strongly encouraged and I urge any ADF members, or members of their family, concerned about their mental health to get in contact with the Department of Veterans' Affairs. They can
call the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service—VVCS—on 1800011046 or visit the website to access free and confidential Australia-wide counselling.

**Schedule 3—align cut-off age incapacity payments to pension age**

The government committed $5.5 million to this measure in the 2016-17 budget to improve support for veterans by increasing the incapacity cut-off age to align with age pension eligibility.

The amendments will enable veterans to continue to receive incapacity payments up until they become eligible for the age pension. Approximately 120 veterans per annum will benefit from this change.

Currently, payment of incapacity entitlements under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA) ceases when an employee reaches 65 years of age or, if the injury occurred on or after the age of 63, after a maximum of 104 weeks of incapacity entitlements have been received.

However, the legislation needs to be amended to keep pace with the scheduled age pension increases, otherwise injured veterans may be without adequate means of financial support upon reaching 65 years of age once the age pension eligibility changes take effect.

These amendments align the cut-off age for incapacity payments to ‘pension age’ as defined in the Social Security Act 1991. Rather than defining a set age, this approach means the incapacity payment cut-off will remain in alignment with age pension eligibility age into the future.

**Conclusion**

This bill will support our veterans in real and tangible ways from increasing access to vital mental health treatment, to better financial support for ADF members transitioning to civilian life and ensuring access to incapacity entitlements through to pension age.

I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Customs Tariff Amendment (2017 Harmonized System Changes) Bill 2016**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Hawke.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (10:44): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.


These amendments give effect to changes resulting from the World Customs Organization’s fifth review of the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, commonly referred to as the harmonized system. Australia provided
significant input into the fifth review. Relevant Australian government agencies and industry groups were consulted during this review process.

Australia is a signatory to the harmonized system, which has formed the basis of Australia's classifications for traded goods, both imports and exports, since 1988.

The harmonized system is a hierarchical system that uniquely identifies all traded goods. Over 175 customs administrations use the harmonized system.

Australia has implemented the harmonized system domestically through the Customs Tariff Act 1995 for imports and the Australian Harmonized Export Commodity Classification for exports.

As a signatory to the harmonized system, Australia is required by 1 January 2017 to give effect to the changes resulting from the fifth review.

Changes to the harmonized system address new and emerging technologies, provide a clearer picture of trade patterns, facilitate the collection and comparison of trade data and assist the monitoring of trade in certain goods.

The 2017 harmonized system amendments address environmental and social issues of global concern. This includes, for example, further enhancing the monitoring of trade in certain fish and tropical woods by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. This will support food security objectives and management of endangered species.

The 2017 harmonized system changes will create new tariff subheadings for specific chemicals. This will further enhance the monitoring, collection and comparison of data on the international movement of these chemicals, which are controlled under international conventions to which Australia is a signatory.

The bill will insert new subheadings, at the request of the International Narcotics Control Board, to monitor and control pharmaceutical preparations containing ephedrine, pseudoephedrine or norephedrine. This will enhance the monitoring and control of certain narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

The bill also clarifies texts to support the uniform application of the harmonized system internationally.

The bill will amend schedules 5 to 12 of the Customs Tariff Act. These schedules give effect to the application of customs duty on certain imported goods in accordance with Australia's bilateral trade agreements with the United States of America, Thailand, Chile, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Japan and China and with Australia's regional agreement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and New Zealand.

Existing levels of industry protection and margins of tariff preference that apply to imported goods, including goods imported under free trade agreements, will be preserved.

One exception to this, however, is the classification of electronic integrated circuits, which will be expanded to include multicomponent integrated circuits, commonly known as MCOs. This means that a subset of these goods will have their duty rates reduced to free when imported into Australia.

Reducing the rate of duty to free for all MCOs is consistent with the Expanded Information Technology Agreement, to which Australia is a signatory.
This bill will provide certainty for Australia's importers by ensuring that Australia classifies its goods and commodities in accordance with the harmonized system—and in a manner consistent with its major trading partners. The bill will also provide a more effective way of identifying goods as they come across the border.

To give effect to the harmonized system changes, complementary amendments will also be made to the Customs Act 1901 by the Customs Amendment (2017 Harmonized System Changes) Bill 2016.

Debate adjourned.

Customs Amendment (2017 Harmonized System Changes) Bill 2016

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Hawke.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (10:48): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Customs Amendment (2017 Harmonized System Changes) Bill 2016 contains amendments to the Customs Act 1901.

These amendments will give effect to changes resulting from the fifth review of the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, commonly referred to as the harmonized system by the World Customs Organization.

The bill will also make minor amendments to the Customs Act 1901 to provide for the collection of appropriate import duties for biofuels and biofuel blends imported under the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

To give effect to the harmonized system changes, complementary amendments will also be made to the Customs Tariff Act 1995 by the Customs Tariff Amendment (2017 Harmonized System Changes) Bill 2016.

Debate adjourned.

Seafarers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Taylor, for Ms O'Dwyer.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TAYLOR (Hume—Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation) (10:51): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Introduction

I am pleased to introduce the Seafarers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 to modernise the Commonwealth Seacare scheme.
The Seacare scheme is a workers' compensation and work health and safety scheme for a small, defined segment of the Australian maritime industry. It covers around 30 employers, 340 vessels and 6,900 employees. The scheme generally applies only to Australian flagged vessels and foreign flagged vessels with an Australian crew and operator that are engaged in interstate, international or territorial trade or commerce.

A workers' compensation scheme to cover Australian seafarers was first established over a century ago to protect Australian seafarers and their families from the financial costs of workplace injury or death.

The Seacare scheme commenced in 1993 and has not been substantially updated since that time.

Two independent reviews of the Seacare scheme—the first in 2005, the second over 2012 and 2013—concluded that it needs widespread reform.

There is clearly a need to modernise the scheme's work health and safety arrangements to ensure that seafarers are adequately protected and to update its workers' compensation arrangements to restore the historic link with the Comcare scheme.

The changing profile of the maritime industry over the last 20 years has also made it more difficult for both maritime industry employers and employees to work out if they fall within the scheme's coverage.

A Federal Court decision in 2014 significantly expanded the coverage of the Seacare scheme casting further doubt on the scheme's coverage.

Finally, the governance of the Seacare scheme is overly complex for its small size, and its regulatory bodies are not adequately funded to perform their functions.

**Detail of the bill**


This represents the Seacare scheme's adoption of harmonised work health and safety laws. This adoption of modern best practice laws will improve the safety performance of the scheme, which should significantly benefit both employers and seafarers.

The bill also amends the Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1992 (the seafarers act) to clarify the coverage of the Seacare scheme while maintaining a similar scope.

The new coverage test in the bill will be two tiered: (1) a vessel must be a 'prescribed vessel', which is similar to existing arrangements, and (2) the vessel must not be used wholly or predominantly for voyages or other tasks that are within the territorial sea of a particular state or territory.

Unlike under the current coverage test—where coverage of vessels can change on a voyage-by-voyage basis—the new coverage test will mean that vessels are either covered or not covered by the Seacare scheme.

The bill also introduces a formal mechanism for employers to opt into the Seacare scheme, while improving the operation of exemptions from the scheme.
The seafarers act will also be amended to make long-overdue updates and necessary clarifications. The changes reflect a sensible balanced approach.

The bill implements the government's decision to transfer the functions of the Seacare Authority to the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (the commission), which was announced in 2014 as part of the Smaller Government agenda. The Seacare Authority will be abolished and its functions split between Comcare and the commission.

The bill will enable the chair of the commission to establish an advisory group—comprised of representatives from Seacare employers and maritime unions—to provide support and industry expertise to Comcare and the commission as required.

At the same time, the bill will amend the seafarers act and the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (the SRC Act) to align the age at which incapacity payments cease to be payable with the 'pension age'. This will ensure that persons in receipt of incapacity payments can continue to receive those payments until they reach 'pension age', which is increasing as a result of changes to the Social Security Act 1991.

The bill will also amend both the seafarers act and SRC Act to align with minimum benchmarks to be set by the National Injury Insurance Scheme.

The bill also amends the seafarers act to ensure compliance with recent amendments to the International Labour Organization's Maritime Labour Convention.

The bill makes other amendments to the Commonwealth Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (the WHS Act) which are of general application. These include amendments to clarify the scope of the WHS Act and demonstrate the Commonwealth's ongoing commitment to nationally harmonised work health and safety laws.

The bill will clarify that judges, justices and heads of mission are not 'officers' for the purpose of the WHS Act. This will ensure the criminal penalty regime does not apply to judges, consistent with the common-law principle of judicial immunity. It also clarifies the work health and safety duties of heads of mission while on international deployment.

Conclusion

The Seafarers and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 will bring the Seacare scheme into the 21st century and protect its immediate sustainability.

The amendments in the bill represent a sensible, balanced package of reforms and reflect the findings of the past independent reviews into the Seacare scheme. These changes have been discussed at length with maritime industry employers and employees over recent years.

Reform of the Seacare scheme has been a long time coming. I would like to thank maritime industry employers and unions for their patience and willingness to work cooperatively and productively with governments over such a long period of time to develop these reforms.

Debate adjourned.

Seafarers Safety and Compensation Levies Bill 2016

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Taylor, for Ms O'Dwyer.

Bill read a first time.
Second Reading

Mr TAYLOR (Hume—Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation) (10:59):
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.


The bill imposes a seafarers' insurance levy on Seacare employers. The seafarers' insurance levy will support a safety net fund for seafarers where an employer cannot meet its workers' compensation obligations because of financial circumstances. It is unchanged from the levy collected under the current Levy Act.

The levy will initially be set at the same rate as the current safety net fund levy. In future, the levy rate will be based on recommendations of an actuarial assessment on the amounts payable from the safety net fund and the costs of the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (Commission) in administering the fund.

Consistent with the government's modernisation of the Seacare scheme, this bill modernises the arrangements for funding the scheme's regulatory bodies by providing a mechanism for a seafarers cost recovery levy.

The seafarers cost recovery levy would recover the costs of the Commission, Comcare and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority in performing their respective regulatory functions in relation to the Seacare scheme.

The levy will not be charged immediately. The government will consult further with Seacare employers on the timing for charging the cost recovery levy. Levy amounts will be set by regulations.

Debate adjourned.

Seafarers Safety and Compensation Levies Collection Bill 2016

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Taylor, for Ms O'Dwyer.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TAYLOR (Hume—Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation) (11:02):
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Seafarers Safety and Compensation Levies Collection Bill 2016 replaces the Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation Levy Collection Act 1992. The bill facilitates the collection of the seafarers insurance levy and cost recovery levy, as established by the Seafarers Safety and Compensation Levies Bill 2016. It requires Seacare employers to lodge returns and make levy payments each quarter.

Debate adjourned.
Social Security Legislation Amendment (Youth Jobs Path: Prepare, Trial, Hire) Bill 2016

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Taylor, for Ms O'Dwyer.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TAYLOR (Hume—Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation) (11:04):

I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill will help give effect to the Youth Jobs PaTH Program announced in the 2016-17 budget as part of the Youth Employment Package.

From 1 April 2017, the Prepare-Trial-Hire Program will increase young people's employability and provide them with real work experience to get the start they need in the workforce.

It will do this by providing a three-stage pathway to work for young jobseekers:

- Prepare: feedback from employers indicates that young people often do not have a good understanding of the values and behaviours that are expected in the workplace and in the recruitment process.
  
  Employability Skills Training will ensure that young people have the right attitude and approach to work, and are reliable and well presented, so that employers who give them a chance will be rewarded with employees who are enthusiastic and willing to work.

  Young jobseekers who need to boost their job-readiness will receive intensive pre-employment skills training within five months of registering with jobactive.

  The first three weeks of training will help build practical industry skills, with a focus on concepts like working in a team, presentation and communication. A further three weeks of training will centre on advanced job preparation and job hunting skills.

- Trial: voluntary internships of four to 12 weeks will give young jobseekers a chance to show what they can do in a real workplace. We will provide an extra $200 on top of the welfare payment they already receive. Up to 120,000 placements over four years will help young jobseekers who have been in employment services for six months or more to gain valuable work experience within a real business; and

- Hire: a new youth bonus wage subsidy of between $6,500 and $10,000 will support the employment of young people. The youth bonus is a smarter way of leveraging what the community would otherwise spend on welfare payments.

  The Youth Jobs PaTH will encourage employers to hire young people by enhancing their employability, providing them with real work experience, and providing incentives for employers to take them on.

  The program will also help to instil confidence among young people and incentivise their transition into employment.
This is truly helping young Australians by getting them ready, giving them a go and getting them a job.

This bill will enhance the internship and wage subsidy elements of Youth Jobs PaTH.

The amendments mean fortnightly incentive payments to eligible young jobseekers placed in internships under Youth Jobs PaTH are not 'income' for social security and veterans' entitlements purposes. This ensures that the incentive payments do not affect participants' social security payments or veterans' entitlements.

For young jobseekers, these incentive payments will go further if this bill is passed.

The amendments also aim to ensure that eligible young people in particular circumstances will be able to have their social security payments restored without having to make a new claim.

Young people will have their payments restored if they lose their job (through no fault of their own) with an eligible employer within 26 weeks of ceasing to receive income support because of that employment.

Early intervention can mean the difference between a young person taking their first steps into a productive working life or entering a cycle of long-term welfare dependency.

Australia cannot afford to leave thousands of young Australians to a lifetime of welfare dependency. We know once a young person is long-term unemployed their chances of successfully finding employment decline drastically.

In addition to the financial cost, the social and human cost is too great for our country to ignore.

The government is therefore committed to ensuring that young jobseekers find work as quickly as possible and avoid moving on to income support and the welfare trap. The Australian community rightly expects that young people should participate in the workforce to the full extent of their capacity.

The Youth Jobs PaTH Program seeks to meet these expectations by helping job-ready young people to fully engage in the labour market to maximise their chances of finding work and avoid moving onto welfare.

Regardless of any of their political or ideological views in relation to the overall Youth Jobs PaTH Program, I call upon those opposite to support this bill. It advantages young jobseekers and provides them with an added incentive, encouraging participants and increasing their income support.

The Youth Jobs PaTH complements the significant measures for young jobseekers announced last year in the 2015-16 budget. This includes:

- the new Transition to Work service, which supports young people aged 15 to 21 through intensive, pre-employment support to improve work-readiness and help them into work or education;

- ParentsNext, which helps eligible parents to identify their education and employment goals, develop a pathway to achieve their goals and link them to activities and services in the local community; and
Empowering YOUth Initiatives, which support innovative approaches to help unemployed young people improve their skills and move toward sustainable employment. These measures, in combination, are giving young people, and in particular disadvantaged young jobseekers, opportunities to succeed in the world of work. The Youth Jobs PaTH represents a scaling up of efforts to improve the employment prospects of a much larger number of young jobseekers.

Complementing these measures are the government’s reforms to employment services. On 1 July 2015, jobactive commenced, reinvigorating employment services by reducing red tape so that providers can spend more time doing what they do best—helping all jobseekers find and keep a job.

The government believes that the best form of welfare is a job. These measures will strengthen the business environment and ensure that young jobseekers have the capacity, support and incentives to take advantage of new opportunities as they emerge, helping them to realise their full potential.

Debate adjourned.
Thursday, 13 October 2016

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell) (11:14): The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (11:14): I rise to speak on the Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016 and want to offer my support for the bill. I want to thank the Prime Minister for making this issue a priority. I believe it is the first time the government has introduced a bill directly in relation to same-sex marriage. It is great that the Prime Minister has fulfilled the election commitment and promise that the coalition government took to the 2016 election. We are certainly delivering in a whole range of areas, but in relation to the same-sex marriage bill, which we promised to the people at the 2016 election, we are delivering there as well. I also want to acknowledge Senator Brandis and Senator Ryan for the drafting of the bill.

I want to start by making an observation that has survived generations and civilisations. It is that the family is the nucleus of society, and a strong family means stability, safety and less need for government intervention. There are so many types of families—nuclear, sole-parent and extended families. It is clear that in the majority of cases families are brought together by a marriage for the purpose of raising children. Millions of Australians have been able to unite under the sacrament of marriage, and changing the definition of marriage will impact all these people and their families as much as it will impact same-sex couples, because you are changing the meaning.

Forty years from now, if same-sex marriage is legalised and grandkids are looking back at family history and looking at the word ‘marriage’, they might see that right now the definition of marriage is a man and a woman in a lifelong commitment. When they look at it in the future, it might be that it is between two men, two women or a man and a woman. So the issue that we as members of parliament are facing is that this is not just another policy. We are not trying to fight unemployment here. It is not about infrastructure or taxes. As my colleague the member for Canning, Andrew Hastie, wrote in The Australian recently:

Marriage is the people's institution.

So the people should decide.

It was not that long ago that the Leader of the Opposition agreed with the member for Canning. Bill Shorten in 2013 said:

I would rather that the people of Australia could make their view clear on this than leaving this issue to 150 people.

That is what Bill Shorten, the Leader of the Opposition, said about gay marriage at the time. There are 150 members in this House and Bill Shorten's position was he would rather the people of Australia could make their view clear on this rather than leaving it to 150 people, he said. Why has he changed his mind? Why has he changed his position?

The Greens leader, Senator Di Natale, said in August 2015, just 14 months ago:

One thing we all agree on is that we need to deal with this issue and deal with it quickly.

I could not agree more. He also said:

… if there is to be a plebiscite it must be at this election and it must be the parliament that owns the plebiscite and drafts the question.

We are implementing exactly what Senator Di Natale was saying too, and it was an election commitment at the 2016 election. He said it should be the parliament that owns it and drafts
the question. As far as I am aware, the Greens leader has not made any recommendations in relation to this plebiscite other than to record his opposition early on.

Same-sex marriage is not a recent topic or issue either. There has been a lot of history in relation to voting in this parliament on same-sex marriage. In fact, my colleague the member for Leichhardt's private member's motion last year was the 18th piece of legislation introduced to the parliament since 2004 to deal with the issue of recognising same-sex marriages, whether Australian or overseas. Only a couple of these motions progressed to a vote and these votes did not get very far.

Most recently, under the 43rd Parliament, led by Labor's Julia Gillard, three bills designed to amend the Marriage Act were presented in the House. These bills were the subject of two parliamentary committee inquiries but were not passed by the parliament. I would just like to remind the House that in 2012 Mr Stephen Jones MP introduced a private member's bill, the Marriage Amendment Bill. Many people voted against same-sex marriage, including many of those opposite: the member for Watson, Tony Burke; the member for McMahon, Mr Bowen; the member for Hunter; the member for Chifley; the member for Fowler; and three prime ministers, Mr Rudd, Mr Abbott and Ms Gillard. The member for Blair also voted against same-sex marriage. So did the member for Lilley, Mr Swan.

So we have had votes in parliament. On this bill in relation to same-sex marriage, the opposition say: 'Let the parliament decide. Get to work! That's what we're paid to do.' We have had many votes on this in the parliament, and every time it has been defeated. I note the member for Kingston voted for it at that time. I cannot see your name on there, Mr Deputy Speaker Mitchell. I am not sure if you abstained or what, but there have been many votes on this issue in the parliament.

When Labor came out with their 'Mediscare' campaign during the recent election, I did not think they could go much lower, but to play politics with this, with people's lives, is very serious. The previous speaker, the member for Barton, made some extreme and hysterical comments yesterday, I think, in her contribution to this debate. She said:

I can see this campaign clearly. I can see those opposed to equal marriage link this to the safe schools programs …

I am not sure what she is saying there. Is she saying that the safe schools program is wrong? She also talked about 'writing the fringe-dwelling bigots a cheque for millions of dollars'. She also said:

I am concerned that this plebiscite, with an aggressive campaign—
so straightaway she is assuming it will be an aggressive campaign—
will see people disengage from our democratic process, putting at risk our chance to change the Constitution to recognise First Peoples.

Linking those two together I do not think is right either. There are many Aboriginal people who do not support same-sex marriage, including Aboriginal elders who have signed the bark petition.

I think it goes further than this. We have also seen the member for Sydney bully her colleagues in relation to this by saying that what the Labor Party should do is make sure that everyone—that is, members of the Labor Party—must vote for same-sex marriage. We saw the Western Australian senator Mr Bullock bullied out of the party last year, and we have
seen many of the people who voted no, whose names I just read out before, perhaps change their mind. But when you read the contribution from the member for Barton and when you read the contribution from the member for Sydney, they accuse those opposed to same-sex marriage—equal marriage—of all sorts of things. Well, what about the people that voted against it previously—including three prime ministers, the current Manager of Opposition Business, Tony Burke, and their former Treasurer, Mr Bowen? These people were capable in 2012 of having a debate in a civilised way and making people with a different view feel that they were okay.

You know what? I trust the Australian people that we can have a debate on this without the extreme hysterical comments that those people opposite vent in relation to this bill. I am sure that you will continue to see those comments as the opposition stand up and talk about the extreme Right, bigots and homophobia—all because some people do not share their view or do not believe in same-sex marriage. Australians can be trusted. Australians can have a debate on this issue. I repeat that the opposition leader said:

I would rather that the people of Australia could make their view clear on this than leaving this issue to 150 people.

Labor talks about same-sex marriage as if changing the definition of marriage will only affect same-sex couples. It will, in fact, affect everyone who has ever been married under Australian law. Only about four per cent of Australians identify as homosexual; 96 per cent are heterosexual. Those people can be trusted. If we were to force a parliamentary vote on this issue—even though we have had many, including the one I mentioned a moment ago—anybody who thinks the results of that vote would be accepted by everyone straightaway is kidding themselves. I think that if we can have a plebiscite, and even if 40 per cent of the population vote against same-sex marriage and 60 per cent vote in favour, then it will be passed through the parliament straightaway. And I think those 40 per cent, who will have expressed their view that they do not support it, would get on board and say, 'Hey, the majority of Australians have spoken and this is what they want.' I actually think it would be better for same-sex couples if it were to happen that way rather than be forced through the parliament because the opposition leader and the Leader of the Greens want to backflip on positions they have stated previously.

According to the polls, there is strong support for same-sex marriage. Newspoll said that 62 per cent are in favour of same-sex marriage and 32 per cent are against. The member for Leichhardt is right: there is too much interest and emotional investment in this issue now for a vote in parliament. But Bill Shorten would now rather drag this process out than trust the Australian people with a vote.

Quickly looking at the bill, the time line is for 11 February 2017, less than four months away. After so many years and so many years of debate, we could have a verdict and give same-sex couples certainty within four months. If we do not get this legislation through, if the vote is not held next year because Labor votes against this bill, then these people will have more uncertainty and wait longer.

The bill is very simple. It will authorise a compulsory, in-person vote in a national plebiscite that will ask Australians simply: 'Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?' It is a very simple question. It will be conducted very much like a standard election. It is no secret that the bill will have a cost. The financial impact to our federal budget
will be about $170 million—not the $200 million that everyone opposite states. This includes $15 million to be divided equally between official ‘yes’ and ‘no’ campaigns, and it also includes the cost of holding the plebiscite and employing AEC officials, like at every election. That is what it costs. So it will cost $170 million for people to finally get their say on same-sex marriage, and Labor thinks it is not worth it. Labor says that this is too much money. I remind Labor that we are currently spending $300 million per week on the debt it racked up—$1 billion per month. We are currently spending $300 million a week on interest on debt, and when we bring bills to make savings into this House those opposite vote against a lot of them. Now Labor wants to say that $170 million—3½ days interest—is too much to give people certainty and to give the Australian public a say!

Those opposite argue against this bill on the grounds of mental health. We can have a grown-up discussion. I trust the people in the gallery, I trust the people in my electorate and I trust Australians to get this right. We can have a discussion where I am okay and you are okay. No-one is any better than anyone else in this country; it does not matter whether you are a federal MP or you are homeless in the street; people are equal. Australians can be trusted to make sure that this debate is done right, just like we will when we have referendums in the future in relation to Aboriginal recognition in the Constitution. The money argument is blown out of the water. It is equal to 3½ days interest for an important issue.

That MPs should decide this not Australians is another argument that the Labor Party opposite make. But we have had many votes on this, and three prime ministers and the current Manager of Opposition Business have all voted against gay marriage. We now need to give the Australian people their chance and get this settled. The other argument that those opposite make about this is that it is non-binding. There are many members from the Prime Minister down who have said that if the majority of Australians vote for same-sex marriage in the plebiscite then it will be decided and it will be put through in law within the next four to six months. We would give same sex-couples and many people in the LGBTI community that want certainty on this issue the chance to have that.

I ask the House to vote yes in relation to holding the plebiscite. It is good policy and it is good for democracy.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (11:29): I oppose the plebiscite because it is costly. I oppose the plebiscite because it is divisive. Most importantly, I oppose the plebiscite because it is ineffective. A plebiscite will, just as the previous speaker indicated, lead to a parliamentary bill and parliamentary motion. The previous speaker also indicated what we all know: a majority of the Australian people support marriage equality. We know that is the case. It is overwhelming. And it is now the case that a majority of House of Representatives members and senators, including the current Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, support marriage equality. We should get on with it and do our job.

The previous speaker also spoke about the conscience votes that we have had in parliament on this side of the House, even though no conscience vote was allowed by those opposite. A few years ago a majority of the parliament did not support marriage equality. When I was elected in 1996, the priority of same-sex couples was certainly not having the right to marry; there were a range of other reforms that had a practical impact on their lives that were much higher up the agenda. Those issues were dealt with by the former Labor government when we
amended some 84 pieces of legislation—on superannuation, on health, on migration, on social security. All of those pieces of legislation passed this parliament without rancour, without opposition and without creating division in the community.

When they were first raised, they were controversial. When I first raised the Superannuation (Entitlements of Same Sex Couples) Bill in my first term of parliament, that was a controversial issue. There was not even unanimous support within my own party. When you spoke about sexuality in this place, people shifted uncomfortably in their seats. Now there is far greater total tolerance, and far greater respect for the fact that we are a diverse community. This campaign for marriage equality is about unfinished business. 'Equality' is a really important term here. That is why the plebiscite is so wrong. We decide in this House social security, taxation arrangements, infrastructure policy, health policy, education policy and defence policy. We determine that.

Why is this one issue being singled out? We know that it is all an attempt by the opponents of marriage equality, including former Prime Minister Tony Abbott, to stop marriage equality. That is why this was put up within the coalition party room. When it was put up, it was opposed within their party room by the current Prime Minister and many of those opposite. Are we on this side of the House supposed to be bound somehow by the fact that Malcolm Turnbull rolled over on his own principles in order to secure the prime ministership by guaranteeing that he would adopt the same policy as his predecessor, Tony Abbott? I actually thought Malcolm Turnbull was better than that. He has a proud record of marching in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in his electorate, and of standing up genuinely on these issues. I know that he is an opponent of discrimination on the basis of sexuality. It makes it even sadder that he is prepared to take the position that he has, knowing the consequences that it will have for division in the community, for same-sex couples and for their families. They know the consequences, which is why they are so strident in their opposition to this.

I believe very strongly that we should have a vote and a determination in this parliament, and we should do it sooner rather than later. Some of the best debates I have been involved with in parliament have been conscience votes on controversial issues like voluntary euthanasia and stem cell research. They have been respectful debates. They have been the parliament at its finest, where people have thought about each and every word that they were going to contribute to the debate. I have been in a minority—it must be said—in those debates, but they have been respectful. I actually think those debates taking place have raised the standing of this parliament as a result.

That is the way forward. In the 20 years I have had the honour of sitting as a member of the House of Representatives, extraordinary advances have been made towards removing discrimination on the basis of sexuality. Marriage equality will be not the final step, but a significant step. The debate about removing discrimination is not just about laws; it is about the way that people conduct themselves in our community. If you engage with young people now—certainly, the ones that I speak to—then they wonder what the big deal is here. What is the issue? Marriage equality will not affect anyone's existing right; it simply extends an existing right to some people who have previously been denied that right.

It will not affect anyone's marriage; indeed, it will strengthen the institution of marriage by allowing more people to participate in it. It will not require churches to do anything against their will. It will simply provide equality for everyone before the law. And, when it is all over,
just like as happened in most of the industrialised world now—in the United Kingdom under the conservatives, in New Zealand under the conservatives, in many of the states of United States, in Canada and in many of the countries of Europe—people will wonder what all the fuss was about and people will just get on with their lives. That is why the Prime Minister really should show leadership on this.

Marriage equality does come down to issues of tolerance and respect. I believe that tolerance and respect needs to be held by all people who participate in this debate, both the supporters and the opponents of marriage equality. I have been very much on the record for a very long time as a supporter of marriage equality but also as a supporter of the conscience vote. I understand that some people of faith who regard marriage not as a civil institution that is governed by laws and legislation but as something that is a sacred institution handed down from God have a different view, and I respect their right to hold their view. That is why any of the legislation that has been drawn up by people such as my colleague, the now member for Whitlam and then member for Throsby, Stephen Jones, included religious exemptions, and that is something that is supported by the gay and lesbian community. A conscience vote of this parliament would allow people who have religious convictions and do not want to choose between that position and the position of civil lawmaking to vote accordingly. It would ensure that the parliament is able to be respectful.

But it does go both ways. The truth is that the families that I have met with through organisations such as Rainbow Families are genuinely and legitimately concerned about the implications of a divisive debate. The member previously quoted the member for Barton in her contribution last night. Due to boundary changes by the Electoral Commission, I now live in the electorate of Barton. During the election campaign, in a marginal seat, I got material in my letterbox which can only be described as targeting Linda Burney because of her Aboriginality and her religion in a way that was offensive and divisive—and it backfired on those people who distributed that material. The concerns that those families have are absolutely legitimate concerns.

I am yet to have a same-sex family in my electorate—not one—ask me to vote for this legislation that is before the parliament. I have my own views that happen to accord with that view. My gut instinct was always to oppose the plebiscite, because we as parliamentarians have a job to do and we should do it. But we do have to be very cognisant of the fact that, as The Smiths said in that great song *What Difference Does it Make?*, 'Heavy words are so lightly thrown.' One of my concerns reflects the view of that great songwriter Morrissey when he said those words. Words are thrown around in a debate which we know, from some of the comments that have been made already in this debate, will be very hurtful and will create needless division. The fact that the government intends to publicly fund this debate is, I think, even more reason to oppose this legislation.

The fact is that we could knock this over this afternoon by having a vote of this parliament. It could go to the Senate tonight and they could deal with it. Then, next week, we could just get on with business. This is an enormous roadblock to the government getting on with other business. Its insistence on this divisive plebiscite is standing in the way of the promotion of harmony and unity, which this parliament has an obligation to pursue. We can see that there is a great deal of distrust of elected representatives playing out in areas such as the US
presidential election. We need to lift standards of public discourse and lead the community in promoting respect and inclusion. Have marriage equality and have it through this parliament.

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (11:44): I rise to support this enabling legislation for a plebiscite. The Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016 will establish the framework for conducting a national plebiscite on the proposal to change the existing marriage legislation and provide every Australian registered on the electoral roll with the opportunity to vote on the proposed date of 11 February 2017. This is in accordance with the election policy commitment which the coalition government made to the Australian public leading up to the recent federal election.

Marriage is one of the most important cultural and social institutions within our society. It has existed for centuries in custom, tradition and common law, long before the notion of parliament or legislation to regulate or codify it evolved. In our society, marriage is the very foundation of the family unit. It influences many aspects of our lives, such as having children and the way in which children are raised into adulthood. It is the widespread custom and social norm that men and women across our nation get married, establish a home and start a family. What other fundamental tenets of marriage, as it currently stands in our society, are likely to be challenged by proponents of marriage equality in the future?

I acknowledge that traditional marriage is not perfect. There are many issues with family breakdown, divorce and dysfunction. However, it is arguably the most stable social institution that we currently have. A strong functional family unit in which members care for each other is the best form of social welfare we currently have.

On Monday I had the pleasure of meeting Millie Fontana, a young lady who was raised by a couple in a same-sex relationship. I heard of how she first met her biological father at the age of 11 after emotionally struggling with not knowing her origins. I understood from our conversation that she is strongly in favour of all children having access to both of their biological parents—a father and a mother. Millie said to me that to intentionally deny a child a mother or a father where there is a conscious choice made by adults is unethical. Millie told me that children will learn to cope with their situation in life, but it is emotionally difficult, and in instances where the decision affecting a child's life is an elective choice made by adults, the rights and welfare of the child are not adequately taken into account.

I make the case that when contemplating such a radical change to marriage as we know it, which is an established social and cultural norm, a comprehensive national debate and plebiscite is justified to properly raise public awareness of and to debate and consider a range of issues relating to the proposal to dramatically change a longstanding custom and institution in our society. The issue raises many complex questions which ought to be addressed.

Concentrating the voting power in the hands of the 226 Australians elected to the House of Representatives and the Senate is not the preferred course of action when determining an issue of such profound national importance as marriage. Regardless of which way we as individual parliamentarians vote, a large section of our constituent electors will be disenfranchised. Therefore, it makes sense to give the Australian people the right of self-determination through a public vote.

To those who say that the debate will be divisive or hurtful or will lead to vilification: the debate can be robust and respectful. I have great confidence in the ability of the Australian
people to conduct a mature and civilised debate. To borrow a phrase from the Speaker: debate can be robust, but it need not be rude or loud. It is possible to promote high-level arguments of an intellectual and academic nature concerning the legal, social, health and other consequences of changing the legislation. It is essential that the decision be an informed one that takes into account all of the foreseeable consequences and costs of the proposed change. On such an important issue as marriage, the Australian people should be given the right to vote on a proposed change that is likely to have significant consequences in the future, requiring existing legislation to be modified and potentially a raft of new legislation to be introduced.

Consider: if same-sex marriage legislation were to pass, then parliament would create legally married couples who—it is obvious—are physically unable to have children. Married same-sex couples will have the same rights as all married couples under the law. As it is biologically impossible for a same-sex couple to reproduce, having children in a same-sex marriage involves, by necessity, a third-party gamete donor, or surrogate. The legal and social consequences of these three-way relationships must be carefully considered.

A number of very valid consequential issues also ought to be considered, including the potential ethical ramifications surrounding the use of human reproductive technology as new technologies evolve in the future, which will enable biomedical scientists to perform procedures not yet in existence. I cite the example of new genetic engineering procedures, such as creating a child from the DNA of three parents, as was recently reported on page 16 of the West Australian on 29 September last month. The article reported that Dr John Zhang and his team from New York's New Hope Fertility Center used a technique known as spindle nuclear transfer, in which the nucleus from one of the mother's eggs was removed and inserted into a donor egg that had had its own nucleus removed. The resulting egg, with nuclear DNA from the mother and mitochondrial DNA from a donor, was then fertilised with the father's sperm. This is an example of how advances in medical technology can lead to complex ethical considerations when dealing with human life. The future cost of these procedures to the health system needs to be quantified and the question asked: to what extent should the public health system subsidise certain elective procedures which are incurred by choice and not by medical necessity?

Surrogacy is another consequential issue which ought to be considered, including the ethics surrounding commercial surrogacy and international surrogacy arrangements. What are the ethical and legal consequences surrounding the involvement of third parties in the family unit and overseas births involving foreign biological surrogates? Will the proposed change to the marriage legislation trigger unforeseen consequential issues which need to be regulated? The impact of the proposed change in legislation in terms of consequential social and legal complexities, with which society will be required to contend, ought to be considered, including the potential impact on children of the complexities of same-sex marriages that involve third parties.

The rate at which children are separated from their biological parents is a major consideration. Will the proposed change to the legislation result in more children being separated from their biological parents? It is valid to consider issues, including the placement, adoption and custody of children. The emerging issue of commercial adoption is very disturbing, as it can lead to the exploitation of vulnerable people in poverty. Many questions
are raised. Should our society permit parents to give up their children for financial compensation? What are the rights of children to know the identity of and have contact with their parents? Are there health issues in storing and accessing genetic and medical records? The rights of children must be paramount. In an ideal society, every child has the basic human right to be raised by a father and a mother, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Unfortunately, this is not always the case even in traditional marriages.

Consider the foreseeable impact of the legislative change on Australian culture in terms of political correctness and potential legal action. Our language may have to change as everyday, customary expressions such as 'ladies and gentlemen' or 'mum and dad' may become politically incorrect. In some overseas countries, the anti-discrimination laws make it prohibitive to question or debate issues relating to same-sex marriage. What will be the impact on society in terms of psychological and mental health issues arising from more complicated relationships in an already complex society?

For those who argue that the plebiscite should not be conducted due to the cost, the question should be asked: what price do we place on democracy? The cost of conducting the plebiscite is likely to pale into insignificance when compared with the potential future costs to the health, education and legal systems if the proposed legislation were to be implemented. Public funding will be administered by the committees established for both the 'yes' and the 'no' cases, comprising parliamentary and community representation with appropriate standards of governance. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the public funding will most likely be used to promote high-level arguments of an intellectual and academic nature concerning the legal, social and other consequences of changing the legislation, with a high degree of accountability. Under this process, materials and content approved for publication using public funding will be required to be authorised by the respective committees. Given the parliamentary and community representation, it is unlikely that offensive material will be endorsed by the committees.

The Australian public needs to be made fully aware of the broad spectrum of consequential issues which are likely to arise from changing the existing definition of marriage. The public ought to understand the cost to the health system and the likely social and ethical consequences of their decision. Having the benefit of this knowledge, every Australian should then be granted the opportunity to cast his or her vote on this important issue. The proponents of same-sex marriage are yet to provide a compelling argument as to why civil unions are inadequate to protect their legal rights. Marriage is not a romantic notion; it is an important social institution that deals with progeny.

In summary, on a social issue of such importance to the family as marriage, I support conducting a plebiscite for the reasons I have just outlined. This legislation will provide every Australian registered on the electoral roll with the opportunity to vote on the proposed change to the existing marriage legislation. This is in accordance with the election policy commitment which the coalition government made to the Australian public. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (11:57): It is a pleasure to rise to follow the member for Moore. I say to my friend the member for Moore that I think we may have found an explanation for his bachelor status, given his description of marriage as being not romantic but a social construct important for progeny. If I were to counsel the member for Moore in his quest for love, I
would say, 'Maybe don't roll that one out on the first date'—that is, if I were to counsel him, which, of course, I would not presume to do.

We are here to debate the Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016—a bill to establish a plebiscite, a national opinion poll, in which people, if the bill were to be passed, would be compelled to vote. It would be an expensive national opinion poll. It would cost the taxpayer $170 million as an appropriation and a further $32½ million as a regulatory impact cost. So it would be an incredibly expensive exercise to conduct this national opinion poll that the government proposes to have.

Deputy Speaker Goodenough, I now welcome you to the chair. Before I speak on the terms of the bill, I want to acknowledge some people who have done a lot of work in relation to this bill and the response to it. I would like to acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition; the Deputy Leader of the Opposition; the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate; the shadow minister for mental health; the shadow Attorney-General; Senator Louise Pratt, a senator for Western Australia; and the member for Bruce, all of whom have been engaged in responding to this bill. In particular, I would like to thank and acknowledge the members of the LGBTI community, with whom I have spoken or consulted through either formal consultation arrangements or other means: Australians for Marriage Equality; A4E; just.equal; AFAO; the Victorian AIDS Council; the Queensland AIDS Council; Western Australian AIDS Council; JOY FM—and thanks to them for having me on a few times to discuss this issue; the New South Wales Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby and their Victorian counterpart lobby; the Brisbane Pride fair and the Queensland LGBTI community; The Gender Centre; Transgender Victoria; La Trobe University; the Bernard Institute; the Drummond Street centre; Rainbow Labor; PFLAG; Rainbow Families; ACT LGBTI Council; Human Rights Law Centre; Geelong for Marriage Equality; AEP; RRWA; Sally Rugg from GetUp!; EMRA; Gilmore for Marriage Equality; ACON; Out for Australia; QUT Law Society; the LGBTI Legal Service in Queensland; Michael Kirby, who spoke at a recent anniversary function at the Queensland Supreme Court in the beautiful Banco Court—I had the very great pleasure of speaking briefly with him; the author Joe Hurst; and a range of other people who have taken the time to speak with me. I also want to thank the many, many people who have written to me, emailed me or telephoned me from the LGBTI community to encourage me and to encourage Labor not to support this proposed national opinion poll.

I also want to acknowledge the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, for making his ministers available to discuss the plebiscite; the Attorney-General for his invitations to meet to discuss the plebiscite; the Special Minister of State—also for meeting to discuss the plebiscite; other members of the coalition in this parliament who have taken the time to discuss the plebiscite; and crossbench members and senators. From the last parliament, I would like to particularly thank the member for Leichhardt, the then member for Brisbane, the member for Denison, the then member for Werriwa, the member for Melbourne and the member for Indi for allowing me to be included in the cross-party work to bring a marriage equality bill before this parliament. It was a great privilege to be able to second a marriage equality cross-party bill in the 44th Parliament. We actually introduced it twice because the 44th Parliament was prorogued—we introduced the cross-party bill again after that had occurred. We did that in a way that was respectful and collaborative, and we were very, very
hopeful that, by working together and reaching out across the aisle, we would be able to find a way to make marriage equality a reality. That is a project that still continues.

Though I certainly do not support this proposal for a national opinion poll, for reasons that I will mention shortly, I very much remain a very strong supporter of marriage equality. I spoke of marriage equality in my first speech in this place, and it is something that I will continue to work towards, because I believe that this country, in its heart, knows that removing this form discrimination is the right thing to do. I also believe that if we will talk and work together we can find a way to do it. I also say to my friends from the Liberal Party and the National Party: 'Even if you don’t support marriage equality there is a question you have to consider, and that is: do you want marriage equality to be passed at a later date when you have no input into the form that it takes, or do you want to have some input and some opportunity to discuss it and to try to find a consensus by which we can actually move forward and have marriage equality?' It might mean we have marriage equality sooner, and, certainly, that would be my preference, but it might also be the only way in which people who have concerns about it can actually express those concerns and seek to negotiate them. This does not have to be an adversarial argument; it can be an argument in which we take down the temperature, meet and discuss the possibilities for change.

I also want to thank and acknowledge each person who has ever moved, in this place or in the Senate, a bill for marriage equality, and I want to thank those who are considering how they might be instrumental in bringing about marriage equality in the future. This bill is not a bill for marriage equality. There are no provisions in this bill that seek to amend the Marriage Act to make marriage equality a reality. At 11 pm on Monday night this week the government published a proposed bill for marriage equality, but that bill has not been tabled in this parliament. That bill remains an exposure draft not a bill before this parliament. This bill—the Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016—as I said, is merely a bill for a national opinion poll.

Labor has made why we oppose this bill very clear. Firstly, we are concerned about the waste. As I said, $170 million and $32½ million extra for regulatory cost is a cost to our budget and then to our economy that we do not need to bear. Offhand, if you asked me, I could think of 10 better things—100 better things!—to spend that money on than this plebiscite process. The next issue, in terms of why we oppose it, is that the plebiscite process is really completely unnecessary. The High Court says that parliament has the power to amend the Marriage Act. This plebiscite is so ridiculous. Any Australian could be fined for not voting in this plebiscite, but no member of this House would be obliged to abide by its result—that is how ridiculous this plebiscite is. So our second reason for not supporting it is that it is completely unnecessary.

Probably our most important reason for not supporting it is the potential for harm—the potential for exclusion and marginalisation. Some of the Liberals and Nationals—not all of them, of course—have sought to characterise this as an accusation that Labor does not believe that Australians can be trusted to have a civil debate. That is certainly not the case. We do not claim that Australians cannot be trusted to have a civil debate. That is a ridiculous proposition, and we are being verballed whenever that is said of us. LGBTI people have a higher propensity for anxiety and depression than others. That is particularly exacerbated amongst young people. The source of this is not that people were born with that heightened
propensity; it is because of exclusion and marginalisation during the course of their lives. The idea that you have a national vote on whether lesbians, on whether gays, on whether bisexual people, on whether transgendered people and on whether intersex people can, as a minority, have the same human rights as the majority of Australians is inherently exclusive. It is inherently marginalising. It does not matter how polite that debate is, it does not matter if I am polite when I say, 'You should not have the same rights as me; you are not as capable of parenting as I am.' It does not matter how politely you say those things—they are inherently exclusive and they inherently marginalise people. It is the very nature of the debate that causes difficulty. It is the very nature of the idea that people should have to submit themselves to a straw poll of their fellow Australians in order to have the same human rights as they do that is problematic.

People ask why can't we just get over it and just cop it—if it is the quickest path, as is the claim from the Liberals, why don't we just cop it? Firstly, it is certainly not the quickest path—the quickest path is a free vote in this parliament on a marriage equality bill. Secondly, why should people be asked to pay this price? Why should the price of equality for them be the subject of this national straw poll of their fellow Australians? Who among us would divorce our husband or wife and agree not to remarry them until there had been a straw poll of our fellow Australians where a majority had voted to agree to our doing so? I certainly would not agree to that and I doubt that anyone here would agree to it.

There are other issues. There is the concern about what else might we have a plebiscite on if we have a plebiscite on this. What other minority will be expected to submit to a vote of their fellow Australians to have the same human rights? What human rights might be taken away using a mechanism like this? We are a parliament. We should act. We should legislate. We should do our duty and not outsource the hard questions. We are all paid a lot of money to be sent to Canberra to make decisions, to vote. That is our job. That is what we are here for. We should be doing it.

So, there are many reasons why we oppose the plebiscite but there is another that I particularly want to mention. Despite the fact that the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General are trying to convince people that the plebiscite is a direct route to marriage equality, that is just not the case. The bill that was published, but not tabled—the proposed marriage equality bill that the Attorney-General produced on Monday night—has provisions in it that will very likely cause the bill to have difficulty passing. Those provisions include exemptions for celebrants in a situation where celebrants are businesses and exemptions for other commercial businesses where they happen to be owned or run by religious organisations. The concern I have with that is this: if you are blind and you take an assistance animal into a shop and they throw you out, if they refuse you service, that is against the law in this country—and it should be. If you are Aboriginal and you are refused service on that basis, that is against the law. I am a woman—I can go into a public bar and buy a pot of beer, and they cannot chuck me out because I am a woman, because that is against the law. We have had these laws that prohibit businesses from discriminating on the grounds of personal attributes for decades in this country. We have laws that prohibit that sort of discrimination on the basis of sexuality and gender identity. The proposed bill that the Attorney-General proposed erodes those protections. So not only are LGBTI people being asked to pay the price of enduring this process—a process that no-one else has to go through in order to have equality and to have
discrimination lifted, that no-one else has to go through in order to have the right to marry—but also they will then be asked to sell part of their existing rights in order to get these rights. They will also be asked to pay a further price, and that is to give up the legal protection that they have had for decades, to accept some of the erosion of those protections, in return for the right to marry.

These prices are too high. People should not be asked to pay these prices in order to have the right to marry—it is wrong. I know it is wrong, the Prime Minister knows it is wrong, the Attorney-General knows it is wrong and Australians know it is wrong and I hope, therefore, that we will be able to continue to talk about what might be other ways to achieve marriage equality, what might be a marriage equality bill that will pass this parliament. If we do not work that out together, it is just going to be the case that when we are in government we will be passing a marriage equality bill that people will not necessarily have had the opportunity to discuss in this parliament. It will be left to us, and we will do it. It will be left to us to pass marriage equality during the course of the first Shorten Labor government. But my preference is not for it to be the Shorten Labor government that passes marriage equality; my preference is for it to be the 45th Parliament that does it together. We can do that—we can work together. I know that some of my friends in this place, not on this side but on the other side, have been making comments that they will not support a marriage equality free vote. I hope that the Prime Minister will not acquiesce, because of course that would serve only to undermine his own authority further. I look forward to working with friends and colleagues to progress marriage equality.

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (12:13): It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on the Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill. Very pleasingly, the introduction of this bill is the culmination of our fulfilment of the clear mandate that we have from the last election. It was very clear to Australians when they went to a polling booth on 2 July that should the Turnbull government be re-elected a vote in parliament on same-sex marriage would only occur following a public vote, a plebiscite, put to the Australian people to garner their views on the proposed change to this very important institution.

The fact that the Labor Party and the Greens have chosen to oppose this legislation is very disappointing—not surprising but disappointing. I accept that particularly the Shorten opposition is basically obsessed with any political advantage they can get, and I do not whinge about that. I can understand that oppositions engage, as a general rule, in political advantage as opposed to fulfilling what I think should be the values that this parliament should uphold. Putting that aside, what did surprise me is the Labor Party's position, seemingly, that the Australian people cannot be trusted and, indeed, are not entitled to have a view on a proposed change to this very, very important institution. That is what surprised me and many of my colleagues and, I suspect, secretly surprised some people within the Labor Party itself. We know the Labor Party have basically adopted an approach that anybody who supports a traditional view of marriage effectively puts their preselection in jeopardy. We know that from 2019 they will bind all their party members to a position supporting same-sex marriage. But it is very surprising to me that they would use the argument that they do, particularly in the context of a parliament where we will, presumably, soon be trying to further the recognition of Indigenous Australians in our Constitution. I wonder if those opposite will use an argument that we should not proceed with a referendum recognising
Indigenous Australians in our Constitution for fear that such a referendum would unleash hate in our society and bring out the racist fringe groups in our society, thereby causing Indigenous Australians much hurt. Might I say, that is a flimsy argument, but it is an argument that I would expect correlates with the argument that they have put forward here—that, because of the fear that a debate on a plebiscite could contain elements that make unsavoury, unfair, cruel or harsh comments, we should not have a plebiscite. Clearly, that same theory would apply to the recognition of Indigenous Australians in the Constitution.

We have been having this debate for many, many years, and it was the advocates of same-sex marriage who have insisted on ensuring that this is debated in our society, notwithstanding the fact that we have had 16 individual pieces of legislation introduced, debated and voted for in this parliament. On the basis of that argument—that we should not unleash such hatred and hateful comments in our society—why has there been, in a sense, a perpetual campaign from the advocates of same-sex marriage? Clearly, those issues were not a concern at that time.

I am very proud that, as a government, we are fulfilling our election mandate but, more importantly—crucially—saying to the Australian people: 'We think you deserve to have a direct say on a change to an important institution like marriage. You deserve that.' I know that, because most of them end up crawling their way onto these benches through the union movement, patronage and other things, those opposite in the Labor Party, who scarcely would live or socialise or spend much time outside a five-kilometre radius of our CBDs, do not really have a great ability to converse with what I would describe as mainstream Australians. They are displaying the same arrogance that we saw very recently in the Brexit campaign in the UK. It is the same arrogance that says: 'You do not deserve, you are not entitled and you cannot be trusted to have a say on an important issue such as this. Leave it to us. We know best.' What we do know is that most Australians are decent, have views, can agree to disagree and will differ but can have a respectful debate.

When we talk about being concerned about the consequences of a plebiscite and concerned about the campaign, I would make two points. Firstly, I do not think a plebiscite campaign would be markedly different to the campaign we have seen for the last five years. These issues have been aired in detail. It feels like we have spoken about this issue ad nauseam for at least five years. In a plebiscite, albeit with the intensity of a campaign, particularly given that our plebiscite is scheduled to be held on 11 February, a relatively short time from now—there would be some intensity—I do not think the substance of the arguments that would be aired in that debate would be markedly different from what we have seen over the last five or so years.

The second point I would make, when we are talking about the concern about fringe groups and hurtful, hateful, negative comments, is that, yes, I am somebody, to be honest, who is concerned with that issue. I am very concerned for those people who hold a traditional view of marriage, because they are the ones who are subject to the most hateful, vitriolic comments that I have seen. I invite any member in this House to express on Twitter or Facebook a view supporting traditional marriage and see what sorts of comments they get. I challenge them to do that. So, yes, I do share those concerns. Most relevantly, I share those concerns for those who have a traditional view of marriage, but of course that would equally apply to same-sex marriage advocates. But for the Labor Party to argue that it is just same-sex marriage
advocates who would potentially be subject to that vitriol is incorrect. I would say that those who are on the traditional view of marriage case have been suffering that for many, many years. I am one of those people who does not support a change to the Marriage Act. That is, in a sense, why I believe that a plebiscite is fair and a responsible course of action by this government.

Plebiscites as a concept are not novel. Yes, they do not happen all the time, but they are not novel in Australian political history. They have been employed to deal with a number of difficult issues over the years. So for the Labor Party to say that it is unprecedented for the Australian parliament to seek the Australian people's views on highly contentious and highly significant issues is wrong. In the area of conscription and many others, the Australian parliament has asked the Australian people for their view on serious questions. The Australian parliament did it with conscription, and I do not think anyone seriously argued that the Australian people should not have had a say on conscription, albeit in our history.

Marriage is an institution. It is one that, formally and informally, has developed over millennia. It has been adopted into our civil law and, in my view, it is an institution that belongs to the people. It is not an institution of government. It is an institution that belongs to the people, and they should be the arbiters. They should be the direct and final arbiters of whether we make a significant change to the definition of marriage. This is not a minor tweak; this is significant and fundamental change to the definition of marriage. So I am very pleased that on 11 February, should this House and the Senate pass this bill, we will have a public vote on this question.

I am also very pleased to note that in this legislation funding will be provided to both campaigns, constituted in a similar fashion to the way funding was provided in the republic referendum in the late nineties. Both campaigns will have access to that funding. I think it is important that, in putting forward this question to the Australian people, they are entitled to hear the respective arguments of both of those cases. We have seen to date it has been, basically, one-way traffic as far as that case being made. I do not begrudge the same-sex marriage advocates—all power to them. They have run a very strong campaign. They have been very strong advocates for their case. They are obviously very well organised and extraordinarily well funded. I do not begrudge them that. I think it is fantastic. In a democracy, that is wonderful. When they commenced that campaign, I did not hear those in the Labor Party saying, 'Just be careful, guys, because I don't want you to unleash any hatred in our society by starting this campaign.' So it is surprising that they have adopted that now.

With this funding it is important that we will have both cases aired in a way that will ensure that the Australian people, when they go to the ballot box on 11 February, are able to make an informed decision.

Importantly, this legislation also provides that we will replicate, to the greatest extent possible, the ordinary voting experience for people at a polling booth on 11 February. We did not want this to be novel. We wanted it to, in a sense, replicate the voting experience that most people would have, as they did when they went to the polling booths on 2 July and gave us a mandate for this legislation. So the ordinary rules around pre-poll, attendance voting and postal voting will apply, so it is easily understood. I think it was important for the purposes of this plebiscite that there was not anything novel or anything that the government or, indeed, the parliament could be accused of, in a sense, changing for the benefit of one side or the
other of the argument. I think we have successfully done that. I do not think anybody has criticised that the legislation—the bill before us—provides a voting experience that would be easily understood and familiar to all Australians.

I will conclude by saying that it is a proud moment for the government. It is a proud moment for me as a member of this government that, in the face of vitriolic hostility, the base accusations of the Labor Party impugning our motives behind this legislation and the inherent disregard or the inherent belittling of the Australian people that is basically contained within their argument that the Australian people cannot be trusted and do not have the right to make this decision, we, in the face of all of that, have brought this legislation before the House, fulfilling a key commitment that we took to the election and, most importantly—and this is the most important thing—ensuring that, if there is to be a change to same-sex marriage, all Australians could say, ‘This was a decision by the people.’ Alternatively, if there is no change, the advocates of same-sex marriage would, whilst they would not be happy with the outcome, appreciate that in a democracy the decision of the people was not to change the Marriage Act.

I think both sides of the argument—whoever the losing side was—would be, in a sense, happier knowing that their ambitions were frustrated not by a political stitch up by this parliament or lobby groups and well-funded advocacy groups running long-term campaigns but, actually, by the majority. In a democracy, the majority rules. The greatest thing about this plebiscite is: ultimately, whichever side is frustrated in their attempts—whether the advocates of same-sex marriage or the advocates of traditional marriage—they will live with the outcome because it will be the determination of the Australian people. I commend this bill.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (12:28): Labor rejects the false choice presented by the government that it is either a plebiscite or nothing when it comes to marriage equality in Australia. There are bills in the parliament right now that would make marriage equality a reality if Mr Turnbull would behave like a leader and allow a free vote.

This plebiscite and the Marriage Act amendments released by the Attorney-General at five minutes to midnight before this bill, the Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016, was debated are the clearest indications yet that the Turnbull government, dominated by Senators Bernardi and Abetz, and the member for Dawson and others in the right, will never accept marriage equality. This massively wasteful and divisive plebiscite was devised by the member for Warringah and others in the right wing of the Liberal Party who are opposed to marriage equality. These opponents of marriage equality demanded a plebiscite not because they wanted to progress marriage equality but because they wanted to delay it and, if it all possible, to derail it.

Prime Minister Turnbull had the chance to ditch the plebiscite and make a fresh start on marriage equality when he took over the leadership from the member for Warringah. He chose not to. That was incredibly disappointing to all Australians who had hoped that the member for Wentworth was a man of his convictions and who had pictured the member for Wentworth as a leader who might take our nation in a different direction. The new Prime Minister's abject failure to do more than follow the destructive tactics concocted by his predecessor, has, of course, been particularly disappointing for Australians from the LGBTI community. The Prime Minister's utter lack of backbone in this matter is plain for all to see. He has had no problem reversing election policies on all manner of economic matters,
including his 'ironclad' policy guarantees on superannuation. He claims these changes were necessary to improve policies that he has since discovered were flawed. Backflips on election policies are no problem at all for this Prime Minister when his right-wing colleagues demand them. 'What mandate?' our Prime Minister says. But when virtually all LGBTI Australians tell him that the plebiscite is a fundamentally flawed policy that will cause great harm—a position the Prime Minister himself held when the plebiscite was first proposed—the Prime Minister claims that he is incapable of changing course. The debate we are having now is not about whether we should have marriage equality or not, in truth; it is about the best mechanism for achieving it. It is now up to the Prime Minister to show that, if one mechanism is blocked, he has the wit and courage to find an alternative mechanism.

Labor has made it easy for him to do that. There are bills sitting in the House just waiting for the Prime Minister to act. This plebiscite is no more than a delaying tactic that became coalition party policy after a six-hour partyroom meeting when a desperate Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, was trying to shore up his leadership. Many of those on the front bench who are now trying to sell the plebiscite as a good idea, including the current Prime Minister and the Attorney-General, were vehemently opposed to the plebiscite when it was first raised.

The Prime Minister does not honestly believe that the plebiscite is a better way to decide this issue than a free vote in parliament; he just has to pretend as much in order to stay in power and to keep sweet with a handful of his right-wing colleagues. Let me be clear: this is not an argument of principle. A plebiscite is a complete fabrication, at odds with the principles of representative government and counter to over a century of our parliamentary democratic process. It is a totally dishonest claim to pretend that it is 'good for democracy'.

Like so many other features of Malcolm Turnbull's Prime Ministership so far, his dithering on this issue speaks of an utter weakness and an unwillingness to stand up to the right wing of his own party. Not all Liberals share the Prime Minister's weakness. Liberal Senator from Western Australia Dean Smith, who is proposing to cross the floor to vote against the plebiscite bill when comes to the Senate, wrote in The Sydney Morning Herald last month:

As a lifelong parliamentary and constitutional conservative, I cannot countenance a proposition that threatens to undermine the democratic compact that has seen Australia emerge as one of the most stable parliamentary democracies in the world.

I do not share Senator Smith's views on many matters, but I entirely agree with the principles he expressed and the reasoning he set out in his piece.

The Hon. Michael Kirby, a former High Court judge, made a related point:

It is exceptional and wrong in principle to commit decisions on the basic human rights of minorities to a majority popular vote, especially in a country such as Australia which, exceptionally, has no entrenched constitutional guarantees for equality or fundamental human rights to protect minorities. For protection, minorities look to parliament to protect them. It should not shirk from that duty.

Holding plebiscites is just not the way we govern ourselves in Australia. It sets a terrible precedent for making difficult decisions. We, as elected representatives, do not farm out tough questions. We debate them, we talk to stakeholders, we think hard on them, we consult, and we vote. It works. We should not change it now just because it is politically convenient for a weak Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is well aware of what he is doing. But he continues to maintain that he is doing it out of some higher moral duty to give people their say. He knows, and we know, that that is just not true.
The only exception to that principle of representative democracy, the only involvement of a
direct public vote on a specific legal change, is when we are compelled by the Australian
Constitution to do so because it is the Constitution itself that is to be changed. In those
circumstances, Section 128 of the Constitution requires that there be a popular vote and for a
majority of people in a majority of the states to be reached. And that is it. There is absolutely
no legal reason for this plebiscite. This plebiscite was invented only by those opposed to
marriage equality to solve a political problem in the Liberal party room.

Then there is the question of cost. That this government wants to spend $200 million on a
needless plebiscite when there are organisations and people around Australia who have borne
the brunt of severe cuts under this government and are crying out for relief is just shocking.
This Prime Minister is willing to spend $200 million of hard-earned taxpayer money just to
save his own neck. The Prime Minister and his frontbench colleagues were bullied by the
member for Dawson and his mates into providing a total of $15 million in public funding to
the yes and no sides, compounding this waste. Let me be clear: only the no case asked for this
money. There was only one side of the case they were seeking to satisfy in this situation, and
that is the one that is driving conservative, reactionary ideology. This entire process has been
captive to that cause, and it is plain for all to see.

Since the idea of this plebiscite was first introduced by the member for Warringah, as a
former Prime Minister fighting for his life, the government has ignored the very real and very
cruel impact the plebiscite would have on the vulnerable LGBTI community. This is a
population which is already vastly overrepresented when it comes to mental health issues and
suicide rates. And this government wants to inflict further harm.

This week we saw research from Ireland on the impact on the LGBTI community there of
their referendum on marriage equality. This was a public vote which, I note, Ireland had to
have as the existing definition of 'marriage' was enshrined in their constitution. That survey
found that 75.5 per cent of participants often or always felt angry when they were exposed to
campaign messages from the no campaign before the referendum, 80 per cent felt upset by the
no campaign materials, and two-thirds felt anxious or distressed. Younger LGBTI people
scored lower on psychological wellbeing compared with older people, including feeling
anxious and afraid.

This is a message that I have heard over and over again from the LGBTI community
throughout Australia. At one round table of LGBTI mental health experts, which I attended
with the Leader of the Opposition and a number of my other colleagues, at an organisation
called drummond street services in Carlton, I was told that calls to their LGBTI mental health
hotline had doubled since the debate about the plebiscite started. Labor has taken the time to
consult extensively with the LGBTI community all around Australia—unlike the Prime
Minister, who I believe has not had one public meeting, and unlike Senator Brandis, who only
took the time briefly last week to call those he was meeting with 'fools'. The LGBTI
community are the ones most affected by the issue we are now debating. LGBTI Australians
deserve to be listened to, and LGBTI Australians have been telling us loud and clear that they
do not want this plebiscite.

I have received a stream of correspondence from the LGBTI community over the last few
weeks, including a letter from John Challis, in Sydney, who is 88. I know the member for
Sydney is also familiar with John and has mentioned him already in this place. John's partner,
Arthur, is 84. They have been together 49 years. They wrote to urge me not to support the plebiscite. They said they would be happy to wait a bit longer to marry in order to avoid the plebiscite. I find that incredible. It shows a patience and kindness that says a lot about the LGBTI community in Australia and the attitude they have taken on this plebiscite.

Labor does not regret opposing this plebiscite. We do not regret rejecting something that will inflict hurt, that will waste $200 million of taxpayer money and that will not even be binding on coalition MPs once it is done. We do not regret opposing this political trick the Prime Minister wants to pull off. The Prime Minister and Attorney-General will try and convince the Australian people that the cause of marriage equality is now dead. Do not listen to them. The cause of marriage equality is more alive than ever. This plebiscite proposal, no matter how pointless it was, mobilised the movement for marriage equality more than anything else has in some years. And if anybody thinks that the movement for marriage equality in Australia is going to go away now, to use the language of the Attorney-General, you are a fool. Labor will keep up the fight. We will keep pushing for a free vote on marriage equality in this parliament. We will not let this slip and we will not give this up. I call on Australians who support marriage equality not to lose hope and to keep up the fight. Join with us.

To the Prime Minister I would say: you tried to force Australians to accept a plebiscite and you have failed. The LGBTI community do not want it and the people across Australia who support the LGBTI community in their quest for equality also do not support it. It is absolutely clear that this has been a mounting majority of Australians who oppose this plebiscite. That has happened over the course of this year, as the Australian community has realised what waste, what harm, what division would be caused by this plebiscite and, I would suggest, as the Australian people have come to realise how unnecessary this plebiscite is.

Australians want their parliament to do the job that their parliament was elected to do—that is, to consider the hard issues that arise in Australia and to debate those hard issues and to vote on those hard issues. There are legion of hard issues that this parliament has looked at in more than a century of Federation, and on all of the occasions when the rights of Australians have been altered, the rights of Australians in Australian law, they have been altered by a vote in this parliament. We did not need a plebiscite to decide that we should ban racial discrimination in this country. We did not need a plebiscite when we changed the laws to permit Aboriginal Australians to marry non-Aboriginal Australians, to allow what was once decried as ‘mixed raced marriages’—just to put this in context. We did not have a plebiscite when we decided to remove discrimination against LGBTI people in 88 pieces of Commonwealth legislation in the 43rd Parliament. I could go on, but the point is that we do not invite the whole of the Australian population to vote and we have never invited the whole of the Australian population to vote on the rights of other Australians, except where there was some constitutional change involved.

I call on the Prime Minister to stand up for something, to admit that you, the Prime Minister, never wanted this plebiscite to happen either. The Prime Minister and the frontbench of the government have it within their power to bring about a free vote in this parliament, and I call on the government to do just that: to drop this ridiculous idea of a plebiscite and to allow a free vote on marriage equality today.
Mr EVANS (Brisbane) (12:43): Today I rise, as Queensland's first openly gay MP, in support of achieving marriage equality and to fulfil the election commitments made by myself and every member of this government. Marriage equality is a very important and deeply personal issue for me. I have naturally been interested in this public debate for a long time. It is with much personal pride in mainstream Australians that I observe how quickly the debate on this topic has transformed in recent years. Basically, this parliament is now arguing over the method by which to bring about the reform, rather than the substantive topic itself.

There are many in our community, including many constituents in Brisbane, and indeed myself, who want to achieve this reform as quickly as possible. I hear and I sense the impatience and frustration of many of my constituents in calling for this reform. And it is worth reflecting for a moment on why there is this frustration and impatience in some parts of the community.

Australia has just had a coalition government, a Labor government and, in between those, a Labor government operating in a formal coalition with the Greens. None of those governments achieved this reform, not even the Labor-Greens coalition, which was, incidentally, the only one of those governments with a majority in its Senate. Those of us who have observed this debate over many years will remember how our three former Prime Ministers over those years—Prime Ministers Rudd, Gillard, Rudd again and then Abbott—all opposed marriage equality, although only one appeared to oppose it through consistent principle, while another changed their mind when it was all too late.

That brings us now to the Turnbull government. Our Prime Minister is the first Prime Minister our country has ever had who has been consistently in favour of marriage equality. This is the first ever government Australia has ever elected with a platform that includes a way forward on marriage equality. In being elected, this government, incidentally, achieved something momentous for the cause of diversity, with the election of Australia's first ever openly gay members of this House: Trent Zimmerman, the member for North Sydney; Tim Wilson, the member for Goldstein; and myself in Brisbane. Now, for the first time ever in Australian history, a federal government is putting forward a government-endorsed bill that paves a way forwards for achieving marriage equality.

A plebiscite might not be described, even by its closest friends, as the simplest or most perfect way to achieve a reform. I am only a new member, but I suspect that very little that passes through this House in a perfect way, given the compromises needed today to scrape together majority support for almost any reform. Indeed, the most perfect way to achieve marriage equality was presumably lost to us years ago before my time here, when the opportunity first arose for a former government to recognise that community sentiment had begun to shift and finally a majority of Australians started to support this reform.

If this issue was such a simple one for our country, then it would likely have been achieved by one of those former governments. That we find ourselves here is a reflection of how difficult this topic has actually proven to be for both sides of politics. While I strongly support achieving marriage equality, I recognise and respect the many Australians, including many Brisbane voters, who have alternative views. A plebiscite may not be the preferred way forward on this topic for me, for our Prime Minister or for many of our colleagues, yet nobody should be surprised to see this government trying to implement its election commitments, nor should they be surprised to see government members supporting this
promise we made to our own constituents. No-one should feign outrage over a policy that has already been taken to an election and been endorsed by the Australian people.

This is the first time in history any Australian government has put its numbers behind a bill paving a way forward on marriage equality. In supporting this bill, I will incidentally be one of the few people in this House to have a consistent voting history in favour of marriage equality. Most of those opposite, who vote no to this bill today, will be condemned by historians not only for voting against the first ever government-endorsed bill presented here with a way forward on marriage and not only for today delaying marriage equality for who knows how long but for taking no action when they had the power to and for failing to try anything to achieve this when they had their chance. Indeed, for many of them, they will be condemned for having voted against marriage equality in past parliaments and in their own party rooms. From the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten down—including the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Penny Wong—they have voted no to achieving marriage equality when they were in government. They were supportive of this plebiscite just a few years ago, as were the Greens, and so their record is, tragically, inconsistent and impotent. It is one I certainly will not ever replicate.

I am voting here today in support of achieving marriage equality, consistent with a strong history of Liberal Party achievement when it comes to diversity and LGBTI rights. The rights of gay people were first mentioned in this House many, many decades ago by an Attorney-General from our side of politics. In Queensland, the Liberal Party was the first party to support ending the laws that previously prohibited homosexuality.

The first victories in this House giving same-sex couples legal equality in federal laws were won by a coalition government, addressing the potential for discrimination in the approach our Defence forces. That government also produced the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission report entitled *Same sex: same entitlements*, which was ultimately acted on by the Rudd government and supported in a bipartisan fashion to achieve legal equality for same-sex couples in areas such as superannuation and welfare.

In the election a few months ago, as I said, the Liberal Party achieved a victory for diversity with the election of Australia's first openly gay MPs. That follows naturally from the achievements of the Liberal Party in other areas of diversity: having the nation's first female MPs and ministers, having the first Indigenous MP and producing the oldest and the youngest ever representatives in this House.

Now, let me be as even-handed as I can in addressing what are regarded as the strongest arguments against a plebiscite. Firstly, to the question of division: a plebiscite will not create a single new line of attack or offence, nor will it create a single new platform for communicating such messages. If we take a moment to think of whatever examples we possibly can where somebody in a plebiscite may say something on any communication platform which could be hurtful, offensive or inappropriate, we find that it can already be said now by that person on that communication platform—today.

It is true that a plebiscite will likely increase the sheer quantity of the arguments being made in the debate around marriage equality for a period of time, yet that is also true for every single other approach. A parliamentary vote, for example, would similarly—as seen now—increase the quantity of debate on every platform. Increased public debate is unavoidable in achieving most reforms. There is no way that this reform can be made in
secret. Nor is it desirable to achieve social change secretly. For example, we will not ever defeat racism, xenophobia or populism by being quiet about it and stifling community debate. We will not defeat domestic violence by being quiet about it and stifling community debate. And we will not defeat homophobia or any inequality by being quiet about it and stifling community debate, either.

Quite frankly, it appears from the way this matter is heading now that if this bill is defeated it will prolong the public debate, leaving this topic a very live one for far longer than a plebiscite would take. Indeed, one of the clear benefits of a plebiscite, compared to the alternatives, is that the debate would be done and dusted by 11 February. For the romantics hoping to get married under these reforms, I note that date is three days before Valentine's Day.

On the topic of division, I want to recognise that, in reality, there is right now a base level of ongoing divisiveness in our country targeted towards some in the LGBTI community. It existed before this debate and it will continue afterwards, especially in the absence of us creating any big watershed moments, as a successful plebiscite would. We all have a very serious responsibility here to shelter from harm those who are vulnerable in our community. Naturally, I feel this responsibility very strongly about my own constituents. That is why I attended the Queensland pride march last month, the IDAHOT rally in June and the Brisbane candlelight vigil for the victims of the Orlando massacre. It is why I have already had so many meetings with individuals and groups representing the LGBTI community around Brisbane, including specifically around the challenges faced by vulnerable trans and intersex constituents. I look forward to working very closely with them all for many more years to come.

In a plebiscite, I could foreseeably be one target for some hurtful and offensive comments. Equally, however, I would also very willingly and energetically be a strong leader and a loud defender of the vulnerable if I ever saw anything inappropriate targeting them. And I know I would be joined by countless more constituents in Brisbane and around Australia who are ready to stand up and argue for a fair debate.

Indeed, my genuine and heartfelt confidence in the people of Australia, in the power of liberal democracy and in the disinfecting virtues of free speech means I have never been overly worried about the conduct or the result of a plebiscite. Every national poll that has been conducted on this topic for many years shows that if we gave Australians an equal say on this topic, they would vote overwhelmingly for marriage equality.

Probably the most crucial thing that can be said about a plebiscite is that it offers a profoundly comprehensive way to resolve the issue. I say 'comprehensive' very deliberately, thinking about so many other policy areas where political games have been played in recent times, where contentious issues have not been resolved by a parliamentary vote—rather, those debates were amplified, then continued to be used in political games for many years afterwards. A plebiscite would have the Australian people make a decision and own the decision in a way that would force most politicians to toe the line. I am concerned about the possibility that a parliamentary vote may not resolve the issue and instead may lead to the LGBTI community continuing to be used as a political game for many more years to come.

To the issue of cost: $170 million is a lot of money. To put it in its proper context, it is about one per cent of the budget repair work that this government has achieved in the last
month. It amounts to about 0.05 per cent of Labor's failed pink batts program or 0.01 per cent of their failed school halls program. It is about the same amount as the cost to the economy being imposed by Labor's lockouts in Queensland, although, of course, the costs of those lockouts will continue to be paid by Queenslanders every year, not just once. And those lockouts, incidentally, have the effect of shutting down the safe spaces of so many in the LGBTI community.

One hundred and seventy million dollars is about the same amount as holding a royal commission, if you look at the average cost of the last three. The fact is that nation-wide activities and national reforms often do cost money. My considered view is that if the $170 million resolves this issue once and for all and puts an end to the political games that have been played with the lives of LGBTI people, then it would be worth it.

In closing, it appears that this bill is headed for defeat in the Senate, despite it being an election commitment endorsed by the Australian people. It begs the question, what next? I do not know the full answer to that question. Those voting against this bill do not have a plan for what happens next, nor do they have the numbers to achieve any plan because they are not in government. There is a real risk that voting no to this bill will stall reform in this area for a long time, possibly many years. That saddens and frustrates me.

I would like to take a moment to thank the people of Brisbane, the community members, the members of the LGBTI community and their interest groups who have spoken with me about this issue, keeping the dialogue open and constructive. I caution some against the idea that a change of government will achieve marriage equality. You would be banking on what a future Senate looks like and counting on an opposition that did not fix this when they had the chance in government. Plus, history will tell you that oppositions do not usually win federal elections.

This government, with the nation's first ever Prime Minister to consistently support marriage equality, is the biggest opportunity the LGBTI community has ever had to achieve reform. If this parliament does not ultimately find a way forward to achieving marriage equality, I extend my arms to all of those not just in that community but also their supporters in the wider community: keep the conversation alive, keep your passion for reform and keep the dialogue open with this government. I strongly believe this reform will be made by a Liberal government.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (12:58): I oppose the Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016 for three basic reasons. Firstly, parliament should not treat gay and lesbian Australians differently when it comes to legislating to determine their rights under Australian law. Secondly, the proposed plebiscite is simply a waste of taxpayers' money. The result can be achieved through a free vote of this parliament, and done very quickly, saving the taxpayers a lot of money in the process. Thirdly, representative democracy is Australia's form of government, and we, as representatives of our communities and as legislators, should perform that role through a free vote of this parliament. If we did so, we could do that this week. The result would be the same, it would save money for the Australian people and we would avoid dividing our nation through a vitriolic and unnecessary debate.

Marriage equality is a reform whose time has come. Australians overwhelmingly support amending our laws to allow same-sex couples to express their love for one another through marriage. The current definition of marriage in the Marriage Act is discriminatory. It
discriminates against gay and lesbian Australians and it does not provide them with the ultimate expression of love that other Australians are entitled to through marriage. For many years same-sex couples in Australia have had many of those discriminatory barriers broken down. It was the previous Labor government—the Rudd government—that removed almost 80 pieces of discriminatory legislation that were harming the lives of gay and lesbian people in Australia. As a result of those reforms, gay and lesbian people in Australia can now share property and income, they can bequeath property and income and they can have and adopt children. They are equal before the law in every respect except for what is probably the most important expression of love that a couple can go through: the right to wed.

In this day and age this parliament should not any longer stand in the way of that reform being achieved in Australia. Through this bill, this is exactly what this government is doing. It is standing in the way of this parliament making a decision to amend our Marriage Act to remove the discrimination that exists under Australian law. The Australian parliament should not discriminate against gay and lesbian Australians in the manner in which we determine their rights and the manner in which we make laws that affect their welfare, but this is exactly what a plebiscite and this bill does. It discriminates, by its very nature, against gay and lesbian people in Australia, because their rights have to be determined through a vote of the Australian people. That has never ever happened before in the history of our federation. So, gay and lesbian people are justified when they ask this government, 'Why should gay and lesbian Australians be treated differently in the manner in which the parliament determines their right to marriage compared with everyone else?'

When we initially established the Marriage Act in Australia we did not have a vote of the Australian people. When we establish other rights that affect Australians we do not have a vote of the Australian people. But when it comes to this particular issue and the rights of gay and lesbian people to express their love and their sexuality, we are going to have a vote? We are going to call the whole of the Australian public together and change the method by which we make laws in this country through a plebiscite vote? That does not make sense. It is abrogating the responsibility that a government has, through representative democracy, to pass laws for the welfare of the people of Australia. This has never occurred before in the history of our nation. The first plebiscite that took place in Australia was 100 years ago and it related to conscription. Then of course we had a plebiscite about expressing favour for a particular version of a national anthem in 1977.

This plebiscite, if it were to continue, if it were to succeed, would result in a vitriolic and divisive debate in Australia, and a particular group of Australians' sexuality and their rights would be the focus of the nation's attention. In the two months that lead up to the plebiscite, that will be the focus of national attention and that will get all the media's attention and that will get all the social media attention and it will be the backyard barbecue debate in homes throughout Australia. This group of Australians' sexuality will be the attention of the nation—whether or not someone is going to vote yes or no to determine their right to express their love through marriage.

We have all manner of divisive debates occurring in Australia. We have people coming up and saying that gay relationships are unnatural and saying that gay couples and lesbian couples who have kids are living in unnatural relationships and that they are not a real family.
These sorts of debates harm people's psychology and their mental wellbeing and they particularly affect kids who are the products of those relationships. This will be fuelled by the current government, because an important part of this bill is that the government will provide $7½ million to the yes and no campaigns to run their campaign and run their propaganda in the wider community. They will be stoking the fire of division in terms of the no campaign by the Commonwealth.

That is unheard of and is something that this government should not be involved in. No Australian government should be involved in providing Commonwealth funding to undermine the rights of another group of Australians when it comes to marriage equality. That is not the role of an Australian government. That is not representative democracy. Indeed, it is un-Australian, because it has never occurred before in the history of nation. In the 1960s when we have the referendum on the rights of Aboriginal Australians to be recognised in the Constitution and recognised under Australian law there was no funding for a no campaign, because it would have set a very dangerous precedent. Yet, as part of this bill, there is funding for the no campaign. That is something that is un-Australian, in my view.

The other point to make—and I have consulted with gay and lesbian members in our community and their advocacy groups—is that they do not want a plebiscite. That is quite clear. The gay and lesbian community in Australia do not want a plebiscite. I think it is interesting that almost everyone who is calling for a plebiscite is not gay or lesbian. That is the real reason the government is out of touch when it comes to this particular issue, because those are calling for this are not the ones who are going to be affected by the vitriolic and divisive debate and having others, including their friends and others in their communities, question their sexuality and their right to equality under the law through marriage in Australia—another reason that this plebiscite should not go ahead.

The second reason is the cost. So far it is going to cost $180 million, and rising, to hold this plebiscite. So much for the fiscal emergency. So much for reining in the budget deficit. So much for the budget emergency and the government saying they need to save every penny when it comes to government expenditure. Here they are going to waste upwards of $180 million for a plebiscite that many on that side of the conservative ilk will not abide by anyway when it comes to the vote in this parliament. That does not make any sense whatsoever to the average Australian. Why are you going to have a plebiscite to determine what we say about marriage equality when some of you are going to ignore that and vote against it? Come on. You want to spend $180 million on this in the environment of, as you say, 'a budget emergency'. It does not make sense. We all know that the result would be the same if the parliament had a free vote anyway. I have no doubt that if we had a plebiscite it would pass, but the result would be the same if we had a free vote in the parliament. We would save the money, we would save the vitriolic and divisive debate and we would not be setting new precedents in terms of determining Australians' rights under the Australian Constitution through a public vote.

The final point I would like to make is that we live in a representative democracy and it is a representative democracy that has served our nation very well. In the finest tradition of the Westminster system, people have been chosen at regular elections to represent their communities and put their views in this parliament and matters, particularly legal reforms, have been determined through a vote of the parliament. It has served our nation well. Yet on
this issue of determining the rights of individuals who happen to be gay and lesbian we are going to divert from that tried, trusted and true course of action for determining laws and hold a very divisive and vitriolic debate. Almost every other nation except for Ireland has gone through a representative democracy model of determining the issue. We are elected to do a job—to represent our communities and to determine laws through votes in this place after we have had a fulsome debate and, where it is required, committee investigation into details. We should do that with respect to this issue. We should get on with it, do what we are elected to do, hold a free and open debate and vote in this parliament. If we did that, we could determine that matter next week. We could have marriage equality here in Australia next week.

The question needs to be asked: why is the government doing this? My wife asked me: 'Why is Malcolm Turnbull doing this?' We all know that he believes in marriage equality. We all know that he has said in the past that he does not support a plebiscite. In fact, in the wake of Tony Abbott's political deal to get his plebiscite up in the coalition party room, Malcolm Turnbull said in a media conference the next day that the Liberal Party had been 'branch stacked', in the words of the minister for innovation, with the National Party being involved:

One of the attractions of a free vote is that it would have meant the matter would be resolved in this parliament one way or another in a couple of weeks.

That is the view of the Prime Minister. I could not agree with him more. I actually agree with the Prime Minister on this issue. It could have been determined and voted on in a couple of weeks time. It would not have lingered and we would have had a vote under a representative democracy model.

That is the view the Prime Minister held prior to doing a deal with the National Party and the conservative wing of the Liberal Party to become the Prime Minister. That is the great shame about this whole thing. That is the answer to the question: why? It is a backroom political deal. This bill we are voting on here today is nothing more than a backroom political deal by the Liberal Party and by the Prime Minister to become the Prime Minister of our nation. That is how he abandoned his conviction. That is how he abandoned his previous views that many in the Australian public were attracted to and the reason why they did like him in the past.

He abandoned those convictions when he became the Prime Minister and it has resulted in this vitriolic and divisive debate. It has resulted in the delay of this important reform. It has got us to this position we are in at the moment where we are arguing across this chamber about the rights of an important group of Australians when we should just be getting on with it and holding a vote and determining this issue right here in this parliament. We are elected to represent the people to determine these issues and that is the manner in which this should be determined. That is why I and my colleagues are voting against this bill.

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (13:12): I rise today to commend the Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016 to the House. I am already publicly on the record supporting the national plebiscite on the question of same-sex marriage. There has been a lot said about the plebiscite, but one thing that is clear is that the government has been very open with the Australian people about this pathway to same-sex marriage since August 2015. Indeed, it has been vigorously debated over the past year both in this house and in the wider Australian community.
The Turnbull government took this policy of a plebiscite to the July federal election to resolve the issue of same-sex marriage. It was distinct from the Labor policy to legislate same-sex marriage within 100 days via a parliamentary vote if they won government, which they clearly did not. So the Australian people were presented with a very clear choice: a popular vote on this issue where they have the freedom to exercise their own conscience or leave this significant decision to the political class. The Australian people re-elected the coalition government. They chose our policy of a plebiscite rather than the policy offered by those opposite. We, therefore, have a mandate for this plebiscite. The Australian people chose the plebiscite to resolve the question of same-sex marriage. This is the proper way forward after the introduction and failure of 20 separate same-sex marriage bills into parliament since 2004.

As it was made clear earlier in the week, Labor has declared that they will frustrate the will of the people and vote down the plebiscite. This is thinly veiled contempt for the Australian people. This neither respects the government's mandate, nor the choice of the Australian people to exercise their personal vote, their conscience, on this important question—a choice that, at the last election, they made very clear they want. Labor's intransigence on this question points to a deeper truth: in this parliament, we are at an impasse. To go forward decisively as a nation on this question, we should and must consult the people.

Whatever side prevails in the plebiscite, they will, importantly, have both a cultural and legal mandate—which is something you can say about the Irish experience, with their referendum. Contrast that with the US experience, where the Supreme Court of the United States unilaterally ruled by judicial fiat that same-sex marriage would become law of the land, riding roughshod over individual states and their own democratic processes. It is my belief that culture is upstream of politics. If same-sex marriage enjoys the support of the Australian people—as those opposite have just claimed, and recent polling has suggested—the 'yes' campaign has nothing to fear from a plebiscite. It is the quickest and surest way to their end state of legalising same-sex marriage in this country.

The coalition has delivered on a plan for the plebiscite after wide consultation with advocates from both the 'yes' and 'no' campaigns. The details are clear: a national vote on 11 Feb 2017; a fair question, 'Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?'; a result that will be determined nationally, with the 'yes' vote being carried with 50 per cent plus one of the national vote; and funding for both the 'yes' and 'no' campaigns of $7.5 million each. If the 'yes' vote carries, it will sail through the parliament—as the Prime Minister has said on many occasions—and no serious advocate of the plebiscite should dare oppose it. The pathway is very clear. It is fair. The plebiscite bill is a good package. It is, therefore, very disappointing that the Leader of the Opposition and Labor have already chosen to oppose this bill. They have given their reasons, and I need not cover them here. However, it is worth noting that at the heart of their opposition is politics—a desire to cause as much damage to the government as possible, even if it means frustrating the desire of same-sex couples to marry. The Australian people deserve better.

I wish to make a few points about the nature of marriage and the civility of public discussion in Australia. I believe this debate is about the objective nature of marriage itself. We are proposing to change one of civilization's oldest institutions. This is not about people's sexuality and this is not about appeals to religious authority; this debate is about the objective
character of marriage and how we define it. I hold to the common view of marriage as a comprehensive union between a man and a woman—comprehensive, because it involves both mutual consent and sexual union that is inextricably linked to procreation and the continuation of the human race. Marriage, in this form, is inherently ordered towards family life. That is why I argue that common marriage in its ideal form is both permanent and exclusive. That is why people say 'till death do us part' and promise to 'forsake all others'. It is about the preservation of a family unit that occurs when two members of the opposite sex come together in a comprehensive union—a union that is both diverse in gender and affords equality to both sexes.

These objective characteristics of marriage have not depended upon individual or cultural preferences across history. There is continuity in how we understand the meaning of marriage throughout human history. These characteristics have been common across all cultures and religions—ancient Greek and Roman, Judeo-Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Confucian. Even under the atheistic communist regimes of the 20th century, where religion was excised from public life, marriage looked the same in its basic character: a man, a woman, procreative potential, children, permanence and exclusivity. All of this is self-evident and requires only observation and reason to comprehend. I have made no appeal to religious authority in making the case for comprehensive marriage and so, in making this case, I appeal to people's reason and common sense. It is on that level that I expect people to find my arguments compelling—or, indeed, to oppose them, and I am more than happy to engage in that debate. I appeal to everyday Australians who can follow an argument without resorting to name-calling, emotional blackmail or accusations of bigotry.

There are many decent people in my seat of Canning. In fact, I am quite confident that, in Canning, we can conduct this debate with temperance, sympathy for those we disagree with and a mutual respect for people's right to be heard and understood without casting aspersions on the motives for their arguments or, indeed, on their character for making them. I am confident we can do this, but it is clear that Labor takes a much lower view of the Australian people, with accusations of bigotry and an assumption that they are incapable of respectful debate. I pose this question: where is our national culture, when we cannot even have a debate about the fundamental nature of marriage?

There is a need to have a public discussion about the consequences of changing the definition of marriage. It is true that Australia is the last English-speaking country in the world to redefine marriage. We can learn from international experience, and I dare say that we need to appreciate the consequences. We are, ultimately, redefining the contours of secular and religious liberty in this country. What does that mean? I think it means that we preference sexual liberty over and above religious liberty, which you could argue has been a long time coming. Where same-sex marriage has become law in other countries, we have seen more state and judicial intrusion into individuals' lives. It is my belief, as a Liberal, that the state should be a supporting actor in our lives and not the protagonist.

Witness the recent example of Trinity Western University in Ontario, Canada. It was denied accreditation for its legal graduates by the Law Society of Upper Canada—a body that accredits universities with delegated state authority. That decision has been upheld by the Ontario Court of Appeals and is now headed for the Canadian Supreme Court. Why? Because the school holds to the view that marriage should be between a man and a woman. It does not
have a discriminatory enrolment policy yet was targeted for its adherence to orthodox Christian teaching on this question. Think of Brendan Eich, the CEO of Mozilla, who was forced to resign from his position in 2014 after it was revealed that he gave a mere $1,000 to a campaign to uphold Californian state law on marriage in 2008. Think of Catholic adoption and foster care agencies across the US and Europe who were not granted religious exemptions under their state jurisdictional laws. Rather than yield to Massachusetts, Illinois and District of Columbia laws, they chose to close down, and they no longer operate in those districts. The alternative was go against conscience.

So the question I put is: will Australian individuals and organisations—secular and religious alike—be protected from similar coercion? These are discussions that the Australian people need to have among themselves at schools, at work, in their homes. This is no small change we are suggesting. Hence I think the plebiscite model is the best way to go forward. This must be debated by the Australian people, not just the political and media class. So, whatever the outcome of the plebiscite, if the yes vote prevails, one thing can be sure: the Australian people will grant a cultural and legal mandate, and this issue should be resolved, going forward, for many years to come. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (13:24): Right now in my electorate there are young kids who are looking for jobs. There are schools scraping around for funds to buy books and basic teaching equipment. There are parents who are wondering whether they can afford to send their kids to university and students who are wondering whether they can afford to pay for the fees that are going to accrue to them if they undertake a university degree. There are jobseekers who are wondering whether they can afford to enrol in a TAFE course because, with the introduction of TAFE fees, they are wondering whether they can afford the bills for redoing their skills.

In Shellharbour, we have a hospital in severe need of an upgrade, yet the New South Wales government’s answer to this is to privatise the hospital instead of investing in a new hospital which is fit for a growing community. We have a freight line which hangs in the air half-built, with that vital last 10 kilometres which would connect one of the great inland railway systems to the port of Port Kembla unbuilt for want of investment. We have a home of football planned and approved; there were funds set aside in the 2013 budget to build it. A meagre $6 million would get the project underway. But, for want of money, the fastest-growing sport in the Illawarra and Southern Highlands does not have a home where kids can play their favourite sport. These are the issues that we should be supporting. These are the issues that we should be talking about. These are the issues on which we should be spending the $200 million that is the price tag of this plebiscite. These are the things we should be spending the money on.

One of the many reasons I oppose this plebiscite bill is that I fear that, if it passes, for the next nine months we are going to be engaged in a conversation about that instead of these important issues and the other important issues that I am confident every single one of our electors sent us here to parliament to consider. That is our job as parliamentarians—not to engage in this destructive fantasy which was put in place to resolve a disagreement in the coalition party room. If this plebiscite bill gets up, if the vote goes ahead, we will spend the next nine months talking about nothing more than the sexuality of people who choose a
different partner to me, and that is not what the Australian people are after. That is not why we were sent here to Canberra.

I have listened carefully to the impassioned speeches of those opposite. I listened to the impassioned speech just now from the member for Canning. He puts forward a classic and well-articulated conservative view on the role of marriage in society. He talks about marriage as one of the oldest institutions in the world. He is right: it is one of the oldest institutions in the world, but it is not as if marriage itself has remained unchanged over the millennia. Let us not forget, in the memories of many who are still alive today, it was prohibited for a black man to marry a white woman. My grandparents, when they were married, had to be married behind the altar, because there was a Protestant marrying a Catholic—something that was frowned upon by society, by their families and by the churches. It is not so long ago that, when a man wanted to marry a woman, he had to go and ask for the permission of that woman's father. It is not that long ago that, when reciting marriage vows, the woman would take a vow to be obedient to her husband. I can tell you that if I demanded a vow of obedience from my wife when I got married I would have walked out of there without a ring on my finger and with two black eyes—it simply would not have happened. So, to stand there and say that this great institution of marriage—one that I enjoy—has remained unchanged for aeons is simply not true. And we did not hold a plebiscite to make all of those changes. We have a job to do as parliamentarians. It is what we are elected to do.

I find the subject of marriage equality fascinating. I support it. But I have to say that I think I have the ear of the majority of people in my electorate when I say that there are dozens and dozens of things that they want us to spend the next nine months talking about—and spend $200 million of public money on—than a marriage equality plebiscite. So, for these reasons, I will be opposing the plebiscite bill—not because I oppose marriage equality. I reject that proposition. I reject the well-meaning and passionate arguments put by the conservatives on the other side. But I call on the true liberals on the other side to stand up for their principles, stand up for the principles that you joined the Liberal Party for, and exercise a free vote.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Petition: Pharmacies

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:30): I rise today to table a petition which has been approved for presentation by the Standing Committee on Petitions from the residents of Fletcher, Maryland, Minmi and surrounds.

The petition read as follows—

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

This petition from residents of Fletcher, NSW, and surrounds, draws the attention of the House to the fact this community is without reasonable access to the supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits by a pharmacist approved under Section 90 of the National Health Act 1953. This community of more than 12,000 residents has been denied reasonable access to the supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits due to an unintended consequence of the application of the Pharmacy Location Rules. The current level of one supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits to this community does not provide the population of more than 12,000 residents with reasonable, timely nor adequate access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.
The current level of supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits does not allow residents to improve their health outcomes through access to, and quality use of, medicines in a timely manner. We therefore ask the House to give the community of Fletcher and surrounds reasonable access to the supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits by requesting the Minister for Health exercise the Discretionary Power under subsection 90A(2) of the National Health Act 1953 to approve the pharmacy premises at Shop 11, Fletcher Village, 221 Mimmi Road, Fletcher, NSW, 2287.

from 3,700 citizens

Petition received.

Ms CLAYDON: This geographical area is home to more than 12,000 residents, with a population growing at approximately four per cent each year. This growth is driven primarily by young families moving into the area, who have every right to expect timely, reliable and affordable access to necessary medicines for their families. That is the role of our Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Yet the only pharmacy in Fletcher, Your Chemist Shop Fletcher, currently operates as a non-PBS pharmacy, meaning these young families do not enjoy the timely, reliable or affordable access to PBS medicines that most Australians take for granted.

As the population of Fletcher continues to grow, so too will the health needs of this community. Local pharmacies play an essential role in the provision of good public and preventative health outcomes, and this role is indisputably enhanced by access to the very wide range of prescription medicines available under the PBS.

On behalf of the 3,700 residents of Fletcher and surrounds, I table this petition in the House of Representatives today, asking the Minister for Health and Aged Care to exercise her discretionary power under the National Health Act and approve this shop as a PBS pharmacy.

(Time expired)

La Trobe Electorate: Electricity Infrastructure

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (13:31): Last weekend gusts of wind exceeded 100 kilometres per hour in some parts of Victoria. This caused a lot of damage and cut power to 80,000 homes, roads, public places and countless businesses. Sadly, at the moment we still have 3,000 houses up in the Dandenong Ranges unconnected to power. These people have food going off in their fridges. Businesses cannot open up. It is very tough.

I take the opportunity to thank the SES for the incredible work they have done in my electorate in Victoria and also the CFA volunteers. I hate to think of how many jobs they have been to. In fact, I believe over 4,000 trees come down in the Dandenong Ranges.

I take the opportunity to thank the SES for the incredible work they have done in my electorate in Victoria and also the CFA volunteers. I hate to think of how many jobs they have been to. In fact, I believe over 4,000 trees come down in the Dandenong Ranges.

We have situations at the moment. This morning I spoke to Dianne Jonker, who lives in Menzies Creek, where 18 trees have fallen down in the street, knocking out 18 different power sources. Dianne, like other residents, has been frustrated with AusNet with regard to the time when the power will be restored. I make the point that AusNet, the guys on the ground, are doing a fantastic job getting around and cutting up the trees, but it would be great to get back to people like Dianne with a time and date and stick with it, because it is becoming exceptionally frustrating. I do feel very sorry for the residents with no power in the Dandenong Ranges.
Australian Public Service: Workplace Relations

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (13:33): There are over 300 people in my local community who are employed in the Australian Public Service. These locals are Australians with mortgages, bills to pay and families to feed. For over 1,000 days they have been let down by a government who cannot or will not resolve public sector bargaining.

One of the people affected is Melissa. Melissa is a single mum with two school-age children, working part time hours at Centrelink. She has not had a pay rise in three years and it is becoming increasingly difficult to make ends meet as the costs of living continue to rise. Being a single mum means that Melissa relies on her part-time work to balance work commitments and childcare responsibilities, pay her bills and perform her important work with Centrelink. Under this government, DHS keeps offering Melissa substandard enterprise agreements which would remove all certainty over her working hours and would pressure her to return to full-time work or into an unsecure future.

This is the first government in 30 years that has not been able to resolve public sector bargaining. That is perhaps not unusual, given that this is the first government to lose a vote in the House of Representatives in more than 50 years and the first government to support an opposition second reading amendment ever in the history of this place. But how can we trust the Prime Minister and the Liberals to govern the nation in the interests of all Australians when they cannot even responsibly fulfil their power as an employer? We know that this government—

(Time expired)

North Sydney Electorate: Anzac Park Public School

Mr ZIMMERMAN (North Sydney) (13:35): I rise to acknowledge in this parliament a very important event in the life of my electorate, the opening of the new Anzac Park Public School in Cammeray. My area of Sydney is home to many great schools. However, increasing enrolments have seen incredible pressure placed on local public schools. The decision of the New South Wales government to fund new schools on the lower North Shore has therefore been very welcome.

Following the opening of the fine new Cammeraygal High School in Crows Nest in 2015, I was delighted to recently attend the official opening of the Anzac Park Public School in Cammeray. The school is a world-class facility and incorporates the best of technology and design to provide a wonderful educational setting for the 1,000 students it has the capacity to enrol.

It has been built on the site of the old Anzac Memorial Club. The club always held a special place in the hearts of local veterans. It is therefore pleasing that this connection with the Anzac tradition is reflected in the name of the new school. The school opened its doors to kindergarten students this year and it was a special moment to see so many of those foundation students excitedly participating in the opening ceremony with such obvious pride.

I congratulate all those who have been involved in seeing this school become a reality, particularly the impressive teaching staff led by its first principal, Unity Taylor-Hill, and the parents who have been intimately involved in its establishment. I have no doubt that Anzac Park Public School will become one of the state’s finest and ensure a quality education for the many students who will come through its doors.
Mr HILL (Bruce) (13:36): I call on the government to match Labor's election commitment to purchase a property for a wonderful organisation in my electorate, Youth Links in Noble Park. Youth Links is a crucial support service run by South East Community Links for young people in south-east Melbourne. It is a welcoming place and at the recent election Labor promised $600,000 to purchase a permanent property for South East Community Links to run this program. They currently spend a large proportion of their budget every year on rent, which could much better be used in services to the community. In the scheme of the national budget, $600,000 is not a lot. I was just doing the sums in my head and thought, 'If every member in this chamber took a Youth Links purchase at $600,000, that would cost $90 million and—if we abandoned the stupid, ridiculous plebiscite—you would still save $90 million from the plebiscite.'

Every month, Youth Links sees over 300 young people, sometimes engaging upwards of 1,000 face-to-face contacts for a range of services and around 40 per cent, at any given time, of these services are actually provided to new migrants, who really need that support. Most importantly, there is a drop-in service which is provided every afternoon for young people to access a youth worker and talk about any problems or issues they have.

In my electorate, we are a hotspot of youth unemployment; it is pushing 20 per cent and there are anecdotal reports of it being 40 or even 50 per cent in some migrant communities. This is a crucial service, and I really urge the government to match Labor's commitment to social justice and find this small amount of money to fund the new premises for Youth Link.

Armenia

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (13:38): I rise to support the words that my friend and colleague the member for North Sydney delivered earlier this week in recognition of the 25th anniversary of independence for the modern Republic of Armenia. This event was celebrated across my electorate of Bennelong, which proudly boasts the largest community of Armenian-Australians in the country.

On 21 September 1991, the Republic of Armenia was formed following 99.5 per cent of the population voting for independence from the former Soviet Union. Within four months, Australia had recognised the new republic and established diplomatic relations. We must also acknowledge the 25th anniversary of independence of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, which declared independence from Azerbaijan on 2 September 1991, following decades of oppression.

Of course, Armenia's history stretches back significantly further. Just last Saturday the capital Yerevan celebrated its 2,798th anniversary since it was founded in 782 BC. It is unfortunate that this rich and long history has been diminished by episodes of persecution and oppression, including the genocide of 1.5 million Armenians by the former Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923 and recent military actions by Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh. Despite these dark chapters, the Armenian people, and their cousins in Bennelong, continue to display their vibrant culture. (Time expired)
Local Council Elections: Victoria

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (13:39): As we speak, citizens in the great state of Victoria are in the process of deciding who will form the councillors and mayors of the local governments throughout the state. It is an important job everywhere, but it is particularly important in Victoria, where the local councils perform so many of the functions that are performed by state governments and community organisations in other states around Australia—functions like running libraries, early childhood learning, childcare, and home and community care programs, just to name a few.

That task has been made all the more difficult by the $925 million worth of cuts of the Turnbull government to financial assistance grants to local councils all throughout Australia. Today, we learnt that in Victoria the devastating impact of these cuts was $200 million to councils right throughout the state. It hurts them all, but it particularly hurts councils in rural and regional Victoria, where they have a low rate base and they rely on the federal grants to provide those basic services. In the council area of Ballarat it means $9.5 million, and in Bendigo it means $9.3 million. I see the member for Indi here in the chamber, and in Indi it is a cut of $15.4 million. In Mallee, it is a whopping $22.8 million and in Gippsland it is a whopping $14.8 million. (Time expired)

Chisholm Electorate: Huntingtower School

Ms BANKS (Chisholm) (13:41): My strong view is that the people and leadership of any organisation define its culture. A culture of warm embrace and intellectual and creative achievement is in the heart of my electorate in Huntingtower School in Mt Waverley. Last Sunday, I had the absolute joy of officially opening the middle years centre at Huntingtower.

Most importantly, it is the staff, teachers, students, parents and wider school community of Huntingtower who create this wonderful environment which resonates immediately upon entering the school's doors. Under the leadership of the school's principal, Mr Sholto Bowen, the head of middle school, Mr Adam Soames, and school captains, Daniel Gates and Sophie Barker, Huntingtower is a thriving environment underpinned by its philosophy of freedom from limitation to achievement. The school's very high standards of education at all levels was on display on Sunday as, prior to the official opening, I had the joy to see the magnificent art created by students at all levels and to hear the wonderful sounds of the orchestra. The school's qualities of wisdom joy, life, love, enthusiasm, diligence and excellence were at the fore of this very enjoyable visit.

As was said during the speeches at the opening, the middle years of any student's journey are such critical years. The current and future students at Huntingtower are so fortunate that they have great people in the school's staff and community supporting them in such a modern and thriving facility.

Kingsford Smith Electorate: Children's Cancer Institute

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:42): In 1975, two parents heard some of the most devastating words imaginable, 'Your child has cancer.' For Jack Kasses and John Lough this terrible news was compounded by the realisation that at the time very few children diagnosed with cancer and leukaemia would survive. The pair decided this had to change, and in 1976 they founded the Children's Cancer Institute from Jack's living room in Coogee.
On 29 September, I was honoured to attend the institute's 40th anniversary to celebrate the wonderful work made possible by Jack and John and the institute's many doctors, scientists and researchers, who have dedicated their lives to improving treatment for children with cancer. Today, the Children's Cancer Institute employs over 200 people, with more than 140 scientists researching the cure for childhood cancer.

Their most recent project, the Zero Childhood Cancer project, is a national personalised medicine program for children with high-risk or relapsed cancer, and the largest single childhood cancer research initiative ever undertaken in Australia. The program will revolutionise the way cancer is treated. I am very proud that this work takes place in the electorate that I represent.

I thank all of those who have been involved with the Children's Cancer Institute—in particular Jack, John and the team—for all that they have done in curing children's cancer.

Mallee Electorate: Paw Po Products

Mr Broad (Mallee) (13:44): Quite a number of years ago, a business in a small town in my electorate of Mallee called Luv-a-Duck needed to get workers and they started to bring in Karen refugees. That has been a real success for that town, but we needed something for a more diversified economy that had more jobs for other Karens, particularly some of the Karen women. It is my pleasure to tell the House that next Thursday Paw Po Products will open a shop in Nhill. Now I have been at the Nhill Neighbourhood House Learning Centre, where ladies who have sewing skills have worked with the Karen refugee ladies to make products that they are going to have for sale. The Nationals' Stronger Communities Program was able to commit $10,000 to help this shopfront open.

This is a great example of, firstly, an extra shop opening in a country town; secondly, encouraging a community to interact and integrate; but thirdly, saying to the people of Australia that you can integrate refugees into country towns and it can be a real success. It has been something just beautiful—a country town now where you cannot buy a house because the houses are full, more houses are getting built, the kindergarten is full because the people are having children, and we have workers and we have industry investing. It is my pleasure to congratulate the Paw Po Products. If you are driving through Nhill, stop, have a feed, buy some of this great craft, and celebrate the diversity of our regional and small country towns.

Menzies, Mr William 'Yarm'

Ms Brodtmann (Canberra) (13:45): On 1 July I officially welcomed Norfolk Island into my electorate of Canberra. I made it a priority to visit shortly after the election. It was not my first time to Norfolk Island. I have been to Norfolk Island more than a dozen times since I was elected as the member for Canberra, as it has been part of my electoral division. Every time I have visited I have been encouraged by the friendliness and the warmth of the community.

In particular, I was always pleased and delighted to land at Norfolk Island Airport because I knew that there to welcome me with a big smile and open arms would be William 'Yarm' Menzies. So I was deeply shocked and deeply saddened to hear of Yarm's recent and sudden passing. Yarm was a much loved member of the Norfolk Island community. Whether it was in sport, out fishing, with his family or with his community, he was always making a significant contribution with a huge smile on his face. A dedicated member of the Norfolk
Island branch of the Labor Party, and an absolute champion of the reform process on the island, Yarm was a source of inspiration to all those who knew him. He had a joie de vivre. He had a fierce and abiding love of Norfolk Island and of his family. I placed a flower on Yarm's grave during my recent visit to Norfolk Island. Yarm will be very sorely missed. I said my farewells when I was bending over his grave. I extend my sincere condolences to his family—to his beloved wife, Sue; his children, Monica and Dylan; and his many grandchildren. (Time expired)

Mental Health

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (13:47): I rise today to acknowledge that national headspace day has occurred this week as part of Mental Health Week here in Australia. This is important because it is about raising awareness about young people—in particular, in relation to mental health issues—and especially about ensuring that young people throughout this country, whether in urban, rural or remote areas, have access to adequate services. Over the past decade, headspace has transformed services for young people living with mental illness. The success of this particular model lies in the fact that it is a service which is specifically designed for young people within our community. This has meant that people who have felt marginalised have accessed services that they may not have otherwise. The result has been a quite clear, measurable difference in reducing suicidal ideation and self-harm. Over the course of the decade some 260,000 young people—more than a quarter of a million—have accessed headspace services, and that has resulted in more than 1½ million services to these young people. Given the fact that in our community up to a quarter of young people will experience mental health issues at some stage of their young lives or adolescence, this is a very important issue. (Time expired)

Alpine Better Places

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:49): Today I would like to congratulate the communities of Porepunkah and Myrtleford, and the Alpine Shire, for their hard work in securing just under a million dollars for the Alpine Better Places project under round 3 of the National Stronger Regions Fund. I encourage the community to continue their participation and interest in the development of their towns. I congratulate Mayor Ron Janas, CEO Dave Barry and the Asset Development team at Alpine Shire Council for their ability to bring together a strategic vision for Porepunkah and Myrtleford, which can now be delivered with this funding.

The funding will transform these Ovens Valley towns. The works will make the towns safer and more attractive, and provide better connections between recreational and commercial spaces. Local groups such as PUNCA in Porepunkah are doing great things to support their towns and the work of the Alpine Shire Council. The Alpine Better Places project will encourage visitors to stop and spend more time and money in these beautiful towns. This will further encourage investment and provide direct economic benefit to my communities.

I would like to take the opportunity today to acknowledge the work of Francine Stacey from the Alpine Shire, who has been volunteering in my office this week, and to thank the mayor and the staff of the Alpine Shire Council for letting her come up here and be here this week. Francine, you made a huge difference to my office. Thank you very much. I have really appreciated having you.
McMillan Electorate: Education

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (13:50): I opened the technology wing of Chairo Christian School recently, and took the opportunity to commend the executive principal, Rob Bray, for his tireless work on behalf of that particular school and in education generally. I commend the Australian government's ReachOut program, designed to help students and parents. The pressures of year 12 were expressed to me whilst I was attending this school.

More than 1,400 students in my electorate of McMillan have undertaken year 12 this year. I have to mention their supportive parents and teachers, and all that they go through in that year 12 process. The beginning of the exam period is 26 October. The stress has become greater and greater, but there are always opportunities to ease these burdens. It is normal to fear a whole range of pressures and expectations before this time. I just want to say to every student out there that has just done year 12: this is not the defining moment in your life. It will not brand you for the rest of your days. I say to the students that are doing their year 12 exams shortly: these exams are important, but they are not the be-all and end-all; you are. You will progress. You will go on and you will do great things. Keep that in mind. Do the best you can, but we want you there for the long run.

Distinguished Gentleman's Ride

Mr KEOGH (Burt) (13:52): The idea of hundreds of motorcycles riding through Perth's leafy western suburbs may have alarmed a few of the local residents, but last month around 500 Western Australian bikers, including myself and my fellow Burt bikers, took to the streets to ride dapper. Dressed in our finest and most dapper garb—I in a red bowtie and yellow gloves—we joined thousands of men and women across the world on the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride, organised by the Perth Cafe Racers. As the proud owner of a Triumph Bonneville T100 that I had not ridden for quite some time due to campaigning, I admit that I jumped at the chance to join the riders, but it was all for a good cause. Across the world more than 50,000 riders took to the streets to raise much-needed funds for men's prostate cancer research and for men's mental health support. Internationally, more than $3.5 million was raised, and in Perth we raised over $100,000. More than 3,000 men die in Australia each year from prostate cancer. We can find a cure, but that requires funding.

It is fitting during World Mental Health Week and following the inaugural headspace day to note the importance of doing everything we can to ensure that those living with mental ill health receive the necessary support and funding. Reducing the stigma around mental health issues is vital, which is why there is always a place for raising awareness. And nothing attracts a crowd quite like a few hundred bikers in blazers and bowties. So congratulations to Perth Cafe Racers on yet another successful Distinguished Gentleman's Ride, and here's to riding dapper again this time next year.

Wright Electorate: Small Business

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright) (13:53): I rise to advise the House of a new and emerging business that has just opened its doors in my electorate. I was fortunate enough to be at this small business restaurant opening the other night. All in this place know the importance of the small business sector in the Australian economy and the effect that it has on employment. Scott and Fiona Roebig are behind the small business, which is doing very well. They have opened a restaurant called Thom and Ann's Deli Restaurant. You may ask yourself why
people named Scott and Fiona would open a restaurant in the names of Thom and Ann. It is because they have dedicated their substantial investment to their children, Thom and Ann. At the opening of the function the other day, the kids were running around, and you could just see the pride that Scott and Fiona had in setting up a business that hopefully one day they would be able to give to their kids.

The opening was a private function, and they very strategically had some of their stakeholders with them. They had there with them their bank managers, their financiers, both sets of their parents—who I think played a little bit of the financier's role—their architects and their accountants. It was an excellent night. I hope to go back to that business in many years time and see them profitably trading. They have an enormous work ethic. Scott is the chef and Fiona, who has such a wonderful personality, is up-front. Do yourselves a favour when you are next at Yarrabilba and pop in and have a lemonade at Thom and Ann's Deli Restaurant.

Gender Balance in the 45th Parliament

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:55): I rise today to welcome the 37 new members to the people's house for the 45th Parliament. On this side of the chamber we have 22—11 women and 11 men—in the Labor ranks joining us now. On the government side we have 14 new members and, of course, we have one new crossbencher, in the member for Mayo. In the shadow of the Day of the Girl Child, I particularly want to welcome the women members to the people's house: the members for Burnie, Brand, Paterson, Werriwa, Cowan, Longman, Lindsay, Herbert, Macquarie, Dobell and Braddon; and, on the government side, the members for Boothby and Chisholm and, of course, the member for Mayo.

Finally, I would like to welcome the new coalition MPs—that sea of blokes; the sea of 12 opportunities missed to add gender balance to the government's benches. I do so with much amusement today, as I find that it has been reported that the Deputy Prime Minister has been out today talking to the press about the National Party building the women's ranks in the National Party and only naming three blokes in the same interview. So, as usual, they are paying lip-service to gender balance on that side of the chamber but we get no real action. We see a sea of blokes. Welcome to the chamber; pity you are not more girls. (Time expired)

Marriage

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—Chief Nationals Whip) (13:56): I was surprised to read a statement earlier this week by the member for Isaacs and the member for Griffiths, taking issue with freedom of religious protections contained in the government's proposed amendments to the Marriage Act should same-sex marriage be supported by the Australian people in a plebiscite. According to their statement, Labor is not happy because 'a same-sex couple could be barred from a reception hall, for example, or using a particular caterer, if it is ultimately owned by a religious organisation.'

When the member for Isaacs goes back to his electorate, I challenge him to drive down the road to Minaret College—the Islamic college of Melbourne south and east—and explain to their board why they must allow a same-sex marriage ceremony to take place in that school's multipurpose hall. The member for Griffith might want to explain to the Catholic parishioners at Our Lady of Mt Carmel in Coorparoo why their church hall should be rented out for same-sex marriage receptions. In fact every Labor member should visit their local church, synagogue or mosque and explain themselves this weekend, because that is what the Labor
Party wants: religious institutions with no right to refuse non-worship services from being utilised for the purposes of validating same-sex marriages. To do so is to deny churches and religious institutions the right to freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. That is what the Labor Party wants to do—deny churches freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. I never thought I would see the day in this country.

**Working Holiday Maker Program**

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:58): This week we have had a lot of huff and puff from the government and members of the National Party about the backpacker tax, demanding that Labor support the backpacker tax changes, even though they were the ones who delayed for 16 months. There is all this huff and puff in the media but here we are today and it is still not on the agenda to be debated today.

What the government and members of the National Party have also failed to do this week is to acknowledge the tragedy that occurred in Perth. At approximately three o'clock on Monday, 10 October, a 27-year-old German backpacker fell 35 metres to her death on a construction project in the Perth CBD. This is one kilometre from the site where two Irish backpackers were crushed and killed by a concrete panel just under 12 months ago. When CFMEU officials entered the site 40 minutes later the job was still going. Despite the horror of the fatality, it was clearly business as usual. They did not even bother to contact the police. It took an ABC journalist before the police was called.

This is what is happening to some of our backpackers. It is tragic. There are 200,000 backpackers in this country at the moment, and 38,000 of them work in agriculture. What about the rest? We need to ensure that they have good workplace practices. *(Time expired)*

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

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Medicare**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. After the election, the Prime Minister said that he had learnt a clear lesson about his attacks on Medicare, but last night, in a train wreck of an interview with Laura Jayes about the government's cuts to Medicare, the Minister for Health and Aged Care said: 'The policy settings are correct. The policy settings are where they need to be'. Who is correct, the Prime Minister or the minister? Or has the government learnt nothing from the election about its attacks on Medicare?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:01): I thank the opposition leader for the opportunity to advise the House exactly how the minister and the government are delivering health care for all Australians—record levels of health funding, record levels of bulk-billing, making medicines more accessible and cheaper for all Australians. In our first three years nearly 1,000 new medicines were approved for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, worth $4.4 billion. Compare that with 331 new medicines in Labor's last three years. That is three times as many new medicines.

Not everyone in the House may be aware, but today is Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day. Breast cancer rates are too high. Thousands are living with metastatic breast cancer and,
tragically, around 3,000 die every year of this disease. I am pleased that, due to our government's strong economic management, we have been able to add new drugs to the PBS. We funded $191 million over four years to list two new drugs used to treat HER2-positive metastatic breast cancer—Perjeta and Kadcyla—in addition to allowing more flexibility with the use of Herceptin. Without government subsidy these medicines would cost consumers over $82,700 a year to access.

I will tell the House a real-life story, about Karen from Yass in New South Wales. She is a single parent with three children at home, including a daughter with an intellectual disability. She was first diagnosed with early breast cancer in 2010. It spread in 2012. She started on Kadcyla soon after it become available on the PBS. These are her words: 'To say that Kadcyla turned my life around is a major understatement. Because it is a targeted treatment, it is not as debilitating as more traditional chemo treatment. For the first time in years, I was well enough to do more about the house, picked up some casual work again and was able to catch up on my daughter's medical stuff that I'd struggled to be on top of. I could actually go out with the family and have some quality of life again. It's still a chemical therapy, and it still has side effects, but the fact that it is available to me, just an average mum, wanting to hang in there for her kids, is truly a complete blessing.'

Let me say that Karen is by no means an average mum, and I am sure that all members wish her the very best of health in the future and acknowledge that making that drug available, which we have been able to do, is changing and sustaining her life.

National Economic Plan

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (14:04): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on the delivery of the government's National Economic Plan? In particular, how will our tax cuts benefit more than 500,000 middle-income Australians and how will the expanded Singapore-Australia Free Trade Agreement provide more opportunities for Australian exporters?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:04): I thank the honourable member for his question and note that his electorate is a hive of industry, innovation and exporters. The government is getting on with the job.

Mr Leigh interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Fenner.

Mr TURNBULL: We are delivering a National Economic Plan that boosts growth and jobs, improves the living standards of every Australian and secures the future for our children and our grandchildren.

Mr Leigh interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Fenner is warned.

Mr TURNBULL: Our polices are pro-jobs and pro-investment. This week alone we have delivered income tax cuts that will benefit more than 500,000 middle-income Australians; we have enhanced and expanded the Singapore-Australia Free Trade Agreement, meaning more opportunities for Australian exporters and more investment at home; and we passed legislation to protect emergency services volunteers, including the volunteers—the heroes—of Victoria's Country Fire Authority from attacks by militant unions. The Labor Party, by
contrast, is interested only in playing political games. Their polices are anti-investment and anti-trade and will fail to deliver the economic growth and the jobs that we need.

Our tax system must be fair. It must encourage people to work hard, to invest, to save, and it must reward sensible risk taking and entrepreneurship. This cannot be achieved with income tax rates and scales that discourage additional effort. No country has ever taxed its way to prosperity. The government's income tax cuts, which apply from 1 July this year, increase the upper threshold of the 32½ per cent bracket from $80,000 to $87,000. This means that more than half a million middle-income Australians will continue paying 32½ per cent marginal income tax instead of being pushed into the higher 37 per cent rate over the next three years.

The government is also delivering for the thousands of Australian exporters and small and medium businesses seeking even greater access to the growing markets of Asia. The amended Singapore-Australia Free Trade Agreement offers enormous potential for our exporters, particularly those in services, to boost trade with Singapore—already Australia's largest trade and investment partner in South-East Asia. This is a big win for our services sector, delivering greater access for engineers, accountants, financial planners, lawyers and education providers to sell their services to Singapore. Commenting on the deal, PwC's Asia Practice leader, Andrew Parker, said:

This upgraded SAFTA is unique in its focus on skills, mobility, and education, which are vital to our services exporters, rather than the usual removal of trade tariffs.

We are getting on with the job of delivering jobs and growth for now and for the future.

Health Care

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:08): My question is to the minister for health. During the election campaign, the minister said:

I've said to doctors I want that freeze lifted as soon as possible but I appreciate that Finance and Treasury aren't allowing me to do it just yet.

This morning, she claimed: 'That's not what I've said.' Given the minister complained on public radio that Finance and Treasury were not letting her lift the freeze, why is the minister now denying she ever said it?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Sport and Minister for Health and Aged Care) (14:08): It is delightful to take a question from the member for Sydney, who introduced the pause on GP wages, who said at the time, 'Oh, doctors can afford it; they earn enough already,' and who had no sympathy for the circumstances of the doctors of Australia. It is delightful to take a question from—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Pyne interjecting—

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left will cease interjecting. The Leader of the House will cease interjecting. The member for Sydney has asked her question. She will not interject. I have warned her numerous times this week. She will listen to the answer without interjecting. I am not going to warn her endlessly.
Ms LEY: a senior member of a government that attacked medicines and Medicare to the tune of $6 billion. As a health minister who succeeded a health minister who blocked access to the medicines that the Prime Minister talked about that have lifesaving capabilities, it is fantastic to take a question from a senior member—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney, on a point of order. She will state the point of order.

Ms Plibersek: The point of order is relevance. The minister is not talking about her six-year pause.

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney will resume her seat.

Ms LEY: I was talking about the member for Sydney's pause, and she knows it well.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney will cease interjecting and is now warned.

Ms LEY: I am proud to be part of a government that spends record dollars on Medicare. I am proud of a government that, unlike the economic illiterates opposite, recognises that what you cannot pay for you cannot deliver. That is at the heart of the member for Sydney's question. Members opposite do not understand that the health portfolio works side by side with the portfolios of finance, treasury, social services and tax and with every other member in this place in order to deliver the health system that the patients of Australia expect. Unfortunately, what you cannot pay for you cannot deliver. We saw the Labor Party adding cost after cost to the credit card, just saying, 'It will be paid for;' not recognising that the first duty of any government is to the economic circumstances of Australians and the national accounts and not recognising that, to build a strong, sustainable health system, you must have a strong economy. Without that, we cannot implement the reforms that we are doing.

We have a policy-free zone here with Labor. There has not been a single policy since 2013—not one single health policy. As another previous health minister said, the health system will continue to demand more expenses and cannibalise itself. That is what a previous, moderately sensible Labor health minister said, recognising that, unless you stay on a calm, sensible, serious path to reform, you cannot deliver the system that puts patients before politics.

Department of Human Services

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (14:12): My question is to the Minister for Human Services. Will the minister explain the importance of the minister's portfolio in protecting the key trademarks and brands of the Australian government from misuse by third parties? What action is taken to ensure this protection?

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Minister for Human Services) (14:12): I thank the member for Corangamite for that question and for her interest in this topic. My department has responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the names and trademarks of many government agencies and services. This includes Centrelink, myGov, the Child Support Agency and, of course, Medicare. This is to ensure that, when Australians see those brands, they can have confidence in them. Australians do not want to have to second-guess whether the messages they receive from government agencies are legitimate. Having confidence in the Medicare brand is particularly important, given the trust that people place in it. Indeed, that is why we
have legislation such as the Human Services (Medicare) Act to protect those brands from misuse.

We are all aware that the federal Labor Party deliberately used this brand during their federal campaign, and they tried to mislead and deceive the Australian public. But this week the ACT Labor Party were at it again, because they were distributing—

Mr Hill interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Bruce is warned.

Mr TUDGE: their federal counterparts' flyers to their electorate, misusing the Medicare name.

The SPEAKER: The minister knows the rules about props.

Mr TUDGE: On this occasion, they were caught out. As soon as my department became aware that this was occurring, they immediately took action. The Australian Governor Solicitor wrote to the ACT Labor Party and asked them to cease and desist. They were caught out. Within nine minutes of the ACT Labor Party receiving the letter from the Australian Governor Solicitor, they had immediately apologised and agreed to cease and desist from using that Medicare logo again. I can quote from the email that Matthew Byrne, the secretary of the ACT Labor Party, wrote to the Australian Government Solicitor: 'I sincerely apologise on behalf of ACT Labor for this error and this use of the Medicare logo. I can confirm that I will not be doing it again.'

Mr Frydenberg interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Minister for the Environment and Energy will cease interjecting.

Mr TUDGE: If the head of the ACT Labor Party can determine that what they did was wrong and apologise for their actions within nine minutes, how long will it take the Leader of the Opposition to apologise for what he did during the federal campaign? What the Labor Party did then was much more egregious than what the ACT Labor Party did on this occasion. The Leader of the Opposition should be big enough to do exactly what the ACT Labor Party did and apologise for misleading the Australian public by sending out text messages, sending out lies and misleading—(Time expired)

**Taxation**

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (14:16): My question is to the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services. Last night, for the first time in the history of Federation, an opposition second reading amendment passed the House on a bill the minister was responsible for while the minister was in the chamber. Was that because the minister agrees the government has failed to close tax loopholes or is it because the minister is so incompetent that she pays no attention when revenue decisions are being made?

Mr Pyne interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I have not called the minister yet. The Leader of the House will cease interjecting.

Mr Giles interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Scullin will cease interjecting.
Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Revenue and Financial Services) (14:16): I would like to thank Wayne Swan's former chief of staff for that question.

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

Ms O'DWYER: I would like to thank the member for his question.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume her seat.

Mr Dutton interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection will cease interjecting.

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: He will leave immediately.

The member for Chifley then left the chamber.

The SPEAKER: The level of interjections is far too high.

Ms O'DWYER: I understand why the member opposite is very sensitive on this point, because it is very embarrassing. But let me say that what is even more embarrassing is the depth that the Labor Party has sunk to and the adolescent games that they continue to play in this parliament, which have no impact on the legislation. That legislation, by the way, has today passed through not only the House but the Senate. It is legislation that helps us to combat multinational tax avoidance through the Australia-Germany tax treaty legislation.

In fact, we are very, very proud on this side of the House of our record on combating multinational tax avoidance. The opposition had six years to do something about this, but they sat on their hands. It takes a coalition government to actually do something about it. Only last year, we passed the multinational anti-avoidance law. The multinational anti-avoidance law is the most significant reform that has been brought into this parliament for decades to stop multinationals profit-shifting offshore. It provides increased penalties to the Australian Taxation Office and gives them increased powers. It means that Australians can have confidence in our Australian tax system. But did we receive help from those opposite? Did they talk the talk and walk the walk? No, every single one of them over there voted against these important reforms.

At the same time, we have increased the resources of the Australian Taxation Office. We have done that by increasing the international division of the ATO. It is much larger than it was under Labor. We also established the Tax Avoidance Taskforce in this year's budget, which will raise $3.7 billion over the forward estimates period. We have introduced country-by-country reporting, which means that our Australian Taxation Office will know the tax that is paid by these multinational companies in every country in which they operate. The Australian Taxation Office will be able to ensure that they can raise tax assessments here in Australia. We have also published tax information for tax transparency, we passed legislation to limit the scope for multinationals to claim excessive debt deductions and we are improving
the integrity of the GST regime as well. These are only some of the elements that, on our side of the House, we have passed, no thanks to those opposite. *(Time expired)*

**University of Tasmania**

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (14:20): My question is to the Prime Minister. The University of Tasmania's proposed STEM facility will transform Hobart and Tasmania. It is a $400 million project that ultimately would accommodate 5,200 staff, researchers and students. Indeed, the University of Tasmania project is nationally significant and an Infrastructure Australia priority, because the percentage of Australian graduates with a STEM background is only 18 per cent compared with Singapore in China, which have 35 and 47 per cent respectively. Prime Minister, further to our meeting earlier in the week, are you able to provide any sort of assurance of federal government support for the project should the university's business case stack up?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:21): I thank the honourable member for his question. As he knows, my government has a strong economic plan for Tasmania to drive jobs and growth. We are investing in essential infrastructure to boost growth and productivity: $400 million to towards the upgrade of the Midland Highway, generating 250 jobs; an additional $60 million for tranche 2 irrigation projects managed in Tasmania; $60 million in freight rail revitalisation; $32 million to upgrade the Hobart airport roundabout and a $25 million jobs and investment package for regional Tasmania, which will create local jobs and promote investment in communities including Launceston, Devonport and Burnie.

We are also investing in cities essential in the transition to a stronger and more diverse economy: $150 million to relocate and expand the University of Tasmania's campuses in Burnie and Launceston to deliver better educational outcomes for Tasmanians. I know he understands that is a matter of real concern. This has been complemented by $7½ million, provided to Launceston City Council, to support the City Heart project as part of our City Deal for Launceston.

As far as the STEM facility in Hobart is concerned, the vice-chancellor has raised it with me. As the honourable member knows, the University of Tasmania is preparing a detailed proposal for government consideration, but we are yet to receive it. It is yet to be completed, and we certainly have not received any formal request for funding. We understand the potential of the project and we obviously have demonstrated an interest in it, but Australians, and indeed Tasmanians, would expect that we would go through proper processes prior to committing their taxpayer dollars. That includes assessment of the business case by government, by Infrastructure Australia, should the University of Tasmania request more than $100 million of Australian government contribution. We look forward to the vice-chancellor's proposal and, as I said on 29 September in Launceston, no doubt the vice-chancellor will propound it as passionately and persuasively as he has done the expansion in Launceston and Burnie.

**Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan**

Mr HOGAN (Page) (14:24): My question is to the Treasurer. Would the Treasurer update the House on how the government's enterprise tax plan will drive jobs and wages growth? How will increasing the turnover threshold definition for small business to $10 million help
employers in my electorate of Page, and indeed across the country, to invest in their businesses, develop new markets and employ more Australians?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:24): I thank the member for Page for his question and his keen interest in small business, in particular, and the important role that small business plays in driving jobs and growth in this country—particularly those small businesses that are between $2 million and $10 million in turnover. Members will know that in the budget this year we announced that we would be increasing the threshold from $2 million to $10 million for the definition of a small business, which would mean that those businesses will get access to not only the instant asset write-off and the 27½ per cent corporate tax rate but other depreciation provisions, how GST is treated on a cash basis, and so on. These are important tax arrangements for small businesses.

The $2 million threshold was set in 2007 by Treasurer Costello. For six years after that those opposite, when they were in government, froze it. They did nothing with it: they left it at $2 million and stuck rigidly to the view that a small business in this country was only up to turnover of $2 million. That is despite the fact that the Henry tax review actually recommended that that threshold be lifted from $2 million to $5 million. I note that those opposite rejected that advice from the Henry tax review. They took another piece of advice in relation to the mining tax—that worked out really well, didn't it? Maybe they would have been better advised if they had paid attention to the recommendation that would have seen the small business definition lifted from $2 million to $5 million, because Ken Henry said that small business had a disproportionately higher share of the tax compliance burden.

This government recognises that, and that is why we are seeking to lift the threshold from $2 million to $10 million to give those businesses the opportunity to invest back in their businesses by paying less tax. These are businesses that pay their staff and creditors first, pay themselves last and reinvest in their businesses. That is what they do, and that is where the growth comes from. There are 2.2 million Australians working for these businesses, and we want to ensure that they can look forward to better real wages in the future and more investment in their businesses so they can grow.

There are plenty of these businesses. There is Zokoko, with a turnover of $2 million and a staff of seven, in the member for Lindsay's electorate. There is WB Truck 'n' Trailer in the member for Braddon's electorate—another business between $2 million and $10 million. They have 13 employees. There is Australian Honey Products in the member for Bass's electorate: they have $2½ million of turnover and eight staff. There is Martin Locke Homes in the member for Herbert's electorate, which I mentioned the other day. They have eight staff and support 30 subcontractors. The member for Greenway has Salem Power Engineering, a $5 million business which has a staff of 20. These are businesses that want to invest and grow. Those opposite would have put a cap on their growth by not supporting the very sensible decision to lift the lid for small businesses and give them access to a better tax deal.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services. Given that the minister was not present in the House last night when detailed questions on the International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill could be asked, and given that the bill that was eventually passed last night affects the taxation of dividend payments, I ask: what will be the change to the tax treatment of effective dividends?

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Taxation

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services. Given that the minister was not present in the House last night when detailed questions on the International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill could be asked, and given that the bill that was eventually passed last night affects the taxation of dividend payments, I ask: what will be the change to the tax treatment of effective dividends?
Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Revenue and Financial Services) (14:28): I very much thank the member for his question. As he is very well aware, the new tax treaty with Germany, which he supports, incorporates integrity provisions as part of the G20/OECD base erosion and profit shifting project. It assists in our continued efforts to ensure that multinational companies and high-wealth individuals pay the tax that they ought to be paying in this country. The treaty measures are intended to minimise the opportunities for non-taxation or reduced taxation through tax avoidance, including treaty-shopping arrangements. Treaty benefits will be denied if a person's principal purpose is to take advantage of the treaty to avoid paying tax. The new treaty authorises the Australian Taxation Office, our revenue authorities and Germany's revenue authorities to exchange taxpayer information on all taxes imposed by either country. It enables mutual assistance in the collection of outstanding tax debts. It is very important that we were able to implement this change in the law—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business, on a point of order?

Mr Burke: On direct relevance, I do not see how it is possible to be directly relevant without answering about the tax treatment of effective dividends, given that was the question.

Mr Pyne interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will cease interjecting. The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Minister for Revenue and Financial Services is entitled, on the substance of the question, to have a preamble, but I do say to the minister that she needs to now start to direct herself to the rest of the question, on the specifics that were asked.

Ms O'DWYER: I say to the member opposite that the reason for the importance of this particular tax treaty is that it is the very first tax treaty that Australia has been able to conduct with another country that implements the provisions of the G20 OECD base erosion and profit shifting project, which is absolutely critical and something that those opposite say that they care very deeply about. You want us to be combating multinational tax avoidance, and this particular tax treaty will be able to deliver just that. So I commend the legislation that has passed both the House and the Senate and I say to those opposite that if you want to actually get into cheap point-scoring, that is the level to which Labor has actually sunk. Then what I would say is that you should be—

The SPEAKER: I again draw the minister to the specifics of the question. She has been entitled to cover the broad range of the legislation, but the question was more specific—this is without being offensive to those asking questions on my left—than many questions are. The minister needs to direct herself to that or wind up her answer.

Ms O'DWYER: I am happy to conclude my question.

**Water Infrastructure**

Mr LLEW O'BRIEN (Wide Bay) (14:31): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources. Will the Deputy Prime Minister update the House on the government's investment in water infrastructure? Is the minister aware of any threats to the rollout of these nation-building investments?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:32): I thank the honourable member for his question and note that Queensland has a very strong interest in water infrastructure. In fact, for the 14 projects that
we will fully fund in Queensland, we have not got any response yet from the Queensland Labor government. The Queensland Labor government are more interested in Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk fighting against Ms Trad than actually delivering on water infrastructure.

I am very proud of the fact that the coalition government have delivered about $1.5 billion of water infrastructure modernisation and efficiency improvements and $250 million through round 3 of the Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program to help people in towns such as Griffith and Deniliquin. Last week I visited the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area to announce an additional $25 million for farmers to improve water use efficiency, taking the total commitment to $175 million. This is very important for the member for Farrer. In the seat of Mallee, especially around Mildura, we have put $105 million—if the member wants to look this way—on the table for further modernisation of water infrastructure in that area. We have put $53 million of funding into Queensland irrigation for Healthy HeadWaters. This is very important for people in Maranoa, especially around places such as St George. We have put money towards the Chaffey Dam upgrade. Not only did we start it, not only did we provide more funds for it but we also saw it completed, and now it is 97 per cent full.

We have a $2½ billion water infrastructure program that is moving forward. Once the Australian Labor Party in Queensland decides to work with us, we will have $130 million on the table for the Rookwood weir in the seat of Capricornia, which is also very important to people in a seat of Flynn. We have a further $175 million for Dungowan Dam in the seat of New England and we have further money for the Macalister Irrigation District, and $20 million for the South West Loddon Pipeline in the seat of Murray and further money for McLaren Vale water storages in the seat of Mayo. We have put $60 million on the table for irrigation projects as part of $120 million package in Tasmania. Of course, once we get this water infrastructure built we will have more jobs come in, and this is why it is very important that we also get the backpackers tax question resolved.

It was interesting yesterday when Brian Carlton, when speaking to the member for Lyons, asked about their plan. Brian Carlton asked, 'Is there an alternate plan?' and the member for Lyons said: 'No. I put forward an alternate, as a local member, and I must stress, this did not go through the Labor Party or the leadership. It is my idea as a local member.' So instead of a backpackers plan, they have an ideas man. They have a regular Dale Kerrigan who is going to come up with ideas. Just watch out; he will have a brush on a hose! He might even dig a hole for Dale Kerrigan. *(Time expired)*

**Minister for Revenue and Financial Services**

**Dr CHALMERS** (Rankin) (14:35): My question is to the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services. Given that the minister cannot answer basic questions about her legislation, contradicts the Prime Minister on house prices and negative gearing and was the original architect of the census disaster, can the minister please advise a very interested House of what other spectacular policy achievements lie ahead? Or is this the high point of your brilliant career?

**The SPEAKER:** That question is out of order. I am going to the next question.
Infrastructure

Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (14:36): My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Will the minister update the House on the progress of the government's $50 billion Infrastructure Investment Program, specifically, the construction of the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing in my electorate of Groom? What benefits will this investment deliver to my community?

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (14:36): I thank the new member for Groom for his question and his longstanding interest in road, rail and other infrastructure in his electorate and right across regional Australia. Like me, he is proud to be part of a government, the Turnbull-Joyce government, which is building for the future in our cities, in our regional centres and in our country towns. We are getting on with the job of delivering for all parts of Australia.

The Toowoomba Second Range Crossing that the member referred to is a very significant project which is currently under construction in the electorate of Groom. The member actually spoke about this project in his first speech. He knows that this is an infrastructure project that will change lives and will save lives. The member for Groom has been involved in the development of this project for many years in his previous role as a Queensland government MP. I congratulate him on his transition to the federal parliament. Likewise, the member for Maranoa and the member for Wright have been great supporters of this project because they recognise the benefits that it will bring to their communities. They know that those benefits will flow to their communities through infrastructure projects that the Turnbull-Joyce government is delivering right across Australia through this record $50 billion infrastructure investment program.

I was very happy to join the member for Groom in his former role at the start of works in April this year. I was there with the member for Wright on that very auspicious occasion. The government is actually investing in the order of $1.1 billion in this project. I know his predecessor, the former member for Groom, Mr Macfarlane, was also a great supporter of this project because he understood, just as we understand and everyone on this side of the House understands, that when you build that good infrastructure you are investing in jobs in our communities. In the order of 1,800 direct and indirect jobs will flow through to the broader Toowoomba region. When we on this side of the House speak about jobs and growth we are talking about projects like the Toowoomba second range crossing.

The member for Groom understands that the benefits that will flow to his community will extend to the heavy vehicle sector in particular. It will mean that 18 sets of traffic lights will no longer impede the operation of that major route through his community. It will divert in the order of 80 per cent of heavy vehicles out of the regional city of Toowoomba. I do congratulate the member for Groom for his outstanding advocacy on behalf of his community, both in his former role as a state MP and now as a federal MP.

While I am on my feet I take this opportunity to also congratulate the member for Groom for the work he has been doing, along with the member for Maranoa, on another important infrastructure project that will benefit their communities—the Melbourne to Brisbane inland rail. I had the opportunity to be in Warwick last week with both members and meet with their communities in relation to this project, which is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform the freight task along the eastern seaboard of Australia.
This is a government that it is getting on with the job. This is a government that is delivering the infrastructure that Australia needs in the 21st century. We are actually building for the future. I thank the member for Groom for his question and I wish him well as he continues to advocate on behalf of his community.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:39): It is my pleasure to inform the House that we have present in the gallery this afternoon the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji, the Hon. Ruveni Nadalo. On behalf of the House I extend a very warm welcome to him and welcome him here to our House.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Minister for Justice

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:39): My question is to the Minister for Justice. A few weeks ago the government lost control of the House when the minister went home early. Yesterday the government voted against itself when the minister was still here and personally in the chamber. Given that the minister has acted against the interests of his government by being absent and by being present, how on earth can this government trust the minister to deal with the serious issues of international crime within his portfolio?

The SPEAKER: That question is—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: If opposition members stop interjecting, I will be able to rule on the question. Unlike the previous question, that question is just in order.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter-Terrorism) (14:40): I tentatively thank the Manager of Opposition Business for the question. Those opposite have been playing these sorts of silly parliamentary games that have absolutely no impact on the lives of the Australian people. Let me go through some things that have actually been happening in the real world, particularly over the last 24 hours, and in this parliament that actually matter for the lives of the Australian people.

Mr Bowen interjecting—

Mr KEENAN: In Sydney yesterday the joint counterterrorism team managed to disrupt the 11th attack on Australian soil within the past two years.

Dr Aly interjecting—

Mr KEENAN: They have been able to do that because this government has been supporting them through the legislative powers that they need and the resources that they need to get their job done. We have had a very successful bilateral visit from the Prime Minister of Singapore and this morning the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police sat down with his Singaporean counterpart and signed a memorandum of understanding—

Mr Bowen interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon has been warned.

Mr KEENAN: that we would work more closely with Singaporean law enforcement authorities about tackling transnational and organised crime, particularly those multinational organised crime syndicates that smuggle drugs into Australia. So, whilst the Labor Party wants to play stupid parliamentary games, we will get on with the business of improving the lives of the Australian people.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House.

Mr Pyne: During the Minister for Justice's excellent answer the member for Cowan made a very unparliamentary remark. I ask her to withdraw it.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga will cease interjecting. The member for Grayndler will cease interjecting. The Leader of the House would well appreciate that one of the many reasons I do not want a wall of interjections is so I can hear these things. I am now placed in the position I normally am in, and that is to ask the member for Cowan whether she made an unparliamentary remark.

Dr Aly: Mr Speaker, I withdraw that remark.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Cowan.

Electricity Infrastructure

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (14:43): My question is to the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science. I refer the minister to a statement yesterday by Manufacturing Australia that outlines the threat to South Australia and investment from unreliable and high-priced power. Will the minister outline the challenges facing South Australian industry and what action the government is taking to safeguard jobs and investment in the future?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (14:43): I want to thank the member for Grey, whose electorate was badly affected by the recent blackout in South Australia. As the Prime Minister has said, energy is built around the three elements of security, affordability and reducing emissions. In a sense it is like a stool with three legs. Unfortunately, in South Australia at the moment two of those legs are missing. It was Manufacturing Australia yesterday that made that point when they said:
The lack of stability and high power prices in South Australia are threatening both existing and future manufacturing investment in a state already reeling from automotive closures.

In the electorate of Grey alone, we know that the blackout has cost Arrium—at a very difficult time in its history—$30 million. It has cost NearStar $7 million.

Mr Hill interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Bruce has been warned!

Mr HUNT: But it has also cost small businesses—it cost Possums Store in Port Lincoln $20,000 after their refrigeration was lost, their food was spoiled and their ability to carry on operations was compromised. That is what is actually happening to real jobs and real employment in South Australia.
There are two different approaches to dealing with this problem. On our side, there is a practical approach. We have been supporting Arrium with $49 million for a loan to upgrade their beneficiation plant. We have been supporting Arrium with 1,200 kilometres of rail track through an Australian Rail Track Corporation contract, and the environment minister, working with the Prime Minister, called an emergency meeting of COAG to address the issues of energy security and energy affordability, and to commission an emergency assessment of these issues.

There is, however, also another approach—the Labor Party approach. Yesterday, in the Senate, Senator Waters of the Greens and Senator Dastyari put up a motion saying that they wanted to consider regulated, planned closures of electricity generation and other industrial assets. What that says is that they want to close power stations and steel, lead and zinc factories—what else do they want to close? What do they mean by regulated, planned closures of other industrial assets? That means steel. That means cement. That means aluminium. And that means jobs of workers whose families depend on that income. This is a new moment in Australian industrial history— (Time expired)

Turnbull Government

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:47): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services cannot answer basic questions about her legislation in parliament, contradicted the Prime Minister on negative gearing and was in charge of the preparation of the census for two years, and given that the Minister for Justice acts against the government when he is here and when he is not here, what exactly does a minister have to do to get the sack in your government? Is the fact that you cannot move on any of these people, the fact that they are still here, because your leadership is so unstable?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members will cease interjecting.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:47): The honourable member's question reminds many of us how scant and sparse are the pleasures of opposition. We have been getting on with governing. We have been getting on with forging new free trade deals, creating new markets for Australian exporters and creating jobs. We have been creating the circumstances that will see $2¼ billion invested in central and north Queensland. We have seen the ability this week to defend the rights of 60,000 Country Fire Authority volunteers. We have been able to do that. We have been able to stand up for the heroes who stand up and fight for us when nature flings her worst at us—people that Labor abandoned. We defended them and we got that legislation through. We did that because we are in government. We have reduced taxes on middle-income-earning Australians. We have done all those things just this week. What does the Leader of the Opposition have to savour? Some games in the House—a pious amendment was his little win. Well, we will not begrudge him his small pleasures, but we will get on with the job of governing for all Australians.

Mr Bowen interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon has been warned!
Electricity Infrastructure

Mr PASIN (Barker) (14:49): My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Energy. In light of the recent state-wide blackout in South Australia and the importance of energy security, will the minister outline to the House the advantage of a national approach to electricity market policy? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Minister for the Environment and Energy) (14:50): I thank the member for Barker for his question and acknowledge that, with more food manufacturers than anywhere else in the country, his constituents know well what is the pain of an ill-considered energy policy. Constituents in his electorate are paying nearly double the price of electricity as those just over the border in Victoria. Whether you are watching a game of cricket under the lights at the MCG or the SCG, whether you live by the beach on the Sunshine Coast or whether you work at the steelworks in Whyalla, you are on the same national electricity grid. For that reason, we need a national approach, which will help us stabilise the energy system and create an affordable energy system as we transition to a lower emissions future.

All those hard-won reforms are now at risk by the unilateral action of Labor state governments and the Labor opposition. We have a 50 per cent target here, from federal Labor. We have a 50 per cent target from Queensland Labor. We have a 50 per cent target from South Australian Labor and a 40 per cent target from Victorian Labor. Do not take my word for it; these are the words of the Grattan institute:

Unilateral action by states or territories is likely to distort the implementation of national policies and increase costs with no net environmental benefit.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, representing more than four million workers, has said:

State-based renewable energy targets can confuse and distort the national market, driving up costs for consumers without necessarily improving environmental outcomes.

Just yesterday, the Queensland Labor government released a report into its 50 per cent target. In that report, it said, remarkably, fancifully, that it would actually lead to no closures of coal generators, even though it projected that coal power generation would go down by a third. It remarkably said that this would be cost neutral, even though we know they want to increase by tenfold renewable energy, and also we know from previous modelling that it would cost upwards of $27 billion. They went against the words of their own Queensland Productivity Commission, who called on the state government to work with the COAG Energy Council as 'an alternative to pursuing independent action'. So it is now up to the Leader of the Opposition to stop sacrificing energy security on the altar of his ideology. We all believe in reducing emissions. We all believe in renewable energy. In fact, this Prime Minister has a realistic target of 23½ per cent by 2020. But what we will not do is compromise the affordability and the energy security of Australians right around the country.

Attorney-General

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:52): My question is to the Prime Minister. Former Solicitor-General Dr Gavan Griffith QC has said the Attorney-General's actions in relation to the Solicitor-General bring to mind 'the image of a
dog on a lead’. Why is the Prime Minister continuing to express confidence in an Attorney-General so obviously unfit for office?

Mr Turnbull (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:53): I can well understand the honourable member’s concerns about the disturbance in the bar common room, but can I say I would never repeat such an unflattering remark as Gavan Griffith made about the Solicitor-General, which I think was very unfortunate.

Welfare Reform

Mr Zimmerman (North Sydney) (14:53): My question is to the Minister for Social Services. Will the minister update the House on how the government intends to improve the lives of vulnerable Australians through the priority investment approach to welfare? Is that the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr Porter (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (14:54): I thank the member for his question. As we all sit here today during this question time, the fact is that 40 per cent of Australian children who grow up in a home where their parents are reliant on welfare will themselves become reliant, as recipients on welfare, before their 22nd birthday. So, as members opposite pepper us with question after question on parliamentary procedure, we face a situation in Australia where nearly half the children in households with welfare dependency will themselves become welfare dependent before they are 22.

We have known about the scale of this problem for some time now, and when the now Treasurer was social services minister he commissioned $33 million worth of data analysis, consolidation and system design research to try to do two things for us as a parliament and for us as a government: to understand where this problem arises; where inside the system the groups of Australians are who are at greatest risk of long-term welfare dependency; and how we identify the shared characteristics of those groups that persist for such long periods of time that welfare dependency is transferred with very high rates to their children. The priority investment approach research—which I would encourage all members present to read—shows us some very, very important trends that we must break for the safety and security of our system and its children going forward.

We looked at 215,830 income support recipients of welfare under the age of 20. We saw that, in 80 per cent of instances for that group, they themselves had a parent who had been inside the welfare system at some point in the last 15 years. We were then able to identify three particular groups at incredibly high risk. One of those groups was young parents under the age of 18. We found that, for that group of 4,370 young parents, a minimum of 40 per cent of them will be in the welfare system in each year for the next 70 years. There is a one in 10 chance if you are in that group that you will never spend a year, in the next 70 years, out of the welfare system. We identified several groups.

I was asked in the question: how does this situation arise and are there any alternatives? In a week when members opposite seek to raise the issue of competency, we have had the education minister put an end to a program that saw diplomas of flower essence therapy and advanced diplomas of classical yoga practice. We have seen the education minister put an end to a system that was meant to help young Australians but produced diplomas of veterinary Chinese herbal medicine. That is to say that members opposite thought that one of the
solutions to long-term welfare dependency was to encourage Australians to study herbal medicine for dogs. *(Time expired)*

**Attorney-General**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:57): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister explain to the House how the Attorney-General was able to consult with the Solicitor-General about a direction which did not exist, receive advice from the Solicitor-General about a bill the Solicitor-General had not seen and receive advice from the Solicitor-General about amendments the Solicitor-General had not seen? Isn't it becoming clear that the Prime Minister's leadership is so unstable that the Attorney-General is surviving for that reason and no other?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:58): The Leader of the Opposition has a very experienced counsel in the member for Isaacs, and I think in matters of this kind he should avoid appearing for himself. The Attorney-General has my full confidence.

**National Security**

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (14:58): My question is to the Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter-Terrorism. Will the minister update the House on what this government is doing to keep our communities safe from the ongoing threat of terrorism?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter-Terrorism) (14:58): Can I thank the member for Robertson for that question—someone who cares about things that actually matter in the real world and is representing her constituents in this place. Yesterday, as members will be aware, two 16-year-old males were arrested in Sydney by the joint counterterrorism team, in possession of combat knives. This morning they have been charged with two terrorism offences: preparing for a terrorism act and membership of a terrorist organisation. The threat posed by these individuals has been mitigated and there is no immediate or ongoing threat to the Australian public. The incident is the latest reminder of the threat that we face. It is very real and it is not going away anytime soon.

Since the national terrorism threat alert level was raised on 12 September 2014, there have been four attacks in Australia and now 11 major CT disruption operations in response to potential attack planning. Yesterday's police response was yet another example of cooperation between Commonwealth and state agencies. We have the best agencies in the world and they continue to do everything that they can to keep Australia safe. I would like to thank members of the New South Wales Joint Counter Terrorism Team, which is made up of the Australian Federal Police, ASIO, the New South Wales Police and the New South Wales Crime Commission. I thank them very much for their professionalism and for their prompt action in once again saving lives and keeping us safe.

The coalition government have and will continue to provide these teams and the agencies they represent with the legislative tools and the investment they need to combat this ongoing threat. We have passed four tranches of legislation through this parliament. There is a fifth tranche of legislation that we would like to pass soon and we have invested $1.3 billion in the ability of our agencies to address this threat. We have also delivered a strong national security
agenda for Australia and will continue to explore ways that we can combat this threat to keep Australians safe.

There has been an ongoing and disturbing trend not only of more Australians but, unfortunately, increasingly younger Australians of subscribing to terrorist ideologies, and it is of great concern to the government that the two individuals arrested yesterday were both only 16. We encourage families, we encourage friends and we encourage communities who might be seeing changes with people within their midst who might be radicalising, who might be thinking about travelling to the conflict zone to contact their local authorities or to contact the National Security Hotline. We have no higher priority than keeping the Australian people safe and what we have done to ensure that has meant that our joint counterterrorism teams have had the success that they have enjoyed with these 11 disruptions.

**Turnbull Government**

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:01): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm that he fronts a government with a health minister destroying Medicare, a revenue minister not up to the job, a justice minister who embarrasses the government even when he turns up to work, an Attorney-General in conflict with the Solicitor-General and a Leader of the House who cannot manage the parliament. Prime Minister, is the only reason that they keep their job because you are so afraid of losing your job?

**Mr TURNBULL** (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (15:02): The honourable member, I think, should have very careful regard to his own job if he keeps on asking questions like that. The ministry is governing. The ministry is delivering. The government is securing legislation through the parliament. The government is securing tax cuts for middle Australians. The government is opening up big export markets that will secure the future of our children and grandchildren.

*Ms Butler interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Griffith.

**Mr TURNBULL:** The government is defending the volunteers of the Country Fire Authority.

*Mr Brendan O'Connor interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Gorton is warned.

**Mr TURNBULL:** We are securing our nation. We just heard from the Minister for Justice—

*Mr Hammond interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Perth.

**Mr TURNBULL:** about the important measures being taken to combat the threat of terrorism. These are the important achievements of our government during the course of this week. We are addressing the vital importance of energy security, affordability and emissions reduction. We have described how we are doing that. We are getting on with the job of governing Australia for Australians. And while I appreciate the opposition's desire to wring some small pleasure out of their miserable lot, they will not distract us from serving the people of Australia.
Medical Research

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (15:03): My constituency question is to the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science. Could the minister update the House on the actions that the Turnbull government is taking to boost medical research and grow jobs on the Central Coast. What action is the government taking to support the Central Coast medical school and medical research institute and surrounding precinct in Gosford?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (15:04): I want to thank the member for Robertson. On the subject of delivery, as the Prime Minister was referring to, I was really thrilled to be able to meet with all of those associated with the new Central Coast medical school and medical research institute for which the member for Robertson fought over a period of three years which, at the end of her first term, she was able to deliver with a pledge of $32.5 million in the last election, and which we are now planning and working on so it delivers places for students this term. And that means three things for the people of Robertson: firstly, better health; secondly, it means opportunities for the students; and thirdly, it means jobs.

In particular on the jobs front—and I want to acknowledge the member for Robertson's vision and role in this space—there is a first wave of jobs which will come from the construction of the medical school and the research institute—plumbers and plasterers, building supplies, people involved in the construction industry. Then of course there are 750 ongoing jobs which will come from the operation of the medical school as it trains not just doctors but nurses and other health professionals on an ongoing basis, an incredible opportunity for people on the Central Coast to work and to be trained. Then of course what the member for Robertson was really looking for was to create something very special and that will be a third wave from jobs by establishing a medical precinct, a precinct of emerging businesses, of campuses for existing major firms in the health field and in the medical field.

In order to achieve this third wave of jobs, what we agreed to establish was a medical precinct task force for the Central Coast. It is the first such task force to be established by this government but we want to establish 39 equivalent task forces with all of Australia's public universities. It is about creating jobs in the private sector but building off the strength of our universities. The member for Robertson will chair this task force. She is committed to the first meeting being within two months and to preparing a plan to carry out that third wave of jobs within six months. In order to do that, she is bringing together the health services of the Central Coast, she is bringing together the University of Newcastle, which will be the operator of the medical school, and she is bringing together the community. This compares with what we have heard today from an opposition which did not deliver such a thing when they had six years in government and right now they are talking about planned closures of industrial assets. In other words, we are creating jobs; they are destroying jobs and that is all any of us need to know from today. (Time expired)

Turnbull Government

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:07): My question is to the Leader of the House. Given that in the first week of this parliament the government became the first majority government in over 50 years to lose control of the House of Representatives and that last night, for the first time—not in 50 years but the first time ever—an opposition's
second reading amendment was carried with the government voting against itself, how does the Leader of the House reckon it is going and is there anything he needs to fix?

The SPEAKER: No, that question is not in order.

McMillan Electorate: Infrastructure

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (15:08): My constituency question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. I refer to the government’s commitment to upgrading the South Gippsland Highway. How will this and other government infrastructure investment create jobs and support my electorate of McMillan and Victoria?

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:08): I thank the member for McMillan for his question. The member for McMillan is my electoral neighbour, and what a great neighbour he is. It is great to see him working every day, focusing on delivering for his constituency right across the McMillan electorate. He lives in one of the most spectacular parts of Victoria—one of the most scenic regions.

The issue he raised is in relation to the South Gippsland Highway. As you travel out of Melbourne and along the South Gippsland Highway through the beautiful townships of Leongatha, Meeniyan and Foster and those communities, one of the big challenges for people travelling on that part of road to Wilsons Promontory, the very popular part of Victoria, is the way that the South Gippsland Highway is falling into a state of disrepair. The member for McMillan has been a real champion of securing additional funding for that road. I was very pleased to announce during the election campaign, in partnership with the member for McMillan, a $25 million commitment from the federal government. We are urging the Victorian state government to match that funding. The Victorian state government has indicated a level of interest in supporting us in our efforts to save lives on the South Gippsland Highway.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr CHESTER: It is a section of road which is primarily a state responsibility, but we have recognised that with the way the road toll is trending in Victoria at the moment this is a very serious issue, and I would encourage those opposite to take it seriously. The road toll in Victoria, particularly in regional areas, has been trending in the wrong direction over the past two years. So we have gone to the Victorian state government and put forward a package of $345 million for rural and regional roads as part of the $1.5 billion package which the Prime Minister announced earlier this year. It is a very good package, and I am very pleased that the community of McMillan, the electorate of McMillan, is going to share in that program.

The member for McMillan was able to secure $25 million for that road. In addition to securing funding for the South Gippsland Highway, the member for McMillan was also able to secure, during the election campaign, funding for another project in much demand in his community—that being the Port Welshpool Long Jetty. That has been a long fight. As long as the jetty is, the fight has been even longer for the member for McMillan, so I congratulate him on being able to achieve a funding commitment from the federal government in the order of $4.8 million for the reconstruction of that jetty. That is a heritage asset for the community. It is a jetty that was used during World War II as a base for minesweeping operations. It has been a subject of much concern in the local community over many, many years. The jetty was, unfortunately, damaged by fire and had fallen into disrepair, and it has not been repaired.
over the past decade. So the member for McMillan, who is an outstanding champion for his community and a tireless worker for his community, has had some great success during the election campaign in terms of securing funding not only for the South Gippsland Highway but also for the Port Welshpool Long Jetty.

I urge the Victorian state government to come on board and partner with the Commonwealth on these important projects. These projects will not only change lives in the community by helping to create jobs but they will actually save lives in the community by improving road safety. I look forward to working with the member for McMillan as we get on with the job of delivering on behalf of the people of McMillan but right across Australia and regional Victoria.

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

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (15:12): Documents are presented in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (15:12): Mr Speaker, I seek your permission to make a personal explanation.

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

Dr LEIGH: I do, most grievously. In an answer to an earlier question, the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services said that I had voted against the government's multinational tax law. This is not correct. Neither I nor any of my House of Representatives colleagues voted against the government's multinational tax law. Given the events of the last 24 hours, I am surprised the minister did not check the Hansard.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Education

The SPEAKER (15:12): I have received a letter from the honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely: The Government failing Australian schools.

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—

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:13): It is great to see the member for Kooyong, the Minister for the Environment and Energy, standing and supporting the matter of public importance, just as he supported our earlier motion at 9.30 this morning!
Turning to a much more serious issue today: we here on the opposition benches, the Labor Party, when we were in government took a very serious look at our school system. We did that because we could see that our results in Australia—a country that had, 10 to 15 years ago, been one of the top performing countries in the world when it came to maths, reading, science and so on—were slipping. So we asked David Gonski and a panel of distinguished, eminent Australians to have a really good look at our school system. They came up with a proposal for a schooling resource standard and loadings for kids with particular needs that those on those benches opposite at first ridiculed and then denied. They pretended they could not support it. They finally realised that it was politically popular, so we saw the gazelle, the Leader of the House, the fixer, finally say at five minutes to midnight that they were on a unity ticket on it with us.

What have we seen when it comes to schools since those opposite have come into government? We have seen $30 billion worth of funding cut from our schools—an average cut of $3 million from every school across Australia.

I think members on both sides are regular visitors to their schools, and many of them have seen the enormous need for extra resources in classrooms and in school communities. Frankly, the idea that they can go into those schools and face those children, principals, teachers, parents, school aides and teacher aides, and say, 'This school doesn't need any extra resources,' shocks me. We know that even the modest amount of extra funding that has started to flow in the early years of the needs based funding system has made an incredible difference in our schools. When we visit our schools, they tell us the difference it has made. Our Lady of Mount Carmel is a fantastic school in my electorate. When I visited Our Lady of Mount Carmel most recently—I have been there many times—their fantastic principal told me that with the early Gonski funding they had been employing speech therapists and occupational therapists, particularly to work with their kindergarten children so that those kids start their education with a love of learning. It has been such a success. How can those opposite genuinely say to the parents and teachers at Our Lady of Mount Carmel that money does not matter?

What did Eagleby South State School in Logan—I am sorry that the member for Forde has left—do with their extra funding? They hired and trained extra reading aides, and the percentage of their year six and seven students reading at age level went from 50 to 70 in a very short time. Can those opposite genuinely say to those children, teachers and parents and that school community that money does not matter? They cannot pretend that it does not. Merrylands High School in the shadow Treasurer's electorate, which is a school with 80 per cent low-SES background kids and 70 per cent non-English-speaking background kids, lifted their HSC results and in just three years actually doubled the number of students receiving an invitation to attend university. This is the difference that needs based funding, properly applied, can make. Those opposite cannot say to those students at Merrylands High School in Western Sydney that money does not matter.

The truth is that these arguments—and the more recent attempt to set state fighting against state, school system against school system, Catholic schools against public schools—are simply a cover for the fact that those opposite have ripped out $30 billion from our schools over the next decade. I think everybody in this place remembers their best teacher. Teachers change lives. Teachers are the inspiration for so many young people to pursue their dreams. We know that one of the most important things we can do as a government is actually make
sure that every child in every school in every school system in every state has the opportunity to experience that great teaching. That is why we wanted to invest this extra money in our schools. But those opposite also say: 'You can't just pour in money. Because money doesn't matter, if you just pour in money, nothing will change.' That has never been the proposition from this side. The only person who has ever said extra funding should be with no strings attached was the former Minister for Education.

Mr Conroy: The fixer!

Ms PLIBERSEK: The fixer, the gazelle, is the only one who has said that Labor's transparency and accountability measures are all just red tape, and that schools should be freed from the responsibility of reporting on their students' results—how their kids are doing. We have said that with extra funding we expect Australia should get back to the top five in the world for maths, reading and science. That is where we should be. Ninety-five per cent of students should complete year 12. Students should get more individual attention so that talented kids get the opportunity to extend themselves and make the most of their gifts, and kids who are falling behind get the support they need to catch up. We have said extra money should come with greater investment in selecting, training and supporting the best possible teachers—and more of them—so that we have better resources and better equipment in our classrooms, and more support for students with special learning needs. Extra investment, yes, comes with big changes in our school system. It means that teachers and school communities can do what they desperately want to do, which is treat every child as an individual and meet their needs.

Those opposite will say, predictably—and let us just see what the next speaker says—'Australia can't afford this at this time. Australia can't afford it.' These are the people who are right now arguing for a $50 billion tax cut for the biggest businesses in Australia. The majority of this cut will flow overseas and benefit overseas shareholders. I am sure they will be very grateful. This is about choices and priorities. We choose our children—the individual kids who benefit from this in the classroom—but we also choose investing in our productivity as a nation. We know that the $50 billion tax cut makes—I am struggling not to use a rude word here—very little difference to our economic growth over time: one per cent once it is fully implemented in 20 years' time. We know that where investment in education funding is higher, living standards are higher; the Australia Institute has told us that.

We know that, if, by 2030, we can equip all our high school graduates with the right kinds of basic skills, we could add $44 billion to the Australian economy, in today's terms. That is the OECD. We know that most economists say that Labor's plan to invest in education is much better for the Australian economy than the $50 billion big business tax giveaway. That is the Economics Society of Australia survey. We know that the quality of schooling in a country is a powerful predictor of the wealth that the country will produce in the long term. That is not us saying that; this is the predominant view of the smartest economists in the world. But it does not convince those opposite, because they want to prioritise giving a multinational company a tax cut over our children's future.

To be a nation with a strong economy, Australia must be an education nation. To be a nation prepared for the jobs of the future, we need to be an education nation. To be an 'innovation nation', as the Prime Minister says, we need to be an education nation. That is
what Labor backs. That is what needs based funding delivers. That is what those opposite are trying to kill.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills) (15:23): I am delighted to speak on today's MPI for a number of reasons. Firstly, I am recently appointed to the role of Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills, and I have to say that I am delighted to be in this role because there are so many opportunities for us as a government to do good work in the education sector.

It is important to note that education is like a highway, and we have the opportunity as we go along that education highway to exit at many different points, including at the vocational education destination. But schooling and school education is a critical part of that education highway, and it is very important that we get that right not just for ourselves but also for our generations yet to come. As a member of the government, what I want is a quality education outcome for the dollars that we are spending on education. As a taxpayer, I want value for money, value for the dollars that are spent on education. And, as a parent, I want a quality education for my children and for other children, so that they have the best opportunity to achieve their life goals.

There is outstanding research and a considerable amount of work that has been done on funding. It is important to note that we have record funding going forward in education—$73.6 billion over the forward estimates to 2020. But there is significant research that says that there is no automatic link between high per student funding and student outcomes but that improved outcomes are driven by policies and reforms both in the school and in the wider education system.

I note that the member for Sydney talked briefly today about Gonski, and it has been a recurrent theme. It is important to make it very clear that, contrary to popular opinion the current arrangements are not Gonski; they are a corruption of Gonski, as has been clearly put by Mr Boston. Ken Boston, one of the panel members on Gonski, said:

In the run-up to the 2013 election, prime minister Kevin Rudd and education minister Bill Shorten hawked this corruption of the Gonski report around the country, doing deals with premiers, bishops and the various education lobbies … and they led to a thoroughly unsatisfactory situation.

I do not particularly want to go down the Labor-bashing approach, but I think it is important to put in some sort of context here. There was an opportunity to come up with a national model that met students' needs, but what we got was a hotchpotch of some 27 different agreements.

Having said that, I think it is important to actually move forward, because what we need to be talking about is the quality education outcomes that are needed. We released a document back in May, Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes, which I would encourage everyone to have a good look at. It talks about how important funding is, but it says that what we do with the funding matters more.

Ms Plibersek: That is what we all think.

Mrs ANDREWS: I am pleased that we are all agreeing on that, because what we do with the funding is very important. It may well be that there are differences of opinion, but perhaps what the debate needs to turn to is what we can do with the money that we have available and how we can ensure that that is used wisely and provides the outcome that our students need.
into the future. Despite significant funding growth in the past decade, NAPLAN results and our international rankings show that there have not been sufficient improvements in student outcomes. So, whilst we are spending record amounts of money, we are not achieving the outcomes that we need into the future.

As I said, it is time that we focus on quality education, and that is exactly what this government is doing. Through our *Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes* paper we are focusing on five key areas. The first one is 'Boosting literacy, numeracy and STEM performance'. We are not just talking about it; we are actually doing it—and I will come back and talk a little bit more about STEM. The second one is 'Improving the quality of teaching and school leadership'—doing the things that actually make a difference. The third one is 'Preparing our students for a globalised world'—where they have to get a job and compete with students who are ahead of them globally. The fourth one is 'Focusing on what matters most and those who need it most'—genuine attention to needs. The fifth one is 'Increasing public accountability through improved transparency'—not the corruption that Ken Boston so accurately describes.

I will start by talking about STEM education—science, technology, engineering and maths. As many in this place would know, my background is as a mechanical engineer. So science, technology, engineering and maths are subjects that are very near and dear to my heart. I was actually trained as a problem-solver, as most engineers are. What we know about STEM and particularly the jobs of the future is that, whilst it is not possible to predict exactly what those jobs are going to be, we do know that 75 per cent of the jobs of the future are going to require skills in science, technology, engineering and maths. But our record in producing students with those skills and expertise is actually quite poor.

If we compare the number of students studying maths and science from 1992 to 2012—a 20-year period—there were 30,800 more students in year 12 in 2012 than in 1992 but there was a significant decrease in the number of students who were studying maths and science subjects. There were 8,000 fewer physics students, 4,000 fewer chemistry students and 12,000 fewer biology students. Action needs to be taken to make sure that we can increase the number of students who are studying science, technology, engineering and maths, particularly science and mathematics at school.

We in the government understand that we have to be producing a pipeline to make sure that graduates are coming through with the high-level science and mathematics skills that we need. Already we have taken some considerable action to make sure that we are introducing science and maths at almost the earliest possible level by funding two programs, including the *Let's Count* program at the kindergarten level and the *Little Scientists* program, which will look at supporting our youngest learners to develop a love for science and a love for maths. That is critical and is important as we take those students through school.

We also know that there are some other critical points to be focusing on as the students go through their education, certainly at year 5 but also further up, at years 8, 9 and 10, where we will be needing to focus on STEM skills for students. Year 10 is a critical year for our skill students. I had the opportunity to speak to a number of Australian Apprenticeships Ambassadors this morning, and they talked about their experiences at school. I think it is probably fair to say that they felt they were a little bit let down by their schooling system, because the support that was given by their career advisers was really aimed at getting students into university without focusing on the vocational educational needs of the future.
That means we have a significant skills gap that we need to be filling in vocational education. This is one of the key areas that have been identified to us as what we should be doing in schools, which is providing additional support to the career advisers so they are in a better position to support students in the very important decisions that they are making about what their future should actually be. When talking to these students it is very clear that they have been let down by the current school system and that serious action needs to be taken in a number of areas.

There is very little time remaining, but I am sure that my colleagues will continue the debate along similar lines. One of the things that we need to focus on quite clearly is quality teaching and supporting our teachers to make sure that they are in the best possible position to impart the knowledge that our students will need into the future. There are a number of key areas, as I have identified, in which the government continues to take significant steps forward to improve education in our schools. I would encourage those opposite to take a proactive and positive approach and to work together with the government.

Mr GILES (Scullin) (15:33): The Turnbull government is failing Australian schools. The Turnbull government is failing Australian students. Even more fundamentally than either of these two failings, it is failing our future. The poverty of this government's vision is shown when it comes to the debate over schools funding and education, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition made clear. They say that we cannot afford to invest in our children, yet we can afford massive tax breaks for the big banks and multinational companies.

Today I have had the misfortune to be sitting in this parliament and hearing contributions from government members on the plebiscite bill. Throughout these contributions they have advanced an argument that we should have confidence in the Australian people. This is a powerful statement. There are 29 billion reasons the conservatives have no confidence in the Australian people. We choose the pathway to prosperity that is built on investing in education and on encouraging every child to fill his or her potential. We do so because it is the right thing to do. We do so on the basis of advice—expert advice here and expert advice around the world. It is so disappointing that government members are walking away from Gonski and are heedless of the advice from bodies like the IMF. Our pathway to the future, for getting individuals into jobs of the future and for all of us collectively, is through investing in education. We have a road map to do that, and I am so proud that the Gillard government ended more than 50 years of Commonwealth funding uncertainty and inequities when it came to schools.

That is why it is so disappointing to hear the assistant shadow minister. She has offered a very effective tribute to her minister, because what she did for 10 minutes is what he does all the time: talk around the issues, offer up platitudes while not engaging with his responsibilities or government members' responsibilities more generally. We have, in the Gonski recommendations, a pathway for every child to fill their potential. Gonski recognised, as we recognised, that talent is distributed evenly. Our challenge is to overcome the barriers that prevent some people's talents from being fully revealed through the schooling system. I am so proud that in opposition we have continued, through the great work of the member for Adelaide and the member for Kingston, to stand true to the principles of needs-based funding. I am proud today to stand here as part of Labor's education team to give voice to the concerns
of students, teachers and parents and to bear witness—as the member for Sydney has just done—to the transformative effects of needs-based funding even in these early days.

On the other hand, what do we have from government members? Schools funding really is the Turnbull government writ small. The conservatives have gone so quickly from a unity ticket to—who knows? The minister cannot explain; he is more interested in offering misleading, dissembling drops to the media than in engaging with his state and territory colleagues. He is treating them with contempt, and he is treating our kids with contempt. He deflects, distracts and dissembles. Why? It is actually pretty easy to see why. He knows, because I presume he has actually read the Gonski report and the mountain of evidence that sits alongside it, that he cannot defend nearly $30 billion of cuts. He cannot argue with the evidence that is before him and before us, so he does not. It is disappointing that the assistant minister talks about large investments and falling standards because those investments are not needs based funding. They reveal the importance of moving to needs based funding—the critical importance of it, if we are serious about our future.

Perhaps the most egregious aspect of the minister's failings go to our failure, under this government, to support students with disabilities. The Gonski report recommended that the loading to support students with disabilities be founded in more evidence. The evidence was not satisfactory in 2013.

Ms Collins interjecting—

Mr GILES: We needed better data from the states, as the member for Franklin reminds me. Three years have gone by. Last year, the minister claimed, 'State and territory education ministers have indicated that they will be able to provide the data this year so it can apply next year'—that is, 2016. I will be holding them to that so that every child in Australia with a disability will be able to receive the correct loading. He made another promise that he has broken. His failure to support students with disabilities is emblematic of this government's failure to support every child having every chance to achieve their potential in schools and education. (Time expired)

Mr HOGAN (Page) (15:38): There are two figures that give a big story that you would not believe if you were listening to the other side of politics. The amount of federal funding going to education in 2013—we all remember the year 2013; it was the year we took over government—was $13 billion a year. In 2013, it was $13 billion. We are currently spending $16 billion a year on education, and we are projected to be spending $20 billion a year by 2020. They are the facts. We will be going from $13 billion a year in 2013 to $20 billion a year by 2020. These are real increases in spending. You can take out inflation; you can take out all sorts of things. This is record spending by the federal government in education.

There were lots of good things in the Gonski report, and the needs based funding model is what we have moved to. Where there is more need for funding and education—for the areas, the regions and the schools that need more funding because of special needs or the demographics of that population—that is happening. The needs based formula is what we are following. We also need to go broader than this. Money is important, and we are increasing funding, but there is more to it than spending money. The Labor Party's solution is to just spend more money because that is the solution they have for everything. This is an important subject. For many years—this has not been happening just since 2013; this has been happening over a longer period—we have been slipping down on most measurements, the
measurements you would like to get, in our education system. This is something that we certainly need to look at. This is of concern to everyone. In fact, given that we are spending more money than we ever have, it shows that money alone is certainly not going to solve this. We are looking at evidence based reforms. In just about any area of our economy or our community, evidence based studies are providing some great insights into how we can get better bang for our buck.

The minister previously mentioned some of these. Our goals in the reform and in the study that we have done are to boost literacy, numeracy and STEM performance. We are going to improve the quality of teaching and school leadership. We are going to prepare our students for a globalised world, focus on what matters most in those who need it and increase public accountability through improved transparency. The education system has to transform, not just on money; it has to transform what it does.

We all remember what it was like when we are at school. I know I am probably older than you, Deputy Speaker Coulton. It was all content based. It was all memory. It was all: 'Read this and regurgitate this in an exam.' We know now is that knowledge itself is one thing, but it is problem-solving skills and a lot of other things that we need to teach our students. I was a schoolteacher for about five or six years, 10 or 15 years ago. I think the education system has made inroads since then, but it needs to make many more. I found there was far too much focus on what they taught. There was far too much focus on the content of what is taught in the classroom and not enough on how children learn. We all know there are different styles of learning, whether it be visual, whether it be auditory or whether it be kinaesthetic. The system was not catering for that. There was too much focus, both within teacher training and everything else, on the content. We have to move on from that.

We have also done some great infrastructure spending in education. In my electorate alone, we have spent nearly $6 million building five trade training centres. At Alstonville High School, there is a new agriculture trade training centre. I was out there the other day. I was envious of their cattle yards. You would have probably liked some of the equipment they had there as well, Deputy Speaker Coulton. Evans River is getting a new food tech trade training centre. Acmena is getting a new hospitality trade training centre. South Grafton High School is getting a new industrial tech trade training school. These are trade training centres funded by this government. There is also Trinity Catholic College. Not only are we providing record spending in our schools; we are delivering in lots of other areas as well.

Ms McBRIDE (Dobell) (15:43): As someone with a background in science and evidence based training, I was really curious to listen to the last speaker! Labor have, for a very long time, backed our schools. We know that, to properly resource our schools so every child in every school has every opportunity, it must be based on need. It is a simple fact that students in some regions face more barriers to success than in others. In my region on the Central Coast of New South Wales, local schools, teachers and teacher aides do an amazing job—teachers like Carinne at Toukley Public School and her passionate commitment to STEM in primary schools. But they do it in spite of the challenges they face from funding cuts, changing socio-economics and a growing community.

Recently I visited the YMCA at Lake Haven Recreation Centre, where their breakfast club currently serves 70 to 90 students four days a week, students who may otherwise start their day at the nearby school without a meal. Those children, some of whom are from families that
struggle to meet day-to-day cost-of-living expenses, have just as much right to a great education as any other. There are still too many children missing out due to a lack of resources—money matters, as is how it is spent—and this needs to change. But for so long as this government fails do the right thing by our schools and continues to cut the funding they so desperately need, addressing the inequality in the system will continue to be a seemingly insurmountable task.

The government's failure to match Labor's commitment to fully fund the final two years of the Gonski needs-based funding, which is having a real impact on schools in my community right now, has resulted in: schools in New South Wales are now $9.3 billion worse off, over $79 million will not make its way to the classrooms of the Central Coast and $44 million that should be provided to the 44 schools in my electorate of Dobell will not be provided because of this government. Our region will suffer more than most. In the electorate of Dobell, around 62 per cent of working people did not complete high school. Of those, the number of people who left school to pursue a trade is significantly higher than in other areas: 58.6 per cent of people in my community have vocational education qualifications compared to the national average, which sits at just under 46.7 per cent.

But, for a young person on the Central Coast who finds themselves without the support they need to finish school, what does the future now hold? Where once the pathway of leaving school, learning a trade and getting a job was commonplace, we know this is no longer the case. For so many people who live and work on the Central Coast, this traditional pathway to employment will no longer be an option. Yes, times have changed. Yes, technology has changed the way we learn and we work. Some traditional industries are being replaced and job opportunities are changing.

Currently, on the Central Coast, only one in two students in high school goes on to finish high school. In an area with chronically high youth unemployment rates, this is a real concern. Where once a TAFE education was a real prospect for young school leavers, the failure of conservative governments at a state and federal level to protect TAFE education's status and the public provider in the sector has gutted what was, for many families on the Central Coast, a vital provider of vocational education.

In this same context, those families now see their local schools at risk of being left with an alarming lack of resources. Why should students in Toukley, Warnervale, Berkeley Vale or Wamberal be left with under-resourced schools and be denied the support and opportunities they need to reach their potential? Why should teachers in local schools be forced to work in larger class sizes or not have access to assistance and support for students with disabilities or behavioural problems? Why should teachers not have the support they need to be the best they can and receive increased training throughout their careers?

Before the 2013 election, the Liberals talked about their unity ticket with Labor on school funding. They went to great lengths to endorse our policy and they pledged to match our funding commitments. In government, they have done nothing but cut funding for schools. Everything this government says about schools must be taken in the context of their $30 billion of cuts to schools and their failure to commit to the full Gonski funding levels. It does not matter whether it is a public school, like Killarney Vale, who visited yesterday; a Catholic school, like St Mary's Toukley, who are here in parliament today; or an independent school—every school and every student will be worse off.
Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (15:48): The provision of education is one of the most important functions of a government. Education is the silver bullet in our society: it gives children hope, life lessons and skills to equip them for the rest of their years. It can shape their futures. Our innovation boom would not be possible without intelligent, well-schooled young people to drive it and ensure our country remains at the cutting edge in many innovative industries. This is why this government is putting so much effort into schools.

The Australian government is providing a record $73.6 billion for school education over the budget forward estimates. This is a growth of $4.1 billion, or 26.5 per cent, between 2015-16 and 2019-20. Current estimates show funding for government schools will increase by 33 per cent and funding for non-government schools will increase by 22.7 per cent over this period. However, achieving better outcomes for our children is not just about money. The funding must be focused on the places it can do the most good. As a result, our policies build on a strong evidence base. This will ensure effort is directed towards the strategies that ensure improved learning outcomes for all Australian students, regardless of their school or background.

This is all detailed in the government's policy paper Quality schools, quality outcomes. This plan continues to focus reform on areas with clear linkages to improved outcomes, including teacher quality and teacher autonomy, engaging parents in education and strengthening the curriculum. Our goals for future reform include: boosting literacy, numeracy and STEM performance; improving the quality of teaching and school leadership; preparing our students for a globalised world; focusing on what matters most and those who need it most; and increasing public accountability through improved transparency.

Anybody who says that we are putting less money into schools is simply wrong and probably should go back to school and study a little math. Any figures that suggest this is a comparison of apples with pears. However, this deception from those opposite does demonstrate the importance of a good education and, as our school systems continue to improve through the policies of this government, fewer people will be fooled by such misleading statements.

In my electorate of Bennelong we have some of the best schools in the country and, alongside the impressive Macquarie University, this has allowed Bennelong to rightly call itself the innovation capital of Australia. Over the 2014-17 calendar years, the Australian government is making available a quarter of a billion dollars for all schools in Bennelong, which is a 28 per cent increase in funding. In 2015 alone, each of the 28 government schools will receive an average increase of $351,227, which equates to a rise of over $700 per student. In the early learning sector, the funding provided to families was similarly upped by 19.8 per cent over the same period. We also have seven higher education providers in the electorate, spearheaded by the mighty Macquarie University, which alone received $412 million last year, which it put towards its world-changing projects. These include the lifesaving Gamma Knife and the world-leading Hearing Hub.

But, as with the national figures, the money is in many regards secondary to the quality of the programs which we run and support. For example, the government's Stronger Community Partnership grants have provided facilities in many local schools which have helped to open them up to the community and improve community cohesiveness. Similarly, the Bennelong Cup table tennis tournament is a wonderful initiative which brings together the many
disparate communities that live in my electorate. Large diasporas from all over the world call Bennelong home, and the commonality of playing table tennis together brings down the cultural barriers between our children. I remember a moment from the competition a few years ago watching a particularly timid child grow in front of me when his table tennis ability was shown off in front of his school. With his sudden celebrity and popularity came confidence, acceptance, and a renewed zest for school life. If this program can bring this sense of fulfilment to more children it will continue to grow into a roaring success, and I look forward to inviting all members, my parliamentary colleagues, to see eight countries compete in the Bennelong Cup right here in Parliament House on 10 November. (Time expired)

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (15:53): I look forward to the Bennelong Cup. Table tennis, or ping-pong, has always been a favourite of mine.

I welcome the opportunity to speak today on this very significant matter of public importance—namely that this government is failing Australian schools. Some here might have heard my first speech in this place yesterday, where I expressed my great concern for education and the whole education system of this country. I know the benefits that can be had from a great state school education. I attended three great state schools in Western Australia in the seat of Brand: Safety Bay Primary, Rockingham Beach Primary and Safety Bay Senior High School. I know how committed our teachers are in delivering the best education they can to our children and young people. But they cannot do this alone. The best education comes from investment—investment in our teachers, our schools and our children.

But this government today, this Prime Minister's Liberal government, is failing to invest in our schools and in our children and young people. It is with disbelief that I look at how this Liberal government is failing to invest in our schools and in our children's futures. With the Liberals it does not matter whether it is a public, Catholic or independent school—under this government every school and every student will be worse off. In fact, education and schools will all be worse off thanks to the Liberal's $30 billion in cuts.

Labor does not believe in slashing education funding—we believe in increasing it. Labor believes in education and the future choices a good education will give Australian students. Labor believes in giving every school child the education they deserve.

The Prime Minister's failure to implement the needs-based funding model for school children—you know, that unity ticket—has denied every student the individual support needed to ensure they achieve their best. Walking away from Gonski school funding reforms, the Prime Minister has walked away from every special needs child who requires individual attention in order to reach their best educational achievement. The Prime Minister has walked away from every disadvantaged child who, through no fault of their own, needs extra help to benefit from a good education. And the Prime Minister has also walked away from every talented student who dreams of being given the opportunities to make the most of their abilities.

The failure by this government, this neglect of schools, has a longer term impact. Youth unemployment in the Kwinana/Rockingham/Mandurah/Peel region has been identified as around 25 per cent. It is a staggering figure. It is a disgrace. Instead of walking away from young people, the government should be investing in them. This investment needs to begin early. It needs to begin at school so that, when they leave school, young people have choices.

CHAMBER
As I mentioned in my first speech, in the 25 years since I left Safety Bay Senior High School not much has changed. The government is failing that school and lots of others across my electorate. When I finished school, out of about a hundred-odd students only a handful gained university entry. In 2015, only 33 of 126 year 12 students at Safety Bay Senior High School left with ATAR university entry. Something clearly needs to change. Only 12 per cent of year 12 students at Gilmore College in Kwinana have ATARs in 2015. Again, something clearly needs to change.

Investments need to be made—investment in schools so they are at the forefront of innovation in delivering education; investment in technology, so that our school children graduate well-versed in the tools of the 21st Century: the tools of a clever country, including a first-world internet service. Labor's fibre optic NBN would have given every school the opportunity of creatively and innovatively delivering classes and courses to engage with students. Labor's fibre optic NBN would give every Australian student the ability to connect to such classes and courses.

Unfortunately, in my electorate, in the suburb of Baldivis alone, students have no access to the internet, thanks to substandard, outdated and ignored communications infrastructure that leaves residents scratching about for ADSL ports to connect to. Never mind the NBN—where is the internet? And this beggars belief: across Baldivis, where is the mobile phone coverage?

This government is failing the people of Baldivis. This government is failing these hardworking, aspirational young people living in one of Australia's fastest-growing suburbs. And this government is failing their children. These students are being left behind when it comes to researching and doing their homework. If they cannot complete their research and work, what does this government expect their school results to look like?

The failure of the Prime Minister's government is entrenching inequality. It is serving to hold aspiring young people back. It is sabotaging the young people in my electorate and their access to education. It is a shocking waste and a shocking shame.

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (15:58): I was appreciating that this was a matter of public importance and that people on different sides of the chamber were having that debate quite respectfully, until the member for Brand made overstatements such as that every student in every school would be worse off. I would encourage the member for Brand—it is probably one of her first MPIs—to try and approach these things with a level of detailed discussion rather than just trying to throw mud.

The government, of course, is not the Liberal government; it is the coalition government. I might just point out that they would not be here without the National Party. It is a point worth making and worth making well.

One of the roles of government, of course, is the education of our children. It is something we take with a level of gravity and seriousness. There are two systems in place across Australia. There is, of course, federal money that goes directly to private schools and federal GST money that goes to state governments, and those state governments deliver our state school system.

I was educated through the state school system. I am a product of Bridgewater Primary School and Kangaroo Flat Tech, thank you very much. I did not know how to tie a tie until I was 30 so I did not go to one of those schools. The electorate of Mallee, which I represent,
has a lot of those state schools, and we have some very good schools. But I just want to bring
to the attention of the House that there are three things, in my opinion, that are very important
if we are going to give our children a good education.

School facilities are one of those things. It is important that we have good school facilities,
and the federal government, as we have heard, has been substantially increasing funding for
better facilities from $13 billion in 2013 to $20 billion in 2020. That is not the only thing that
is important. The school's culture is also important. I am very pleased that one of the things
that members of parliament get to do is deliver flags into our schools, because it gives me a
chance to talk to teachers and get a feel for the school's culture. The third thing is the home
life of those students.

On school culture, we have a couple of schools in my patch that are stand-out schools.
Robinvale Secondary College has 415 students and 54 first languages. Just think about that
for a moment. It is one of the most multicultural schools in Australia. We have a strong
Indigenous community and the Clontarf Foundation, which originated in Western Australia,
are running things with young Aboriginal students using AFL football to bring people into
school. Tyrrell College is another one. It is in a farming community and the students can do
very good subjects that are relevant to people's future career choices in a farming community.

I want to touch on the issue of home life, and this comes from my personal experiences of
being a foster parent and of having a child who missed out on breakfast and had to deal with
eating issues. I think that there is a legitimate argument, when we think about how we fund
schools, that we had better fund an ongoing breakfast program. Now, anyone who works with
children will know that if a child has not had breakfast then they will not be able to learn.

An opposition member interjecting—

Mr BROAD: It is one thing to say, 'You treat the cause,' but in a lot of cases in my
electorate the parents are probably not out of bed; the home life is broken.

Ms Husar: Education fixes that.

Mr BROAD: I would like to say that education fixes that, but it does not fix it when you
are dealing with significant ice issues and you are dealing with significant family breakdowns.
It is a lot more complex than saying, 'Education fixes that.' I am making the point that there is
a strong argument for the federal government and state governments to bring in permanent
breakfast programs in our schools.

An opposition member interjecting—

Mr BROAD: You can laugh about that if you like, but I have seen this in the children we
have been involved with as foster parents. There is no argument that our children need to be
fed and need to have access to good food so that they can attend and stay at school.

I want to use the last 40 seconds of my speech to talk about the volunteers in our lower
socio-economic schools, the schools in my electorate, and commend them for their
volunteerism. Most days each week they deliver breakfast programs.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr BROAD: I am very surprised that I am getting pushback from the opposition about
our children getting fed. The lowbrow level of discussion surprises me. We need good
education. Home life is part of good education and school culture is part of good of education,
as are school facilities. Our government will continue to deliver $20 billion towards our educational program in 2020.

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (16:04): I agree with the previous speaker: the school breakfast programs are very good and volunteers are very important. But they are not the answer in themselves. We need to fund schools. Government is about priorities. Today, the Minister for Social Services talked about intergenerational welfare. Well, key to addressing social inequality is better education, not cuts to education. Labour went to the 2 July 2016 election with a pledge to invest $37.3 billion in education over a decade. 'Unaffordable', 'ruination' and 'debt and deficit disaster' were the cries from those opposite. So, what was their priority? It was to hand $50 billion to corporations, multinationals and some of the wealthiest people in Australia but cut $30 billion to schools. That is the difference between us.

Investing in our kids and investing in their futures is the choice that Labor makes. Those opposite derided Labor's Building the Education Revolution but, by golly, they love to get their names on those plaques. The kiddies had to practically jump out of the way as Liberal MPs stampeded for the photo opportunity at the openings. In Lyons the former member, who I have replaced, officially opened the Sorrell East Trade Training Centre, in my neck of the woods—which I found a bit ironic given that it was a centre built by Labor and it was part of a program that his government abolished.

Labor knows that Australian schooling is falling behind internationally. The OECD reports that in 2000 only one country outperformed Australia in reading and maths and in 2006 only two outperformed Australia in science. We were global leaders, but today 16 countries outperform Australia in maths, nine outperform Australia in reading and seven outperform Australia in science. We are falling behind. If we fell this far behind in the Olympics there would be a national outcry. Labor knows that key to improving education is investing in education. Unbelievably, not only is the Turnbull government not investing properly in education but it is cutting funding for schools. Millionaires get a tax cut; schools get a funding cut. It would be funny if it were not so tragic. The Prime Minister's cuts will result in an average cut of $3.2 million per school across the country. My electorate of Lyons has 30 primary schools, two high schools and 18 district schools. That is $160 million to be torn out of the education capacity of my electorate alone. That is equal to one in seven teachers. That is a cut that my constituents and their children do not deserve. There would be less individual support, fewer subject choices, less support for students with disability, literacy and numeracy programs cut, music and sport programs cut, and less training and support for teachers.

Tasmania needs more investment in schools, not less. My state and my electorate lag behind on just about every educational index. It will not improve by cutting funds and teachers. How on earth could anyone think that giving $50 billion in tax cuts to wealthy corporations is more important than investing in schools? Those opposite will say that the tax cut will help businesses invest and grow the economy, but they should have stayed in school longer and learned how to read because their own budget papers admit that the cuts will add, at best, one per cent to GDP over the decade.

So what is Labor's plan? Ninety-five per cent year 12 completion; STEM teachers; students to have maths or science to year 12; digital technologies; returning Australia to the top five countries in reading, maths and science; and Asian language and culture. Labor knows that real investment transforms the lives and aspirations of Australian children and that real
investment has national dividends that far exceed any initial cost. Labor knows that kids who get a good school education do better in life. We have a responsibility to every Australian kid in every Australian school to give them the best shot in life. That is a responsibility that this Turnbull government is failing every single day.

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (16:09): I sometimes wonder just what the opposition go on about with their education cuts. I can say the following with a high level of relevance because I was a secondary science teacher for 10 years. Under the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd successive governments we saw huge investment in education—well, at least that was the public perception. The halls, especially in state funded schools, were built according to a formula by an urban-based construction company that had no ability to leverage local subcontractors. They had much higher contract prices anyway. They were beaten hands-down by the private school sector because they could do both parts to gain a much better bang for their buck. Then there was the universal distribution of the class sets of laptops for a school. There was no budget for repairs, replacements or stolen items. The result was a storeroom filled with outmoded and unrepaired laptops. But, worse still, in order to change the youth unemployment level back in 2010-11 any child up to the age of 17 had to remain at school. I was a teacher trainer at the time and I can tell you the devastating effect that that had in the classes to the teachers, the students who wanted to learn and the students who hated to be there.

Today this so-called matter of importance is trying to present that the Australian government is failing schools. I really feel sad when education is used as a political football, and so do the parents and the teachers. Much has been made of the Gonski model of funding, even to the point of giving the term the status of being a noun—like 'I give a Gonski'. But when you ask them what that actually means you rarely get an answer. The most important element of Australian education is not this word 'Gonski'; it is the concept of needs-based funding where local schools with specific needs gain sufficient funding to give the best opportunities to the greatest number of students—those with a disability, those with cultural disadvantage and those with an economic disadvantage. This is not a system designed for an equal outcome for every child. While in utopia that would be brilliant, we on this side of the House live in the real world.

While we are referring to the real world, I wish the opposition would stop talking about mythical money being taken from education. Labor in its amazing marketing—and I wish I had had that when I was a fudge manufacturer—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mrs SUDMALIS: There were cuts coming out of it. But I only marketed honestly. The Gonski funding model was a proposal of funding for six years. It was not even published in the forward estimates. When Labor was in government the first four years of the plan were well funded, and we have matched it dollar for dollar—in fact, we have actually added to that funding. We all know this. This is a bit like the story of the goose and the golden egg. It is time for us to realise that all we have is the goose—actually we have got lots of them and they are sitting over there.

The funding dollars have so far made incredible differences in our local schools and not a single dollar is to be cut from those allocations that are currently with our schools. There have been programs of literacy, numeracy, coding, robotics and one-on-one teaching. This has
made a huge difference and—I must keep repeating this—the current investment will continue, with an extra $73.6 billion in the forward estimates over the next four years. That is a 26.5 per cent increase. It is time to make sure the funding formula place it exactly where it is needed, and it is happening. Kiama Public School, Berry Public School, Terara, Sanctuary Point, Ulladulla and Milton, just to name a few, all have developed a program of improvements for their students and they will continue under the current model. Chucking undirected dollars into a school is not going to change the outcomes. Mentoring, teacher training and respecting the profession of education are the essential first ingredients.

Just stop pushing as many students as possible to university. It is not the panacea for our future. Our tradies and skills are the missing link in our school-to-work system. Support those students who wish to enter a trade. It is no less important than a degree and for some students it is a far better choice. My local teachers are talking about other related issues that affect education. We need to listen to them because their views are straight from the children around them—like the breakfast programs, after-school care and growing their own food in the garden for the canteen. That is what we need to listen to.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton):** The discussion has now concluded.

**BILLS**

- **International Tax Agreements Amendment Bill 2016**
- **Industry Research and Development Amendment (Innovation and Science Australia) Bill 2016**
- **Statute Law Revision (Spring 2016) Bill 2016**
- **National Cancer Screening Register Bill 2016**
- **National Cancer Screening Register (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2016**

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

**Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016**

*Second Reading*

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"this bill be withdrawn and redrafted to legislate for marriage equality and that the House calls on the Government to afford all members of parliament a free vote."—

**Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (16:15):** The history of attempts at achieving marriage equality in Australia will not be a tale of courage or conviction—certainly not in this place. It will not be a story about how this parliament came together and ended discrimination against same-sex attracted people and it will not be a story about the will of the Australian people being given effect to by their representatives, for those of us seeking to achieve an end to
discrimination are hostage to those who seek to delay, obstruct and frustrate. The Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016 before the House today is evidence of that strategy.

The history of social reform across the world shows that ending discrimination is only a matter of time. It is only a matter of time until marriage equality becomes a reality in Australia. It could happen very, very soon. When I first spoke about marriage equality in this House it was 15 November 2010; it was not long after my first election. I said:

… marriage is an important institution in our society. It is a special relationship where two people say to each other and to the rest of the world that they agree to be bound together in love, exclusive of all others, for life. I believe it would diminish us all as a society if we were to say that we may exclude gay and lesbian couples from this celebration. That marks them as somehow less worthy or even as biological oddities. I respect the right of religious organisations and others in our community to disagree with this view and to continue to practise in accordance with their beliefs. Indeed, no motion or act of this place can of itself change those beliefs. But it is an entirely different thing to ask of the state to enforce it.

As many in the House know, I had the enormous privilege of introducing the first bill to give effect to Labor's national platform, which was changed in November 2010 to recognise marriage equality. That private member's bill was just one of 18 bills that have been introduced into this House and the other place since that time. My own private member's bill was introduced on 13 February 2012 following a period that enabled all members to consult with their communities. It is a matter of history that my bill did not succeed. It was voted down in this place by a majority of 56 votes. Obviously many people abstained. This is despite the fact that polls then showed, and now show, that more than 60 per cent of Australians support marriage equality—so it seems that the 45th Parliament remains just as out of step with community attitudes as the 43rd Parliament was.

Labor rejects that the false choice that is being promoted by the government: that there is either a plebiscite or nothing when it comes to achieving marriage equality. We could make this a reality within the next 10 days. That would be possible. The plebiscite, as I said earlier in this debate, is a colossal waste of money. Just imagine what good we could do with the $200 million if it were spent on our health system, on our schools, on legal services, on mental health services or on domestic violence front-line services, just to name a few. That is $200 million which would otherwise be wasted.

From the experience of advocating for this from 2010 to this date, I have garnered some small exposure to the level of vitriol, hatred and fear directed against the LGBTI community that emanates from those who are strongly opposed to marriage equality. I am a privileged, white, heterosexual male. I hold a position within the community that gives me great privileges and benefits. I can say that I have never experienced the sort of institutional discrimination that many people who have come to me and expressed their concerns have experienced. However, the very limited experience of proposing a change to the marriage laws has led me to take their concerns very seriously.

When the plebiscite was first proposed, I have to say that I had an open mind to the question. This was before the issue of the cost was brought to my attention, but it was also before I sat down and spoke to many members of my community and to many people within my friendship networks and, in fact, around the country. I spoke to them about their very real concerns. I think it would have been an abrogation of my responsibility for me—as I have
said, as a privileged, white, heterosexual male—to say, ‘C’mon, we can toughen up; we need not be concerned about these issues,’ and not listen to their concerns and their lived experiences. To a person, they were concerned about the impact of the plebiscite on their children or on young LGBTI people.

I can attest to the hundreds and hundreds of emails that I have received from opponents of same-sex marriage who thought it was fit and appropriate to commit to writing and to communicate to me and to many other people some of the most egregious statements and comments about our fellow Australians. That is a private communication to a member of parliament; I can only imagine what it would be like if this bill proceeds and that is let loose in a full-blown public debate. People say that we are a robust country and good people, that they have confidence and faith in the Australian community and that the majority of Australians will not stoop to that level of debate. I understand that. I actually agree with it. I actually agree that the majority of Australians will not engage in that sort of debate. But it is not the majority of Australians that I am concerned about and it is not the majority of Australians that raise the concerns the LGBTI community have made direct representations to me about.

As former Justice of the High Court Michael Kirby has said:
A plebiscite campaign unfortunately would be likely to bring out hatreds and animosities in our country that are bad for minorities generally and for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender minority in particular.

From my own experience, I have no reason to doubt this. Michael Kirby has put forward 10 reasons against the plebiscite, including this one. These are compelling reasons against the plebiscite, including the controversial precedent that it would set in our history as to how such matters are determined within our political system, in the view of former Justice Michael Kirby and in my view; and including advocacy that we have heard this week on behalf of Professor McGorry, who has warned that a public campaign could and probably would increase the risk of self-harm and suicide in an already vulnerable community. We cannot blithely dismiss these concerns.

The experience in Ireland has been pointed to as precedent within this debate. In my view, that is misplaced. There is a good reason why the people of Ireland conducted a national referendum to determine this question, and the reason is this: the provisions concerning marriage were entrenched in their constitution. Our Constitution is entirely different species, which gives this parliament the right to make laws in respect of marriage. And it is indeed this place where a bill will have to be considered at the conclusion of any plebiscite, were it to proceed. The Irish experience is pertinent. Australian researchers have identified that Ireland's same-sex marriage referendum 'no' campaign had a deeply negative impact on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people and their families. Dr Sharon Dane in from the University of Queensland School of Psychology found that over 1,600 people within the LGBTI community—

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (16:24): I am pleased to rise this afternoon to speak on the Plebiscite (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill 2016. Firstly, I would like to note that this debate is not about the merits or the pros and cons of the same-sex marriage debate. What we are debating is whether we should go ahead with a plebiscite in February next year to make a determination to give every single Australian the opportunity to have their say on this issue.
What has been a bit disappointing during the debate on this particular bill is that it has shown there has been a growing disdain on the Left side of politics from Labor and the Greens—a disdain for our democracy. The issue we are debating was taken to the last election. At the last election, on one side we had the coalition. We set out our position. We said that, if there were to be a change, a redefinition of the term 'marriage' in the Marriage Act, changing a definition that was centuries-old through Western civilisation, that change should be done through a national plebiscite where every single Australian has the opportunity to have their say. In the alternative, we had the Labor Party and the Greens. Their position going to the election was that, if they were successful, they would legislate to change the Marriage Act during this term of parliament. We had that debate during the election period. The different positions were crystal clear. Many Australians went to the ballot box at the last election and cast their vote knowing that there was a clear choice. We saw the results of the election. Labor and the Greens lost the election. The coalition was able to form government.

If we are to have any respect for our democracy, once we have had that debate during the election period, the opposition should not come into this parliament and try to block the will of the Australian people as demonstrated at the election. Otherwise, why even have elections? Why have debates during elections if the result of the election is not going to be respected by those on the other side? The positions were clear at the last election. The vote was held. Our position to have a plebiscite was crystal clear. We have formed government. The opposition should allow us to continue with this process.

Sadly, this is not just a one-off incident where we see those on the Left side of politics having a growing disdain for our election process and our democracy. In 2013, we saw the then Labor Prime Minister go to the election with the promise, 'There will be no carbon tax under a government that I lead.' To make that commitment before an election and reverse it afterwards simply shows a complete disdain. We again saw it at the last election. Yes, there was vigorous debate about many issues, and that is the way it should be, with one side putting up one proposition and the other side countering it. That is how our democratic process should work—a contest of ideas.

At the last election we saw the Labor Party creating false electronic documents—millions of them. They sent those false documents out to millions of Australians—which created the false impression that this was some type of official communication from Medicare, a government organisation—with what was the complete untruth, that the coalition would privatise Medicare. Rather than be embarrassed about that act, rather than come in and be a bit contrite and say, 'Yes, we need to change these laws,' the Labor Party came into this parliament and laughed and said, 'Ha-ha, we tricked you.' They tricked millions of Australians at the last election, and there is no embarrassment, no apology—it is just, 'Ha-ha, we've tricked you.' That is the disdain that we are seeing for the democratic process in this country. If that were undertaken in trade or commerce, it would be an offence. We have also seen disdain for democracy. We saw it with the Orwellian Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal—

**ADJOURNMENT**

The SPEAKER (16:30): It being 4:30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.
Employment

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (16:30): It has been one of those weeks where sometimes I have shaken my head at some of the conversations that have been going on in hallways and what has been talked about in the media. It appears the only workers that the government care about are backpackers. The only conversation they have been willing to have this week about workers has been about backpackers. What we have not heard from the government this week is any talk about Australian workers or about their jobs or the job insecurity that they are facing.

Inequity in this country is at a 75-year high and it is growing. It has been growing under the term of this government. It is growing because of a number of factors but one factor which the government do not rant about or talk about is the fact that it is because wages growth is at an all-time low. We now have a growing group of people in Australia who not only have job insecurity but also have income insecurity. There is an increasing number of Australians who are worried about not getting enough hours—being underemployed, not just unemployed. For all the rants that the government have about jobs and growth, they have failed to really understand what it means to have a good secure job and that is because the government are not talking to workers. Instead, what we have seen in the last parliament and now in this parliament is a number of bills put forward to attack workers and basic working conditions.

Australian workers have the right to be frustrated that their government is not only not representing them; it is also not talking to them. When it comes to jobs and job plans from Australians, this government has absolutely no agenda, just slogans. Australians have been met with silence continuously about the inaction of this government. There has been no genuine legislation put forward to protect vulnerable workers and no plans to address the decline in full-time jobs.

Labor, in the government's absence, did something about it. We started to talk to workers. We formed our own caucus committee and we started to engage with workers from not-for-profit organisations, with advocacy groups, with stakeholders and with academics about jobs, Australian jobs, and about the Fair Work Act. Some of the stories from the workers that we spoke to were quite alarming. We heard from seafarers that, with the loss of so many permanent based jobs on Australian ships, the prospect of a permanent job now does not exist. One seafarer said:

So for someone like me who wants to buy a house and start a family, there is no job security whatsoever. I could have a job today but it could be gone tomorrow.

We also heard from another seafarer that he, as well as 76 other co-workers, wait for a phone call on Friday to find out if they have work the following week. We heard from people who work in manufacturing who have been replaced by temporary workers. We heard from people in manufacturing who themselves are directly employed by a company but the person working next to them works for a labour hire firm whether they be an Australian or a temporary worker. The problem is that the people working for the labour hire firms work at lower rates so, when it comes round to enterprise bargaining, the workers on the collective agreement are given a terrible choice: wage freeze, cuts in pay and conditions or being
replaced with more labour hire workers. This is the reality of people in our manufacturing sector. This is the reality of people who are working in many regions.

We also heard from workers who spoke about what would happen to them if this government gets their wish and penalty rates are cut. For a lot of people who are casual and part-time, it is their penalty rates that are helping them to pay their bills. If we cut penalty rates, people told us that they would not be able to afford things like their children's school piano lessons, their children's basketball lessons. These are the stories of Australian workers. These are the voices and the stories that the government are choosing to ignore. Instead, they are continuing their ideological obsession of attacking workers and attacking the unions that represent them.

Working Holiday Maker Program

Mr DRUM (Murray) (16:35): It is a good lead-in to have the member for Bendigo talk about backpackers because obviously she does not understand the necessary labour force that is so critical for areas not only in horticulture but also in viticulture and in the dairy industry. Specifically, the issue of the backpacker tax needs to be fixed up. Initially when this was a very serious issue for the coalition, it was put down that the resolution would firstly be through a review process that would involve consultation right around Australia, reporting back mid-October.

Once those consultations were underway, it became very obvious that this issue needed to be resolved quickly and that is why the government moved in accordance with the evidence that was given at these consultation meetings. The government moved with that evidence to resolve this issue as quickly as possible. Therefore, the government jumped to a conclusion that everybody could live with, everyone was happy with—19 cents in the dollar for the backpacker tax rate. The government introduced a bill into parliament and this House passed that bill.

However, we now move over to the Senate and we obviously have the Labor Party and the Greens playing games and apparently joining teams with Jacqui Lambie and others. But even with the Labor Party and the Greens wanting to play their games and even if Jacqui Lambie wants to support them, there are still enough in the Senate to understand the critical nature of the backpacker tax issue. There still should be enough with the Nick Xenophon Team, One Nation, the Liberal Democrats, Family First and Derryn Hinch. If they had any idea of the necessity of this issue and of its time critical nature, then they would be trying to make sure that it was resolved as quickly as possible.

Backpackers right around the world are looking to make decisions about where they end up for their holiday experience as they earn their way around whatever holiday destination they choose. They will be making their decisions right now, and we need to have our share—maybe 200,000 of them—find their way to Australia in the next month. The consequences, if that does not happen, will now rest with the Labor Party and the Greens. Fruit rotting on the vine and its consequences will sit with the Labor Party and the Greens.

It is not just the horticulturalists and the viticulturists that will be damaged by this. There are a whole range of associated secondary industries that are hanging off the end of primary production. In the Goulburn Valley there is a huge amount of horticulture where backpackers are needed to pick the fruit, but preserving companies are sitting right there next to them. As
we know, SPC employs well over 500 people. We also have the packaging companies—Visy and a whole range of others—that are there producing the packaging. We also then have the transport industries. All of these associated industries are the biggest employers in the Goulburn Valley. One way or another, they are all going to be reliant on the backpackers arriving in Australia in a timely fashion so that the crops can be picked.

If the games of the Senate spill over and last indefinitely, the message is soon going to get back to all of the overseas countries that are going to be the suppliers of this backpacker workforce. This could have catastrophic consequences, and I do not know whether the Labor have really thought long and hard about that. Quite simply, whilst the issue was sitting with the coalition, the only screams we heard from the Labor Party were to get this thing resolved. It should not be an issue. They understood how critical it was then. Once it has been resolved by the coalition, now the Labor Party try and play their games and try and string this out so that it becomes a bigger issue than it ever needed to be.

Blair Electorate

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:40): I rise to recognise some significant anniversaries in my electorate: 60 years of marriage, 25 years of pastoral ministry and 30 years of service to the Ipswich community.

Des and Dawn McLucas have just celebrated 60 years of marriage—a wonderful achievement and a tribute to their mutual love and dedication. They have lived in Ipswich for 50 years and raised three children, all of whom attended Silkstone State School. They have had a long commitment to and involvement in the church and community. They were members of church youth groups and met at Youth for Christ in Brisbane. Later they participated in outreach work to street kids.

Des has spent his adult life helping many Ipswich residents improve their vision. He was an optical mechanic and made lenses for spectacles. Dawn was a talented milliner and made beautiful hats. In fact, while working in Ipswich she created a bridal headpiece that won a Queensland fashion award. Des is a member of the Labor Party and a beloved member of my own branch, the Raceview Flinders Branch. He is known for his compassionate approach to politics, his commitment to social justice and his enthusiasms for democratic involvement within the Labor Party. He has been a great support to me politically and indeed spiritually, providing wisdom and a considered point of view. Congratulations, Des and Dawn, and may God bless you throughout the remainder of your lives together.

I want to recognise Pastor Mark Edwards OAM for his remarkable 25 years as senior pastor of the Cityhope Church in my own neighbourhood. In 2014, Mark was recently awarded the prestigious Order of Australia Medal by the Governor-General for service to the church and to the Ipswich community. Mark and I have a lot in common. We have known each other a long time and our families have known each other for generations. Mark was a lawyer, initially, like I was. He went into pastoral ministry not into parliament. We both like to run, but he is a much better runner than I am. He takes it very seriously. Tragically, Mark suffered a serious heart attack in 2013. Through determination and extensive rehabilitation he managed to regain his fitness, and two years later he completed the Paris marathon, to his credit.
Mark is from a long line of Edwardses who have served and contributed to Ipswich. Mark's father was Sir Llew Edwards, the former Liberal member for Ipswich, Minister for Health, Treasurer and Deputy Premier of Queensland. Mark serves in that tradition. Today, Cityhope Church is not only one of the region's largest and most vibrant churches; it has a wonderful record of engagement with the Ipswich community. The Cityhope Church, under his leadership, has played a tremendous role following many disasters—particularly the 2011 floods, with an evacuation and recovery centre located at the church. Each year the church hosts the 'Day of Honour' service, acknowledging and thanking local emergency service workers, politicians and others who serve the community.

Mark's achievements would not be possible without the support, love and strength of his wonderful wife, Gail, and their four children. His anniversary is their anniversary and it is their achievement together. I am proud to call Mark a friend and value his wisdom, pastoral care and regular visits to Canberra.

Last week I had the honour of participating in the 30th birthday of the Leichhardt One Mile Community Centre in my electorate. I was honoured to participate in the official ceremonies and held a mobile office at the centre's celebratory fair. The centre is operated by the Leichhardt Community Group Incorporated, which began operating in 1984 to provide assistance to the wives and families of RAAF personnel living in Leichhardt. It soon expanded to include all members of the local community in and around Leichhardt, One Mile and Wulkuraka.

My uncle Merv Neumann is the president of the Leichhardt Community Group and has been a driving force in ensuring ongoing funding and support. He was instrumental in establishing the men's shed that operates at the community centre. I want to acknowledge the work of the centre's coordinator, Kym Tuuta, along with the community development worker, Alana Wahl, and early connections worker, Ainsley Walker. Together with their incredible volunteers, they ensure the centre provides a wonderful range of support and welfare services to this part of the Ipswich community.

One such volunteer is an Indigenous woman and elder Aunty Vera Short, who is a friend of mine. She is passionate about connecting young Indigenous people with the community. Over the last 30 years the centre has changed and evolved with the local residents. Today, the Leichhardt One Mile Community Centre provides everything and anything the community needs. It is a place where people come for a coffee, to participate in the community garden, to connect with others around them and also to help each other out. It is something for everyone—expectant mothers, babies, children and teens throughout their lives, right through into seniors programs. Congratulations on 30 years of wonderful service and on the role the centre plays in making Ipswich a vibrant, warm and loving community.

**Edith Cowan University**

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (16:45): The coalition government is committed to investing in Australia's critical research infrastructure with reforms to research funding to promote improved collaboration between researchers, industry and businesses, with the objective of facilitating the commercialisation of intellectual property. Accordingly, I wish to report on the success of the Collaborative Research Network in promoting research excellence at Edith Cowan University in my electorate. The project represents a $17.8 million investment, which includes $5.6 million in funding from the Commonwealth between 2011
and 2016 through the Department of Education and Training's Collaborative Research Networks scheme, along with contributions from 10 partner universities.

Researchers at Edith Cowan University have enhanced the quality of their research programs and expanded the scope of their research activities and outputs through a more collaborative approach. At the same time the university adapted its research support services and processes to conduct research beyond the university's physical boundaries. As a result, ECU will be better placed to deliver on Australian research and innovation priorities. I commend the outstanding entrepreneurial leadership and vision of Vice-Chancellor Professor Steve Chapman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor John Finlay-Jones, Office of Research and Innovation Director Professor Margaret Jones and Innovation Development Adviser Neil Butler for their willingness to engage with industry and external stakeholders. It is refreshing that these educational leaders recognise that research does not exist in a vacuum and appreciate the value of applied research within the Australian economy.

Industry engagement has been a defining characteristic of the ethos at ECU, with members of the collaboration and innovation team linking industry with the university. This facilitates access by industry to end-user-driven research programs and intellectual property. Partnerships are developed with industry and government. Six recent research project success stories highlight the range of endeavours in which the university is currently involved: the promotion of mental health and wellbeing in young people, led by Professor Donna Cross; exercise medicine for the prevention and management of chronic disease, led by Professor Rob Newton; integrated health services to enhance community based healthcare, led by Professor Cobie Rudd; the Electron Science Research Institute, led by Professor Kamal Alameh, which studies nanophotonics and nanoelectronics to support national frontier technologies; research into the protection of coastal ecosystems and marine resource management, led by Professor Paul Lavery; and research into advanced technologies for leading teaching and education practice, led by Professor Mark Hackling.

ECU has created a virtual innovation precinct, named THE LINK, in collaboration with the City of Joondalup. The main objective of THE LINK is to act as a catalyst to connect business and academic researchers to develop new innovative ways to solve problems and foster growth, commercialisation and competitiveness to benefit the wider community. The collaboration and innovation team, in partnership with the ECU Office of Legal Services, are available to guide industry partners through the process of identifying and licensing university intellectual property which could benefit business. Dedicated research programs can, in most cases, be developed to suit the needs of the respective industry or business partner and contribute to collaborative success.

In summary, Edith Cowan University has continued to build on its organisational research capacity through the Collaborative Research Network project, as a result of many successful industry partnerships. The future focus is to ensure that the lessons learned and the benefits from collaboration continue to enhance all research areas by encouraging more active research, the development of new collaborations, contributions to publications, and also the preparation and submission of new research grant applications.

**Mental Health**

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (16:50): I want to take the opportunity, as this sitting week comes to an end, to reflect on some of the important conversations and events that occurred as
we went through Mental Health Week this week. Many of us in here are aware that we 
commenced with World Mental Health Day, on Monday, and many of us started wearing our 
badges. I participated in the campaign to make a personal pledge on mental wellbeing, as I 
know many of my colleagues did. I was pleased to sign that campaign website and make my 
personal pledge, which was to give back to my local community through something both fun 
and meaningful. There was a great range of options for people to consider signing up to. That 
is still operating, and I would encourage people who are interested in supporting it to go onto 
the website, make their own pledge and be part of a very important initiative.

I have to say, there has been much discussion—I have participated in the appropriation 
debate today—reflecting on the period of the election campaign and what has happened since. 
But there is one image that has stuck in my mind particularly from the period of the election 
campaign, and that was when our leader, Bill Shorten, was at the Sky News People’s Forum in 
Brisbane. He was asked a question about suicide, and he asked members of the audience to 
put their hands up if they knew someone who had attempted to take their own life. To be 
honest, I was quite shocked by the number of people in that room—from a random group of 
people brought together with nothing to do specifically with mental health—who had known 
a friend or family member who had been touched by this terrible circumstance. It is good that 
the profile of this issue is being raised, and I know colleagues from all around this chamber 
have been very active in their own electorates in talking about raising suicide awareness and 
how we can as individuals, families and communities help to eliminate suicide.

Part of the reason that I am very conscious of the suicide campaign issues in my own 
electorate is the work of my own headspace organisation. Tuesday was National headspace 
Day as part of Mental Health Week. I hardly feel I need to make any explanation in this place 
about the work of headspace, because it is so well known, well regarded and supported across 
all parties. I was pleased in May 2008 to attend the commencement of our own local 
headspace service. They have provided an excellent and very important service to our 
community in the years since then. On Tuesday I put a post up about National headspace Day 
and a photo from 2008. One young local woman commented on my post, and I think it 
captures why they are such a significant service. She said:

I wouldn't be where I am today if this amazing group of people didn't help me to see the light at the end 
of a very dark tunnel!! Can't speak more highly about an organisation who is truly there to support 
young people going through a tough time in their own heads!!

I think that beautifully captures the important work of headspace.

Today, headspace held a local Walk of Pride. Our local candidate for the Wollongong by-
election, Paul Scully, was there. I would definitely have been there if we were not in this 
place. This evening they are having a Living Book session about mental health at the 
Wollongong Library. Importantly, carers and ARAFMI Illawarra are involved in those 
activities as well. About a month ago—in fact, the evening before World Suicide Prevention 
Day—I joined the local headspace and Lifeline supporters at the Wollongong Lighthouse for 
their Out of the Shadows and into the Light Walk. There were about 120 people there on a 
very cold and windy evening. I think it showed the great support there is in our communities 
to arrest these issues.

Finally, I want to acknowledge a local journalist, Angela Thompson, from the Illawarra 
Mercury, who did a very important article about a local organisation that has been formed to
take a collaborative approach to suicide prevention in our region as we are increasingly aware of what a devastating effect it is having on individuals and families across our communities.

Cybersecurity

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (16:55): Cyber attacks are a clear and present danger to this government and this nation. Australia has not yet suffered a cyber attack yet the threat to the Australian government, infrastructure and industry remains. In the last 18 months, the Australian Signals Directorate responded to over 1,000 serious cybersecurity incidents on government systems. Last year, the Computer Emergency Response Team Australia responded to over 14,000 cybersecurity incidents affecting Australian business. Of that number, 418 involved systems directly affecting our national interest and critical infrastructure.

This is a new battleground on which Australia's interests and security will be contested. One hundred years ago, our ANZAC forbears could not have imagined the complexity of the new challenges we face. The role of this government is to provide the Australian people both national and economic security. Cyber attacks pose a threat to both of those domains. It is therefore timely that the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber-Security is providing leadership in this vital area. This is a serious government, led by the Prime Minister, that focuses on the real challenges facing this nation.

The Australian government defines a cyber attack as a deliberate act through cyberspace to manipulate, disrupt, deny, degrade or destroy computers or networks, or the information resident on them, with the effect of seriously compromising national security or economic security. The aim of cyber attacks is to leverage a decisive advantage against Australia in both peace and war. That advantage might be military, economic or political. Key targets are critical infrastructure that provide essential services like energy, communications, public health, banking and finance. These are all increasingly vulnerable to attack. As an example of the sort of chaos that could be wrought by an attack, just look at South Australia two weeks ago when they were denied their energy supply. Imagine if someone could hack into the grid and shut down our energy supply.

Our government agencies—defence and intelligence—are prime targets. And, dare I say it, this House and the MPs and senators who occupy it are also targets. ASD has previously assessed that cyber attacks against Australia would most likely occur against such targets during periods high tension, with the object of escalating conflict. But we are now seeing an increasing trend of cyber incidents against our national interest any other day of the week. Of the 14,000 cybersecurity incidents last year against Australian systems of national interest and critical infrastructure, most were concentrated on economic targets. The energy and communications sectors experienced the highest number of compromised systems, the banking and financial services and communications sectors had the highest incidence of denial of service activity, and the energy and mining resources sectors received the highest number of malicious emails. Corporate Australia is a highly valuable target to those who would do Australia harm. This poses a significant economic risk to Australia, to our prosperity and to our confidence as we deal in a global market. Lost productivity and income and the costs of dealing with these incidents are no small thing. The theft of intellectual property from Australian companies poses a challenge for the future competitiveness of Australia's economy.
Who are carrying out these attacks? The capacity of terrorist organisations to carry out such attacks is limited. While their use of social media is prolific, their cyber capability remains limited. Most cybercrime targeting Australia originates overseas, and state based actors represent a clear and growing threat—state actors that seek a decisive edge in trade, defence, foreign policy and investment.

I am proud to be a member of a government that takes this issue seriously. Under the able direction of the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security, we are implementing a comprehensive cybersecurity strategy. This government is working with industry to promote and implement best practice in cybersecurity, including voluntary check-ups for ASX 100 listed business. We are improving the resilience of Australia's networks and systems, making them harder to attack and compromise. We are working with international partners to address cybersecurity threats and promote a cyberspace in which states abide by international law. More than $230 million has been committed by the Turnbull government to roll out our cybersecurity strategy.

We live in a complex world with constantly evolving threats to our national and economic security. Cyber is the new battleground. The Turnbull government is delivering on its commitment to safeguard the Australian national interest.

The SPEAKER: It being 5pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 17:00

NOTICES

The following notice was given:

Mr Wilkie to move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges the:

(a) high level of concern in the community, especially in recent years, about the generosity and leniency of the current parliamentary entitlements framework; and

(b) fact that current parliamentary entitlements are out of line with community expectations;

(2) notes that the Government-commissioned report on the review of an independent parliamentary entitlements system (Mr John Conde AO and Mr David Tune AO PSM, An Independent Parliamentary Entitlements System), was delivered to the Government in February 2016, but so far there has been little progress on implementing its recommendations;

(3) acknowledges that there is a need for a much deeper overhaul of the parliamentary entitlements system, including:

(a) an audit of all Members' and Senators' travel claims during this and the previous Parliament;

(b) real-time online reporting of entitlement expenses and the requirement for more detail of the substantive reason for the expenditure; and

(c) provisions to refer misuse which forms a pattern of misbehaviour to the Australian Federal Police; and

(4) calls on the Government to commit to meaningful reform of the parliamentary entitlements framework that would put it in line with community expectations.
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Blair Electorate: National Police Remembrance Day 2016

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (10:05): I rise today to remember and honour those police men and women in Queensland who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. I recognise the commitment, dedication and bravery of all past, present and future police officers in the state of Queensland. On the 2016 National Police Remembrance Day, police officers and their families, friends and representatives of the wider Blair community marched to Browns Park in North Ipswich for a service to honour those police men and women who had been killed in the line of duty, along with those who have died as a result of injuries sustained in the line of duty.

The concept of National Police Remembrance Day came from John 'Bluey' O'Gorman. The idea occurred to him in 1986, when, as the Vice President of the Queensland Police Union, he was travelling to Adelaide to attend the annual conference of the Police Federation of Australia and New Zealand. As he drove through western New South Wales, he cast his mind back to try to remember the name of a police officer who had been killed on duty several years earlier. He could not remember, much to his disappointment. So, concerned about the memory lapse, he was determined to do something about it. He spoke to Queensland Police Union President Col Chant and together they spoke with other fellow conference delegates. That is why we have National Police Remembrance Day, and I want to pay tribute to John 'Bluey' O'Gorman for the work he did.

One hundred and forty three Queensland police officers have lost their lives since the Queensland Police Service was founded in 1864. Thankfully, no officers have lost their lives in the line of duty in the Ipswich region in the past 12 months. At the service at North Ipswich we paid tribute to Senior Constable Peter McDougall, who passed away in August 2016 as a result of natural causes. This year, following an historical review, three Queenslanders were added to the National Police Memorial's Honour Roll and their lives and service were commemorated: Sergeant Thomas Heaney, who died in September 1906 in South Brisbane from assault injuries he sustained while attempting to arrest two break and enter offenders in 1905; Constable Benjamin Ebbitt, who died in 1984 in Highgate Hill from assault injuries sustained during an attempted arrest of two offenders four years earlier; and Senior Constable Henry Fetherston, who died from a horseriding accident in Maryborough.

I thank Superintendent Charysse Pond, who oversees the Ipswich District. I will finish on these words said in a prayer by Police Chaplain Brian Hoole at the local commemorative service:

We know that the greatest ingratitude of a nation is to neglect the price that is paid to maintain its freedom. So we declare today, we will not be a community that neglects the price that has been paid to uphold our freedom.

Thank you to the Queensland Police Service and particularly those men and women who bravely serve in Queensland Police Service in the Ipswich region.
Higgins Electorate: Sky Rail

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Revenue and Financial Services) (10:08): I rise today to address state Labor's sky rail project. Some freedom of information requests I have made have been very revealing. Two of these requests have demonstrated a concerning level of secrecy within the Level Crossing Removal Authority as it surges forward with Labor's sky rail. The Level Crossing Removal Authority has so far exceeded the 45-day statutory response time frame by more than three weeks. The requests relate to the Community Tender Advisory Panel, a panel that the government set up to provide community consultation. The residents of Carnegie, Murrumbeena and Hughesdale have the right to know what advice, if any, was provided before Labor announced sky rail. It is simply not good enough to leave the community in the dark. This information must be made public, and if it is not then what are they trying to hide? Another FOI request has revealed that Premier Daniel Andrews failed to take any advice from the panel before his announcement. These revelations confirm that the community was missing from the supposed community consultation process.

I recently had the opportunity to visit Murrumbeena Primary School. The students cheered when I said that I was against Labor's sky rail proposal but that I was for putting rail under road. One student asked what #wheresdimo means. Missing posters have appeared across Higgins showing the hashtag with a photo of the member for Oakleigh, Steve Dimopoulos. Mr Dimopoulos has gone to ground, hoping to ride out this saga. Premier Andrews and Minister Jacinta Allan are also in hiding. I invited Minister Allan to visit our community over six months ago. She has yet to take up my offer, despite repeated requests. I again call on her to visit to hear directly from our community and to reverse state Labor's very damaging decision.

Because the Glen Eira council have not taken any action, the community has now launched a legal challenge to sky rail. I want to acknowledge the work that is being done by some incredibly passionate people, including Lower Our Tracks group. They are fighting for their homes, for their community and for the generations that will follow. They include Dianne Hunt, Karlee and Mark Browning, Michelle Letho, Tracey Bigg, Darren Brittain, Rob Leigh, Catherine Pendelich, Nina Lucas, Ruth Williams, Ed Meysztowicz, Manny Markogiannakis, Tim Snowden and many others. Our community is capable of achieving great things by working together. It is capable of delivering great infrastructure projects by working together and properly consulting with the community. I will continue to work with my local community to make sure that the infrastructure projects that are delivered in our part of Victoria are going to serve not only my local community but Victoria as a whole.

The Labor government need to examine the decision that they have taken. They must remove level crossings, but it must be done the right way.

Conroy, The Hon. Stephen

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (10:11): I rise today to put on the record and pay tribute to the work of Stephen Conroy as he leaves the other place and goes on a new journey. Lots of things are said about my friend Stephen Conroy and lots of things have been said in the media over many years. But in my parliamentary life Stephen has been an extraordinary friend. He has shown extraordinary loyalty to his country across his 20 years of service as a senator in the federal parliament. That service has been extraordinary. He is reputed and...
renowned for his committee work, for his estimates work and for the load he carried in both government and opposition for the Labor Party in the Senate.

He was Deputy Leader of the Senate in government and in opposition, he was a minister in both the Rudd and Gillard governments and he spent many years ensuring and fighting for fairness. His support for people like myself and the member for Gellibrand cannot be overestimated. On joining the parliament three years ago after the 2013 election and knowing that I was getting on a plane to enter a world that I knew very little about—having never operated here as a staffer—and getting texts from Stephen regularly across that weekend and first day, he was the best friend I could have. He was texting with a cheery 'hello', and at the end of the first trip he met the aeroplane to say: 'Okay—I've got a car. Let's go!' These were small things, but they meant the world to me on that incredibly important day. And across the three years his support has been enormous. There was never a question that was too small or too silly for Stephen to take seriously and give a considered response to, and there was never a time when you needed advice that he did not make himself available to give you his guidance. I would also like to comment on Stephen's loyalty over many years towards many people in this place. 'Loyalty' is the word I think of when I think of Stephen—his generosity of spirit and his generosity in giving his time to ensure that my colleagues here got the kind of support they needed.

There are lots of other things about the senator that probably should be noted. I know the member for Gellibrand will probably reference—(Time expired)

**Robson, Ms Sandy**

**Mr ENTSCH** (Leichhardt) (10:14): As the month of October draws closer to an end, so does the monumental journey of a Western Australian woman, Sandy Robson. Around the 23rd of this month Sandy will end an epic sea-kayaking expedition from Germany to Australia when she lands on Saibai Island, the northernmost point in my electorate of Leichhardt. Following the same journey that 25-year-old German Oskar Speck began in 1932, Sandy launched into the Danube River on 14 May 2011 and has been making her way back to Australia every day since—a 23,000-kilometre journey. In the final leg, she is expected to leave Daru in Papua New Guinea on 18 October. Three hundred kilometres lie between her and her home soil. Along the way, Sandy has overcome great hurdles with physical and mental endurance in the company of local paddlers who have joined her for parts of the journey. She has received well-deserved recognition, including a 2014 world record for being the first person to circumnavigate Sri Lanka in a kayak.

When Oscar Speck departed in 1932, he only intended to make it as far as Cyprus to find work, but decided to continue to Australia. It took him seven years and three kayaks, and he landed in Australian waters just in time to be interred due to the start of World War II. Despite this, his fearless and pioneering spirit was embraced by 1930s Australia and his achievement is celebrated by the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney.

Conflict has also impacted Sandy's route, with some sections of Speck's original itinerary, including Syria and Iran, removed due to safety concerns. Sandy's journey has mobilised a shared admiration for her efforts, and her arrival in Saibai is keenly awaited by supporters who have helped her plan and complete the journey. One such supporter is Tim Trehearn. He contacted my office seeking help to connect Sandy with Torres Strait Border Force personnel, who will be required to clear her entrance into Australia. I have been in touch with Border
Force and am hoping they will be able to time their regular patrol to Saibai on the day of her arrival and waive some of the processing fees.

Sandy describes Oscar Speck's journey as one of the most amazing kayak journeys of all time. Well, Sandy, your expedition has certainly sparked a similar admiration from me. I look forward to welcoming you to Leichhardt and back onto Australian soil, and being able to congratulate you on what has been nothing short of an amazing feat.

Conroy, The Hon. Stephen

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (10:17): I want to use this constituency statement to recognise the extraordinary career of one of my constituents and friends, Stephen Conroy. Stephen has been one of the biggest figures on the Australian political stage over the past 20 years. It is a very small group of people indeed who could say they have done more to shape Australian politics since he entered the Senate in 1996. He made an extraordinary contribution, both to the direction of the Australian Labor Party and to our nation.

Stephen was a prodigious political talent. It has been lost to the shadows of Stephen's parliamentary career, but he came to the Senate by the most retail of Australian politics—Footscray local government. I can say from firsthand experience that he never lost those retail political skills honed on the doorsteps of West Footscray, and I was proud to be able to campaign with him by my side in my community in Melbourne's west during my first election campaign in 2013. As a result of this retail touch, there is nobody that I know who gets the nub of the politics of an issue more quickly than Stephen. I will greatly miss his political judgement in this place.

Stephen was famously labelled 'a factional dalek' by a former colleague some years ago, a pejorative that Stephen, a massive Dr Who fan, embraced and appropriated. But this label did an enormous injustice to Stephen's work in this building. Stephen's biggest fights in politics were not about preselections, they were about policy—fights on PPPs, on nuclear power, on the NBN, on internet governance and, more recently, over China and electoral reform. They were fights with colleagues in the Labor Party, fights with the opposite side of politics, fights with powerful interests in Australian life outside of the parliament, but always substantive policy fights about the direction of our country. I am proud to say that I stood behind Stephen during some of these fights and there is no-one in the world that I would rather be in the trenches with. I had the misfortune of being on the opposite side to Stephen in a small number of these instances and those occasions were far less enjoyable or successful!

Stephen knew his trade in this place well. He was a master of the Senate, constantly and gleefully setting and pulling procedural snares for his opponents. He had a habit of making something from nothing for his cause by knowing the business of the Senate far better than anyone around him. One of his greatest contributions came through the unseen work of this place: the crucial accountability mechanisms of the Senate committees and the Senate estimates process. Public servants with something to hide will be relieved to see the back of him. Stephen was known for his ferocious loyalty to his staff, a diverse crew who all share a reciprocal loyalty for the man that they served to this day.

I cannot let this occasion pass without noting that Stephen had the most appalling judgement of sports teams as any member of parliament who has ever served in either of the houses of this parliament. Surely he is the only member who supported Collingwood, Chelsea
and the English cricket team!—though I do note that the parliamentary soccer team was well served by him and they have lost their latest game in his absence this week.

I have seen firsthand how dedicated Stephen is to his family. All of us make sacrifices to do the work we do here, but for Stephen these sacrifices were all the greater given the challenges he had to overcome to build the beautiful family that he has today. While we are all very sad to lose Stephen from this place, I know that Bella and Paula's happiness will be ever the greater.

**Gone Fishing Day**

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (10:20): Do you love fishing? If so, Sunday is your special day. It is Australia's national Gone Fishing Day, the best reason yet to go for a fish. Even more importantly, this year Gone Fishing Day is coming to Busselton in my electorate. Not only has the WA Minister for Fisheries Joe Francis made it a licence-free day; he has also delayed the annual west coast bioregion demersal finfish closure for 48 hours. The Geographe Camping & Tackle World and the Naturaliste Game & Sport Fishing Club are busy planning and will run the event in Busselton. What they are really hoping is that people who have never fished before take up this opportunity to have a go, to experience just what it is like to catch a fish or two. They are running a fishing competition, and there will be plenty of prizes, so we are encouraging everyone to get along and have a go this Sunday. Otherwise, why not just get your family and friends together and simply go fishing? Some of my best memories as a child were holidays spent early morning beach fishing with my Little Jim fishing rod, catching sand whiting, or evenings spent fishing under the Mandurah bridge.

The national Gone Fishing Day initiative started with a conversation between fishing mates that has grown to become what is now a major national community event. Given that an estimated five million Australians are enjoying recreational fishing every year, there are now 100 registered Gone Fishing Day events across Australia. Busselton is just one of them. There will be a range of events to choose from: kids and family fishing events, fishing events for the disabled, events for those with mental illness and those recovering from trauma, events cleaning up our waterways and improving habitat for fishing, and fishing tournaments for the most experienced anglers. Have a look on their website for an event near you.

And there will be thousands of other Australians who simply use Sunday as just another day to go fishing with family and friends just because they love fishing and it is a great day out.

I note that there will be a fun fish-off between federal fisheries minister Anne Ruston and New South Wales state fishery minister Niall Blair.

There is something uniquely and inherently Australian about going fishing. As a nation surrounded by water, it is part of our way of life. Can you remember how excited you were the first time you caught a fish? Have you been on the beach and heard the excitement of other young kids when they catch their first fish? It is just an extraordinary experience. I know many people in my own communities in my electorate go fishing because it actually makes them feel good. They relax. The peace and what it brings to their life is extraordinary.
In Busselton the longest jetty in WA is an iconic fishing spot. It is great for every fisher. It does not really matter what age you are. That is where you could catch some squid or some King George whiting and have a great day out. Go fishing this Sunday.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): I thank the member for Forrest. You're making me feel hungry!

Broadband

Mr HAMMOND (Perth) (10:23): On the topic of hunger: I am also very hungry but not for fish. I am hungry for a fast, decent and reliable national broadband network, which is yet to find its way over to the far-flung suburbs—or so it is according to those in this part of the world—of Perth in Western Australia. It is noteworthy that only a couple of weeks ago, on a cold winter's night—and, yes, they do happen in Perth from time to time—more than 120 locals from the suburbs of Noranda and Morley braved the cold to come out to the Morley Sport and Recreation Centre to hear the member for Greenway, the shadow minister for communications, Michelle Rowland; as well as Amber-Jade Sanderson, Labor's very hardworking candidate for the state seat of Morley; Alannah MacTiernan, former member for Perth and current candidate for the North Metropolitan region at the next state election; and me. We talked to residents and listened to their frustrations about the absence of any meaningful direction from this government in relation to a fundamental piece of infrastructure that they have failed dismally to deliver: the National Broadband Network.

Some examples from what the locals had to say in the course of that cold wintry night include: when local high school, Morley Senior High, is running its media class it has to shut down the internet connections everywhere else in the school, including the administration, so students can do what they need to do in the class, which goes directly to the issue of education; one resident with a son in year 11 complained that 30 minutes of homework takes him three hours because of his slow internet speed and the fact that communications keep dropping out; a senior who completely disconnected from the internet out of frustration; and a couple who refuse to do any online banking or online shopping lest they be disconnected in the middle of a transaction.

A retired telecommunications technical adviser explained that even when Mr Turnbull's fibre-to-the-node NBN is eventually rolled out, the poor condition of the ailing copper network will mean that those mentioned will still be on the wrong side of the digital divide. If we need any further evidence, it is in our rankings in the world internet speed. We are now at 56; we were at 30 and even New Zealand is ahead of us. So for all his big talk about being the inventor of the internet, Malcolm Turnbull, the Prime Minister, and the Liberal Party have let down the people of Perth, they have let down the people of Western Australia and they have let down Australian communities all over the country in an absence of action on the National Broadband Network.

Armenia

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (10:26): On 21 September this year, one of the world's newest and smallest nations celebrated its 25th year of independence. There are few nations that deserve to celebrate such an occasion more than Armenia. Armenia's capital is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world. It recently celebrated its 2,798th anniversary and Armenia was the first Christian kingdom in the world. However, independence did not
come easily. Armenians have been subject to genocide, and the first democratic republic of Armenia was formed in 1918 but lasted less than three years. Seventy years ago, the Red Army marched in and Armenia fell to communist rule. However, under Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika, Armenians were able to once again voice their desire for independence and freedom.

Finally, on 21 September 1991, the Republic of Armenia was established. Armenia was one of the first countries of the former Soviet Union to declare independence. As you would expect of a nation of people who fought so long for their independence, Armenia has made significant strides especially in technology, agriculture and the arts. Armenian's ecommerce activity is accelerating. The innovative start-up hub for technology and app development has been so successful that Armenians have their own version of the iPad and iPhone called the ArmPhone and ArmTab.

But Armenia's contribution has been far more global. Throughout the world, their diaspora make significant contributions including here in Australia. In this parliament, we are honoured to have the member for Goldstein as an embodiment of that outstanding contribution. On the northern beaches, the Armenian community established a college to promote and preserve their culture and indomitable spirit. Galstaun College was recently recognised by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority as having demonstrated substantially above-average gains in NAPLAN results. As Galstaun College's principal, Mr Edward Demirdjian, pointed out, the college was one of only six schools in the state to achieve significant gains. The core ideals of the college are empathy, understanding and respect. No doubt the importance of these ideals are born out of the trials and tribulations of the Armenians' long journey to independence. The college was living these ideals when it accepted 33 family sponsored children of Syrian refugees. The college provides ESL classes, books and uniforms without cost to the families of the children.

The Armenian community is rightly proud of its independence but should be even prouder of the contribution that its community provides all over the world in places like Galstaun College, which is setting an example for all of us to aspire to.

**Moreton Electorate**

**Mr PERRETT** (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (10:29): I rise to speak about a meeting I had on 7 October with Wendy Francis from the Australian Christian Lobby. This was not a meeting about the marriage equality plebiscite or anything like that. This was actually about something that Wendy and I agree on. We agree about billboards being G-rated; but this was another topic. I met with Wendy Francis, Ian, Lauren and Ann to discuss an application by the Acacia Ridge Hotel to turn that area into an adult entertainment area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not sure if you know the southern suburbs of Brisbane. This is a working-class suburb surrounded by an industrial area. It is the end of the standard gauge rail line and is a big shipping container distribution area. It is a good, strong working-class suburb. The Acacia Ridge Hotel is a fine hotel. I have been there, I have had functions there and I have had a few drinks in the bar there over many years. My grandad used to drink there. Its attempt to change this area is an attack on the community. I will back Ian, Lauren and Ann as much as I can to make sure this does not happen. I know there is an entertainment precinct in the middle of The Valley in the city. That is fine. I understand that. But putting an
entertainment precinct here would completely change the character of this area and have an impact on families.

We took our concerns to Acting Senior Sergeant Murray Crone, the officer in command at the Acacia Ridge police station, and he listened to us. There is still a process going on where the state government has a say when it comes to the entertainment licence. We have already had the Brisbane City Council sign off in terms of the planning, saying it could take place. I am disappointed that took place. I know that Councillor Steve Griffiths spoke up and said it did not suit the area and that it would be a complete departure from what goes on in the suburbs of Brisbane. It would be like moving Kings Cross, or a similar entertainment area, to the suburbs of Sydney. I would hope that there would never be a need for such entertainment; but I understand it does take place.

I am giving my word to Wendy Francis and to the other residents of Moreton that I will do what I can to make sure that the voices of the good families and people who go about their business. We have day care centres. We have a Police-Citizens Youth Club across the road. This is a family area. Admittedly, it is also an industrial area, but the residents of Acacia Ridge and my family—my grandad has been there since World War II, since he worked with the Yanks when it was an airport as part of the defence of Australia. We will do what we can to make sure Acacia Ridge stays safe.

Sydney Taiwan Festival

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Urban Infrastructure) (10:32): Recently, I had the great pleasure to be at the opening of the Sydney Taiwan Festival. This is the fifth Sydney Taiwan Festival to have been held. It was held in Victoria Avenue in Chatswood, which is at the southern end of my electorate and at the northern end of the electorate of my very good friend the member for North Sydney. In fact, both the member for North Sydney and I were present at this very important event.

The Taiwanese Australian community is a significant community around Australia and, indeed, within my electorate of Bradfield. As at the time of the most recent census, there were over 28,000 people born in Taiwan living in Australia. They are preponderantly to be found in Sydney and in Brisbane. Interestingly, almost half of those in Australia who were born in Taiwan have arrived in Australia in the last 10 years. The richness and vigour of Taiwanese community activity is really quite impressive, particularly when you consider the proportion of those who have arrived in the last 10 years.

The Sydney Taiwan Festival, held in Chatswood, featured more than 30 stalls. There were traditional Taiwanese food stalls in a night-market-style setting. There was a range of craft and cultural exhibits and there were popular children's folk games to introduce young people to Taiwanese culture. The event was well supported by local dignitaries. I want to commend Mr James Kuo, the chairman of the Taiwan Festival; Mr Chang Liang Ming, Chief Secretary Overseas Community Affairs Council, from Taiwan; Mr Morgan Chiang, Deputy Director General of the Taipei Economic and Culture Office Sydney; and also Mr Paul Lin.

The purpose of this very important festival is to give people of Taiwanese origin living in Sydney the chance to connect—or reconnect—with their culture, to allow the next generation of Taiwanese Australians a better understanding of their culture and heritage, and also very importantly, to showcase to the broader Australian community the contribution being made
by those of Taiwanese background. The vigour of the cultural activities, the quality of some of the delicious food on offer, and many other features of this event very successfully achieved the objective of communicating to the broader Australian community the vigour of the Taiwanese Australian community. So let me express my thanks to everybody involved in organising this very significant event, the fifth Sydney Taiwan Festival. I was pleased to participate and I hope that I will have the opportunity to participate in future such events.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: In accordance with standing orders, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

BILLS

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017
Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2016-2017
Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017

Second Reading

Cognate debate.
Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (10:36): Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment.

I speak on the budget appropriation bills, and this is a very good time for me to talk as this is the eighth anniversary of Wayne Swan's stimulus package, which prevented Australia from entering the global financial crisis. This is my first contribution to the work of the Federation Chamber and I am grateful for the chance to say a few words on these very important bills. In keeping with what I understand to be conventional practice, my remarks today are intended to encourage and persuade, rather than confront. If that means that, at times, I am a bit off message, I can only apologise to my colleagues in advance and say that I am sure it has something to do with the proximity of this chamber to the Senate and with the spirit of the late John Button, an icon to me and one of the Hawke government's sharpest ministers, but one that, even as government Senate leader, could not help publicly testing ideas that others occasionally wished he had stuck in the bottom drawer.

The labour force statistics for September 2016 are due out next Thursday, so now is as good a time as any in the context of these budget bills to have a look at how the Australian job market is travelling and see if we might do better than present trends suggest. I am old enough to remember the 1960s, when an unemployment rate above two per cent was nearly enough to get a well-entrenched federal government unelected. I am also old enough to recall that, more than once in the last 40 years, unemployment has been a major blight on our country. In some ways, and for many people, it still is. From experience, we know that when the unemployment rate climbs, it climbs steeply, and when unemployment falls, it does so slowly. It can take anything from five to 10 years to make up for the jobs and jobs growth lost in six to 12 months of downturn and recession. We can easily forget how a recession plays out. Many older workers are retrenched, never to find employment again. That is what we are seeing now. Those trying to enter the job market find it incredibly hard to gain a foothold or

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permanent employment. Savings soon disappear, and families and individual lives are destroyed.

That is why we should be grateful to those, such as Wayne Swan and the Labor Party, who piloted our economy through the global financial crisis and left us with a job market that was the envy of the OECD. That is also why we should be none too comfortable about living with an unemployment rate that has edged close to the wrong side of the OECD jobs ledger. Australia's unemployment rate has been pretty much stuck at around 5.5 per cent to 6.1 per cent since February 2013. According to Treasury's budget and pre-election forecasts and projections, that rate is likely to persist until 2019-2020. That is if everything goes reasonably well and economic growth continues uninterrupted at a solid but uninspiring rate of between 2.5 and three per cent. What that means is that, even if 25 years of uninterrupted economic growth stretches out to 28 or 29 years, we will still have close to a million Australians who want work in 2020 and cannot find it, and that is a tragedy. That is an unemployment rate three to four times higher than back in the era of fixed exchange rates, of centralised wage fixing, of higher tariffs and pre financial market deregulation.

It is not that we should return to a time when dinosaurs, John McEwen's Country Party and unabashed protectionists, last roamed the earth. Far from it. Beggar-my-neighbour trade policies and protection all around might make for a simpler world, but it would be a far poorer world too. However, we are overdue for a frank re-evaluation of our economic thinking and priorities. As with many Western economies, 'business as usual' looks a poor option for ensuring a better and more secure life for all Australians. We need to identify policies which, at the very least, will better cushion Australian families, however defined, from the next economic shock when it comes.

An unemployment rate mired at around 5.5 per cent or higher comes at a significant social as well as economic cost and is bad for the budget bottom line. Unemployment strikes at the heart of social justice and social cohesion. Invariably it falls most heavily on the poor and the weak. It represents waste in every sense of the word—wasted opportunities, dashed hopes and, too often, lives scarred by chronic ill health and tragically cut short.

As a doctor working for over 30 years in Sydney's south-west, I saw almost every day the misfortune and misery that had its root cause in unemployment. So when I say that I think we need to be more honest with ourselves when pondering the failings or shortcomings of economic and employment policies, I am saying that we need to think beyond the headline monthly figures and challenge policymakers to, at the very least, keep their eye on the ball. We must also not pretend that the unemployment problem is either too hard or too elusive to solve. It might constitute a good start if government were not quite so self-congratulatory whenever the number of Australians in work rises. Yes, that is a good thing but, no, it is not necessarily cause for breaking out the champagne.

For unemployment rates to fall, the number of new jobs must at least match population and productivity growth. But history tells us that employment levels may rise even if unemployment is rising too. Jobs growth of a few per cent a year is situation normal; it is not situation spectacular. Let's also not be overly confident that, when national growth rates pick up, all boats will rise on the tide. They might, but it is not always the case that everyone finds a job when times improve. Good macro-economic policy and a strong economy will not
magically return us all to full employment, even if it is the best way of getting us most of the way there, and monetary policy alone will not do the trick either.

I note the Treasurer’s recent comments regarding the diminished effectiveness of monetary policy, which pretty much bring him and the government into line with what the Reserve Bank and many others have been saying for some time. It is pleasing to see him on board. The question that he has yet to answer, though—the really hard question for whoever holds the economic levers—is: if the limits of monetary policy are exhausted, what are our remaining options? And for those who might think that that is an argument for a dose of budgetary austerity, think again. Better still, just have a quick read of any of the statements and speeches made by Reserve Bank governors in recent times. There is no support whatsoever for another round of budget tightening or fiscal self-mutilation.

The first step to better labour market policy is to try to better understand what the headline rate of unemployment actually signifies. Is 5.5 per cent good, bad or indifferent? Stripped of its context, 5.5 per cent of anything is just a number.

I have already touched on the history, so now I will turn to how we have been doing against those economies we usually like to compare ourselves with. How well is our labour market positioned in comparison to those countries to withstand the next economic shock? Unfortunately, the answer is: not as well as we once were. Australia is now squarely in that block of advanced economies whose employment rate has either flatlined or deteriorated since the GFC. Immediately post 2009, Australia was ahead of the game. Now, though, most of the countries we like to compare ourselves to—the US and the UK in particular—have not just caught up, they have zoomed by.

Our relative position against the majority of OECD countries has deteriorated in the last three years, and that is despite our falling dollar and record low interest rates. The unemployment rate here has been barely treading water since 2013. At 5.6 per cent, Australia had the eighth lowest unemployment rate of the 34 OECD countries in 2009. Now, in 2015, at 6.1 per cent, it has only the 13th lowest unemployment rate. Australia is one of the 14 OECD countries that recorded a rise in their unemployment between 2009 and 2015—19 OECD countries recorded falls in unemployment. From 2009 till late 2015 the US unemployment rate fell from nine per cent to about five per cent and, in the UK, from 7.6 per cent to 4.9 per cent. I am not the only one to notice this—many economic commentators have already noticed it.

The picture is no rosier if you drill down to the headline rates of unemployment and look at Australia's performance in four critical measures—underemployment, long-term employment, youth unemployment and labour force participation, and employment and training to population ratios. Youth unemployment currently stands at around 13 per cent, which is shocking. Similarly, for the 20- to 24-year-old cohort, the proportion in work or training has continued to decline since 2008. Our long-term unemployment figures are also terrible. By July 2016 about 22 per cent of those unemployed were classified as long-term jobless. These are very depressing figures, because those remaining out of work for periods of 12 months or more have a very high propensity to suffer scarring and psychological and physiological damage. They are also subject to statistical discrimination from potential employers—for example, they cannot get a job not because they are unemployable but because they are unemployed.
In underemployment we are also doing badly. Both labour underutilisation and underemployment rates are two to 2½ points higher now than they were in 2012. A higher proportion of the workforce wants more hours than employers can give them. The proportion of persons in paid employment has also deteriorated and is now lower than before the GFC and lower than three years ago. It is also much harder to find a job. Recently published National Institute of Labour Studies research shows that the transition from university to full-time employment is becoming more perilous. Between 2008 and 2014 the proportion of new university graduates in full-time employment six months after course completion had fallen from 89 per cent, which was reasonable, to now only 67 per cent. At the other end of the market, the prospects were even worse, with those who do not complete secondary education having far higher rates of unemployment.

This seems to be part of a wider picture and raises the prospect of a growing mismatch between job vacancies and persons with the right skill sets to fill them. In my own electorate of Macarthur the position is pretty much on a par with national trends, although our youth unemployment is a little higher. I see some aspects of this seemingly intransigent problem most days that I work in my practice, and it seems a lot, lot worse to me than any numbers can tell. I see people I have looked after since they were babies now as young adults being unable to find meaningful work, sometimes for years. That causes long-term social harm.

As I suggested in my opening remarks, I am not here to apportion blame. I am not trying to be uppity and pretend that I know it all or that I am an economist. What I want the government to do is have a fresh look at the jobs market and then ask itself whether it is sensible to simply continue along with its present policies. By that I do not mean embark on another campaign demonising the unemployed or trying to reintroduce Work Choices-type arrangements or harsher work tests via the back door. Australia does not have a problem with a lazy or ill-educated labour force, excessive wages growth or even a lack of workplace flexibility. You only need to look at the amount of unpaid overtime being worked to refute any of those myths.

To conclude, the core fact remains: on any number of labour market indicators we are not doing as well as we might. We could do a lot better. We are also doing a lot less well than we once were. We are performing poorly in comparison with many other OECD countries. On measures such as labour utilisation, youth unemployment, long-term unemployment, ease of transition from education to work and income growth we are highly exposed if the world economy stalls or domestic growth rates falter. It is all contributing, via lower economic activity and higher welfare payments, to a bigger budget deficit.

However, to end on something of a bipartisan note, one thing worth recalling is that change is possible and there is often plenty of credit to go around. Federal Treasurers from Keating and Costello to Swan—we could each anoint our own personal favourite—all improved the level of economic discourse in Australia. They took people with them or they tried to. They explained. Principally under Paul's Keating stewardship even the quality and readability of the budget papers improved. We went, as he called it, to a Rolls-Royce standard. Even busy doctors like me became semi-economic literates. It helped, too, that more and more Australians had a background in business, finance or economics, and that we had a crop of first-class popular—but not populist—economic commentators like Alan Kohler and that national treasure, Ross Gittins. Most significantly, the people stuck with it too. And that is in
no small measure because there was always a sense that the policymakers stayed true to the one principle. That principle was that, ultimately, jobs and the protection of people's welfare were what mattered most. Increased flexibility and economic reform, under Labor in particular, was about ensuring that there was always enough work to go around, even if the nature or the type of work changed very much over time. Neville Wran's famous words at the Hawke government's National Economic Summit still resonate with me: 'Economic policy is fundamentally about three things—jobs, jobs and jobs.' No government or opposition should forget that, and I am trusting—although some may think there has been the odd memory lapse or policy misfire along the way—that no-one has forgotten that.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (10:51): I rise to speak on the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017 and the related bills. Mr Deputy Speaker, the Grey electorate is a place I know you hold fondly in your heart, having grown up in the great small city of Port Augusta. To speak of that area, the whole of Australia knows that the South Australian economy is under siege—with the highest unemployment rate in the nation, the highest electricity prices, and business investment dragging along the bottom.

In Grey, one of our biggest employers, Arrium's Whyalla operation, is fighting for its survival. I am very pleased with the government's work in this area thus far: I would particularly like to thank the Prime Minister, and the Minister for Industry and Innovation, Greg Hunt, for their personal interest and involvement in providing support which on the one hand enhances Arrium's saleability yet on the other does not set up an endless stream of government subsidies—which almost always prove counterproductive in the end.

Australia is aware that steelmaking in Whyalla is facing an existential challenge. For those not familiar with the steel industry in Whyalla, it was originally developed on the back of Australia's first iron ore mine at nearby Iron Knob by BHP. In 1998, BHP spun off its steelmaking enterprises in Australia and the company Arrium was formed. Along with some east coast assets, including steelmaking and electric arc furnaces, rolling facilities, distribution and sales networks, the portfolio included the iron ore mines and tenements near Whyalla which, with the traditional coke-powered blast furnace, formed the integrated iron-steel production platform in Whyalla. Since that time, the fortunes of the integrated operation have waxed and waned. The highlight was the investment in Project Magnet in the early 2000s, when after the refurbishment of the blast furnace it was supplied with magnetite instead of hematite, thus freeing up the significant hematite supplies for direct export. The Whyalla port was redeveloped to facilitate barging of iron ore for loading onto Cape class vessels. This just preceded the peaking of the iron ore market, and its subsequent retreat. Arrium had borrowed hundreds of millions of dollars on developing the new Southern Iron operations some 400 kilometres away, and when iron ore fell below $50 a tonne they were forced to close that particular operation, costing the company in excess of $100 million for the shutdown procedure. The seeds of ruin were well and truly sown. These decisions coincided with longer-term underinvestment in the steel plant. Arrium reported in early April that the company was going into administration, and it was soon revealed that the company had accumulated debts in excess of $4 billion. Certainly, some parts of Arrium have more value than others; unfortunately, their assets based around Whyalla are at the wrong end of that spectrum. However, it is in Whyalla that any possible closure of capacity would have a disproportionate impact.
Whyalla was simply a supplier of iron ore to Newcastle until the 1940s, when a blast furnace was commissioned and the shipyard established in 1941. The Morgan-Whyalla pipeline was opened in 1943 and the town grew quickly through the fifties and sixties. Whyalla's population peaked in the 1970s at about 33,000 people. The shipyards were closed in 1978. The result was catastrophic for the city, and over the next 20 years the population shrank to 19,000. They were tough times indeed. During the early 2000s, the population recovered somewhat to about 23,000, on the back of the relining of the blast furnace, with Project Magnet, which I spoke about earlier, and the goods times in the resources sector resulting in a direct iron ore export port being developed in Whyalla and the development of the northern mines, which I mentioned earlier.

However, the tough times of the eighties and nineties pale into insignificance compared to the possible impact of the withdrawal of steelmaking and possibly the current mining operations today. The steelworks employs about 1,600 people directly, and the mining venture, which supplies about two million tonnes a year to the blast furnace and eight million tonnes a year for direct export, employs around 700. Given even a modest multiplier effect, it is not difficult to extrapolate that well in excess of 50 per cent of the Whyalla workforce depends on the survival of the integrated operation.

Consideration to Whyalla's isolation must also be given. Whyalla is not based in a thriving agricultural region. It is surrounded by good-quality outback grazing country, the type of country where a family might need a couple of station workers to operate a property bigger than the whole of the Adelaide metropolitan area. In most of the world, this land would be described as desert. Consequently, Whyalla is a custom-designed city built to service one industry. If there is no iron and steel industry in Whyalla, there is little reason for Whyalla to be there. The sad reality is that, should the iron-steel industry close, many of those who live there would lose their jobs, whether or not they be directly employed by the industry, supply industries or industries as diverse as education or retail. If they were at the stage of their lives where their biggest investment is their house, then as prices crash—and they have already fallen significantly—they are likely to feel as though they are marooned in the city.

However, federal government action on this very important issue is strong. In April, the Prime Minister came to Whyalla and announced the bringing forward of the re-railing of the Adelaide to Tarcoola line, operated by the government owned Australian Rail Track Corporation—1,200km of single rail and over 70,000 tonne. The order has been won by Arrium. As a sign that the government is focused on moving quickly, three weeks ago—in fact, it is probably five weeks ago—I witnessed the signing of an agreement and watched as the first of the rail moved out of the OneSteel-Arrium railway terminus in Whyalla. One of the chief drivers of profitability in the plant is achieved by maximising the throughput. Essentially, much of it has a high fixed cost and so throughput reduces costs.

The Turnbull government has also made significant moves in the area of antidumping, with more than 70 per cent of Arrium output now covered by some form of action. Last year, in the 44th Parliament, I led an inquiry into circumvention of antidumping rulings, and it is good to see the government's action since the delivery of that report. It is worth remembering that, like many other areas of government legislation, almost as soon as alterations are made, some of the smartest lawyers in the business are working out ways to avoid the intent of the legislation. However, this government is up to the task in this area and will continue to make
reforms. The government has also announced a huge investment in South Australian naval shipbuilding, and the $80 billion investment over the next 40 years will require huge amounts of steel. Initially, the first steps, which will be the huge expansion of the facilities at Osborne, will require thousands of tonnes of structural steel—just the kind that Whyalla makes. For those of you familiar with Adelaide Oval, the planned shed for submarine construction will be bigger and taller than that whole area.

The next step came in the commitment by the Turnbull government during the election period to provide a low-interest loan of $49.2 million to Arrium for the construction of a new beneficiation plant in the mines of the Middleback Ranges, close to Whyalla. This will lift profitability of the OneSteel Whyalla operation by $50 million per annum by allowing for stockpiles of lower grade ore to be brought up to export standard—a huge shot in the arm for the business. And it has not stopped there: during the election period we also committed to a $20 million innovation and investment package for the Upper Spencer Gulf, and I look forward to this fund coming on line, hopefully, around the end of the year. Additionally, Minister Hunt has provided a letter of comfort to possible purchasers of the Arrium business indicating the government is open to further support, particularly in helping establish cheaper clean energy options and ensuring that a foreign investment would receive support from the government. For its part, the state government has said it will provide a grant of up to $50 million for specific projects when the new buyer is identified. This, of course, cannot progress until we have reached the point where a buyer is identified, whereas the Commonwealth contributions are already having a very positive effect on the operations.

In another piece of excellent news, upon reconsideration, the workforce at the steelworks have agreed to a new EBA which includes a reduction of wages of 10 per cent. I commend the workers for this action. In effect, they have made a commitment—a contribution, if you like—not just for and from themselves but on behalf of the whole community, doing what they can to ensure that everyone in Whyalla keeps their jobs. It is not an easy thing to put your hand up for a wage decrease, and I know this has been a difficult time and I compliment them all for going back and reconsidering this issue. When the penny dropped that so many people around them—so many of their friends and families—relied on them to keep their jobs and keep this business open, that was probably the turning point in this decision. Now, in itself it is not enough to turn a plant that had been bleeding red ink into a highly profitable exercise, but, given the other savings that have already been made in Arrium's time and now by the administrator, KordaMentha, it is a significant contribution. In effect, everything that can be sensibly done to ensure Arrium's Whyalla operations find a new owner, one that can identify the opportunity this presents on many levels, is being done.

Unfortunately, in recent times it has not been all plain sailing, and the calamitous loss of power to the South Australian electricity grid on 28 September has caused tens of millions of dollars of losses to Arrium over the last two weeks. Power was restored fully yesterday, I think, and production is back in full swing. It is hard to see a silver lining in an event like this because this has caused significant damage to the company. In fact, those kinds of losses, for a company that is already struggling, are astronomical. As I said, it is difficult to see the silver lining in that event, but perhaps if there is one it is that it has focused the attention on the electricity grid in South Australia. This is an issue that I have been raising for some time. What happens if you lose your baseload capacity? Over a long period of time, the South
Australian government have pursued with some vigour the Commonwealth legislated subsidies that flow through from the renewable energy target. One could say that this is a very smart move by the South Australian government, and good on them, because they have got investment in South Australia on that basis, but during that time I have been warning that, if you are overly reliant on an intermittent source of electricity, you are likely to be setting yourself up for a nasty fall—and that, unfortunately, is exactly what has happened.

We have reached a point in South Australia where 41 per cent of our electricity is now delivered by the wind network. In fact, 50 per cent of Australia's wind generation is situated in South Australia and, of that 50 per cent, around 60 per cent, or 30 per cent of the Australiantotal, is within the electorate of Grey. That in itself is a good thing because we are all in favour of renewable energy, but unfortunately the channelling of the subsidies into the wind farm operations came to a point where it made the Alinta northern power station at Port Augusta unviable. They closed down in late April this year—it may have been early May. Since that time, the wholesale price of electricity in South Australia has more than doubled. This is a rolled-gold disaster, let me tell you. We could talk about the damage from the storms and the outage in South Australia, which, as I have said, has cost tens if not hundreds of millions of dollars. But the fact that we are now selling electricity that is twice as expensive as the rest of the Eastern States is a long-term issue for South Australia that will cost us very dearly.

To put this into context, if the price of wholesale power prior to April was, say, 5c a kilowatt hour and it is now 10c or 11c a kilowatt hour, it has effectively doubled and gone up by around 5c to 6c cents a kilowatt hour. For a household consumer that is on 30c a kilowatt hour already, it is not going to go up by a hundred per cent; it is going to rise by that 5c or 6c cents per kilowatt hour, which is around 15 to 20 per cent. But for the big businesses—the big users that employ people in our economy—the rise is around 80 per cent. And if you are paying $10 million, $20 million or $30 million a year for electricity, this is a serious down issue. As far as the security of the grid is concerned, it has been tested. I am very concerned about what is to come for us this summer when people turn on their air conditioners and the wind stops on certain days.

Ms McBRIDE (Dobell) (11:06): During the recent election campaign, my team and I knocked on tens of thousands of doors and we held countless telephone conversations with residents in the electorate of Dobell. Often during these conversations, people told me they expect members of parliament to work together—if the best interest of our community can be found, we should agree on it.

This is my first contribution to parliamentary debate. To meet the expectations the community expects of me, I would like to place on the record that I am prepared to work with the government to deliver for Dobell. During the recent election campaign, candidates and political parties had a platform to outline their priorities for the Central Coast. As a Labor candidate, I was pleased to have the opportunity to describe how a Shorten Labor government would deliver benefits for Dobell if elected. Likewise, the Liberal candidate and former member for Dobell made a number of commitments before and during the campaign.

Whilst Labor's priorities differ and, in some instances, markedly from those of the government, the people of Dobell expect this government will deliver on those commitments made by representatives of the Liberal and National coalition before and during the election.
campaign. These commitments include: $3 million to support environmental management of the Tuggerah Lakes estuary; $12.3 million to complete local road upgrades; close to $4 million to support the redevelopment of local sporting facilities; and $100,000 for desperately needed equipment for the emergency department at Wyong Hospital. It is only reasonable and fair that my constituents in Dobell should have the government keep its promises and deliver on its commitments for our community.

Labor have a proud record of driving renewable energy growth. We created ARENA and we created the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. The goal of ARENA was to make renewable energy more affordable and increase the supply of renewable energy sources. ARENA funding supports early research development and precommercialisation of emerging renewable technologies. Alongside completed projects, there are currently hundreds in the pipeline. For example, an ARENA grant of more than $2.8 million supported the design and construction of a catalytic hydrothermal reactor facility at the Licella plant located in Somersby on the Central Coast. This is a unique process where inedible plant material is converted into a biocrude oil, which can then be refined to produce biofuels and renewable biochemicals. To have a leading technology developed on the Central Coast is something our region can and should be very proud of. To have it happen as a result of our vision and support for ARENA is something that Labor can be rightly proud of.

As part of the omnibus bill, Labor negotiated a package that would allow ARENA to continue this vital work. Importantly, this will bring some much-needed certainty to a sector that has suffered years of attacks under this coalition government. This is an example of the way in which Labor will work with the government, and I am pleased with this constructive approach.

There is much more work to be done and it is no more obvious than in the area of public health. Under this government we have already seen a failed GP co-payment proposal that would have put an end to bulk-billing in this country; an attempt to freeze the Medicare Benefits Schedule for six years, putting bulk-billing in many practices in my community and across Australia at risk; and the ploughing ahead with changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which would increase the price of medicines for general patients by $5 and for concessional patients by 80c.

As a pharmacist who has worked in health and public health for almost 20 years, I have seen too many patients and those who love them have to make tough decisions that nobody should have to make about not filling prescriptions, not getting the vital medication that they need and when they need it. This should not and must not happen in Australia today. The cuts from pathology and diagnostic imaging will mean that patients will pay more for vital preventative and diagnostic tests, such as MRIs, X-rays and CT scans. We know that when cuts are made at this point in the health sector it means that there are delays and that people miss the chance of early intervention, early diagnosis and early treatment, which means costs to their health and costs to our health systems. It is not in the interest of the patient, it is not in the interest of those that care for them, and it is definitely not in the interest of our national budget to act in this way.

In my region, the state Liberal government is also pursuing a dangerous agenda to reduce public hospital services. They recently announced their intention to enter a public-private partnership for the Wyong Hospital upgrade. In question time on 15 September, Minister
Skinner made an announcement that nobody in our community was prepared for, that nobody in our community had been consulted about and that nobody in our community supports: to ask for expressions of interest for a public-private partnership for our community hospital. As someone who has worked at this hospital for almost a decade, I am deeply concerned about what this means for patients, for the dedicated staff who care for them and for our community. There had been no mention of private sector involvement in this hospital, despite two election campaigns in which these plans could and should have been taken to the community.

We are talking about the largest employer on the Central Coast. Close to 18,000 people are employed in health care locally. Health workers are dedicated and hardworking, and many are on very modest incomes. They work to save and improve the lives of people in our community each and every day. They do not deserve this uncertainty. When Wyong Hospital opened in 1980, it was a result of a long community campaign. For around 30 years, local people banded together, fundraising and working tirelessly to establish Wyong Hospital. In 1956 the first public committee meeting was held for the formation of Wyong Hospital. It was not until 1 September 1980 that the newly constructed 100-bed hospital that had been desperately needed for decades by our community was opened.

I will joining my community this Sunday 16 October to support them in keeping our community's public hospital in public hands. I commend my Labor state colleagues—David Harris, David Mehan, Kathy Smith and Yasmin Catley—and Senator Deborah O'Neill for their unwavering support for our community hospital, for public health and for our community. This is our hospital. This hospital belongs to our community and its future should and must be in public hands.

This week I delivered my first speech in this place. In doing so, as with my colleague Milton Dick, I pledged to use this platform so that those living with mental illness and those who love and care for them will live better. I have worked as a pharmacist and mental health worker for close to 20 years. I know that it is impossible to separate mental illness and mental ill health from the circumstances in which we are born, in which we live, in which we work and in which we age. It is a fact that there is also an overrepresentation of people with mental illness and mental ill health in our justice system. There are better ways to approach mental health and sufferers of ill mental health. Early intervention and genuine support may prevent vulnerable people from ending up before the courts.

Too many times this government has displayed an attitude to policy development that ignores the importance of these social determinants—housing, education, health, public transport. Their repeated attempts to undermine Medicare would affect all patients, especially those needing mental health services. Their insistence that young jobseekers should wait for social security payments for any length of time will lead to severe financial hardship and affect the health and wellbeing of those who can least afford it.

Recently I received a phone call from a young woman who was desperate. She experiences lifelong enduring mental health issues and has been able, with good support, to be able to secure a job and a modest income that helps to support her and her wellbeing. She has recently found out that, due to changes, she may be ineligible for Newstart or other payments. This woman is in a desperate situation. Her mental health and her wellbeing are now vulnerable, having been triggered by a harsh measure of this government. Nobody
experiencing mental illness or ill mental health should have their mental wellbeing threatened by the actions of a government that should, and must, act in their interests.

Their dogged pursuit of a plebiscite on same-sex marriage provides a platform for harmful sentiments to flourish. As a mental health worker I have seen first-hand, and I know, that what we say and how we say it matters. We need a new perspective, and it needs to start here. Right now there is an alarming lack of resources available to public hospitals and community support teams working in mental health. I first started working in mental health 20 years ago and, 20 years ago in the UK, there was a well-designed, well-resourced and well-functioning community mental health sector. I worked very closely with community mental health nurses at community health centres, and what we were doing then—20 years ago—is being reversed in Australia today. We need to make sure that the modest gains we have made—the small increase in funding, the slight change in stigma—are kept; that there are not any changes that put those gains at risk.

Patients are increasingly cared for in the community, but if the support services are not in place to cope then patients, their carers and the community will continue to suffer. There were many mental health nurses who worked on my recent election campaign—Di, Helen, Nat. These are people whom I have worked with for over 10 years at our local hospital. They worked on my campaign because, as nurses, they could not stand by, could not be idle, while this reckless government was making changes that would threaten the health and wellbeing of patients whom they care for. There is nothing cost-effective or compassionate about making it harder for people to see their doctor. There is nothing cost-effective or compassionate about making it harder for people to see their psychiatrist. There is nothing cost-effective or compassionate about making it harder for people to see their mental health worker. There is nothing responsible about withholding basic income support to young people who find themselves out of work.

Recent job figures show that 16 per cent of young people on the Central Coast today are unemployed, and recent high school retention rates indicate that one in two young people on the Central Coast does not have the chance to finish high school. This is shameful in our community on the Central Coast, where job opportunities are so limited and where one in four of the people who are working is travelling outside of the Central Coast each day to work. We need to make sure that there is basic support for young people who are motivated, who are talented, who want to work, who want to contribute—but because of structural barriers are limited from being able to participate and have active and full lives. I, with my colleagues in this place, will make sure that we will always stand up for young people.

Young people—wherever they live, whatever their postcode—should have the same opportunity. The fact that a young person on the Central Coast today has only a 50 per cent chance of finishing high school is shameful. Our state Liberal-National government is gutting the TAFE sector so that young people, like my brother Eddie, who would choose a pathway to a trade or a trade certificate or an apprenticeship are not just limited but are stopped from doing so. My brother Eddie was one of those practical, smart, capable people in our community like so many thousands of other young people. He wanted to be a plumber. Twenty years ago on the Central Coast he could do his training locally, he could be supported locally, and he could stay within our community and be part of our community. Recently, to upgrade his qualifications, he has had to travel to Sydney. This is a man who has his own
business and who has a family with two young children but for the last six months has been travelling two nights a week to Sydney to get basic accreditation that he should be to get locally.

We should use our role in this place to help people, not harm them, as we seek to remove the discrimination wherever and however it exists. It is one thing to ask people to put their trust in you and elect you as their representative in this place but meeting their expectations is another. It gives me great pride as a new MP to speak today on my first official parliamentary business. There is a reason why people want this parliament to function and why they want they both sides to work together: they want us always to put people first.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (11:21): I rise today to follow on from the member for Dobell in her first parliamentary debate contribution. It is an honour to follow her words of wisdom and experience, particularly in the health sector, which is important not only for my electorate but for every electorate in Australia. Today as we deal with these appropriation bills, I will be focusing on the first 100 days of my election and that of the Turnbull government. The member for Dobell explained the importance of the parliament not only working together but working.

I gave my first speech yesterday in the House of Representatives and then it was only a matter of hours later that we saw once again this government and this parliament fall apart. This is week 3 for the member for Dobell and I, day 10, of a so-called new government, and we witnessed yet again the government fall to pieces on the floor of the parliament. You could say one strike was bad enough in the first week when government members, ministers and senior ministers thought it more important to catch aeroplanes to fly home, to leave their job. In my community, you do not leave work early; you do not just put your feet up; you do a full day's work because that is what you are employed to do, just as we are employed to pass legislation—like for marriage equality.

The important issue related to these bills today is we saw a senior economic minister, the person charged with the responsibility of delivering outcomes, the person charged with the important responsibility of looking after our finances not knowing what she was voting for but more importantly not apparently caring what she voted for either. For the first time since Federation, we saw a coalition government voting with the Labor opposition to deliver our amendments. This is pretty serious stuff. The government today is simply saying well, it is just one of those things. One of those things we have also witnessed in the first 10 days of representing our communities is $107 million slipped off as part of a package. Another of the things we have also saw was the Senate running out of work to do. And of course we also saw the government lose control on the floor of parliament. So I would particularly say to the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services: pay more attention to your job because our nation's finances are in your hands. Sadly they are in her and this government's hands.

Today I will be focusing on a couple of important issues as a part of the appropriation debate, particularly in the areas of infrastructure; the delivery, or lack of delivery, of the NBN; and accessible and affordable health care. On the issue of infrastructure, in my first contribution to this chamber I will be putting fairly and squarely on the agenda the issue of the Ipswich Motorway upgrade. This is a critical issue for my local community. I spoke about it in my first speech to the House of Representatives, and each and every day I will be championing this issue. Looking at the facts on the table: the former federal Labor
government invested around $2.8 billion to complete the Dinmore to Darra section. When you drive around my community, the record speaks for itself. Only Labor has invested in real infrastructure. For 12 or 13 long years we had inadequate representation in our community, with Liberal representatives doing absolutely nothing on the Ipswich Motorway. It took the election of a Labor federal government, working hand in glove with a Labor state government, to deliver the real economic and infrastructure reforms that our communities have needed.

Labor committed to this upgrade in 2013, but, of course, the incoming Abbott and Turnbull governments failed to advance the project. And there was a little bit of time during that when we had a terrible experience, which was, of course, the Newman government in Queensland. That toxic experience was rejected, quite rightly, by the community. It had one of the largest majorities in Queensland's history and it only took 36 months—36 months too long—for the Newman government to be wiped out, as it should have been, for refusing to deliver on infrastructure commitments, for refusing to deliver for my community. If it was not bad enough that they were not delivering on infrastructure, they also took an axe to frontline workers, health workers in particular, and our community suffered for it.

Thank goodness the Palaszczuk Labor government and the transport minister, Mark Bailey, have championed this issue, alongside my colleagues the member for Moreton and the member for Blair, Shayne Neumann, who has long been an advocate for infrastructure delivery for the south-west corridor on the outskirts of Brisbane, right up through to Ipswich city. Labor is committed to this important, vital infrastructure project.

We are putting this Turnbull government on notice: it is now time to deliver. We have got to see that bottleneck end, that valve relief. I know, living in a suburb near the Ipswich Motorway—my friends, my neighbours, the people I work with, the community groups I serve, they all tell the same story: they are sick and tired of sitting in traffic day in, day out. They want to be home with their families and businesses want to be able to get around a lot quicker, so this is an important, critical piece of infrastructure. The Labor record will show that it delivers important projects like the Redcliffe rail project—this was championed by a former federal member of this place, Yvette D'Ath, and opened a matter of a week or so ago—under the stewardship of Wayne Swan, who allocated those hundreds of millions of dollars to deliver that project. The Turnbull government is very good at cutting ribbons, taking selfies, catching the train and perhaps having people talking to the Prime Minister—or not, as was the case most recently—but we know, when it comes to delivering projects, it is only this side of the chamber that actually gets on, allocates the funds and delivers those projects.

Another issue I will be focusing on today in my first address to this chamber will be the failure of the Turnbull government to hear the message about Medicare. It has been 100 days since we saw a pretty bad performance by the Prime Minister on election night—more like a tantrum—saying that the Australian community had got it wrong. I know, in my own community and sitting in the parliament now, we have had lectures from the health minister and ministers from the Turnbull government saying that it was all a scare campaign. It was all scary and it was somehow mischievous. I will tell you what is scary: what this government is doing in this budget to the healthcare needs of my community and every other Australian. There are major cuts to frontline services, cuts to medicines and cuts to services that my
community relies on. I am sick and tired of having lectures from those opposite, because the proof is in the pudding. I know that in my community, right throughout the election, I had GPs contacting me; GPs campaigning by my side; and health professionals right across the electorate on election day, in surgeries, in practices across the Oxley electorate, who simply wanted a fair go for their patients. Those opposite in the government simply say, 'Well, we're not going to listen to that message.' You would think, looking at the chamber now with all of those members lost on the other side of the parliament—with fantastic new members like the member for Dobell, who championed as a health professional herself and who is now serving in this parliament—that they would hear that message. But, sadly, they have not. We will continue to fight for a fair go for constituents and a fair go for GPs and hardworking professionals.

If you are listening to the government, mate, they like to say: 'GPs are wrong. The health practitioners are wrong. The community is wrong. The AMA is wrong'—but they are right. They need to start really listening to the concerns of those residents out there, residents who contacted me during the campaign and who continue to contact me about their concerns about the shambles that this government is creating in health care in this country.

On the issue of the NBN, this is a sad story that the government is refusing to acknowledge. In my community, where we are seeing that digital divide, I have spoken to small-business operators. I have spoken to young families who are moving into one of the fastest growth corridors in the nation in my electorate, through the Greater Springfield development. They just want a fair go when it comes to NBN. They want to make sure that the commitments that have been made by this government are met. We know we were promised a lot by the innovative Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, who promised that we would have it cheaper, we would have it quicker and it would be faster—failure on every account. We know that, because our communities are telling us that message. The business community is telling us that over and over again—inferior technology delivering an inferior outcome. We know that the issue of faster, quality broadband is not just a way of life for many younger Australians. It also connects some of the seniors in our community as well to make sure that they have the opportunities.

It is bad enough that this government keeps outsourcing and privatising with their agenda, ignoring the warning signals from whistleblowers within Health and Human Services who are now saying that times for claims for Medicare are blowing out. We have shut down Medicare interface offices. I know in my electorate that has occurred. We are now pushing people to go online. We are now pushing more and more people to use online services. The facts are that there are a large number of Australians who simply have not caught up and who do not have access to quality internet services—made worse by those not delivering on their commitments on the NBN, I may add. But they know that they need those services put into place.

The NBN rollout and faster and accessible broadband is critical for access to quality health services, for young students completing their senior studies and for studying online. We know that frustration from so many young Australians because they do not have access to quality services. Our internet speeds now are completely collapsing under this government. They keep dropping, year in, year out. I only wish that this government would actually hear these messages, particularly around the NBN.
In the rollout in my own community, there has been delay upon delay. We know it is a critical piece of infrastructure. I am going to keep championing this as a major issue in my own local community because the business community has asked me to do this. The education communities and the health services community have also asked me to make sure that this is a priority.

It is a privilege to serve in this place, but it is more important that all of us ensure that we keep this government to account when it comes to its budget. We know that we have seen the budget deficit blow out under this government. The centrepiece of the budget was, of course, a $50 billion tax cut, giving wealthy individuals earning over $180,000—around the top three per cent of income earners—a tax cut to their marginal rate. I know those opposite. That is their priority. Their priority is to always look after the top end of town and to make sure that those at the high income levels get a tax break. I am here to tell them—that my job here is to make sure that we have budget repair with fairness. We have to make sure that the budget repair is done with fairness. It is bad enough that this budget is cutting $30 billion from schools. There are $100,000 university degrees, the plan to increase the cost of medicine, a plan to have the world's oldest pension age, and also the lack of reform in child care and education. I will keep fighting for these issues because that is what the Oxley community has sent me here to do.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (11:36): The automotive manufacturing industry in Australia is dying, and I think it is a needless death. With the closure of Mitsubishi in South Australia in 2008 and the closure of Ford in Victoria last Friday, we are no longer making Territories. Holden is now the last major player still operating. In 2017—in just one year—it, too, will shut its doors. While the Holden plant is not in my electorate, my electorate will sharply feel the pain of its closure. We are witnessing not just the death of the iconic Australian-made car but the end of thousands of Australian jobs. Thousands of families have been, and will be, affected. Many have suffered, and will continue to suffer. Many of these families come from the more disadvantaged communities in Australia. The tragedy of Ford's closure in Geelong is immense. While the carbon fibre research facility at Deakin University promises to be a job creator in that region, it will be too little, too late.

After the death of the Falcon comes the death of the Commodore—both icons of Australia. This tsunami of job losses is coming for South Australia next. It is going to devastate the entire northern suburbs of Adelaide and its effects are going to reverberate throughout the whole of the state of South Australia. This is not just a tragedy for the Australian manufacturing sector; it is a tragedy with a human face. Whilst more than 1,400 workers at Holden will lose their jobs when the factory closes, Professor Spoehr from the University of Adelaide estimates that the total loss will be approximately 12,000 jobs across 500 automotive components suppliers and the other businesses in the community that depend on their prosperity to survive.

My heart reaches out to the families that will suffer and struggle when the jobs are gone. My heart goes out to the people who have worked at Holden for a generation and will be forced to go back to the drawing board—who will be forced to start again. My heart goes out to the shops and the corner delis that rely on the economic affluence of their community in order to keep their doors open. And my heart goes out to the families who will end up
struggling to pay for their kids' Christmas presents next year and will struggle to pay for ordinary bills—their rates and their electricity bills.

Perhaps globalisation and international competition have made this whole process inevitable. Some say Holden could never have been saved. But this is not progress. Whilst it may be too late for the Holden factory itself, it is not too late for the businesses, the workers and the families who have been depending on that factory for their livelihoods. I repeat, it is not too late, and we cannot give up on them. When a change of government policy leads to adjustment costs that create great social suffering, the government needs to step in and make the transition for those who are affected as easy as possible.

Free trade may be well and good, but we must always remember that behind every economic transaction there is a human story. The removal of protection for the car industry might have been a long time coming, but it is no less painful for those who are affected. Not everyone has capacity; not everyone is as agile as they might like to be. So many families will be focusing week to week—and have been for years—on paying their mortgage, on paying rent, on making sure their children get to school. Finding a new career in, possibly, a new industry is a very high bridge to cross.

I am calling on the government to step up and do more to help those who are affected by the closure of the automotive industry. I am not seeking to blame anyone; I am seeking solutions—and that is the job of every person in this place. Automotive producers and service providers can apply to access the Automotive Transformation Scheme. This scheme has $2.5 billion of funding, and just under half of the scheme—a whopping $1.24 billion—remains underspent. The scheme is an excellent idea in principle, but there are so many automotive industry businesses that cannot access those funds, simply because the eligibility criteria are too strict. Currently this scheme only allows a successful applying business to spend money on capital and research related to the automotive sector. However, the closure of Mitsubishi, Ford and Holden means that many automotive businesses will not be able to remain in the industry.

The eligibility criteria also require businesses to meet strict production quotas in order to access the scheme. This sounds good in principle but stops producers of small-volume but high-quality products from accessing the scheme. For example, Supashock is a small business in Magill, just outside of my electorate, that currently employs 25 staff. Supashock produces high-quality, specialised shock absorbers. Since launching their product in 2012 they have grown by over 150 per cent per year. They have outgrown their current facilities and need to expand. They estimate that they are currently able to support around 100 Australian jobs just through their supply chains. After supplying to the V8 supercars, Supashock now supplies to all of the top-rated racing cars in Australia, and they are even starting to branch out into commercial vehicles as well. Supashock has signed contracts with both Defence and mining, where their technology will be used to prevent rollovers and to save the lives of both soldiers and miners. With these added contracts, Supashock will have the scope to expand to at least 120 full-time jobs. They also have an undergraduate job experience program with Flinders University, and the best students are then employed into the business.

However, despite all of their innovation and agility—'agility', the word of 2015-16 in this parliament—Supashock cannot access the Automotive Transformation Scheme. This is because they do not produce enough of their high-quality components to meet the eligibility
criteria. The threshold is 30,000. Supashock is ready to be turbocharged. They could take on some of the automotive workers about to lose their jobs with the closure of Holden, saving some of them from the tsunami and devastation to come. Supashock could be a small but important part of the solution, and yet, because the eligibility criteria are too strict, Supashock and other businesses like them cannot access this capital and, therefore, they cannot even expand as they would like to and quickly take on more staff.

The multiplier effects are stronger in manufacturing than in other sectors because they have more developed and elongated supply chains. According to work done by the Australia Institute, the job multipliers in specialised high-technology manufacturing operations can be as high as 10 to 1. Even if this number were overstated, it demonstrates that for every job we can save or create when Holden closes we can save more jobs in other shops, trades and businesses across South Australia. Many of the current automotive product and aftermarket product providers still have time to diversify and adapt, if only we can provide them with access to assistance from the Automotive Transformation Scheme. If these businesses can survive and grow we can build at least some of the levees against that tsunami.

We can also rescue some of those who have already been hit. Not all businesses will be able to continue in the automotive industry but many may be able to transform themselves into new businesses, such as exporters of design, engineering services, engineering products and even high-quality food production, which is a big part of my electorate. Other existing automotive businesses could become other advanced manufacturers. Beverage manufacturing is the largest manufacturing sector in Australia, and in South Australia we grow the best food in the world and we make some of the best beverages, much of it in my own electorate of Mayo.

I am thus proposing two changes to the eligibility criteria for the Automotive Transformation Scheme: firstly, that the required thresholds for both quantity and value of the scheme are reduced significantly and, secondly, that funds from the scheme can be used by current automotive industry businesses to diversify, retool and transform into other industries. Imagine: if we could turbocharge these industries, we could provide jobs so that many of those who will be losing their jobs when Holden closes will have a new life. Enhancing access to the Automotive Transformation Scheme by broadening the eligibility criteria will help the South Australian economy make the transition with as little pain as possible.

Again, while it might be too late for Ford and Holden, it is not too late for the businesses, the workers and the families who have been depending on the factories for their livelihoods—we must not give up on them. I thus appeal to the government to make it even more accessible for businesses and use the remaining $1.24 billion in the Automotive Transformation Scheme so that we can turbocharge them through this difficult transition. The livelihoods of so many Australians are depending on us.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (11:46): I am very pleased to have the opportunity in the chamber today, under the broad discussion of the appropriation bills, to canvass some of the issues in my local area that have occurred during the election campaign and since then.

Sadly, over that period of time we have seen the Liberal Party's absolute disdain for the Illawarra, again demonstrated in the 2016 election campaign. Again, our area was completely ignored by the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party. In fact, in each and every electorate campaign it has been the same story. I can report to the House that in 2004 they did not make
one commitment to the Illawarra; in 2007, not a single commitment; in 2010, not a single commitment; and this year it was a case of history repeating itself in the 2016 election campaign in my seat—not one commitment for my area. As the member says, they are not in the least bit interested in the Illawarra. It is like groundhog day for us: during each election campaign we wait for the Liberal Party to make some sort of commitment and we wait in vain.

It was not just the people of the Illawarra who were left out in the cold, although I have to acknowledge that it was during the long and dismal winter election campaign that the Liberal Party cut billions of dollars from our local schools. They make it harder for people on low and fixed incomes to survive, they make it harder for parents looking for child care and they make it harder for people to get the skills they need to find a job. I would point out to the chamber that the Liberals did not have one policy in support of TAFE or apprentices during the election campaign. They did nothing on child care except to make sure it was more expensive, and they did nothing on higher education except to try and implement an American-style user-pays higher education system, which clearly would result in $100,000 degrees. They did nothing to grow the local economy and generate jobs, despite that being the theme, supposedly, of their campaign. I have to say, clearly the only jobs they were interested in were their own, or those of some of their big business mates who were targeted for the $50 billion tax cut. They did nothing to help. In fact, their actions would have hindered and very badly affected people who were sick. Their policies would have gutted our health system as we know it and forced Australians to pay more for their health care.

I point out that just this week in the parliament government MPs voted against a guarantee to keep Medicare in public hands as a universal health insurance scheme for all Australians. They voted against a guarantee to protect bulk-billing, so that every Australian can see their doctor when they need to, not only when they can afford to. They voted against reversing the harmful cuts to Medicare by unfreezing the indexation of the Medicare Benefits Schedule. They voted against reversing the cuts to pathology that will mean Australians with cancer will have to pay more for their blood tests. They voted against reversing the cuts to breast screening, MRIs, X-rays and other diagnostic imaging, which will mean Australians will pay more for these vital scans—indeed a shame. They voted against abandoning plans to make all Australians, even pensioners, pay more for vital medicines. They voted against developing a long-term agreement to properly fund our public hospitals, so Australians do not languish in emergency departments or on long waiting lists for important surgery. This is a critical issue in my area, where the Baird Liberal have now listed Shellharbour Hospital, a great public hospital, for privatisation. So we see this agenda playing out across conservative governments.

At least 27 times during the election campaign, Malcolm Turnbull said that he would never outsource Medicare. But the truth was revealed this week when he would not bring himself to guarantee that it would be kept in public hands. Labor, as always, remain committed to supporting the services that people need, particularly in our area and investing in our Illawarra region. By contrast, I would like to indicate to the House the commitments that Labor made to our area during the last election.

The member for Whitlam and I put forward a number of commitments for the Illawarra. Firstly, just before the election commenced, we had a visit by the Leader of the Opposition to
announce our steel industry plan. This is critically important for our region obviously, with the Port Kembla steelworks so significant as an employment driver and, just as importantly, its flow-on effects through the steel fabrication and manufacturing sectors. We produced a significant plan that will give real viability to the long-term prosperity of the steel industry.

We also made a $50 million commitment to commence the building of the Maldon Dombarton rail link. This is a vital freight infrastructure link between the port at Port Kembla and the western and south-western Sydney region. This work has stalled since this government was elected. In 2013, Labor committed $50 million to commence the process to find a public-private partnership to get this very important piece of infrastructure built. The Abbott government abolished that $50 million commitment. We are very concerned to see that there is a renewed focus on that piece of infrastructure. We made a $50 million commitment in the election campaign and I will continue to pursue commitments from this government to progress that project.

We also made a $50 million commitment to improve the safety of the Appin Road. The day after that commitment was made, the Prime Minister gave a commitment for the same amount. The problem was his commitment only covered the road up to the point where it bordered my electorate. Our commitment was for the entire length of the Appin Road, including the part in the seat of Cunningham. But that was not repeated by the minister, as my colleague the member for Macarthur indicated, as he borders the other end. That is a very important piece of road infrastructure and we will continue to press to get that delivered.

A very important commitment from the member for Whitlam and I was an improvement in the funding for our Illawarra legal service, a $300,000 commitment. These front-line legal services provide support and assistance to some of the most vulnerable in our community and they have been under a great deal of pressure. They do a fantastic job and they struggle to cover all that they are required to cover as it is, and to face this sort of significant funding cut is very detrimental. So I was pleased we were able to get that commitment.

We also gave a commitment of $200,000 towards the extension of the Bulli Surf Life Saving Club, a great local community organisation doing important work. We gave a commitment to three very significant disability employment service providers in our area, Greenacres, Flagstaff and the Disability Trust, to ensure the ongoing viability of Australia's disability enterprises. That was very important to many of our locals who rely on those organisations, and do great work and are very proud of their employment at those places.

An ongoing issue in our area has been the access to a permanent full-time judge for the Federal Circuit Court, particularly in cases of family breakdown and resolving those issues. These are extremely stressful times for people, and we have had a real problem with extensive backlogs and with people being referred interstate to get their cases heard. We gave a commitment to a permanent full-time judge and we will continue to press the government to address that issue.

Part of the Gonski commitments of years five and six would have meant another 59 million in funding for schools in our area. I want to make it clear that this was not an unusual or new thing; we have in fact invested in our region significantly whenever we have been in government. There was a $135-million investment in the University of Wollongong over our period in government and in significant research and teaching facilities such as the Australian Institute for Innovative Materials Processing, the Sustainable Buildings Research Centre, and
the SMART Infrastructure Facility and, the most recent one, the Early Start facility. We have put over $100 million into our local schools and TAFE.

We have put $140 million towards supporting the BlueScope Steel Structural Adjustment Programme, and nearly $29 million to progress the Maldon-Dumbarton rail link, plus the $50 million I referred to earlier. We have put $42 million in upgrades to the Mt Ousley Road and $4 million for a Mt Ousley truckstop to make the journey safer for truck drivers, and for the road users who share the roads with them—and I have to say, building has just now finally commenced—as well as $4.6 million on improvements to the Picton Road. We put nearly $3 million into the Blue Mile project to make a beautiful part of our area so much more usable for locals and more accessible, in particular for people with mobility issues, but also to make it into a great tourist attraction, and nearly $5 million into the refurbishment of the Wollongong mall.

We had the early rollout of the National Broadband Network. I spend so much of my time now dealing with complaints about the second-rate system that people are getting with fibre-to-the-node. They are very, very unhappy with what they are getting with that technology. We put $12 million into an Illawarra Cancer Care Centre at Wollongong Hospital and $5 million towards a clinical teaching and training facility at the hospital. There was nearly $16 million in black spot and infrastructure commitments on local roads, $6.6 million for community infrastructure such as parks, footpaths and cycleways, and some great local tourism projects—$863,000 for the North Beach Bathers' Pavilion, a great historic facility; $100,000 for the Sumatran tiger exhibition at our wonderful Symbio Wildlife Park; half a million dollars to refurbish The Snakepit, our famous basketball centre; and $4 million for Southern Youth and Family Services and Youth Off The Streets for homeless and at-risk young people. The commitments we made at the last election follow on from a strong record of Labor delivering for my region.

It is also important to acknowledge that at the state level, it has been New South Wales Labor governments who have also committed to the region. We have had investment in the Northern Distributor, the building of the wonderful Sea Cliff Bridge, a free commuter car park in Wollongong, the free Gong Shuttle which gives locals better access to public transport, $140 million in upgrades to the Port Kembla Steelworks, the establishment of the world-leading Innovation Campus at the University of Wollongong, and a state-of-the-art police station for the Lake Illawarra Command. We have given commitments to accessibility lifts at the Unanderra Station, to upgrading the local hospital and TAFE, to building the Western Grandstand and the Northern Grandstand at WIN Stadium, and to the $170-million expansion of Port Kembla Harbour. In particular, we have committed to saving Bulli Hospital and to $100 million in investment in the Wollongong Hospital. These have been important commitments for state Labor and, I have to say, in those areas great work continues by our local colleagues Ryan Park and Anna Watson along with some important and significant commitments by our candidate in the Wollongong by-election, Paul Scully, who is an extraordinarily good candidate. I hope people will get behind him in the by-election in November, because he will do an outstanding job for locals.

Across the region the story is consistent. It is very frustrating. Our region is an important regional driver of jobs and economic growth. We have wonderful opportunities for diversification. We have the challenges that many regions have in terms of the existing
employment sectors and supporting them in their capacity to continue to employ. In particular, obviously steel and manufacturing are very important parts of that story, but we have expanding and developing opportunities in education and tourism. Only this week I met down here with Nieves Murray and the Illawarra Retirement Trust group, who were down here doing some visits to ministers and shadow ministers. The aged-care sector is another one where there are real opportunities for jobs and some leading national organisations like IRT have grown out of the Illawarra. So the things that you need a region to do in its own best interests we are doing.

I want to finish by acknowledging the great work of Destination Wollongong in getting the first visit by the Radiance of the Seas, a major tourism boat, into Port Kembla at the end of this month. There was a great community campaign rallying around making that visit a real success so that it continues to develop jobs and opportunities in our region. We are doing what we need to do as a region. Labor governments at state and federal levels have supported that. Liberal governments have been very disappointing.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan—Assistant Minister for Social Services and Disability Services) (12:02): I rise to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2016–2017, Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2016–2017 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2016–2017. The combined total appropriations being sought by these supply and appropriation bills is just under $100 billion. This is an important budget, but it is also a budget unlike others. This is a budget that has been put before the people of Australia at the last election. Notwithstanding the deliberately dishonest scare campaign by Labor and their union bosses, on any quantitative measure this budget has been endorsed by the majority of Australians.

Let us put this clearly on the record. Bill Shorten and Labor did not win the election. Labor has 69 seats in this House while the coalition has 76 seats—a clear majority. We may not always agree with the way our fellow Australians vote, but we must always respect the collective statement of intent by the Australian community through the ballot box. Clearly there will be some qualitative differences on certain budget measures; but, simply put, Australians do not want the government to spend more than Australian taxpayers can afford.

We all have a moral responsibility to restrain spending, boost investment, encourage economic growth and guarantee a strong social safety net. Today's budget position is not what it was when the Howard government lost office, and it will take some time to reign in public spending in a responsible way. There are some important truths we must acknowledge, and we need to cut Australia's suit according to our cloth. Labor's magic pudding economics that underwrote year-on-year promises of a non-existent budget surplus resulted in increasing deficits and left disappointed Australians genuinely concerned about our economic future.

The last time Labor delivered a budget surplus was in 1989, 27 years ago. Instead of delivering a secure economic future to Australian taxpayers, all Labor offers now is their most-appropriately-named leader—short on vision, short on policy and short on integrity. While I recognise the current Labor leader wants to run the government like a union, Australians do not want their government to spend their money like a union boss with a union credit card. More debt is not the measure by which I want future generations of Australians to judge us. The parliament must work for Australians now and, especially, for future Australians. I reflect on a saying attributed to St Francis of Assisi which seems appropriate
given the enormous challenges facing the 45th Parliament of Australia: 'Start by doing what is necessary, then do what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.'

For government, money to make things happen can only come from three places: increased taxes, increased borrowings or savings. The critical importance of adequately funding the National Disability Insurance Scheme is especially important to me. In May this year I spoke on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment Bill 2016, noting that the website of the member for Jagajaga claimed that the NDIS was properly funded when Labor left office. This was simply not true. Savings that Labor claimed were to be directed to the NDIS were simply returned to consolidated revenue. They were not set aside for the NDIS. You simply cannot direct the same funding if it has already been used.

My colleague on the other side the member for Lilley promised a surplus many times. And that, he claimed, was where additional disability service funding would come from. So, despite distributing campaign brochures claiming they had actually delivered a surplus, let me just remind you once again: Labor has not been capable of delivering a surplus since 1989, 27 years ago.

On the other hand, the coalition government takes our financial responsibilities to the NDIS very seriously. Those with disability, their carers and individuals and organisations involved in the provision of services within the disability services sector depend on adequate funding for the NDIS. To meet the future costs of the NDIS, we are establishing an NDIS savings fund, which will hold unspent funds from the NDIS, as well as the proceeds of savings measures from better targeting our welfare spending. These funds can then be reinvested back into delivering the NDIS and can contribute to filling the existing funding gap.

Let me now turn to my electorate of Ryan—this special part of Australia. I want so much more for my electorate than what I could justifiably ask for at a time when responsible government demands that we rein in spending. But in this budget I have many things to celebrate, including a never-ending pipeline of innovative projects and exciting and inspiring local entrepreneurs to champion.

Our National Innovation and Science Agenda will create a modern, dynamic, 21st-century Australian economy that will transition the Australian economy from a winding-down mining boom to a burgeoning ideas boom. With one of the world's leading universities, the University of Queensland, now ranked 55th in its academic ranking worldwide and second in Australia, there has never been a more exciting time to be the member for Ryan. Already in the top 10 in the world for commercialisation, the University of Queensland is well positioned to leverage Australia's natural strengths in science, innovation and technology to secure Australia's future prosperity and high standard of living.

In my previous role as a local councillor, I was part of the team from Brisbane City Council that put forward a very effective way to deliver first-rate internet services for South-East Queensland, especially in Brisbane. In effect, the whole of Brisbane would have had fibre-to-the-premises services by now if it were not for the previous Labor government's arrogance, incompetence and spite. While I understand that residents are disappointed that the roll-out of the NBN has not occurred sooner, the use of HFC network and fibre-to-the-node and fixed wireless are part of the government's multitechnology mix approach to building a
network which uses the most appropriate technology to deliver the NBN sooner and at less cost to taxpayers.

Also, as part of our Mobile Black Spot Program, new mobile base stations in Mount Crosby and Karana Downs will bring a much-needed boost to mobile coverage, providing benefits to emergency service operators, businesses and residents. These areas were overlooked by mobile network operators due to commercial factors, and the former Labor government refused to invest in fixing mobile black spots in regional and remote Australia.

In this special part of Australia, small things do lead to bigger things. Who here has not tried some of the fine jerky products produced by Geronimo Jerky? Starting their business in 2011 as a side project of four friends, Geronimo Jerky now turns over literally tonnes of beef each month to produce large quantities of the product in eight different flavours that fill orders with the Australian Defence Force and various mine sites and in more than 400 locations across Australia. As a local business resident in Blackwood Street, Mitchelton, Geronimo Jerky—along with other traders—is also benefiting from the coalition's announcement that they will be providing $208,000 for CCTV in the area. This project, committed under the coalition's $40 million Safer Communities Fund, was secured through an ongoing campaign by the Blackwood Street chamber of commerce and will enhance security of patrons and businesses.

Another great success story of innovation and entrepreneurship in the Ryan electorate is that of Opengear—an innovative leader in the next generation's smart solutions to protect and manage critical ICT infrastructure. Starting in 2004 with just two employees at ilab in Toowong, Opengear now employs 64 staff worldwide and has offices across Australia, the USA, the UK and Europe. From humble beginnings, Opengear now boasts many international customers, including tier 1 companies, DFAT and Queensland Police, and has been recognised with many product and technology awards.

Governments can never hope to fund the literally millions of hours of work, care and support provided by tens of thousands of volunteers. The Ryan electorate not only has some of the smartest and brightest people in the world; it also has some of the most truly beautiful souls who continue to warm our hearts with regular acts of human kindness. I would like to again say a big and very public thank you to the dedicated network of Meals on Wheels volunteers, who pride themselves on providing more than just a meal to some of the most frail and vulnerable residents living in our neighbourhoods. We have some of the most inspiring community-spirited volunteers in our electorate. Every day of every week volunteers from the western suburbs—Kenmore, Ashgrove and Mitchelton—Meals on Wheels organisations ensure that members of our community who are sick, elderly, frail and disabled benefit from this valuable community service.

Recently, I had the pleasure of also paying tribute to three members of the Wests Junior Rugby League football club. Erica Quinn and Ron Raper were recognised for their tireless contribution to the club with an oval named in their honour and, with more than 40 years of association and still being an integral part of the club today, Margaret Carl, who has held the position of president, secretary and treasurer, has also been recognised with an oval named in her honour. The contribution of so many volunteers in the Ryan electorate is humbling. Indeed, actions do speak louder than words.
Since coming to office, the coalition government has honoured our strong commitment to building Australia's future defence capabilities while also recognising the enormous contribution and personal sacrifice made by our veterans to our country. As most members know, the federal electorate of Ryan is home to the Gallipoli Barracks and one of the largest populations of serving Australian Defence Force personnel. We are a community that supports our defence force personnel, past and present, and we are committed to recognising the significant contribution of our veterans in protecting and enabling the way of life and the quality of life we all enjoy.

Current and former defence force personnel and their families have welcomed the coalition's decision to reverse Labor's cuts and to increase defence spending by $29.9 billion over the next 10 years. This marks a significant contrast between what a coalition government will do and what a Labor government did not. Indeed, it would be difficult to find any serving Australian defence service personnel or veteran who would consider the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government anything but the worst in our nation's history in this area. While Labor increased non-defence spending sharply over its six budgets, the defence budget was slashed by 10.5 per cent in 2012-13—the biggest single cut since the Korean War. In that one year Labor ripped $18 billion out of the defence budget and cut defence spending to its lowest level since 1938. This resulted in 1,200 job losses in the ADF alone and delays to 119 defence projects, then another 43 projects were reduced and eight projects cancelled. Not surprisingly, Labor's defence budget cuts, deferrals and procrastination, and a growing lack of opportunity for local suppliers meant our local defence industry also shed more than 10 per cent of its workforce.

Only a coalition government will ensure Australia's national security and economic prosperity both now and for decades to come. In doing so we will maximise the opportunities for our defence industry to participate in our historic shipbuilding programs.

In closing, I repeat the phrase attributed to St Francis of Assisi, which offers some guidance for all members and senators in this 45th Parliament of Australia:

Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

I commend this bill to the House.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Revenue and Financial Services) (12:15): I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the debate on these bills. Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017, Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2016-2017 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017 form the principal bills underpinning the government's budget. The provisions in the bills seek authority for appropriations broadly equivalent to seven-twelfths of the estimated 2016-17 annual appropriations plus budget measures. Together with supply acts, these bills provide appropriations for the full year of 2016-17.

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017 seeks authority for meeting the expenses of the ordinary annual services of the government and approval for additional appropriations from the consolidated revenue fund of just over $49 billion for 2016-17. Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2016-2017 seeks approval for appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of just under $9 billion in 2016-17. This bill provides for non-ordinary annual services of government, including capital works and services and payments to states, territories and local government authorities. The purpose of Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017 is to provide funding for the operation of the Department of the Senate, the Department of the House of Representatives, the Department of Parliamentary Services and
the Parliamentary Budget Office. This bill seeks approval for appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of just over $147 million. Details of the proposed expenditure are set out in the schedules to the bills and portfolio budget statements previously tabled in the parliament. I commend the bills.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton):** The question is that the bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Ordered that consideration in detail be made an order of the day for the next sitting day.

Debate adjourned.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr LEESER (Berowra) (12:18):** I move:

That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

**Shipping**

**Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (12:18):** I take this opportunity to talk about shipping and the potential impact on our environment of shipping in two areas: firstly, the Great Barrier Reef, and secondly, in my electorate of Grayndler. On 20 September, when asked about calls from the environmental movement for more protection of the Great Barrier Reef from coal freighters, the Deputy Prime Minister said that shipping accidents on the reef were inevitable. He said:

… but that's life. If you have ships at sea you're going to have them run into things and sink from time to time.

As the person who was the transport minister in the previous government, responsible for the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, I say thank goodness that is not the approach of AMSA or the regulatory authorities. The comment was reckless in the extreme. The Deputy Prime Minister was speaking after the government reached a $39.3 million out-of-court damages settlement with the operators of *Shen Neng 1*, a coal freighter that ran aground at Douglas Shoal about 100 kilometres east of Rockhampton in 2010. When the *Shen Neng 1* hit the reef it was 10 kilometres outside the shipping lanes. The mariner in charge was operating on little sleep because the vessel did not observe Australian workplace health and safety requirements—that is why he was jailed for 18 months for negligence. While accidents certainly have happened, they are more likely to happen if ships passing through the reef are being steered by sleepy overseas operators who have no idea where they are. It is up to governments to maintain high safety standards and that is why an Australian shipping industry is vital—not optional but vital. Governments through appropriate regulation can certainly have an impact. What the Deputy Prime Minister has said is ignorant in the extreme and puts under threat the overwhelming support that there is for safe passage of ships to Australia's north and around our coastline.

I want to talk about another issue which is of concern, particularly in my electorate. In June I contacted the transport minister, Darren Chester, to offer bipartisan support for action to ensure that cruise ships on Sydney Harbour use low-sulphur fuel. There has been concern because the New South Wales government carried legislation at the same time as the federal
government was considering anti-pollution legislation, which had the unintended consequence of rendering inoperable the state government's new requirements on the use of low-sulphur fuel, 0.1 per cent or less, on Sydney Harbour.

Residents of Balmain have expressed legitimate concern about fuel fumes from cruise ships in White Bay. It is important that the Commonwealth act and address this problem. Since the election I have repeatedly asked Minister Chester to fulfil his commitment to resolve this issue either through legislation or other means but it needs to be required in a way which is better than just voluntary compliance. Cruise ships do provide significant economic activity for Australia but it is important that they operate within environmental best practice. I am pleased that the cruise ship industry has agreed to voluntarily implement this New South Wales government policy of using low-sulphur fuel but Commonwealth action is required. If the Commonwealth makes legislation that has unintended consequences then it is its responsibility to fix it. Minister Chester understands that there is a problem but he needs to fix it. This government seems incapable of being able to legislate in the national interest. This is an issue which is not ideological, which has bipartisan support. I say to the minister: get on board; introduce the legislation. We on this side will ensure its quick passage through both houses of parliament and fix this problem.

Dunkley Electorate: Langwarrin

Mr CREWTHER (Dunkley) (12:23): I rise today to talk about a wonderful and dynamic part of the Dunkley electorate, Langwarrin. Although Langwarrin covers a geographical area of only 24 square kilometres, almost 22,000 people call it home. Langwarrin is also home to a number of nature reserves, parks and gardens. Some of the more prominent sites are the Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve, the McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, and Cruden Farm.

The Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve, formerly known as the Langwarrin Military Reserve, is one of Langwarrin's most well-known landscape features set over two square kilometres. After World War II, the reserve was used as a military hospital and subsequently for occasional military training until 1974 when it was taken over by the Balcombe military camp and was used for training about Army Reserve and school cadet units. As I noted in my maiden speech, my father started his career training in the Army at the Balcombe army barracks.

Eventually in 1982, the state government then purchased the reserve from the Commonwealth government but these days it is used by locals and visitors as a recreational nature reserve boasting a number of picturesque walking tracks including an amazing new military trail and walking path which were recently worked on as part of the local Green Army project funded by the federal government. During the election campaign, I was pleased to join the former member for Dunkley, the Hon. Bruce Bilson, to meet the Green Army team who worked on landscaping the trail, and I thanked them for their hard work.

Another impressive place which calls Langwarrin home is the McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park. Set in eight hectares of landscaped bushland and featuring a sculpture park, it is now home to the famous moving Tree of Life sculpture, which was previously one of the many pieces of artwork showcased along the Peninsula Link freeway. It is Australia's largest sculpture park and a major tourist icon, attracting 130,000 visitors per year. The gallery was named in honour of renowned Frankston artists Nan and Harry McClelland. The McClelland
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Award is Australia's richest sculpture prize and is awarded by the gallery biennially, and it was supported by the gallery's patron and Langwarrin resident, the late Dame Elisabeth Murdoch.

Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, Australian socialite and philanthropist, was the mother of media mogul Rupert Murdoch and resided at Cruden Farm in Langwarrin up until her passing in 2012 at the ripe age of 103. The garden at Cruden Farm is a result of 80 years work and is considered the heart of a working farm—a small piece of country set amid dense suburbia. Every year in mid-April, the gardens are open to the public to raise funds for a not-for-profit medical research organisation, Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute.

Langwarrin has also been home to many other notable residents including Lady Joan Lindsay, author of the famous Picnic at Hanging Rock; Stephen Sutherland, Australian Olympic boxer; Luke Parker, AFL player for the Sydney Swans; and Jarred Moore, also an AFL player for the Sydney Swans and assistant coach at the North Melbourne Football Club.

As you can see, sport plays a big part of the social fabric of Langwarrin. During the election campaign, I was pleased to make a number of funding announcements for several well-deserving Langwarrin sporting clubs. Langwarrin Football and Netball Club is set to receive $10,500 in federal funding to upgrade women's amenities, Langwarrin Tennis Club will receive $10,275 in funding to install solar technologies and the Langwarrin Soccer Club will receive $15,000 under the Stronger Communities Program to construct a much needed utility shed. Langwarrin is also well represented by basketball, dancing and horse riding. Langwarrin Pony Club and the Peninsula Adult Riders Club provide cross-country, dressage and show jumping facilities for equestrian enthusiasts at the Langwarrin Equestrian & Recreation Reserve.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with Langwarrin resident and Paralympian Emma Booth to congratulate her and her horse Zidane on their terrific success at the recent Rio 2016 Paralympics as part of the Australian dressage team. Langwarrin is a great place to live, and I encourage people to come and visit Langwarrin.

Human Rights: The Philippines

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (12:28): I would like to talk about the human rights issues that I see currently developing in the Philippines. I recently met with representatives of Human Rights Watch concerning developments in the Philippines, particularly in regard to extrajudicial killings. For the sake of political populism, in the recent Philippine election then presidential candidate Rodrigo Duterte declared a so-called war on drugs, indicating his determination to reintroduce the death penalty. During the election campaign, Duterte issued a series of inflammatory statements directly contravening the Philippines international human rights obligations, including a promise to reduce crime by shooting suspects. He said that he would execute 100,000 criminals and dump them into Manila Bay. What is worse is that he won that election and now is making good on his promise. Since his election, over 3½ thousand people have already been subject to extrajudicial killings—not found as criminals, simply shot and killed. For those of us who believe in human rights and the importance of the rule of law, it is disturbing to see that a nation that we are particularly close to has political leaders that are so backward looking when considering the future of its people. For a predominantly Catholic country, one which
abolished the death penalty in 2006 on human rights grounds, the reintroduction of this barbaric and archaic measure shows little vision in a civilised world.

In addition to this, the newly elected government's desire to lower the age of criminality from 15 to 12 years provides little hope of rehabilitating minors. The death penalty bill, by the way, was the first bill introduced by the Duterte administration. Impervious to international criticism and with a total disregard for the rule of law, last week President Duterte further infuriated many with his comment:

Hitler massacred three million Jews.

And 'there are three million drug addicts in the Philippines'. He went on to say:

I'd be happy to slaughter them.

To raise Hitler, a mass murderer, a person involved in genocide, in the way he has done, I think, shows little hope for international diplomacy from the Philippines.

A recent former death squad member testified before the Philippines Senate in regards to his involvement in the drug war in Davao city. The witness publicly named then Mayor Duterte as being behind the judicial killings in that principality. The senator chairing the inquiry, Senator de Lima, former justice secretary and a former chairperson of the Philippines Commission on Human Rights, has long campaigned against Duterte in respect to human rights violations. As a result of her stand on human rights, and no doubt her opposition to the current situation, she, herself, is now being subject to a campaign of intimidation and harassment.

It is important that we, as a nation that is committed to promoting human rights, particularly within our region, support those that are brave enough to make a stand and campaign against human rights violations, such as Senator de Lima. It is also important that we support organisations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International in their efforts to expose human rights violations wherever they occur. Where administrations bypass due process and ignore the rule of law, atrocities will occur, closely followed by corruption and, no doubt, a total lack of transparency. That is not what would be good for any developing country, particularly one such as the Philippines.

This week marks international World Day Against the Death Penalty and it is important that we make known our position on capital punishment let alone extrajudicial killings—what we see occurring in the Philippines. We do expect better from the Philippines, particularly as a country with which we share a very close bond and personal friendships. We need to show that violating human rights cannot and should not be tolerated in a civilised world.

**Western Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative**

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter-Terrorism) (12:33): I rise today to express my sincere gratitude and also to highlight to the House, and hopefully a wider audience, the great work that has been done by the Western Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative, which has been brought to my attention by Professor of Obstetrics John Newnham.

Professor Newnham is the executive director of the Women and Infants Research Foundation of Western Australia. The foundation is an independent research institution solely dedicated to improving infant health and women's reproductive health. Recently, I met with Professor Newnham, who spoke to me about the foundation's latest preterm birth prevention
initiative, which is entitled The Whole Nine Months. He sought me out after I mentioned in an article in the paper that my youngest child was born 10 weeks early in June last year—so this is a topic that is very close to my heart. Luckily, for my wife and I, he is a very happy and healthy child but, of course, that is not always the case—the news, unfortunately, can be devastatingly different for parents.

Preterm birth is a major cause of death and disability in young children in the developed world, and Professor Newnham and his team are currently working on what is a unique plan to prevent this complication in pregnancy occurring. The Whole Nine Months campaign has the single aim of safely lowering the rate of preterm birth in Western Australia by combining the latest evidence-based clinical practice with educational outreach programs for healthcare practitioners and the general public. Ongoing research and evaluation of the effectiveness will ensure that the initiative does remain responsive in what is a rapidly changing field of medicine. By working together with Western Australia's healthcare professionals and the 34,000 women who give birth each year in Western Australia, Professor Newnham and his team hope to achieve the goal of safely lowering the rate of preterm birth by 15 per cent over the next two years and 35 per cent over the next five years. Thanks to Professor Newnham and the foundation's research finding, the Western Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative has been made possible.

Already, we can see significant results. They have actually had some success lowering the rate of preterm birth around the state overall. Clinical strategies have been developed to lower the preterm birth rate and to make pregnancy safer for women and, of course, for their babies. I would encourage all Australians who are expecting a child to visit The Whole Nine Months website, which is at www.thewholeninemonths.com.au, for a range of information and fact sheets around raising awareness and reducing the risk of preterm birth across Australia.

Finally, on a personal note, I would like to acknowledge the incredible professionalism that I found when we had our baby significantly preterm. The staff in the ICU at the King Edward Memorial Hospital in Perth were just amazing. They did guide my wife and I through what was a very difficult time. The care that my younger son received was quite remarkable. I did want to mention that in the House, and, again, to acknowledge Professor Newnham and his team for being inspiring advocates for preterm birth prevention. I would like this initiative, and information about the initiative, to go as far and wide as possible. I do wish it every success.

Gellibrand Electorate: Australian Islamic Centre

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (12:37): I rise to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of the Newport Islamic Society and the community in Hobsons Bay in the construction of the new Australian Islamic Centre in my electorate. I have visited the Australian Islamic Centre repeatedly during its construction. When completed, the building will be a landmark for Melbourne's west—something that our whole community can be proud of. The mosque's design is a product of 10 years of work by Glenn Murcutt AO, perhaps Australia's most celebrated architect, in collaboration with Melbourne architect Hakan Elevli of Elevli Plus. The construction of the project has been driven for many years by financial and in-kind contributions by members of the community, led by Haddara Designs & Constructions. The mosque is the subject of an exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria entitled Glenn Murcutt: Architecture of Faith.
The building is designed to be open to the community, using open space, windows and water to invite the community into the building. As the NGV has noted:

The building, its roof studded with multi-coloured glass lanterns and without the traditional minaret or dome, challenges assumptions of historical Islamic architecture and puts forward a new architectural language for Australian Islam.

While respecting the fundamental principles and requirements of Islamic architecture, Murcutt and Elevli have pushed beyond the symbolic language of the traditional mosque, reimagining its geometry, colours, materiality and spatial organisation to create an accessible and contemporary place of worship, learning and community.

When you walk through the mosque, you feel that you are in an Australian building. There are reflective pools that are open to the community and open to the outdoors to bring in air to cool the building during the summer, and it relies on natural light to illuminate the area. The building has 96 hand-painted gold lanterns on the roof, each with a different coloured glass inset, that are facing different directions. As the sun passes over the roof of the mosque during the day, different colours and different shades of light illuminate the prayer room below. In the morning, yellow streams, representing paradise, illuminate the area. In the middle of the day, there are blues, symbolising the sky, and greens, symbolising nature. In the afternoon, red lanterns, indicating blood for strength, illuminate the area.

The design is intended to symbolise the mosque's philosophy of open arms to all members of our Australian society. As a centre for prayer, learning and community activities, the mosque's design is dominated by two soaring wings to each edge of the entrance. The symbolism of these two open arms is very clear. The mosque sits comfortably next to the Altona Miniature Railway, a very popular family destination in Melbourne's west, and their inclusive interaction with each other will certainly promote understanding and inclusion in our area.

The site was opened for tours as part of Open House Melbourne this year, and it attracted substantial community interest. As Elevli explained, in the design:

We want to create something that's inclusive—something that's going to be transparent.

As a result, the mosque includes a community centre, a library, a café and a restaurant, all designed to encourage the broader public to interact with the site. Elevli says:

That's what we want to reinforce, that people are always welcome.

I want to congratulate the Imam Abdullah for his leadership throughout the project, and I want to particularly acknowledge that the centre's builder, Mohammed Haddara of Haddara Constructions, for his extraordinary dedication to the project. This has not been an easy project for the builder to manage. It comes as the tip of a pyramid of 10 years' fundraising by the local community and 20 years' identifying a site significantly larger than the existing site on Mason Street in Newport. So the pressure on Mohammed through this process to deliver—and to deliver a construction that fully realises Glenn Murcott's design—has been extraordinary. I certainly feel for him every time that I visit the site.

In a time when we hear a lot of nonsense about Islam—and nonsense about the Australian Islamic community in particular—the Australian Islamic Centre is a model for Australia. We in Melbourne's west understand the benefits of multiculturalism because we live it. There have been no protests and no nonsense from the community in response to this mosque, and it has been supported by all levels of government: our local council; our state government
members, including Wade Noonan, the state member; and me, the federal member. Moreover, it has been supported by the broader community. The community has watched this project rise and watched the hard work of members of our community trying to build this landmark facility in Melbourne's west. I know that I express the views of all of my constituents when I say to the Islamic Centre and the Newport Islamic Society that we anticipate with great joy the opening of this centre.

Murray Electorate: Aged Care

Mr DRUM (Murray) (12:42): Last week was an amazing week for aged care in the Goulburn Valley in the seat of Murray. We had an announcement through the National Stronger Regions Fund, which is headed by Fiona Nash, that a fraction under $1 million will be provided for the Warramunda aged-care facility in Kyabram. This injection of funds is going to contribute to a nearly $10 million build in the town of Kyabram that will allow a new 22-bed dementia wing to be built to provide much needed additional places. This facility is also going to be a major driver of building investment in the region. It will be a real boost to that community. It is also going to provide necessary administration space and will house a new home-care business as well.

It was tremendous to see so many of the staff there. They are genuinely excited that this announcement has come through. This announcement was the final funding piece that the community was waiting for. The staff there were incredibly excited, as were the residents, who were very keen to see their facility have the capacity to grow. The board members were also there, as were the very proud volunteers that get in and help in and around Warramunda each and every week.

Later in the week I had the opportunity to invite Ken Wyatt, the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, to Echuca to attend a forum that we were able to hold with aged-care providers. We had about 28 representatives from around 19 different organisations or aged-care providers. It was great to be able to have Minister Wyatt there, with his capacity to understand and to empathise with a whole raft of issues that were raised by some of the providers—namely, the importance of maintaining facilities in smaller communities for the wellbeing of patients so they are able to go into residential places in close proximity to their families and, certainly, to the community network that they have grown up knowing and loving. Also, what these residential aged-care facilities mean in relation to the economy of some of our smaller communities is critically important. Quite often some of these facilities are the largest employers in some of our small towns.

It was also important to be able to talk through areas such as not only attracting quality staff but also shining a spotlight on the training that goes into some of our aged-care providers and making sure that their training is of a high quality and not just a course that may be acquired online. I think we are all now aware that residents who come into our aged-care facilities at a later stage have been able to stay at home through a large portion of their frailties. Again, this was an area where Minister Wyatt was able to assist and help. He communicated very calmly and very evenly with the aged-care providers, who were incredibly appreciative of his input and his ability to understand exactly the work that they are doing.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Fiona Nash and the National Stronger Regions Fund for the injection she was able to provide into Warramunda and for the amazing work.
that will be able to continue in the community of Kyabram. I also want to thank Assistant Minister Ken Wyatt for meeting with so many passionate aged-care providers to talk with them about the issues that they all shared and to provide a shared vision and a way forward. I think we all understand, especially members representing rural and regional electorates, that the aged-care issue is going to be more and more problematic in all of our smaller towns—and even in some of our larger ones—as a whole raft of baby boomers need to enter aged-care facilities in the next five, 10 or 15 years. We understand that, as our individual aged-care residents get older, a greater percentage of those residents will be suffering from dementia. A whole raft of additional pressures are going to be placed on this sector, and it is great to have someone like Ken Wyatt who has an understanding of the issues and is able to meet with all of those providers on a regular basis.

Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 12:48