**INTERNET**

Proof and Official Hansards for the House of Representatives, the Senate and committee hearings are available at http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard

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

**SITTING DAYS—2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>12, 13, 14, 25, 26, 27, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- **ADELAIDE** 972AM
- **BRISBANE** 936AM
- **CANBERRA** 103.9FM
- **DARWIN** 102.5FM
- **HOBART** 747AM
- **MELBOURNE** 1026AM
- **PERTH** 585AM
- **SYDNEY** 630AM

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

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

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP
Members of the Speaker's Panel—Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP,
Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP,
Mr Patrick Martin Conroy MP, Mr Alexander George Hawke MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Ms Sarah Moya Henderson MP, Mr Stephen James Irons MP, Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP,
Mr Craig Kelly MP, Ms Michelle Leanne Landry, Ms Clare Ellen O'Neil, MP,
Mrs Jane Prentice MP, Mr Donald James Randall MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP,
Mr Brett David Whiteley MP, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP

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

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Mr Scott Buchholz MP
Government Whips—Mr Andrew Alexander Nikolic, AM, CSC and
Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

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

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

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
### Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbott, The Hon. Anthony John</td>
<td>Warringah, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanese, The Hon. Anthony Norman</td>
<td>Grayndler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander, Mr John Gilbert OAM</td>
<td>Bennelong, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Mrs Karen Lesley</td>
<td>McPherson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, The Hon. Kevin James</td>
<td>Menzies, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin, The Hon. Robert Charles</td>
<td>Paterson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandt, Mr Adam Paul</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billson, The Hon. Bruce Fredrick</td>
<td>Dunkley, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird, The Hon. Sharon Leah</td>
<td>Cunningham, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, The Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen</td>
<td>Mackellar, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, The Hon. Julie Isabel</td>
<td>Curtin, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen, The Hon. Chris Eyles</td>
<td>McMahon, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briggs, The Hon. Jamie Edward</td>
<td>Mayo, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad, Mr Andrew John</td>
<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan</td>
<td>McMillan, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brodman, Ms Gai Marie</td>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brough, The Hon. Malcolm Thomas</td>
<td>Fisher, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchholz, Mr Scott</td>
<td>Wright, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, Ms Anna Elizabeth</td>
<td>Chisholm, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, The Hon. Anthony Stephen</td>
<td>Watson, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, The Hon. Anthony Stephen</td>
<td>Port Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, Ms Terri Megan</td>
<td>Griffith, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrne, The Hon. Anthony Michael</td>
<td>Holt, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalmers, Dr James Edward</td>
<td>Rankin, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion, Mr Nicholas David</td>
<td>Wakefield, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester, The Hon. Darren</td>
<td>Gippsland, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie</td>
<td>Bendigo, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christensen, Mr George Robert</td>
<td>Dawson, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciobo, The Hon. Steven Michele</td>
<td>Moncrieff, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare, The Hon. Jason Dean</td>
<td>Blaxland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine</td>
<td>Newcastle, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobb, The Hon. John Kenneth</td>
<td>Calare, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleman, Mr David Bernard</td>
<td>Banks, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins, The Hon. Julie Maree</td>
<td>Franklin, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conroy, Mr Patrick Martin</td>
<td>Charlton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulton, Mr Mark Maclean</td>
<td>Parkes, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danby, The Hon. Michael</td>
<td>Melbourne Ports, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreyfus, The Hon. Mark Alfred QC</td>
<td>Isaacs, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutton, The Hon. Peter Craig</td>
<td>Dickson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliott, The Hon. Maria Justine</td>
<td>Richmond, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis, The Hon. Katherine Margaret</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entsch, The Hon. Warren George</td>
<td>Leichhardt, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeeny, The Hon. David</td>
<td>Batman, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson, Mr Laurie Donald Thomas</td>
<td>Werriwa, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzgibbon, The Hon. Joel Andrew</td>
<td>Hunter, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher, The Hon. Paul William</td>
<td>Bradfield, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frydenberg, The Hon. Joshua Anthony</td>
<td>Kooyong, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambaro, The Hon. Teresa</td>
<td>Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles, Mr Andrew James</td>
<td>Scullin, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillespie, Dr David Arthur</td>
<td>Lyne, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald</td>
<td>Moore, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray, The Hon. Gary AO</td>
<td>Brand, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffin, The Hon. Alan Peter</td>
<td>Bruce, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griggs, Mrs Natasha Louise</td>
<td>Solomon, NT</td>
<td>CLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, Ms Jill Griffiths</td>
<td>Shortland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartsuyker, The Hon. Luke</td>
<td>Cowper, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke, Mr Alexander George</td>
<td>Mitchell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes, Mr Christopher Patrick</td>
<td>Fowler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson, Ms Sarah Moya</td>
<td>Corangamite, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendy, Dr Peter William</td>
<td>Eden-Monaro, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey, The Hon. Joseph Benedict</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogan, Mr Kevin John</td>
<td>Page, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howarth, Mr Luke Ronald</td>
<td>Petrie, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt, The Hon. Gregory Andrew</td>
<td>Flinders, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husic, The Hon. Edham Nurreddin</td>
<td>Chifley, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutchinson, Mr Eric Russell</td>
<td>Lyons, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irons, Mr Stephen James</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jensen, Dr Dennis Geoffrey</td>
<td>Tangney, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr Ewen Thomas</td>
<td>Herbert, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr Stephen Patrick</td>
<td>Throsby, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katter, The Hon. Robert Carl</td>
<td>Kennedy, QLD</td>
<td>AUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keenan, The Hon. Michael</td>
<td>Stirling, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, Mr Craig</td>
<td>Hughes, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, The Hon. Catherine Fiona</td>
<td>Ballarat, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laming, Mr Andrew</td>
<td>Bowman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landry, Ms Michelle Leanne</td>
<td>Capricornia, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundy, Mr Craig</td>
<td>Reid, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh, The Hon. Dr Andrew Keith</td>
<td>Fraser, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ley, The Hon. Susan Penelope</td>
<td>Farrer, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macfarlane, The Hon. Ian Elgin</td>
<td>Groom, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macklin, The Hon. Jennifer Louise</td>
<td>Jagajaga, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacTierian, The Hon. Alannah Joan Geraldine Cecilia</td>
<td>Perth, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marino, Ms Nola Bethwyn</td>
<td>Forrest, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus, Mrs Louise Elizabeth</td>
<td>Macquarie, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marles, The Hon. Richard Donald</td>
<td>Corio, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matheson, Mr Russell Glenn</td>
<td>Macarthur, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCormack, The Hon. Michael Francis</td>
<td>Riverina, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGowan, Ms Catherine AO</td>
<td>Indi, VIC</td>
<td>IND.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McNamara, Mrs Karen Jane</td>
<td>Dobell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell, Mr Robert George</td>
<td>McEwen, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison, The Hon. Scott John</td>
<td>Cook, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neumann, The Hon. Shayne Kenneth</td>
<td>Blair, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolic, Mr Andrew Alexander AM, CSC</td>
<td>Bass, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Connor, The Hon. Brendan Patrick John</td>
<td>Gorton, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Dowd, Mr Kenneth Desmond</td>
<td>Flynn, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Dwyer, The Hon. Ms Kelly Megan</td>
<td>Higgins, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Neil, Ms Clare Ellen</td>
<td>Hotham, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owens, Ms Julie</td>
<td>Parramatta, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer, Mr Clive Frederick</td>
<td>Fairfax QLD</td>
<td>PUP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parke, The Hon. Melissa</td>
<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasin, Mr Antony</td>
<td>Barker, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas</td>
<td>Moreton, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitt, Mr Keith John</td>
<td>Hinkler, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plibersek, The Hon. Tanya Joan</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter, The Hon. Charles Christian</td>
<td>Pearce, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prentice, Mrs Jane</td>
<td>Ryan, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price, Ms Melissa Lee</td>
<td>Durack, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyne, The Hon. Christopher Maurice</td>
<td>Sturt, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric</td>
<td>Grey, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randall, Mr Don James</td>
<td>Canning, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ripoll, The Hon. Bernard Fernando</td>
<td>Oxley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rishworth, The Hon. Amanda Louise</td>
<td>Kingston, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robb, The Hon. Andrew John AO</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert, The Hon. Stuart Rowland</td>
<td>Fadden, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowland, Ms Michelle Anne</td>
<td>Greenway, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy, Mr Wyatt</td>
<td>Longman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruddock, The Hon. Philip Maxwell</td>
<td>Berowra, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine</td>
<td>Lalor, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, The Hon. Bruce Craig</td>
<td>Maranoa, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Ms Fiona Meryl</td>
<td>Lindsay, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten, The Hon. William Richard</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpkins, Mr Luke Xavier Linton</td>
<td>Cowan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, The Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn</td>
<td>Casey, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowdon, The Hon. Warren Edward</td>
<td>Lingiari, NT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southcott, Dr Andrew John</td>
<td>Boothby, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone, The Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy</td>
<td>Murray, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudmalis, Ms Ann Elizabeth</td>
<td>Gilmore, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukkar, Mr Michael</td>
<td>Deakin, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan, The Hon. Wayne Maxwell</td>
<td>Lilley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, Mr Angus James</td>
<td>Hume, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehan, Mr Daniel Thomas (Dan)</td>
<td>Wannon, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thistlethwaite, The Hon. Mr Matthew James</td>
<td>Kingsford Smith, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson, The Hon. Kelvin John</td>
<td>Wills, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truss, The Hon. Warren Errol</td>
<td>Wide Bay, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudge, The Hon. Alan Edward</td>
<td>Aston, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnbull, The Hon. Malcolm Bligh</td>
<td>Wentworth, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vamvakinou, Ms Maria</td>
<td>Calwell, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>van Manen, Mr Albertus Johannes</td>
<td>Forde, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varvaris, Mr Nickolas</td>
<td>Barton, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier</td>
<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watts, Mr Timothy Graham</td>
<td>Gellibrand, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Members of the House of Representatives

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

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

- Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
- Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
- Acting Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—D Heriot
- Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen

v
## ABBOTT MINISTRY

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

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

BILLS—

Export Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015—
  First Reading ................................................................. 5623
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5623
Export Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2015—
  First Reading ................................................................. 5625
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5625
Export Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2015—
  First Reading ................................................................. 5625
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5625
Export Charges (Collection) Bill 2015—
  First Reading ................................................................. 5625
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5625
Imported Food Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015—
  First Reading ................................................................. 5626
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5626
Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2015—
  First Reading ................................................................. 5628
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5628
Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2015—
  First Reading ................................................................. 5628
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5628
Imported Food Charges (Collection) Bill 2015—
  First Reading ................................................................. 5629
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5629
Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Bill 2015—
  First Reading ................................................................. 5630
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5630
Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (Consequential and
  Transitional Provisions) Bill 2015—
  First Reading ................................................................. 5634
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5634
Customs Amendment (Australian Trusted Trader Programme) Bill 2015—
  First Reading ................................................................. 5635
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5635
Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015—
  Second Reading ............................................................. 5637

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—
  Open and Accountable Government ........................................ 5688
  Electorate of Wannon: The Serra Terror Endurance Event .............. 5688
  Stubbs, Mr John .............................................................. 5689
## CONTENTS—continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Sight of Dreams Foundation</td>
<td>5689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>5690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey Electorate: Thanksgiving Day Breakfast</td>
<td>5690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroney, Mrs Beverley Ann</td>
<td>5690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boothby Electorate: Budget</td>
<td>5691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper, Ms Marlene</td>
<td>5691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moorebank Concrete Recycling Plant</td>
<td>5692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Television</td>
<td>5692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illicit Drugs</td>
<td>5692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indi Electorate: Building a Local Food Future Forum</td>
<td>5693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Security</td>
<td>5693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petition: Asylum Seekers</td>
<td>5694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume Electorate: Child Care</td>
<td>5695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddie Mabo Day</td>
<td>5695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beenleigh State School</td>
<td>5695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drought</td>
<td>5696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrie Electorate: Sport</td>
<td>5696</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Business</td>
<td>5697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>5697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Business</td>
<td>5698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>5699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Business</td>
<td>5700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Australia</td>
<td>5701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet</td>
<td>5703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>5703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Australia</td>
<td>5704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>5705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Security</td>
<td>5706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Unions</td>
<td>5708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superannuation</td>
<td>5709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Security</td>
<td>5710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superannuation</td>
<td>5711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illicit Drugs</td>
<td>5711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superannuation</td>
<td>5712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon Pricing</td>
<td>5713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Violence</td>
<td>5714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>5715</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions in Writing</td>
<td>5716</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions in Writing</td>
<td>5717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing Orders</td>
<td>5717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### COMMITTEES—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection Committee</td>
<td>5717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>5717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS—continued

AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS .................................................................................................................. 5723
DOCUMENTS—
Presentation .................................................................................................................................................. 5723
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE—
Budget ....................................................................................................................................................... 5723
CONDOLENCES—
Johnson, Hon. Leslie Royston, AM—
Reference to Federation Chamber ........................................................................................................... 5738
BILLS—
Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015—
Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 2) Bill 2015—
Second Reading ......................................................................................................................................... 5738
ADJOURNMENT—
Access to Government Services .................................................................................................................. 5781
South China Sea .......................................................................................................................................... 5782
Kirner, Mrs Joan Elizabeth AC ................................................................................................................... 5783
Page Electorate ........................................................................................................................................... 5784
McEwen Electorate: Broadband .................................................................................................................... 5785
Queensland: Infrastructure ............................................................................................................................ 5787
NOTICES ....................................................................................................................................................... 5788

Federation Chamber
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS—
Holt Electorate: Casey Cultural Precinct Regional Arts Centre ............................................................... 5791
Holt Electorate: headspace ............................................................................................................................ 5791
Holt Electorate: Medicare ............................................................................................................................... 5791
Page Electorate: Citizen of the Year Awards ............................................................................................... 5792
Page Electorate: Disaster Recovery Payment .............................................................................................. 5792
Paterson Electorate: Category C Assistance for Primary Producers ......................................................... 5792
Gellibrand Electorate: Arts Funding ............................................................................................................ 5792
Agriculture .................................................................................................................................................. 5793
Irrigation ..................................................................................................................................................... 5794
Australian Natural Disasters ....................................................................................................................... 5795
Multiculturalism ........................................................................................................................................ 5795
Lyons Electorate: Campbell Town Show ....................................................................................................... 5796
Infrastructure ............................................................................................................................................ 5797
Lindsay Electorate: Youth Sports Grants ....................................................................................................... 5798

BILLS—
Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016—
Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015-2016—
Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016—
Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2014-2015—
Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2014-2015—
Second Reading .......................................................................................................................................... 5799
Consideration in Detail ................................................................................................................................. 5823
CONTENTS—continued

BUSINESS—
  Rearrangement ........................................................................................................ 5823
CONDOLENCES—
  Johnson, Hon. Leslie Royston, AM......................................................................... 5823
  Kirner, Ms Joan Elizabeth, AC.................................................................................. 5826
ADJOURNMENT ........................................................................................................... 5836
BILLS

Export Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture) (09:01): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Agriculture is a vital part of the Australian economy. As a nation, we are a net exporter of agricultural produce, forecast to be worth $40 billion this financial year.

Australia's produce is of the highest standard in the world. Our enviable pest and disease status gives our farmers a unique advantage over many of their competitors.

The Department of Agriculture plays a significant role in supporting our exporting farmers and agricultural industries.

The department's important work can be seen in opening and expanding access to export markets. In the past year we have secured access for kangaroo meat into Peru and lychee and mango exports to the United States. This has opened the door for Australian growers to export some of our finest quality produce.

This behind the scenes work is critical for Australia's agricultural sector. It contributes to progressing new and expanded trade agreements, opening more markets for farmers, and bringing greater returns to the farm gate.

Access for Australian agricultural exports relies on the department's certification, inspection and auditing activities that provide assurance to other countries that their conditions of import are met. Last year alone, the department issued around 300,000 export certificates covering meat, grain, horticulture and fibre products. It also provided inspection and certification for the export of over 3.1 million live animals.

Maintaining a robust export system comes at a cost. The Australian government has had a longstanding policy of recovering these costs from those individuals and businesses that receive export certification activities.

In 2014, the Australian government reaffirmed this policy. Agencies should set charges to recover the efficient costs of activities that they provide.

Cost recovery encourages the efficient use of government services. It also allows public scrutiny of the costs of government activities. Cost recovery also provides the Department of Agriculture with a sustainable source of funding. It enables the department to meet increased demand for export services as Australia grows its agricultural exports, especially in the ever-increasing South-East Asian market.
The cost of export services must not affect our competitiveness in international markets. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences has recently reviewed the impact of cost recovery on agricultural exports.

This work has shown that most of Australia’s key competitors also have cost recovery arrangements in place for these types of services. The impact of full cost recovery on the value of Australian exports is less than 0.8 per cent.

Government export certification costs are a small price to pay when you consider the returns to farmers and exporters from their ability to sell products overseas.

New charging legislation is needed to recover costs under both the Export Control Act 1982 and the Australian Meat and Livestock Industry Act 1997. Existing export charging legislation is complex and allows for the recovery of costs under the Export Control Act only.

This legislation will ensure that the costs of administering the export system can be recovered appropriately and equitably across the supply chain of all exporters of live animals and reproductive material.

Changes to improve equity are supported by exporters but are not possible under the current charging legislation.

The Export Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015 is the first of four bills that provide the appropriate cost recovery mechanism for export related services and activities.

Specifically, the bill will enable cost recovery of activities that provide general benefits to agricultural exporters. Particularly, the recovery of costs associated with program management and administration, verification, risk and incident management activities.

This bill will sit alongside legislation that allows the Department of Agriculture to apply fees that recover the department’s costs of those activities provided directly to people such as inspection and audit services.

The bill does not itself set the amount of the charges and will not impose any financial impacts. The charges and who is liable and exempt from paying the charges will be set in regulations.

This bill ensures the Minister for Agriculture is satisfied that the amount charged will not be more than the likely cost of delivering the activity. This will provide clients with confidence that the government will not charge more than is necessary to recover the costs of its export services.

Three companion bills are being introduced alongside this bill, the Export Charges (Imposition-Customs) Bill 2015, the Export Charges (Imposition-Excise) Bill 2015 and the Export Charges (Collection) Bill 2015.

This package of bills will ensure that appropriate cost recovery mechanisms are in place for all export certification related activities. It provides a flexible and common-sense structure for applying cost recovery charges. This supports the important work undertaken by the Department of Agriculture in progressing the interests of farmers and exporters across the country.

I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.
Export Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2015

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture) (09:07): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Export Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2015 is the second of four bills being introduced to form the export charging legislative package.

The Export Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2015 will impose charges only when they are considered a duty of customs. The key provisions of the bill mirror those in the Export Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015 and have the same operative function and effect.

The bill does not itself set the amount of the charges and will not impose any financial impacts. The amounts recovered by the charges, and the persons liable or exempt from paying them, will be set in delegated legislation under this act.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Export Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2015

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture) (09:09): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Export Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2015 is the third of four bills being introduced to form the export charging legislative package.

The Export Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2015 will impose charges only when they are considered a duty of excise. The key provisions of the bill mirror those in the Export Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015 and have the same operative function and effect.

The bill does not itself set the amount of the charges and will not impose any financial impacts. The amounts recovered by charges, and the persons liable or exempt from paying them, will be set in delegated legislation under this act.

I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Export Charges (Collection) Bill 2015

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.

Bill read a first time.
Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture) (09:11): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

The Export Charges (Collection) Bill 2015 is the final bill being introduced to form the export charging legislative package.

The Export Charges (Collection) Bill 2015 will provide authority to collect charges imposed under the Export Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015, the Export Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2015 and the Export Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2015.

The bill provides that the regulations will determine the time allowed to pay charges.

The regulations under this bill will also outline the liability of a person's agent to pay charges on that person's behalf and establish appropriate late payment fees where charges are not paid in the time allowed.

Specifying such matters in regulations, as opposed to the act itself, provides the department with sufficient flexibility to ensure that these matters are appropriate in all circumstances.

The bill also provides the Commonwealth with mechanisms to appropriately deal with nonpayment. This includes powers to refuse service or to suspend or revoke export approvals.

Unpaid charges and late payment fees will be considered as debts to the Commonwealth and may be recovered by action in a relevant court.

The bill sets out provisions for the remitting or refunding of charges or late payment fees where the secretary believes there is sufficient reason to do so.

Together these four bills being introduced today will ensure cost recovery arrangements for activities provided in relation to exports are appropriately supported.

As mentioned earlier, sustainably funding the export services is essential for maintaining farmers' access to overseas markets, strengthening our position as an exporter of the highest quality agricultural goods and ensuring Australia has a vibrant agricultural sector now and in the future.

Debate adjourned.

**Second Reading**

**Imported Food Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture) (09:14): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Australia's participation in global markets provides consumers with access to a wide range of food products from all over the world, year round. The range of imported food products reflects the demand of Australian consumers and the diversity of our population.

This government works hard to maintain Australia's access to high-quality and affordable food. Having some of the most stringent food standards in the world provides a high level of protection for Australian consumers.
Consumers rightly expect that food imported from overseas meets the same standards of food produced in Australia.

We have biosecurity arrangements that safeguard Australia from unwanted pests and diseases and protect Australia's economy. We also have measures to ensure imported food complies with Australian health and safety standards.

The Imported Food Control Act 1992 allows us to monitor the compliance of imported food with Australian food standards. The Department of Agriculture relies on a risk based regime of inspecting and testing imported food. Importers operating under recognised food management systems are regularly audited to ensure compliance with food standards.

These arrangements come at a cost. Importers of food need to pay for this.

Having the right cost recovery mechanisms in place will support Australia's capacity to manage public health and safety of imported food. The Australian government has had a long standing policy of recovering these costs from those people that receive activities related to the importation of food.

In 2014, the Australian government reaffirmed this policy. Agencies should set charges to recover the efficient costs of activities that they provide.

Consistent with the arrangements that are in place for the imposition and collections of charges for biosecurity activities from the users of the biosecurity system, this bill provides for the same charging arrangements to be established for imported food.

The Imported Food Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015 is the first of four bills that will establish the legislative basis that allows for charges to be imposed to recover costs from food importers.

Specifically, the bill will enable cost recovery of activities that provide general benefits to food importers. This bill will enable the recovery of costs for administering the imported-food regulatory framework including the development of audit and compliance standards for third-party arrangements.

The legislation will sit alongside the existing cost recovery legislation that allows for the recovery of the department's costs for activities provided directly to people, such as inspection and audit services.

This legislation is designed purely as a cost recovery mechanism. The legislation requires that the Minister for Agriculture be satisfied that the amount charged will not be more than the likely costs of delivering the activity. This will provide clients with confidence that the government will not over-recover the costs of its imported-food services.

The bill does not of itself set the amount of the charges and will not impose any financial impacts. The charges and who is liable and exempt from paying the charges will be set in regulations.

The legislation has been drafted to be consistent with Australia's international trade obligations. This will also be the case in drafting any delegated legislation.

Three companion bills are being introduced alongside this bill, the Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2015, the Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2015, and the Imported Food Charges (Collection) Bill 2015.
This package of bills will ensure that appropriate cost recovery mechanisms are in place for all imported-food-related activities. It provides a flexible and common-sense structure for applying cost recovery charges. This supports the important work undertaken by the Department of Agriculture to monitor the compliance of imported food with Australian food standards.

I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2015

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture) (09:19): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2015 is the second of four bills being introduced to form this legislative package.

The Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2015 will impose charges only when they are considered a duty of customs. The key provisions of the bill mirror those in the Imported Food Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015 and have the same operative function and effect.

The bill does not of itself set the amount of the charges and will not impose any financial impacts. The charges and who is liable and exempt from paying the charges will be set in regulations.

I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2015

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture) (09:21): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2015 is the third of four bills being introduced to form this legislative package.

The Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2015 will impose charges only when they are considered a duty of excise. The key provisions of the bill mirror those in the Imported Food Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015 and have the same operative function and effect.
The bill does not of itself set the amount of the charges and will not impose any financial impacts. The charges and who is liable and exempt from paying the charges will be set in delegated legislation.
I commend this bill to the House.
Debate adjourned.

**Imported Food Charges (Collection) Bill 2015**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.
Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture) (09:22): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Imported Food Charges (Collection) Bill 2015 is the final being introduced as part of the package to provide appropriate cost recovery arrangements for managing imported food. These arrangements are consistent with the Australian government's cost recovery policy.

The Imported Food Charges (Collection) Bill 2015 will provide authority to collect charges imposed under the Imported Food Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2015, the Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2015 and the Imported Food Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2015.

The bill provides that the regulations will determine the time allowed to pay charges. It does not of itself set the amount of the charges and will not impose any financial impacts.

The regulations under this bill will also outline the liability of a person's agent to pay charges on that person's behalf and establish appropriate late-payment fees where charges are not paid in the time allowed.

Specifying such matters in regulations, as opposed to the act itself, provides the department with sufficient flexibility to ensure that these matters are appropriate in all circumstances.

The bill also provides the Commonwealth with mechanisms to appropriately deal with nonpayment. This includes powers to refuse service or to suspend or revoke certificates, compliance agreements or any other approval given under the Imported Food Control Act 1992 until payment is made.

Unpaid charges and late-payment fees will be considered debts to the Commonwealth and may be recovered by action in a relevant court.

The bill sets out provisions for the remitting or refunding of charges or late-payment fees where the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture believes there is sufficient reason.

Together these four bills being introduced today will ensure cost recovery arrangements for activities provided in relation to imported food are appropriately supported. As mentioned earlier, these fund the arrangements which contribute to the management of the compliance, health and safety of imported food for all Australians.

I commend this bill to the House.
Debate adjourned.
The SPEAKER: It has been splendid to see such adherence to our constitutional requirements in operation this morning.

**Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Bill 2015**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Billson.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (09:26): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Bill 2015, and its accompanying Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2015, fulfil a key coalition election commitment to establish an Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman. They are yet another demonstration of the commitment of the Abbott government to the small businesses and family enterprises of Australia. I would like to take a moment briefly to outline the contribution of small business to our economy, and the challenges this crucial sector faces.

There are more than two million actively trading small businesses in Australia. Ninety-six per cent of all Australian businesses are small businesses. Combined, small businesses produce more than $330 billion of total economic national output, and employ over 4.5 million people. Many small businesses are also family enterprises, which represent 70 per cent of all Australian businesses. These businesses and their enterprising women and men are the foundation on which Australia's economy is built and our future prosperity will be realised.

Small business people face many challenges. Family enterprises share these challenges, and face others as well—such as succession planning. Small business people and those who run family enterprises put a lot of time and effort into their business. They deserve our respect and support.

Small businesses are often treated as if they were big businesses with all the resources of a big business. Important compliance demands faced by small businesses include:

- the workplace relations framework;
- competition policy;
- contract law;
- business and tax law; and
- business processes and communications.

Big businesses, with their accountants and their legal departments, are better equipped to deal with such matters. For small business people, time spent on compliance demands is time away from investing in the success of their enterprise.

Australian governments have not always understood these challenges and the needs of small businesses and family enterprises. Under the former Labor government, small business was not a priority. There was a revolving door of small business ministers, including five in
the final 15 months of Labor's term in office. More importantly, over the six years of the former Labor government, 519,000 jobs were lost in small business. At the end of Labor's term, fewer small businesses were actually employing people than when Labor started, with the small business share of the private sector workforce falling from 52 per cent to 43 per cent of all employees.

This coalition government, this Abbott government, is committed to turning this situation around. We know the hardworking women and men of Australian small businesses are the engine room of our economy, and a key impediment to their growth is unnecessary red tape and excessive regulation. We are implementing a general deregulation agenda, which will ensure that Commonwealth legislation and regulations are small business friendly, and this especially focuses on the particular demands of small business and family enterprises. A good regulatory regime can make all the difference to the productivity of small businesses and family enterprises, and decisions about when, or whether, a business should proceed with an investment or a decision to expand or recruit additional employees. Because small businesses feel the burden of regulation more keenly than large businesses, the government's deregulation efforts will especially benefit small businesses.

I often speak with admiration of the courage that small business people display when taking risks to start their businesses. These people now have a cabinet-level champion, with the Abbott government the first to give small business its own dedicated cabinet-level position. But small business also deserve an advocate embedded within the federal bureaucracy who understands their concerns and can assist them. As of March, the government had announced reforms to generate more than $2.45 billion in annual red tape compliance cost savings. These are reductions that make a real difference for businesses on the ground. However, in addition to an evangelical minister, an advocate within the Commonwealth machinery can help the government do more.

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Bill will establish the position of the ombudsman who will assist the small business and family enterprise sectors. The ombudsman will have two key functions, an advocacy function and an assistance function. Through these functions, the ombudsman will meet our commitment to establish a role that is:

- a Commonwealth-wide advocate for small businesses and family enterprises;
- a concierge for dispute resolution, who will also offer an outsourced alternative dispute resolution service; and
- a contributor to making Commonwealth laws and regulations more small business friendly.

The advocacy function of the ombudsman will build on the role and work of the Australian Small Business Commissioner, which was created without 'commission' or legislative backing by the former government after the widespread support for the coalition's policy initiative and 2010 election commitment. The former government asked Mr Mark Brennan to be an advocate for the small business sector, but the role was not underpinned by any specific legislation. The ombudsman will be much more, and will have strong, legislated powers. Despite the limitations of the current commissioner's role, Mr Brennan has and continues to function well in his role and is contributing positively to the preparations and groundwork for the ombudsman.
Mr Brennan has my ongoing thanks, and doubtless also the thanks of the small business sector.

The advocacy function will allow the ombudsman to advocate for small businesses and family enterprises in relation to relevant legislation, policies and practices. The ombudsman, with an expanded advocacy role, will listen to small businesses and family enterprises and work with the Treasury portfolio to ensure small business perspectives and views are front of mind and embedded in bureaucratic, consultative and policy and program development, analysis and review processes across the Commonwealth. To assist this expanded advocacy role, the ombudsman will have the information-gathering powers to be able to investigate and make recommendations to government on the wide range of issues affecting small businesses and family enterprises. The ombudsman will also promote best practice, to address the key concerns of small businesses and family enterprises, as they interact with the public sector and corporations.

The ombudsman will not duplicate the functions of other officials. The ombudsman will therefore work collaboratively with Commonwealth officials, such as the Commonwealth Ombudsman, and the state small business commissioners, as well as other relevant officials across all jurisdictions. As part of this collaboration, the ombudsman will identify systemic issues that warrant a national approach, and advise the government about such matters.

To assist with the deregulation agenda, the ombudsman will provide advice on proposed and existing legislation, regulations and practices. The ombudsman will therefore help ensure that the interests of small businesses and family enterprises are at the centre of policy and program design at the bureaucratic level, just as I am doing as minister at the cabinet level. The ombudsman will also help ensure that, wherever possible, red tape burdens are minimised, removed or prevented from being imposed.

The bill also allows for the minister to refer matters to the ombudsman for inquiry. This part of the advocacy function is similar to that available under the Productivity Commission Act 1998, and it is intended to provide a formal framework and supporting powers under which the ombudsman can be asked to undertake a public inquiry into matters of significant interest to small businesses or family enterprises. In these circumstances, the minister will be required to table the report of the ombudsman's inquiry in each house of parliament.

Under the assistance function, the ombudsman will fulfil an important alternative dispute resolution role, providing improved access to justice for small businesses at the Commonwealth level. The ombudsman assistance function requires the ombudsman to give assistance in relation to relevant actions if requested to do so, and will comprise two parts—a concierge role and an outsourced alternative dispute resolution service.

A key requirement of the ombudsman is to not duplicate the functions of Commonwealth, state or territory officials. Instead under the ombudsman concierge role, small businesses and family enterprises will be referred, where appropriate, to existing agencies that can deal with their issues. The concierge role acknowledges that a number of services already exist for small business issues, complaints and disputes, but that small businesses often do not know where to turn for support. Under the assistance function, small businesses may approach the ombudsman for assistance for any dispute or complaint. However, the ombudsman must transfer a request for assistance to another Commonwealth, state or territory agency, if that
agency could deal with the request and it would be more effective and convenient for that agency to do so.

The ombudsman will also provide an outsourced alternative dispute resolution service, dealing with matters involving, for example, interstate and international commerce. As part of this facilitated dispute resolution function, the ombudsman may recommend that an alternative dispute resolution process be undertaken. The ombudsman may further advise parties to a dispute of relevant providers that may be able to independently perform the alternative dispute resolution process. To support the facilitation of early and cost-effective dispute resolution, the ombudsman may publicise the failure of a party to participate in a recommended alternative dispute resolution process. This approach is intended to incentivise parties to genuinely participate in an alternative dispute resolution process.

The ombudsman’s alternative dispute resolution service will complement the concierge role and has been designed to work with, and not replace, existing systems across the Commonwealth, states and territories. The government does not want to complicate matters, nor create ‘forum shopping’ opportunities for the multiple handling of single concerns or grievances. This facilitated dispute resolution service will be underpinned by the Commonwealth’s reach under the Constitution, and will be bound by the requirement that the ombudsman not duplicate the functions of existing agencies.

When used effectively, alternative dispute resolution services help improve business productivity, preserve business relationships, and avoid expensive litigation. It is important that the ombudsman facilitate, and not hinder, the timely resolution of disputes. The outsourced alternative dispute resolution service has been designed so that the ombudsman can help parties understand their options, but that any alternative dispute resolution process is conducted by an independent practitioner chosen by the parties. This separation will give everyone confidence in the independence and integrity of the ombudsman alternative dispute resolution service, and allow the ombudsman to advocate on broader matters relevant to small businesses and family enterprises.

Further to these functions, the ombudsman will also seamlessly link with the government’s single access point for business information, services and assistance, which will form part of the government’s Digital Transformation Agenda. It can be extremely frustrating for businesses to make sense of the often complex information and broad array of services on offer. Consequently, the ombudsman will direct people to information about accessing Commonwealth small business programs and assistance.

One area where the ombudsman will not undertake a formal role at this time is in relation to dispute resolution under the mandatory industry codes for franchising, horticulture and oil. Unfortunately the specific requirements under each code do not align with the operation of an ombudsman who is an advocate. However, the ombudsman will be able to receive such enquiries regarding industry codes matters, and, through its concierge role, refer businesses to the mediation or dispute resolution adviser under each code. The success of this arrangement, as well as potential solutions to formally align the mandatory codes and any voluntary codes with the ombudsman, will be considered in the future. I anticipate that it will be considered before or as part of a review of the ombudsman assistance function. Under the bill, the first review must be completed not later than 30 June 2017.
This government listens to small businesses and family enterprises, and the bill is the result of extensive consultations. I take this opportunity to thank the wide range of stakeholders who participated and demonstrated great good will and interest in the various stages of the consultation process.

In particular, I would like to thank my ministerial counterparts in the states and territories, the state-based commissioners, Commonwealth agencies such as the Commonwealth Ombudsman and ACCC, as well as industry ombudsmen and others that currently provide dispute resolution or policy advocacy support to small business. The success of the ombudsman will depend on its relationships with these and other organisations. Their feedback has helped ensure that the bill will help these relationships grow and prosper, to the service and benefit of small businesses and family enterprises across Australia.

An Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman was first proposed by the coalition before the 2010 election. This bill is the latest step in a long standing coalition commitment to support and be the best advocate and ally of the small business community. Small businesses have waited a long time for this new role. That is why I am delighted to bring this bill to the House and commend it to my colleagues.

Debate adjourned.

**Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2015**

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Billson.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (09:41): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2015 (the bill) is part of the legislative package that will establish the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman.

The ombudsman will not duplicate the functions of other officials, and will work collaboratively with other officials, including the Commonwealth Ombudsman. This bill's consequential provisions therefore will amend the Commonwealth Ombudsman Act 1976, to allow the Commonwealth Ombudsman to transfer matters to the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman.

I thank the Commonwealth Ombudsman for his contribution to the drafting of this bill. The collaborative approach evident in the drafting process will, I am sure, continue and result in small businesses and family enterprises having their matters dealt with, conveniently and effectively, by the most appropriate agency.

The current Australian Small Business Commissioner provides advocacy and representation for small business interests and concerns to the Australian government. Persons sometimes also seek the commissioner's assistance in looking for information. The bill's transitional provisions allow any work of the commissioner, which is ongoing at the time the ombudsman is created, to be transferred to the ombudsman.
I commend the bill to the House.
Debate adjourned.

**Customs Amendment (Australian Trusted Trader Programme) Bill 2015**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr McCormack for Mr Dutton.
Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (09:43): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Customs Amendment (Australian Trusted Trader Programme) Bill 2015 establishes the Australian Trusted Trader Program, sets up the framework for the Australian Trusted Trader Program and enables trusted traders to benefit from streamlined customs procedures.

The Australian Trusted Trader Program—which has been co-designed with industry stakeholders, partner agencies and international counterparts—is a trade facilitation initiative based on internationally recognised supply chain security and trade compliance principles which contribute to a holistic compliance framework.

The program provides an opportunity to reduce the regulation of our international traders and enhance supply chain security. Consistent with the World Customs Organization SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade, the Australian Trusted Trader Program will introduce a differentiated trust-based regulatory framework at the border for those entities that meet or exceed international supply chain security and trade compliance standards.

Entities meeting these standards will be assessed as low-risk and benefit from reduced regulatory burden and streamlined customs procedures. This will alleviate a significant trade burden and enhance the competitiveness of Australian international businesses.

This approach, which is commonly known as the Authorized Economic Operator model, has been adopted by all of Australia's major trading partners over the last ten years. It is also consistent with the government's deregulation agenda and contributes to the Economic Action Strategy and is included in the Prime Minister's Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda.

The approach is also a key component of the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade Facilitation and an integral part of the government's commitment to foster legitimate trade as outlined in the government's G20 Australia 2014—Comprehensive Growth Strategy.

The program will be an important element of a compliance continuum that will provide a better understanding of the entities moving goods across our borders. This strategy will work to 'shrink the haystack' by removing accredited entities from traditional transaction based border risk assessment. This reform is important for managing the increasing volume of trade growth and ensuring that resources can be diverted away from highly compliant traders to focus on risk and noncompliance.
The bill is intended to commence on 1 July 2015 for a period of 12 months, in line with the commencement of the pilot phase of the Australian Trusted Trader Program. The pilot phase will include a limited number of participants to test and refine processes and the design.

Firstly, the bill will amend the customs act to enable the Comptroller-General of Customs to establish the program in accordance with the framework set out in the bill. Participation in the program is voluntary and will allow entities such as importers, exporters, customs brokers, freight forwarders and transport companies to nominate themselves to participate in the program.

Secondly, the bill will amend the Customs Act to set up the framework for the program. There are three key powers under the framework:

- The first is the power of the Comptroller-General of Customs to enter into a trusted trader agreement. Entering into a trusted trader agreement will confer an interim trusted trader status on the entity. An entity with interim trusted trader status may receive certain administrative benefits which will be prescribed in the rules. These kinds of benefits will provide a more streamlined experience to the trusted trader when interacting with the department.

- The second is the power of the Comptroller-General of Customs to vary a trusted trader agreement following physical inspection and audit to confer an ongoing trusted trader status. An entity with an ongoing trusted trader status may receive additional benefits, including benefits that streamline procedures in relation to the reporting, movement and clearance of goods.

- The third power is the power of the Comptroller-General of Customs to vary, suspend or terminate a trusted trader agreement unilaterally if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the entity has not complied with, or is not complying with conditions prescribed by the rules or terms or conditions specified in the agreement. The first operational response to noncompliance with conditions prescribed by the rules or terms or conditions specified in the agreement will, in general, be engagement, education and training. This approach is consistent with the partnership ethos of the program. However, the nature of noncompliance may be such that it is necessary to vary, suspend or terminate a trusted trader agreement.

The bill amends the Customs Act to provide for the external merits review of decisions made by the Comptroller-General of Customs in relation to these three powers. This will be in addition to an administrative internal review mechanism.

The bill will also amend the Customs Act to allow the Comptroller-General of Customs to maintain a register, known as the Register of Trusted Trader Agreements. The register will demonstrate to the public that an entity has an agreement with the Comptroller-General of Customs, and has demonstrated a satisfactory level of supply chain security and trade compliance standards in their international supply chain activities. This information may be necessary for other entities in the international supply chain to make an informed decision when they are choosing business partners and want to link with other trusted traders to ensure an end-to-end secure international supply chain.

Finally, the bill will amend the Customs Act to enable the Comptroller-General of Customs, by legislative instrument, to make rules in relation to the operation of the program.
Consistent with the co-design approach, consultation on the rules will be undertaken before the rules are made.

In summary, the reform delivered through this bill will support the government's priority of ensuring Australia's ongoing success as an open economy. This bill will enable the Australian Border Force and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to create stronger borders and to manage the exponential growth in trade volume by diverting resources away from highly compliant traders to focus on risk and on compliance.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015
Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 2) Bill 2015

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (09:51): As I was saying, following the budget the Treasurer and I visited one such business, Briki Espresso and Gelati Bar in the suburb of Ironside. There we met Sav Ermides, who told us that the depreciation changes in the budget will help him to expand his cafe and also buy a new oven so that he can serve more customers and grow his business. Mr Ermides is one of thousands of such stories among the 13,000 registered small businesses in my electorate and the hundreds of thousands more across Australia. This policy is already making a real difference to small businesses.

These days it is a cliche to say that small business is the engine room of the economy, but nevertheless the numbers back it up. Small businesses produce more than $330 billion of our nation's economic output every year. Better yet, they employ more than 4.5 million Australians. Businesses such as Brookfield Gardens, a family-owned garden retailer in my electorate that now boasts a restaurant addition. Robin and Scott McLay have a passion for gardening and have built a successful local business that demonstrates their passion and expertise. They are a great small business success story. Then there is the French patisserie at the Cat and Fiddle shopping centre in Toowong. They have been a family run business since 1984, making delightful pastry desserts as well as quiches that are a weekend lunch staple for my family. And businesses such as Kenmore Gallery and Picture Framing, run by well-known Ryan local Liz Barker with more than 30 years of industry experience.

As I speak to people across the electorate of Ryan, I am hearing more and more stories of new families investing in existing small businesses—a positive reaction to a recharged economy, where a more optimistic mood is encouraging people to take that step into their own business. Like Cave Coffee Espresso Bar at Keperra. It has always served great coffee and has been revitalised under new ownership. I am particularly looking forward to the planned redecoration, which will very much reflect the new owner's heritage. Fancy That Boutique, a business with a 30-year history in The Gap Village, is a fine example of an established small business that has had a new lease on life under the stewardship of a new owner. Paula Johnston, having previously had a corporate career, bought it four years ago and
is carrying on the hard-working traditions of the original owners, the Watkins family, with her fabulous range of clothing. Blackwood Street in Mitchelton is experiencing a renewal with a number of businesses changing over as people retire or take up new challenges. The local post office franchise is one case in point. Mitchelton Newsagency is another, with Rod and Cathie Palmer retiring after 12 years as invaluable and energetic members of the local chamber of commerce and wider community. And there is the Taverner Lounge, where Kim and Grant Limburg have taken over and are well and truly putting their own stamp on that business. These are all fine examples of local small businesses with new owners willing to give it a go.

Ryan is an electorate full of small businesses and when one small business succeeds, then the flow-on effects boost the wider local economy. More than 90 per cent of all businesses headquartered in Ryan have a turnover of below $2 million and will therefore be eligible for the tax cuts and franking changes outlined in this bill.

If only half of the small businesses in Australia employed just one more person each, we would no longer have any unemployment problems. That is why it is so important that the small business sector be incentivised to invest and grow and why the coalition government stands side by side with small business to make it easier for them to do just that. The contrast between this government and Labor governments past could not be more stark. Labor saddled this country with 21,000 new and amended regulations, drowning the small business sector in red tape. Under Labor, 519,000 jobs were lost in small business. They had five different small business ministers in one 15-month period. Kim Beazley said it best when he admitted in 2000:

We have never pretended to be a small business party, the Labor Party, we have never pretended that.

Compare Labor’s actions to this bill, which demonstrates that the coalition government is serious about sorting out Labor’s mess and getting the small business sector back on the path to growth and prosperity. This bill delivers a real and immediate benefit to small businesses across Australia. I urge all members, and particularly those opposite, to do the right thing in the interests of 780,000 eligible small businesses across Australia and support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (09:56): I can assure the member for Ryan that—just as we have been saying since budget night, when our shadow Treasurer said it—we are supporting the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015. What a lot of hypocrisy from the government, saying that somehow there is a question mark over it. We have said we will support it time and time again. What cheap politics from the member for Ryan, who normally does not engage in that. We believe in small business that they have confidence. We would never do anything to jeopardise this, and shame on the government and its speakers who have pretended otherwise for the last 22 days.

Labor, and indeed Australians, are sick of being patronised by this government. The government have never seen a policy issue that they do not reduce to politics. The Australian people are not the mugs that the government take them for. We are in the middle of the biggest transition we have seen in our recent economic history, from mining investment to non-mining investment. We have no time to waste on games in this nation, and to watch this
government flounder around since the budget trying to score points when in fact we are all on the same side just shows you how poor the government are at this matter. Let's forget the rhetoric. Let's put the facts on the record.

I, like most Australians, cringe when Tony Abbott says he is the best friend of someone. When he says he is the best friend of small business, I know what Tony Abbott's best friends think. I am reminded of that Norwegian artist Edvard Munch, who famously painted *The Scream*. When Tony Abbott says he is someone's best friend, I think of the person in that painting. He says he is the best friend of Medicare. Thanks for the GP tax, mate! He says he is the best friend of pensioners. Thanks for cutting the indexation rate, mate! Then he says he is the best friend of superannuation. Not once, not twice, but three times this government has tampered with the increase to superannuation, and it freezes it for many, many years for Australians, which means that Australian workers will be $983 billion worse off over the next 40 years—almost $1 trillion in savings denied to Australians because Tony Abbott is their best friend. And, of course, he has abolished the tax relief to 3½ million Australians. He will fight to the last ounce of his energy to defend a few thousand people, who already have multiple millions of dollars, getting a 45c tax concession. He says he will never, ever change that, but, when it comes to supporting 3½ million people with a tax refund on their superannuation contribution, Tony Abbott is not their best friend.

But, of course, when he says he is the best friend of small business, I would submit that that is false and misleading conduct, almost in breach of the Trade Practices Act. To prove that, you only have to ask working women. Remember, he was going to be the best friend that working women have ever had. Remember what he said: that he believes he is the best friend of women of calibre. Whatever happened to that commitment?

It is not just their rhetoric which makes us suspicious about what they are doing for small business; we look at the Liberals' record. When they came to office, they said—they not only said it; they did it—there would be a $3.8 billion cut to small business. That is right: $3.8 billion taken away from small business. They abolished the tax loss carry-back provisions, they abandoned the special depreciation rules for motor vehicles and they unwound instant asset write-off, a point I will come back to. In the 2014 budget, they followed up on their mugging of small business when they came to power with an $845 million cut to industry and small business programs—successful improvement programs like Commercialisation Australia, enterprise solutions and Enterprise Connect. But they were not content to stop there, these vandals; they went after the Tools For Your Trade program, with $1 billion in support for apprentices gone in the blink of an eye, and another $1 billion worth of skills and training programs was gone. They even managed to go after the Joint Group Training, which helped small and medium businesses find and retain apprentices.

Furthermore, not content with what they did in 2014 and not content with the $3.8 billion in cuts to small business that they have abandoned since they came into power, now they are actually proposing to do a petrol tax deal with the Greens. We listened to sanctimonious lectures from the government when they were in opposition—and the government certainly have the monopoly on sanctimony. They said, 'How could anyone ever work with the Greens?' Remember there was a Tony Abbott promise? I know what they are worth, but, for the record, he did actually say that he would never do deals with the Greens. Now we can see the petrol tax coming in to slug small business and the government are doing a dirty deal with
the Greens to lock it in. Well done, Tony Abbott. At least we know you are consistent in your inconsistency.

The bigger issue is not just that their rhetoric does not match the reality of what they have done; it is what they are actually doing to the economy. For a year—you can almost date it; you can carbon date it from three weeks before the 2014 budget—they have suffocated confidence in this economy. They have suffocated and smothered confidence for more than a year. They have doubled the deficit between their last budget and this budget. In the time that Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey have been in charge of the nation's finances, between the 2014 budget and the 2015 budget they have doubled the deficit. They have added 17 new taxes and doubled the deficit.

Australians knew about the mining boom easing off. Australians understand that the rise of Asia provides opportunities for us, but Australians never saw the government coming at them to wreck their confidence in 2014. In 2014, this government vandalised, damaged, wrecked and mugged confidence in the Australian economy. We have stopped the harm being worse because of our strength in opposition against their unfair measures, but the issue now is that these changes to small business are a recognition that the Prime Minister and the Treasurer—and, indeed, the whole of the frontbench, including the minister at the table—have mugged Australians with their changes. Now they are putting a couple of band-aids on. They are trying to bandage up the damage to confidence they have done.

The reason why Labor is supporting the small business package is that, for us, everything is about jobs. What motivates the Labor team that I lead is jobs. We are interested in the jobs that people currently have and in people keeping their jobs. We are interested in jobs for the future. The massive failure of the government, and there is much competition for that title, is unemployment. Joe Hockey said, in that poor man's Hamlet style he likes to affect in question time, 'Woe is me. I wish I inherited an economy where unemployment had a 4 in front of it.' Well, Joe, Labor, having helped Australia get through the GFC, working with a lot of people, gave you the next best thing. You got unemployment with a 5 in front of it—and what have you done since you took over? You have put a 6 in front of it, Joe Hockey. Woe is Australia that we have you as our Treasurer. Unemployment since September 2013 has gone up, up and up again. Unemployment is the highest it has been in 12 years. The significance of 12 years, other than it is a terribly long period of time since unemployment has been that high, is that the minister for employment when unemployment was this high was none other than Tony Abbott. He is back to the scene of the accident.

Unemployment in this country is now higher than at any time during the global financial crisis—that is right. Australia had to navigate the global financial crisis. Many other countries did it very hard, and Australia did do it hard, but, because of the excellent leadership of the then Labor government and the decisions they made then, unemployment did not hit the levels it has hit under this current bunch of ne'er-do-wells. There are 130 people every day joining the back of the unemployment queue under the Liberal government. What we know when you get a Liberal government is that you get longer unemployment queues—that is what you get. There is record youth unemployment in the regions and the outer suburbs of our big cities. It will take a lot more than this small business package to fix it up.
Let me talk a little about the legislation. This legislation, which we are supporting, has a very familiar feel to it. A tax cut for small business—that is a good idea. Labor proposed it, but, when you were in opposition, you opposed it.

**An opposition member:** With the Greens.

**Mr SHORTEN:** And they did it with the Greens, too. Then, of course, we proposed the instant asset write-off. Labor proposed it, Labor delivered it and then, when the Liberals came into power, you undid it. Two years later, you realised what a terrible mistake you made and you have come crawling back to the people of Australia. You have not admitted any mistake—not a hint of contrition; not a hint of repentance; not even a modest admission that maybe Labor had the right idea with the instant asset write-off. For not a moment, in the arrogance of the government, do they ever say that. They are so blinded by their own born-to-rule mentality that, whenever Labor has an idea and the Liberals have realised that they had to do it, have we even got a bit of modest acknowledgement that maybe the people sitting opposite, the leakers of their own national security debates—do we ever get a modicum of an admission—are not the repository of all knowledge in this nation? Of course they are not?

How quickly they forget the changes which we introduced with the instant asset write-off. I have a little fact from Tony Abbott's little book of commitments. Actually, this is his long book of commitments; the shorter book, the sequel, is the book of promises that he keeps—that is a short book. When it was Labor policy, did Tony Abbott ever utter the words 'instant asset write-off'? Did he ever utter the words just once? In the desert of Tony Abbott's contributions in opposition, did he ever utter once the words 'instant asset write-off'? The answer is nope—nope, nope, nope. In the 22 days since the budget he has said it 36 times. As Tony Abbott understands, there is no zealot like the convert—except of course when it comes to paid parental leave; then he's a backsliding convert.

Of course it is not just the Prime Minister who is guilty of hypocrisy when it comes to small business and the members opposite. I actually have here the words of Bruce Billson, the ubiquitous Minister for Small Business. He issued a media release on 17 July 2012—of course, that was then and this is now, but what he said then, and I quote directly from the mouth of Bruce Billson, was: 'Cash-strapped small businesses won't be able to take advantage of an increase in the instant asset write-off because they don't have spare cash lying around to pay for an asset in the first place.' Another intellectual zinger from the member for Dunkley!

Bruce Billson was keen to return to the scene of this matter again, because he was consistent between 17 July 2012 and November 2013. Again he had a bit of a foray into this issue of bagging instant asset write-offs. He said this at a doorstep. You might be forgiven for thinking, 'Did he say that before the last election or after the last election?' because now this is a government of converts to instant asset write-offs. He actually said this on 6 November 2013:

...some of the instant asset write-off arrangements were sold as if they were great for cash strapped small businesses but you needed the cash to start with to make the purchase.

So there we have it—Billson-the-convert is actually Billson-we-don't-know-quite-what-he-thinks, and we don't know what he thinks and when Labor thinks it he certainly doesn't agree with it!
But, to be fair to Bruce Billson, his intellectual thought-leader, Joe Hockey, did say on ABC News Breakfast on 11 July 2011:

JOE HOCKEY:
These guys are not buying assets.
PRESENTER:
You just made a statement about small business not getting azac. I am say simply saying that the small business asset write-off has increased. Do you concede that?
That is a pretty straightforward factual question—not a lot of wriggle room. But these guys never need a lot of wriggle-room not to answer a question.
JOE HOCKEY:
Only if you buy the asset.
Well, that is true, Joe! The lights were on that day! But he goes on:
If you don't buy an asset for a year you are not getting a zac.
Again, he is reinforcing his first point. He then says:
If you have already bought a million dollar refrigerator, what are you going to get this?
Well, to begin with he could not get the million-dollar refrigerator under this deal either!
You don't replace a refrigerator for 3, 4 or 5 years.
Thanks, Joe!
The point about all of this is that the nation and the government are entitled to be reminded of the stubborn ideology, the bleak oppositional mentality, which runs this country. There is a very small heart lurking in the very large body of this government. Whenever Labor has an idea, these people attack. They do not listen; they just attack. And of course the minister at the table, Minister Dutton, would not be prone to that, would he! I've got a bridge to sell you, if you believe that!

Labor could take the same attitude that the Liberals took in opposition. We could give them a taste of their own medicine. And we don't like to talk about medicine, do we, Minister at the table? That would remind us of health! But the reality is: Labor is actually better. We think that—all the political points to be made aside—the period that Tony Abbott was opposition leader was one of the bleakest periods of this nation. We are different in opposition from Tony Abbott and his team when they were in opposition. We are cut from a different cloth. We will judge these measures on small business not by the puerile point-scoring that we have seen over the last 22 days where the government has been engaging in some sort of existential angst—'Will they? Won't they?'—when we have already said we will. We are not the people that this government are. Labor is not into hating people who disagree with them. We are not into bullying people with their policies if we think that they actually have an idea which is worth backing in.

Mr Dutton interjecting—

Mr SHORTEN: Nor do we have, Peter Dutton, the born-to-rule mentality totally undeserved by these people opposite. We want to help grow the economy. We want to help grow the economy and we want to help grow jobs. But I have to sound a note of caution about this legislation. We most certainly will vote for this package, especially the increased instant asset write-off. But we do so trusting that this government has done its homework—in
between leaking on each other on national security matters. We trust that this government has
done its homework. We trust that the plan will be properly implemented and directed for the
purpose intended. We know that, on budget night, when they made this announcement they
forgot primary producers and farmers and have already had to subsequently update what they
are saying to include them. But we also hope that the ATO has the resources and powers they
need to make sure that compliance standards are met. We do not want honest, hardworking
small businesses to miss out because there are some flaws in the scheme which allow some
people to rort the scheme for purposes other than those for which it was designed.

I say to Joe Hockey and to Tony Abbott: I hope you enjoy your road trip to the Harvey
Normans and to the second-hand car yards across Australia, trying to find the confidence that
you lost last year. These two remind me a little bit of Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels from that
road trip film—what was it called again? Dumb and Dumber! But I hope that, as they are
making that road trip, they make sure there are no unintended consequences from the
implementation of this scheme, so that it does not see taxpayers' money squandered in a
desperate bid by these two on their road trip to find some votes to save their jobs.

But, while we are here and we are talking about helping small business, I repeat my
invitation from the budget reply speech: let us work together to reduce the tax rate for small
business, to not just give a 1½ per cent cut but a five per cent cut. We understand that there is
no way that Labor can do this without the agreement of the government. We understand that it
could take more than the life of one parliament. But I do think that, in a spirit of
bipartisanship, we need to keep talking about how we help small business.

But, in helping small business, there is a proposal on the table. We listen to Joe Hockey
come into parliament in question time every day and complain about how hard his job is. We
listen to Tony Abbott pretty much 30 seconds into any answer say, 'Well, can you give us the
answers, because we've run out of the answers.' What we do say is: perhaps you could make
multinationals pay their fair share. While you are talking to the cafes and the news agencies
and the Harvey Norman franchises—indeed, while you are getting out talking to florists and
subbies and drycleaners and chemists—maybe what we need to be doing is explaining to
them why they pay more tax than James Hardie. But of course, when we proposed a measure
to tackle foreign multinationals to make them pay their fair share, what was the response from
the government as soon as we had said it? There is nothing like that Pavlovian, knee-jerk,
negative response: 'If Labor says it, we're against it.' This country needs better from its
politicians than the government always rejecting every idea that Labor has. We are prepared,
when the government has a good idea, to back it in. But, as to the people opposite, including
the minister at the table, I have never seen them say anything good about the Labor Party—
and that is because they live in a world where politics is more important than policy, and
where hate and division are more important than uniting this country and bringing people
together.

Labor has a plan for the future. It is not like the government's love of self-promotion—the
government do love their self-promotion. At least when they do it themselves it is cheaper
than tricking poor old Dr Karl into doing it for them. The idea that this small business
package will be the panacea for every economic challenge that Australia faces right now, and
the notion that over the next two years a $5 billion temporary stimulus will be enough to
replace a $100 billion contraction in investment due to the wind down in investment in the
mining industry, just does not stack up. The deposit of $5 billion of taxpayers money into the Australian economy to replace a $100 billion contraction in investment really misses the big story of Australia.

The budget missed the chance to give us a long-term plan. It was just a plan to save the jobs of Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey. What we really needed in that budget was a plan beyond the mining boom—a plan for the next decade, a plan for the long run. There is no doubt that Australians are disenchanted with politics, but this government gives them no hope. We all understand about this budget, and deep in their hearts the government understands this, too: the 2015 budget was not designed to last 12 months. It is a budget sticky taped together to try to boost confidence in small business, which has been damaged by the actions of this government over the last years. It has been sticky taped, bandaged and rubber banded together, and it will not last 12 months.

We see that the big questions for the future are not being addressed by the government, and that there is no economic plan. No wonder Australians are confused about this government. In 2014, the government said that there was a debt and deficit crisis—that we were drowning in a debt and deficit crisis. This year, there is more cash to splash around than people have seen in a long time. This government is inconsistent. They are political chameleons. Chameleons, in nature, take the colour of the environment they are in to camouflage themselves. In 2014, the Tony Abbott chameleons camouflaged themselves in the rhetoric of economic austerity. They were going to sort things out—a debt and deficit crisis. Now, in 2015, the chameleons have taken a different approach. They are trying to pretend that they are economically fair. Tony Abbott does not understand that fairness is not a domain name you can buy on the internet. It has to be something that you believe in every day.

When we talk about the future, we understand that Australians expect more and deserve more from their government. They want a plan for long-term confidence and sustainability; a plan to accelerate jobs growth and encourage business investment. They want a plan to unlock our cities and towns. They want to see support for public transport. They want to see a cut down in the hours that Australians are spending commuting to and from home. They want a plan to equip our children, and indeed to retrain adults, with the skills and knowledge to seize and create the opportunities of the new economy. This means, as Labor has said, more children studying coding and computational thinking in primary school—and, no, Tony Abbott, studying coding and computational thinking in primary school does not mean that you go to work when you are 11!

We want to see more competent, skilled and inspiring science teachers in our secondary schools. We want to see more Australians—more women—enrolled in engineering at uni, or technology at TAFE. We want to create a culture of innovation and risk taking. We do not want this country dumbed down to the Liberal three-word slogans. We want to encourage Australians to turn their good ideas into great businesses. We want a smarter, more competitive workforce for all employers, and we certainly want to fund our innovative small businesses. We want to see support for Australian's start-ups, entreprenuers and innovators.

Labor will create a $500 million Smart Investment Fund for backing great Australian ideas. The Smart Investment Fund will partner with venture capitalists and fund managers, investing in early-stage and high-potential companies. It is a model with a definite, proven track record of success. We have created jobs, growth and innovation before. Australia can do it again.
Australians want more from their government than this bleak vision of unfairness rebadged—this dodging of the big issues in the taxation system, and support of small business, without a long-term plan to build confidence to deal with the skills and the infrastructure of the future. Because we back small business, we will also work with the banks and the finance industry to help establish a partial guarantee scheme—Start-Up Finance—to help more Australians to convert their great ideas into good businesses. We will enable entrepreneurs to access the capital they need to start and grow their enterprise. Before we hear the standard government knee-jerk reaction of 'no, no, no' to this, please have a look at what the UK, the US, Germany, France and Hong Kong do, before you do what you are so good at doing and give a knee-jerk, negative reaction. Start-ups and innovators will drive growth and create jobs. We take responsibility, on the Labor side, for supporting our next generation of designers and refiners, manufacturers and creators.

Every day since the budget, the government has come into this place and demanded that we vote for legislation that they have not yet moved. Six times, the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the minister have stood at the despatch box and urged us to vote for a bill that they had not even brought into the House. We made it clear on election night—Chris Bowen on television, and me the next morning when I bumped into Tony Abbott in one of those awkward moments that you have at the ABC. I said that I did not like what he was doing on health and education—and who does, let's face it—but I said that small business looked good.

We said it again in the budget-in-reply, and we have said it every day since. But do you think this government is so addicted to trying to create divisions in this community? They want small business to not like Labor, even though we are supporting small business. They are so determined to divide this country. They have no capacity to unite this country. They are people addicted to the view that there are good people and bad people, and they are constantly adding to the list of bad people. So we say to the government, and I say to Tony Abbott, enough is enough. Enough playing of the silly political games that are your trademark.

We are not going to delay this legislation for one minute longer. We were always going to vote for it. We always said we would support it. Let's get on with it. Therefore, I move:

That the question be now put.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell):** The question is that the question be now put.

The House divided. [10:25]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Mitchell)

Ayes .....................47
Noes ....................77
Majority .................30

**AYES**

<p>| Albanese, AN | Bowen, CE |
| Brodtmann, G | Burke, AE |
| Burke, AS | Butler, MC |
| Butler, TM | Byrne, AM |
| Chalmers, JE | Champion, ND |
| Chesters, LM | Clare, JD |
| Claydon, SC | Collins, JM |
| Conroy, PM | Danby, M |
| Dreyfus, MA | Elliot, MJ |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AYES</th>
<th>NOES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeney, D</td>
<td>Alexander, JG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzgibbon, JA</td>
<td>Baldwin, RC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray, G</td>
<td>Briggs, JE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes, CP</td>
<td>Broadbent, RE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, SP</td>
<td>Buchholz, S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh, AK</td>
<td>Cobb, JK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacTiernan, AJGC</td>
<td>Coulton, M (teller)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Connor, BPJ</td>
<td>Entsch, WG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owens, J</td>
<td>Gambaro, T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perrett, GD</td>
<td>Goodenough, IR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowland, MA</td>
<td>Hartseyker, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten, WR</td>
<td>Henderson, SM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan, WM</td>
<td>Howarth, LR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vamvakinou, M</td>
<td>Irons, SJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zappia, A</td>
<td>Jones, ET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Katter, RC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kelly, C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landry, ML</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ley, SP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marino, NB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matheson, RG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McGowan, C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morrison, SJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O'Dowd, KD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pitt, KJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prentice, J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ramsey, RE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robert, SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scott, BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smith, ADH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stone, SN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sukkar, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tehan, DT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tudge, AE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Varvaris, N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson, LDT</td>
<td>Andrews, KL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles, AJ</td>
<td>Billson, BF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, JG (teller)</td>
<td>Broad, AJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husic, EN</td>
<td>Brough, MT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, CF</td>
<td>Christensen, GR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macklin, JL</td>
<td>Coleman, DB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marles, RD</td>
<td>Dutton, PC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Neil, CE</td>
<td>Frydenberg, JA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parke, M</td>
<td>Gillespie, DA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ripoll, BF</td>
<td>Griggs, NL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan, JC (teller)</td>
<td>Hawke, AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowdon, WE</td>
<td>Hogan, KJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thistlethwaite, MJ</td>
<td>Hutchinson, ER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watts, TG</td>
<td>Jensen, DG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce, BT</td>
<td>Keenan, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keating, A</td>
<td>Laming, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundy, C</td>
<td>Macfarlane, IE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus, LE</td>
<td>McCormack, MF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McNamara, KJ</td>
<td>Nikolic, AA (teller)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasin, A</td>
<td>Porter, CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyne, CM</td>
<td>Randall, DJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy, WB</td>
<td>Scott, FM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottott, AJ</td>
<td>Sudmalis, AE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, AJ</td>
<td>Truss, WE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Manen, AJ</td>
<td>Vasta, RX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (10:33): I rise today to support small business. From this side of the parliament you will not hear any negative rhetoric, bullying, hypocrisy, personal attacks and whingeing that we have just heard from Australia's biggest whinger. And there will be no cheap stunts. In fact, it is quite ironical that we just heard from Australia's biggest whinger when we are about to introduce the biggest small business package in our nation's history and the lowest small business company tax rate in almost half a century. This government understands the important contribution small business makes to the Australian economy. The Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 2) Bill 2015 lower the company tax rate by 1.5 percentage points, to 28.5 per cent for incorporated small businesses with a turnover of less than $2 million. This is the lowest small business company tax rate since 1967.

We believe in Australia's small businesses and acknowledge that government can do more to support and encourage greater growth. This government is building a stronger and more prosperous economy so that every Australian can get ahead. At the foundation of a strong economy is the need to support small businesses. We need to provide more support for entrepreneurial Australians who are looking to create Australia's new innovative jobs. The government is supporting eager young people with new ideas and mums and dads who are prepared to wager the family home to start a new business. These are the building blocks of our stronger economy and future prosperity.

Small businesses will pay less tax for income years that commence on or after 1 July 2015. This fulfils our 2013 election commitment. Unlike members opposite, who had a budget night epiphany about the importance of small business, this tax break has been a long-held commitment of the government. Sadly, rather than congratulating the government on our achievements, members opposite sought to politicise the announcement and also have a cheap stunt.

Mr Ripoll: We have congratulated you.

Mrs McNAMARA: Thank you. It is good to hear more congratulations on the positive things that this government is doing. Small businesses remember how Labor treated them when they were last in government and how they did not get a tax cut. They got a jobs-destroying carbon tax. They did not get an accelerated depreciation on assets; they got a confidence-eroding mining tax. And they did not get red-tape reduction; they got a burdensome and costly red tape. That is the difference between this government and the opposition. Members opposite should know better than to try and deceive our small business community.
The small businesses of Australia hold the key to our future prosperity. Approximately 96 per cent of all Australia's businesses are small business. Collectively, they produce over $330 billion of Australia's economic output and employ over 4.5 million people. This represents almost 43 per cent of non-financial private sector jobs in Australia. I am a passionate supporter of small business because I appreciate just how much they contribute to our economy. This is particularly true in regions such as the Central Coast where, collectively, small business is our largest employer. This package will assist the electorate of Dobell's 8,707 businesses to invest more, grow more and employ more. The government is well aware that slow economic growth is impacting on the labour market. Unfortunately, this is leading to increasing unemployment in some areas, such as the Central Coast, having a severe impact on the employment prospects of our youth.

While it is businesses which create jobs, there is a need, albeit limited, for government to reduce the impediments and encourage the right conditions for Australia's small businesses to grow and become more productive. Since my election I have been working alongside small businesses in my electorate of Dobell to identify and address the barriers that prohibit growth and employment opportunities. This government acknowledges that small businesses are typically more vulnerable to changes in economic conditions than larger businesses.

As our economy is currently in a state of transition it is essential that government policy supports small business growth and innovation. Reducing the tax rate for more than 90 per cent of incorporated businesses with an annual turnover of under $2 million is definitely a 'game changer'. This will benefit 8,283 businesses in Dobell, which is 95 per cent of all businesses in Dobell. Providing small businesses with a reduced rate of company tax will allow them to retain more earning for investment and increase cash flow. When speaking with local small business operators I ask them what they would do if they had more cash flow, and I am frequently told that they would grow their business. Small businesses understand the important role they play on the Central Coast, and they want to grow and provide new employment opportunities for locals. Increased cash flow means small businesses are better placed to create new jobs. This may mean a new admin assistant to assist the owner with paperwork, allowing the owner to concentrate on growing their business or even take a well-deserved break—many small business operators do not even have the chance to have a family holiday—and it may mean the first job opportunity for a young job seeker.

In addition, small businesses with an annual turnover of under $2 million will be able to immediately deduct each and every asset costing up to $20,000 that they purchase between 12 May and the end of June 2017. Cutting the company tax rate will cost the Commonwealth approximately $1.45 billion over the forward estimates, but this translates into a $1.45 billion injection into the Australian economy. In 2013-14, Australians started over 280,000 small businesses. Our $5.5 billion jobs and small business package will create the right conditions for small businesses to thrive and grow. Members on the side of the parliament understand the importance of transitioning people from welfare to work. Every Australian who is capable of working should have the opportunity to do so. These measures will assist small businesses to create new jobs and help Australia's unemployed to access these jobs.

As I stated previously, providing incorporated small businesses with a reduced rate of company tax creates more cash flow. This is essential to ensuring that a new small business can survive and prosper. This will benefit 780,000 small businesses nationwide. In 2014 we
saw the highest level of new company registrations on record. Businesses both new and old can have renewed confidence that they can grow, thrive, prosper and compete. New accelerated depreciation arrangements will particularly benefit new start-up businesses, which face greater up-front costs. The Herald Sun reports that small businesses plan to purchase new computers, tools, phones, work cars, technical equipment et cetera. These new assets will boost business productivity and innovation, allowing growth and the creation of jobs.

These bills will also ensure that the maximum amount of franking credits a small incorporated business can attach to its dividends in a year will not be reduced along with the tax rate. By doing so, we are allowing small companies to distribute surplus franking credits accumulated in previous years, reducing the tax their owners pay when they receive dividends. This will benefit owners of small businesses and effectively reduce the overall tax paid by shareholders, regardless of their marginal tax rate.

In the lead-up to the 2013 federal election, small business proudly proclaimed that they were 'too big to ignore'. This government agrees with them. We believe Australia is the best place to start and grow a business. This government knows that the best way to create jobs is to build a strong and prosperous economy. This knowledge was lost on the former Labor government. Dobell's small businesses were particularly hit by the economic mismanagement of the former Labor government. In 2013 The Daily Telegraph reported that 'more businesses had shut their doors in Dobell than anywhere else in New South Wales'. This was a damning indictment of the former Labor government and totally unacceptable.

Over the next 15 years the Central Coast is expected to grow by 100,000 people. Our region will need an additional 45,000 new jobs to address the employment needs of this growth. This simply will not happen without strong small business. Small businesses in Dobell now have a new lease on life. Small businesses will be better placed to generate local employment in a region where over 38,000 people commute out of the region daily for employment. We will see more jobs created for our youth, addressing the ongoing youth unemployment issue that has afflicted the Central Coast for many years. This is real action for small business that will deliver real outcomes. I look forward to continuing to work alongside Dobell's local businesses to expand their opportunities and increase the prosperity of everyone in our community.

I commend the bills to the House.

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (10:43): How embarrassing it must be for the government to come into this place, after carrying on ridiculously for 22 days, saying Labor must get out of the road and support the budget's tax measures and small business package. This is where the rubber hits the road, this is where we are right now: we can do it immediately. Let's not waste one more minute. Let's get on with the job. If Tony Abbott and the government say that want to support small business, then Labor says let's get on with it, let's do it. Today will be the 23rd day that small business have had uncertainty from this government. They do not get the tax measures that are in the budget. This government is holding it up. This is the 23rd day, yet they come into this place every day saying Labor should do everything it can to support these measures.

Well, here we are. The test is right before us, right now. Let's have them all come into the House. Let's not talk about this ad infinitum. Let's do it right now. Let's support small business. Let's support the tax measures that are in the budget. We just gave the government
that opportunity—no more talk; talk is cheap. Let's vote on it and let's do it right now. We moved to put these bills before the House, to put the motion, to give small business the certainty they need, because their certainty and confidence is being destroyed. For 22 days this government, Tony Abbott, has been talking down the possibility that this just might not get through the parliament. 'Let's get a lot of uncertainty out there', the Liberals say. 'Let's make sure we scare the living daylights out of small business. Let's make sure we get out there and create the uncertain environment that small business certainly does not need.' I will come back to that point in a minute and tell you about what that uncertainty has done over the past two years that this government has been in and the damage that has been done to our economy and to small business.

So, no more of this false 'We support small business' and the rest of it. How embarrassing it must be to have to speak on this. Why are you going to waste the parliament's time speaking on this? Why? Let's just put these bills. You can speak about this to your small business friends all the time.

Mr Craig Kelly: Sit down and get on with it!

Mr RIPOLL: Well, I would sit down if we put the bill. You are going to get up after me. The member interjecting has a lot of hide, because he will get up after me and he will be wasting the time of this parliament when we could have these bills done. What hypocrisy and what irony.

This is where the rubber hits the road. This is where you actually get to show your real colours. We do not need to hear from you. We do not need to hear from all the other Liberals. In fact, let's vote on it right now. Let's get it done. Let's pass these bills. I am just going to grab the speaking list here and have a little bit of a look. I have done a quick summation of how long it will take for the parliament to get through this speaking list—22 days of this government just bleating and yelling at small business: more uncertainty, breaking more confidence down. And the government is not in a hurry to pass these bills; they are just not in a hurry. There are eight hours worth of speakers on this list. We are not going to get through this today. We are not going to get through this tomorrow. We are not going to get through it this week.

Such is this government's urgency to have these bills passed that we are probably not going to get to them for another fortnight. That is how urgent it is. For 22 days Tony Abbott has been standing up every day and saying: 'Oh, the uncertainty; oh, the worry of small business. They must be just so worried and uncertain that perhaps Labor won't pass these bills through parliament. How can people get up in the morning? Small businesses have risked their mortgage and their lives. We need to give them certainty.' Well, I agree. Labor agrees. Labor will pass these bills. In fact, we will do it today. If you want to get the certainty through the House of Reps today, let's get it in the parliament. Let's decide. We can do that today. Let's just cut this short. I am happy to speak for all of my time, and I know everyone in this place will be as well. But I think a lot has actually been said about small business. It certainly was when Labor was in government, because we did some real things for small business—something that the government has only just discovered. The Liberals have only just discovered this instant asset write-off. It has been around for a little while. In fact, it was Labor's policy, Labor's initiative. It was what Labor put in place. That is what we did when we got to government. We did not go making a great big song and dance about it and carrying
on. We knew what had to be done. We had to work hard in a difficult time, a global financial

on. We knew what had to be done. We had to work hard in a difficult time, a global financial
crisis. We wanted to support small business, we wanted to support the economy and we
wanted to support jobs, because Labor understands that there is no greater certainty in life
than having work.

Look at our record on jobs and unemployment during a time of great difficulty. The global
financial crisis was very real and had an enormous impact right across Europe and the United
States and here at home in Australia. But Labor stood up and did the things that needed to be
done: underpinning jobs, underpinning growth and making sure that small businesses did not
close their doors—and they did not. We did that through a whole heap of measures,
including—wait for it—instant asset write-off. Why did we do that? Because it was really
important. You would have thought that at the time Liberals, in opposition—being the bastion
of small business; they love small business and are the best friend of small business—would
have supported it. Who cares who put it to parliament, whether it was Labor of Liberal? I do
care who put it to parliament, it needed to be done. But what did the Liberals do in
opposition? They voted against the small business package then. They spoke against it. In
fact, now Minister Bruce Billson, who was then in opposition, spoke against it. Just recently
Bill Shorten, the Leader of the Opposition, detailed some of the quotes of the minister shaking
his head and saying, 'Oh, this is bad; oh, this is no good.' Well, how is it any different from
what is before the parliament right now?

So, I would ask that we not spend the rest of the day—and we will not get to it today.
Question time is at two o'clock, and the day must come to an end at some point. We have
eight hours worth of speakers, and there is a long list of Liberal speakers who want to speak.
Well, good on you; congratulations. And they want to hear 'congratulations', so let me say it
again: Labor will support these bills. Congratulations for introducing something that was well
and truly overdue, because you did such a bad job on your first budget, Joe Hockey and the
Liberals, such a bad job. You destroyed so much confidence. You did so much damage. You
had to lift your socks and do something. Well, I would have been glad if I had seen a new
idea. That would have been really good—something new.

But I am not too worried about whether the Liberals come up with new ideas or old ideas,
as long as they are good ideas. Isn't that what is important, good ideas? Let's support the good
ideas. I do not care who has put them forward; I will support them, and Labor will support
them. That is what we are saying here today. That is what we are doing. Labor is not standing
up and doing what is expected or what the Liberal opposition did, which was vote against it
not because it was anything bad or wrong but just because it was a Labor idea. Well, here is
the chance to turn the tables today. The Liberal government now gets a chance to vote for its
own small business budget measures. We say, let's do it. Let's put it to the parliament
immediately, because Tony Abbott is running out there every day scaring small business,
creating more uncertainty—22 days of it, we have had. For 22 days we have had Tony Abbott
come into this place, go outside and talk to small business, saying: 'We've got this great
package that will do you so much good,' but 'The uncertainty— the worry, the fear that maybe
Labor will not pass these bills.' For 22 days we have said we will pass these bills.

This is day 23. Let us pass the bills. Labor supports the small-business-package bills, every
single one of them. Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015: Labor
supports it and will pass it, and we will do it immediately. If the government had half a brain,
the next speaker would get up there and say, 'Thank you. Let's get on with and pass these bills;' and give the certainty that the Liberals keep telling small business they need. Let us give them that certainty.

Labor will support these bills. Put the bills to the parliament. Test us. Test Labor that we will support these bills. Will support. We will support Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015. We will support these bills. Why won't the government? You cannot have it both ways. Generally, in life, that is how things go. You cannot come into the parliament, create more uncertainty and lack of confidence in our economy, telling small-business people they have this fantastic package coming, but then make sure you create uncertainty. Accountants are telling their small-business clients, 'We're not sure. Just in case, don't go doing anything yet. Just wait. We're uncertain. We're not confident about this, because Tony Abbott is telling everybody that this just might not pass parliament. This might not get through.'

Let us end the uncertainty. Let us not have this charade, this farce, of the government saying that somehow this bill will not pass. Let us pass them today. Let us get on with it today. What hypocrisy, what irony, what embarrassment. How can this mob, how can the Liberals stand here and look people in the eye, small-business people, who will be asking them: 'Why didn't you do it today? Why wait and delay for one more day?'

What is the strategy? What is the cunning plan? What is the strategic advancement for small business to not have the certainty today? It can be done today. Given the certainty, let us pass it here. Labor will support it. Labor will support these bills. Labor supports small business. Labor will support the budget measures it contains for small business. Why is it that this government is the only one not supporting it?

Mr Laundy: You said you're going to support it. They have certainty now.

Mr RIPOLL: Red-faced with embarrassment, they try to throw back some interjections. They are embarrassed because today they stuffed up. You need to have a bit of a forward think in this place. Occasionally, when a government puts forward its own bills, somebody just might say—a really good opposition, like Labor—'We agree with you. Let's do it. Let's vote on it now.' And they go, 'Hang on; no. We won't vote on our bills.' We will. Let's put the bills to the parliament. I think people get how that works. The Liberals voted against their own bills. I am wondering how they are going to explain this to small-business people.

Mr Dutton: Bernie, you're embarrassing yourself.

Mr RIPOLL: The Liberal Party voted against their own small-business-package measures. What really is embarrassing in this place is that after more than 22 days you mob still do not vote—

Mr Laundy: We are going to vote for the package, trust me.

Mr RIPOLL: Always gunna. The Liberals are gunna, gunna. Today, we did a 'did a'. Today, we actually put it to you—and you voted against it.

Mr Laundy: I'll explain to you how business works, mate.

Mr RIPOLL: You fool! You voted against your own package. Let us restore some confidence. Let us get this place functioning like it is meant to be functioning. Small business cannot wait any more. That is the reality. It is Wednesday today. They cannot wait till
Thursday, because that is what you tell them every day. Every day there is more uncertainty. Every day you have another go at small business, making their lives difficult. When they go to see their accountants, their accountants say, 'No, don’t make these decisions today. There is too much uncertainty.’ Tony Abbott loves nothing more than turning up to small coffee shops, somewhere locally, shaking his head and saying, 'It’s a worry. We are not sure what’s going to happen. We are so uncertain.' He’s asked, 'But isn’t Labor supporting these bills?’ He says, 'We’ll see when these bills are put to the parliament.’

Guess what? They were put to the parliament today. Labor voted for the bills in support of small business. The Liberal Party voted against them. We have just had it. It will be in the Hansard. It is on the record. Every single one of them voted against it. Most of them were scratching their heads and going, 'What are we voting on?’ I saw some ministers running around, frantically, asking 'What’s going on? What are we voting against? Surely we can’t be voting.' They are the government. Governments do not vote against—governments vote for. It is their bill. You do not vote against your own bill, you vote for your own bill.

I will not get into the detail of consumer confidence, because we have talked about it in this place so much. The numbers are a disaster.

Mr Dutton: I’ll bet you won’t! That’s a cracked mirror for you, Bernie.

Mr RIPOLL: The minister thinks he is really clever by saying, 'You do not want to talk about that.' I do not want to talk about it anymore than has already been done, because small business needs to be uplifted. Let us have a bit of uplifting, in this place. Let us have a bit of lifting of confidence. Let us have, for once, the simplicity of the government saying, 'The small-business budget measures are good. Labor thinks they are good. Labor will support them.' Labor will get on with it. We are not standing in the road.

How many more days? I am counting the days: 22 days; 23 days. We are not going to get through it this week, so it will be 25 days, 26 days and 30 days, and the government still will not have passed its own measures. When will the government step up to the plate? When will the government do the right thing by small business? When will the government restore confidence? When will the Liberal Party and the National Party stand up for small-business people in this country? When will they pass their own bills? Let us tick off how many more days we have to wait for the government to pass its own bills. Labor stands here ready, right now. Pass the bills.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (10:59): The member for Oxley has just proved an important point. He has proved you can talk for 15 minutes without saying anything. I understand—as he leaves the chamber—his complete embarrassment, because the member for Oxley, if I remember, was the parliamentary secretary for small business during the previous Labor regime. I will come to that appalling record, so it is no wonder he is scurrying from the chamber and does not want to hear about the appalling record of the Labor Party during its six years looking after small business. What we have seen this morning is just a simple, cheap, tardy stunt. For those following the debate here, we have a speakers list. Probably 20 or more coalition speakers wish to speak on this bill. Labor’s cheap stunt today was simply to silence all those speakers, to silence them so as not to give them the opportunity to speak and to raise their issues on the importance of this bill.
I will go back to the bill, the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No 1) Bill 2015. One of the most important speeches ever given in this country was 'The Forgotten People' speech by Sir Robert Menzies, not only for its content but for the time when it was given, in 1942, in the middle of the Second World War. Sir Robert talked about the kind of people he represented in parliament. He called them the salary earners, the shopkeepers, the skilled artisans, the professional men and women, the farmers and so on. He said:

These are, in the political and economic sense, the middle-class. They are, for the most part, unorganised and unself-conscious. They are envied by those whose benefits are largely obtained by taxing them. They are not rich enough to have individual power. They are taken for granted by each political party in turn. They are not sufficiently lacking individualism to be organised for what in these days we call "pressure politics." And yet, as I have said, they are the backbone of the nation.

He finished the last line of 'The Forgotten People' speech, by saying—and it is as true today as it was back then:

But what really happens to us will depend on how many people we have who are of the great and sober and dynamic middle-class—the strivers, the planners, the ambitious ones. We shall destroy them at our peril.

It is worth looking at how many of those people were destroyed by the previous Labor government and their anti-small-business policies. We saw a revolving door of small business ministers. At one stage the previous Labor government had had no fewer than five separate small business ministers in 18 months, none of them in cabinet. We saw a decline in the number of small businesses in this country and an incredible number—519,000, over half a million people—who were employed in small business when Labor came to office were no longer employed in small business by the time they had left office. Over half a million jobs were lost in the small business sector under the six years of policies of that previous Labor government. We also saw the small business proportion of private sector employment decline, from 52 per cent to 43 per cent. You could not have had a greater destruction of small business in this nation than that which occurred under the previous Labor government, and especially also under the previous speaker, the member for Oxley, who was parliamentary secretary for small business during that appalling regime when we saw such destruction.

But the real destruction was the decline in new start-up businesses under the previous Labor government. In 2012-13, their last full financial year in government, we saw the numbers of new start-up businesses decline by over 100,000. If we compare that to 2003-2004—a decade earlier—we see that the number of small start-up businesses declined by 100,000. We had more businesses exiting the economy than we had entering the economy under the policies of the previous Labor government. The number of start-up businesses we get in the economy is probably one of the most important economic indicators. We can see from the numbers the confidence that the small business sector has got simply by removing the Labor government from office. In 2014, the first full year of the coalition government, we saw the highest number of company registrations on record. Small business knows who to trust when it comes to the economy simply on the track record of the policies of the two parties.

We saw Labor's real attitude towards small business when the Leader of the Opposition was in here this morning. Everyone well remembers his foray into that North Carlton pie shop and his gratuitous attack upon that small businessperson over not having a warm pie sums it
up completely—not the 500,000 jobs lost, not the decline in small business employment within the private sector, not the massive decline in start-ups in the economy. The single attitude in that pie shop sums up Labor's approach to small business.

There are several reasons why small business is important for the economy. We know it is important for job creation, because it is small business that creates most of the new jobs, so invigorating small business is what we do need to do to get unemployment numbers down. We also know that it is small business that drives the innovation in the country.

Small business getting in there and experimenting, taking risks, using their entrepreneurial skills, testing new products, new methods of business and new ways of doing things—that is how we create the innovation in this country. That is how we get our productivity increases. That is what history has shown. If we look at the largest companies in the world today—Amazon, Apple, Disney, Google—they all started as small businesses working basically in a garage from home. That is why we need the encouragement for small business to get out there to create tomorrow's Apple, to create tomorrow's Amazon. They will be one of those small businesses out there that we have to incentivise and to encourage to take those entrepreneurial risks.

Another reason why small business start-ups and encouragement of small business is so important is that, for decades throughout this country, small business has been the gateway for new migrants to assimilate, integrate and get their roots into this community. We are seeing something quite unique in this nation's history—for the first time we are seeing second and third generation Australians turning against our nation. With previous generations of migrants, the first generation had some difficulty settling into the country, but the second and third generations have settled in well and have contributed enormously to make this nation a better place. If we do not have opportunities for those new migrants to set up and start into small business, what we simply do is make it easier for the terrorist recruiters to alienate that second and third generation. That is another reason we must get out and encourage small business.

These bills are an important step, but there is still a lot more that we must do. We have, unfortunately, competition laws in this country that are anti small business. There is no provisions against anti-competitive price discrimination. They protect and provide privilege to the larger incumbent players. One example of how out of touch our competition laws are is a comparison with the Canadian Competition Act. The very first section of that act sets out the purpose of the act. It says:

Its purpose is to maintain and encourage competition in Canada in order to:

• promote the efficiency and adaptability of the Canadian economy

It goes on—

• ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises have an equitable opportunity to participate in the Canadian economy
• provide consumers with competitive prices and product choices.

'Small and medium sized and enterprises have an equitable opportunity' are words that are not seen anywhere in our own competition act.
Then we have the banking sector. The Reserve Bank prints a list of historical indicator lending rates. It goes back quite some time and from about 1996 they start to separate the lending rates charged to large and small businesses. If you look back through these historical comparisons, there was a loan from one of our major banks to a small business, which was secured by a residence where the owner of the business had put their house on the line, so if the business failed the bank could step in and take the owner's house. When you compare that to what was loaned to large businesses there was very little difference for many years. In fact in some cases the rate of lending to small business was actually less than it was to large business. That should only be natural because the loan to the small business is actually secured by residential property. As we go through the list, year after year we see the gap, the differential, between what the banks loan to small business compared to what they loan to large business continue to blow out. In the latest figures small business are paying perhaps 260 basis points or more to borrow money from the banks than are their larger competitors, even though that loan is residentially secured. That is one of the great factors we have against small business in this economy.

Another factor is around shopping centre leases and rents. In any major shopping centre you will see large chains, supermarkets, paying perhaps three per cent of their turnover in rent because of special deals. But the small business competitor is paying up to 20 per cent of his turnover in rent. Just imagine the outcry around the GST if one company was paying three per cent and another company, selling the same product, had to pay 20 per cent. That is exactly what we have with the distortions in the retail rents and the protection from competition in our shopping centre industry.

The other factor is our legal system. How can a small business, today, take on a large corporation in a dispute before the Australian courts? There are two ways that they can get beaten. They can get beaten on the facts, but in most cases they can get beaten simply because they run out of money. Other competition laws have provisions for triple damages. We used to have a triple damage provision, going back to the old Industries Preservation Act. We cut that out in the sixties. It was another anti-small-business step.

These bills are one of the important steps to levelling the playing field for small business, and to incentivise our entrepreneurs to get out there and to take risks. What they do is lower corporate tax rate from 30 per cent to 28.5 per cent. I would like to make a prediction. Treasury estimates that the corporate tax reduction will cost the budget about $300 million to $400 million every year. My prediction is that, when the dust settles and we do the final accounting on this, it will not cost the budget a single cent. I speak that from history for every single time in this nation that we have lowered the corporate tax rate, as have both Labor and Liberal governments in the past. We have lowered it from 49 per cent all the way down to the current level of 30 per cent. Every single time we have lowered that corporate tax rate the Treasury has had more taxation revenue flowing into it from the lower tax rate and also more tax revenue as a percentage of GDP. If you lower those tax rates, you create greater incentive for investment and the government ends up in a better position. I believe that, when we look at the numbers in perhaps 18 months, or two years, or three years, we will see exactly the same thing from this taxation rate reduction. My prediction is that the government Treasury will get more taxation revenue from small business at 28.5 per cent than they will at 30 per cent. Mark my words, Deputy Speaker. I thank the House.
Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (11:14): I take this opportunity to speak on the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and related bill. The Australian people need to understand what just happened in their House of Representatives. Every small business around the suburbs and towns of our nation needs to understand what just happened when it came to the opportunity to vote on these important small-business measures. Every small business in the electorates of the members for Moreton, Hughes and Farrer needs to know that the Liberal Party of Australia, after breathlessly spruiking these policies for weeks, voted against their own legislation being put. They were so desperate for division on this issue that they voted against their own bills. As I sat there listening to the contribution the Leader of the Opposition made earlier on to this debate, I thought that surely the Liberal Party of Australia will not vote against their own legislation. I was wrong. They did vote against their own legislation. I watched them walk in here, one at a time, and come over and sit on this side of the House and, amazingly, vote against the small-business measures that Labor thinks are very important to the future of our economy. Even the Minister for Small Business himself did so. It was a humiliating spectacle to see the Minister for Small Business vote against his own legislation. After going around the country—he began as a figure of fun and ended as a figure of ridicule—he voted against the bills that he himself put before the House of Representatives.

In question time, day after day, the government—whether it is the Prime Minister, the Treasurer or the Minister for Small Business—stand up and say, 'Labor must absolutely support our small-business measures,' failing to understand that on budget night itself, when the ink was not yet dry on the budget, Labor said that we would support the small-business measures in the budget. But they were so desperate for division on this issue, so desperate for conflict and a fight, that they either did not know or did not care that Labor has said all along to the small businesses of Australia that we will support this legislation. That proves the government has a political strategy but not a strategy for small business and for the broader economy. Have a look at some of the things they said about passing this legislation. In question time on 1 June 2015 Tony Abbot said:

I say to the Leader of the Opposition let us not let politics get in the way of economics. Let us not let self-interest get in the way of national interest. Let us pass this bill straight away.

That was the Prime Minister of this nation, this week. That is what he said about how important it was that the bills get passed straight away. We moved for that to happen. The Liberal Party voted against it. There is quote after quote of Liberal Party ministers saying we need to pass the bill straight away. Joe Hockey said:

So here is a challenge for the Labor Party. This legislation is going to go through the House of Representatives this week. Then it goes to the Senate. I lay down the challenge: Help us get that legislation through as quickly as possible.

Well, we have. And again, they have shown that they put politics ahead of the economy of this nation. The member for Hughes said to look at their real attitude to small business, and I think what happened this morning really did shine a big spotlight on their real attitude to small business. Small business, for the Liberal Party, is secondary to their political strategy—to their hunger and desperation—for there to be division and disunity in the House of Representatives and, indeed, right throughout the country.
Labor supports these bills because we support small business. We want to reward the effort of people who take chances. We want to reward the effort of the entrepreneurs in this country. We want to reward their effort and their enterprise. We want to give them every chance of success. That is why we have said all along that we will vote for these measures. The member for Parramatta, who joins us at the table, has been a big supporter of these measures because she is a big supporter of small business in our country. Everyone on this side of the House believes that we need to do all that we can to help and assist small business to create jobs and wealth in this country so that we can be a successful economy into the future.

Other speakers have spoken about the two main measures in these bills. The first one, of course, is the company rate tax cut and the second component is the instant asset write-off, which, in my personal opinion, is the better part of the suite of policies. I speak of the instant asset write-off with some experience, having played a small part in the government that introduced it. The Labor government introduced an instant asset write-off during the dark days of the global financial crisis, and it was a tremendously successful policy. The feedback we got from business was very positive, because it did help small business to make the investments they need in small-scale capital to succeed and to be wealth-creating, job-creating small businesses in this country. I really think that it speaks volumes about the government that they had abolished the instant asset write-off before then reinstating it. They did not just abolish it straightaway; they Rubbish it as well. There are quotes, and the Leader of the Opposition went through some of them—whether it is from the Minister for Small Business, the Treasurer or others—saying that the instant asset would not work. We disagree with that. It was a tremendously successful policy then, and I expect it to be a successful policy now. That is why I want to support it. That is why I voted for it this morning. It is a real shame, a real source of embarrassment, for the Liberal Party that they could not find a way to support the instant asset write-off this morning.

Let us have a look that at the sorts of things that the Minister for Small Business has previously said about the instant asset write-off. On 17 July 2012 he said:

Cash-strapped small businesses won’t be able to take advantage of an increase in the instant asset write-off because they don't have spare cash lying around to pay for an asset in the first place.

After the election, on 6 November 2013, he said:

Some of the instant asset write-off arrangements were sold as if they were great for cash-strapped small businesses. But you needed the cash to start with to make the purchase.

I do not agree with the views the Minister for Small Business has expressed about the instant asset write-off. I am pleased to see he has gone back on some of these views, but it is worth noting, for the record of this parliament, the hypocrisy of those opposite, having bagged and abolished a measure, and reinstated it, expecting the country to applaud them and pat them on the back for reinstating a successful Labor policy that we support wholeheartedly.

We all represent communities with fantastic small businesses. Many of us have 10,000 or more terrific small businesses in the communities we represent. In my case, I have 10,746 of them. More than 60 per cent of them are sole traders—people working for themselves. But there are more than 4,000 of them who employ between one and 19 additional people in their business.

I want to specifically salute them because they are a much needed source of jobs in my community, and we should not beat around the bush: jobs are not that easy to come by at the
moment and my community has had persistently higher unemployment than the national average. So I salute the small businesses in my community. I salute the Logan Chamber of Commerce—Bill Richards and his colleagues—that represents them so ably. Every single small business in my community is doing the right thing by the country. They are taking risks. They are showing an entrepreneurial spirit. Many of them are employing more people from my community, and I pay tribute to every single one of those companies.

Why is this so important? The economy is going through a period of below-trend growth. Very shortly—indeed, in about seven minutes time—national accounts for Australia will be released, and they will give us a good snapshot of the last three months of economic activity. But, in the last year or two, it is a fact not an opinion that the Australian economy has been going through a period of softer growth. There are a couple of reasons for that and there are some manifestations of that. One of the reasons that the Australian economy's growth is softer than is ideal and softer than trend growth is that there has been a dramatic drop-off in confidence in the economy.

If we just take consumer confidence is one example, at the 2013 federal election, consumer confidence was recorded by Westpac at 110.6. It is now 102.4, and it plummeted into the low 90s after the 2014 budget. So we do have a confidence problem in the Australian economy. It is made worse by the Treasurer, in this place, comparing us to the economy of Greece and all kinds of other damaging rhetoric, which is having a real impact. As the Treasurer of this nation, what you say matters. When he gets up and says that the Australian economy is like the Greek economy, people in the business community listen, and when they hear that, it damages confidence. It damages investor confidence and it damages consumer confidence in our economy.

That means that we have higher unemployment than is ideal. It is a stunning fact that the unemployment rate today, under this government, is higher than at any point under the previous government, and remember that the previous government dealt with a global financial crisis. The sharpest synchronised downturn in the global economy since the Great Depression happened under Labor's watch. The unemployment rate then was lower than it is today. Having diminished confidence in the economy, having done all they could to trash confidence around our community, the least that the Liberal Party could do is to vote for their own small business bills so that we can get things in train to get that legislation in place and pass them the instant asset write-off and the lower company tax rate. But, again, the political strategy of those opposite trumped what the economy needs and, specifically, what the small businesses of this country need.

On this side of the House we want an economy that is powered by aspiration and powered by enterprise. We want people who take risks to be rewarded for those risks. We want people to take a chance. We want people to aspire to employ more Australians. Certainly, in my community, as I said, we can do with all the new jobs created, so what we need to do is support sensible measures like these. Whether they were drafted initially by the Labor Party or not, we need to get together as a parliament and pass them.

We had an opportunity to do that this morning, and those opposite missed it. It should be a source of acute embarrassment for those opposite. They could not even vote for their own small business measures this morning, because they were so desperate for division and disunity in this place. If they were fair dinkum about small business they would have voted
for their own small business legislation. That they did not speaks volumes about that political approach. It speaks volumes about the character and the strategy of the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the small business minister that when they were given that opportunity they could not take it.

This is a government that always elevates the cheap political hit over the long-term benefits of the Australian economy not just in small business but right across the board. The way that the Prime Minister has shamefully attacked our idea to teach coding in primary schools is another example. His instinct always is to attack, to diminish and to divide the country. So his immediate reaction to our sensible policy to teach kids the language of the 21st century is to diminish it and to bag it, even though, right across the country, the parents and the teachers of Australia know that it is something that is needed, and there are so many more examples of the way that they go about rubbishing any idea that does not come from a Liberal Party focus group.

This is a divisive budget. This is a divisive strategy from a divisive government. It was proved again this morning by those opposite. Every small business in every community should know that when given the opportunity to vote in the interests of small business, the Liberal Party of Australia left them high and dry.

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (11:27): These related bills, the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 2) Bill 2015, seek to amend the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 in respect of companies with a total turnover below a $2 million threshold, firstly, to introduce a new tax rate of 28.5 per cent, which applies to the taxable income of qualifying small businesses and, secondly, to permit these qualifying entities to claim an immediate tax deduction for eligible productive assets costing less than $20,000 each. Nationally, small business generates $330 billion in gross domestic product, employing 4.5 million Australians. There were 280,000 small business start-ups in 2013-14. Small business provides 40 per cent of all jobs in the private sector, 60 per cent of jobs in the construction industry and 80 per cent of the employment in agriculture. Nearly 4,000 new jobs each week were created within the economy during 2014, equating to quadruple the rate of employment growth experienced in 2013. Since the start of this year, approximately 79,000 new jobs have been created, bringing the total to around 250,000 jobs created since the coalition government came to office.

Since the budget was announced in May, leading indicators have shown an increase in consumer confidence. The Westpac bank monthly consumer confidence index rose by 6.4 per cent, whilst the ANZ-Roy Morgan index rose 3.6 per cent in the week following the budget. Both indices are trending above their long-run average levels. Job advertisements remained strong. As measured by ANZ bank, the number of employment advertisements has risen in 10 of the past 11 months. Furthermore, retail trade figures have risen for 10 consecutive months, export volumes are now up 7.2 per cent on a year ago and residential building approvals are up 16.3 per cent over the past 12 months, remaining at near record levels.

As the Australian economy becomes increasingly connected with international economies through globalisation and free trade, our competitiveness increasingly matters. It is true to say that Australia's economy is more heavily taxed in comparison with those of emerging economies in our region, putting Australian businesses at a strategic disadvantage. The coalition government realises this and is taking appropriate action to ensure that the
Australian economy can be more resilient and compete internationally on a more level playing field.

I researched the comparison between Australia's corporate taxation rates and some of our closest regional trading partners to assess the competitiveness of our nation in the global economic marketplace. Figures sourced from the global tax rates table published by international accounting firm KPMG reveal that Singapore has a company tax rate of 17 per cent; Thailand, 20 per cent; South Korea, 24.2 per cent; and Indonesia, China and Malaysia, all 25 per cent. The OECD average is 24.77 per cent, the Asian average is 21.91 per cent, the European Union is average 22.15 per cent, and the global average corporate tax rate is 23.68 per cent. This illustrates that, if we are to remain competitive in attracting investment capital to develop our economy, we must keep our tax rates low. Previous tax reviews, including the Australia's Future Tax System review, have suggested that there would be benefits from a lower company tax rate and that government should continue to reduce tax rates as fiscal circumstances permit. According to OECD statistics, 11 of its 34 member countries have a differential corporate tax rate for small business.

These taxation reforms are much needed to make our business environment more competitive and to attract investment into Australia. In order to take advantage of the economic opportunities presented by free trade agreements, the government must ensure that our taxation system is efficient and flexible enough to permit Australian industry to prosper. The coalition government has a strategy to encourage Australian businesses to take advantage of export markets with the emerging economies in our region, facilitated by free trade agreements with Japan, Korea, and China. Trade is projected to continue expanding as a free trade agreement is expected to be reached with India and as Australia develops stronger economic partnerships with the 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam.

The budget contains $5.5 billion worth of initiatives designed to promote small business investment, growth and employment. It is estimated that some 90 per cent of incorporated businesses, representing 780,000 small companies, will be eligible for the 1.5 per cent reduction in the company tax rate, the lowest rate for small business since 1967. In addition, a five per cent tax discount will apply for the estimated 1.7 million small unincorporated businesses, providing a cut of up to $1,000 for sole traders, to give them similar incentive. On the other hand, more than 95 per cent of Australian businesses will be eligible for the instant tax deduction on productive assets of up to $20,000 in value purchased from 7.30 pm on 12 May 2015, which will encourage businesses to invest in tools, plant and equipment to raise output.

To support our agricultural sector, the budget provides $300 million in drought assistance for struggling farmers. In addition to the small business tax cuts, accelerated depreciation is provided for investment in water facilities, fodder storage assets and new fencing. All primary producers will be able to immediately claim a tax deduction on capital expenditure on fencing and water facilities such as dams, tanks, bores, irrigation channels, pumps, water towers and windmills. Farmers will also be able to depreciate over three years all capital expenditure on fodder storage assets such as silos and tanks used principally and primarily to store grain and other animal feed. The accelerated depreciation arrangements are expected to improve
resilience for primary producers facing drought, assist with cash flow and reduce red tape by removing the need for primary producers to track expenditure over time.

Like many of my colleagues on this side of the House, I come from a small business background. I started out in business with an $85,000 loan and, over 18 years, built my engineering supply company into a leading supplier of electrical, mechanical and pipe support systems to the commercial construction and mining industries. My company has made a lasting contribution to Western Australia by supplying iconic projects such as the new Terminal 2 at Perth Airport, the Graham Farmer Freeway tunnel, the Whitfords City and Lakeside shopping centre expansions, and the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, to name a few. As my company grew, I reinvested the retained profits into a commercial and residential property development business, which recently completed a district shopping centre project. I have experienced firsthand the challenges of being in business: employing staff, managing inventory, organising production, cash flow and paying the bills.

These tax reforms are a welcome boost for small businesses in my electorate of Moore, whose collective interests are represented by the Joondalup Business Association and the Wanneroo Business Association. Local businesses are experiencing the effects of falling commodity prices, the slowdown in the mining industry and the ever-increasing cost of production. It is therefore important for the government to implement policies which help to contain the cost structure of doing business.

This legislation needs to be passed by 1 July 2015 so that a lower tax rate of 28.5 per cent for small business can take effect from the start of the new financial year. The Treasury has consulted with the Australian Taxation Office in order to identify any implementation issues and integrity concerns with the proposals, as well as any potential flow-on impacts they might have within the broader tax framework. The tax rate reduction measure will cost the budget $1.45 billion over the forward estimates. On the other hand, the instant asset write-off scheme will cost the budget $1.8 billion over the forward estimates, with accelerated depreciation costing a further $70 million. It reflects an election commitment in the coalition’s policy for small business.

This budget delivers for families, for small business and for our economy. It is responsible, measured and fair. It cuts taxes, will create jobs and delivers a responsible pathway back to budget surplus. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (11:39): A number of years ago, before I was a member of parliament, I was running my own business, and I was headhunted by a man called David Williams who runs Shock Records, who turned out to be one of the great negotiators of all time because he managed to convince me to take on the management of the national association of independent record labels on a percentage basis when it had five grand in the bank and 20 members. He managed to convince me to do that and I did, and, a number of years later, it was representing virtually 95 per cent of the sector and it had five staff. But, during that time, I spent a lot of time in this place and in government departments lobbying for things that my sector needed in order to do well, and one of the things that you always wanted, as a person who represented an industry and represented a small business, was for whatever thing you were arguing for to have bipartisan support. The last thing you wanted ever was for something that mattered to small business to become politicised because, when it did, uncertainty developed. The timing blew out, sometimes to years. It came and went.
Uncertainty ensued. So, for us, it was always a case of trying to find members of the public service to work with and avoiding working with politicians until the last moment until you had support—trying to keep things as bipartisan as possible for as long as possible.

In all the meetings I have had with similar organisations since I came to this place—and I have had three in the last week with representatives of various small business associations—there is a single thing they all ask for. They ask for all sorts of things—sometimes the same thing; sometimes different things—but they always ask for one thing: 'Can you make this bipartisan?' It is the single thing that they all ask for, because they want the certainty. And I usually say: 'Well, we'll see what we can do. But there is not a three word slogan in it, so I am hopeful,' because we know that, if the government can find a three word slogan, they will make it political. And many, many things that business wants should actually be pursued in a bipartisan manner because both sides of government believe that small business is incredibly important and needs the support of this parliament.

Having watched what has happened in the last two weeks, particularly about the instant asset write-off, I am not so hopeful anymore, because this is an area of policy that we do agree on. We have agreed on it since it was presented on budget night. On budget night, the Leader of the Opposition said: 'We support that.' He said it the next day. In the budget reply he said: 'We support it.' And we have said it every day since then. And yet, for the last 21 days, we have had government members going out and trying to convince the small business associations and the small businesses out in their communities that there is doubt about this legislation—that somehow Labor might not support it; that the government is the friend of small business, and Labor is the enemy and might bring this great policy undone before their very eyes. Every day they have gone out and done that. And in this House they have gone out and done it. On 1 June, Tony Abbott said:

With the economy in transition, it is important that these budget measures to help small business get through the parliament as quickly as possible, some small businesses are reluctant to invest until the measure has passed the parliament. I say to the Leader of the Opposition, let us not let politics get in the way of economics. Let us not let self-interest get in the way of national interest. Let us pass this bill straight away.

On the same day, Joe Hockey said:

So here is a challenge for the Labor Party. This legislation is going to go through the House of Representatives this week—absolutely right. Then it goes to the Senate, which has only two weeks to sit. I lay down the challenge to the Labor Party: help us to get that legislation through the Senate as quickly as possible.

Bruce Billson on 26 May said:

The only thing people are uncertain about is whether Labor are going to muck around with this. Are they going to stand in the road?

Time after time in the last two weeks we have seen members of the government get up and say: 'Labor might not support this. There is doubt. Be fearful. Be worried. Put off spending. Put off using this until we are certain that Labor won't get in the way.' They have stood here in this House and they have said it—even though, on budget night and the day after, and in the budget reply and every day after that, we on this side of the House have been totally clear that we support it. This is an extraordinary turn of events—a government that claims to be about certainty, and claims to be for small business, in a case where there is bipartisan support
for a policy, cannot help themselves but try to find some political weapon to use. It is as if Tony Abbott's three-word slogan is his character: 'No, no, no. We cannot get on with this. We have to find some way of manoeuvring this and making a political benefit.' It is quite extraordinary.

Today we have seen, perhaps, the culmination of it. Having asked over and over again in this House for a commitment from Labor to support it—even though we committed to support it—when we get up and move that the motion be put and say 'let's get on with it; let's just pass it now', they vote against it. Most of them were confused, by the way. I am not sure all of them knew what they were voting for, but they voted anyway. We asked that the motion be put now, that it be voted on, that it be done. It could be done now. It could have been done yesterday, by the way, when it was on the Notice Paper, until the government decided to delay it a day. Who knows why? There might be a news cycle or something that will be in their favour. It was scheduled for yesterday; they moved it to today; they have delayed it 24 hours; and now they are delaying it for probably another 24 hours, because there are eight hours worth of speeches on this list. It could have been passed this morning. It was not, because the government decided that they did not want to pass it straight away. Having argued for it, and having stood up in this House day after day saying they wanted to pass it straight away and Labor was in the way, it turns out that it is exactly the other way around—Labor was prepared to pass it this morning; they are not. They want to delay it for as long as they can, presumably for some political advantage, in their minds, that we might see play out today somehow—who knows? It could have been passed. It has not been.

The reason you can be absolutely certain that Labor was going to support this—you could have been pretty much certain before we even knew about it—was that it was Labor's policy. Labor introduced an instant tax write-off for small business when it was in government. The current government, when in opposition—Tony Abbott, Bruce Billson, Joe Hockey—all argued against it. They said it would not work. They said that business did not have the cash; that it would not work; that it was bad. They argued against it—all three of them. They argued against it in 2011. They argued against it in 2012. They argued against it in 2013. Then they were elected, and they abolished it. They stood in this House, and in the Senate, and they abolished the instant tax write-off that Labor had introduced, because they thought it was a bad idea—it was bad in 2011, 2012, 2013, and it was bad in 2014 when they abolished it retrospectively. Labor argued to keep it. We thought it was good policy. Labor argued and fought to keep the instant tax write-off in place, and the government argued to abolish it because they thought it was bad. So having now changed their minds, and decided it is actually a good thing after all, you would think they would know that Labor had thought it was a good thing all that time, and that we would support it. We did, and we did support it.

Here we have a government that jumps to its feet to claim credit for reinstating something they had abolished the year before and argued against for three years. With incredible front, they are now claiming the moral high ground and blaming Labor for the uncertainty on this—even though small businesses, probably for nine months, were unsure whether the bill abolishing it would go through parliament. Then it was done retrospectively.

It is a similar story on the tax cut for small business. Again, it is a good thing and something that Labor supported on budget night and the day after, and in the budget-in-reply we said we wanted to work in a bipartisan way and go further. That seems to be a pretty
strong indication that we support a business tax cut for small business—we said we wanted to go further. Yet, again, we have had the Treasurer, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Small Business in this House trying to create uncertainty in the small business sector, as if Labor, somehow, were not going to support this. It had been our policy when we were in government. We tried to introduce a small-business tax cut when we were in government. Guess why it did not happen? Because the then opposition thought it was a bad idea and they argued against it. They did not want to do it. In opposition they did not want to do it, but now, miraculously, they have changed their mind and they are trying to tell people that Labor is standing in the way. Small business could have had this tax cut three or four years ago if the opposition had not stood in the way. They could have had it three or four years ago, and we could now be talking—as Labor wants to—about where you go from there. The government, when in opposition, stood in the way of small-business tax cuts—not Labor. We wanted to do it for years. They argued against it. It was a bad idea because it came from Labor. If it comes from Labor, it must be a bad idea, as far as this government is concerned.

We hear a lot in the media, and from this government, about the difficulty of governing when you do not have the numbers in the Senate. I want to spend a few minutes talking about that because it really is disingenuous for this government to talk about the difficulties of getting stuff through this House. There were two parliaments in the history of Australia that had, perhaps, the most difficult Senates around. One was the Whitlam government, who we all know. Whitlam did not get anything through—no legislation through—without the support of the opposition. Every single thing that Whitlam did, and that you remember him for, that required legislation, had to be negotiated through with the opposition—every single thing. Kevin Rudd was the same. People do not realise that. When the government gets up and carries on about what Kevin Rudd did when he was in government—the numbers in the Senate were such that the Liberals had the numbers. So everything that Kevin Rudd got through the parliament, he had to get through with the support of the opposition. It is called negotiating. And yet, he managed to get 95 per cent of his legislation through, because he negotiated. He treated the opposition with respect. He talked to them. He made sure the work was done ahead of time, and he actually got it done.

This government plays the politics at every single moment. This government plays politics with every single issue. It is even playing politics with something that we have agreed to. They could not even accept bipartisan support. They could not even accept that an opposition could get up and say, 'We support this.' They had to try to turn that around for their own political gain. It is truly extraordinary. It is because of that politicking that everything they touch turns into politics rather than government. Because everything is about politics, and not governance, we see this extraordinary decline in business confidence over the last two years. We can see it from day one. We can see business confidence figures start to fall from the election. They freefall—as down and down and down they go—from the 2013 election. Immediately after the first budget, down they go again.

So it is not surprising that we see a government that has to try and do something to bring confidence back. But the way to bring confidence back is to bring it with certainty: 'There's going to be an instant tax write-off; the opposition supports it. That's great. Let's get on with it.' Let's get on with it this morning. Let's get on with it. Don't go out on a travelling circus tour in your high-vis vest or whatever and make sure that business is as uncertain as possible
because you tell fibs—and I am being very generous about the opposition's position. We have been clear on this. Let's look at where we are because of the uncertainty and the politicising of everything by this government.

In the wake of last week's capex figures, we can see that private capital expenditure data for the March quarter fell by 4.4 per cent. It is 11 per cent down since the federal election. It is recession rates. It is at recession levels. Capex has collapsed. Unemployment is up. They inherited an unemployment figure with a five in front of it; it now has a six in front of it, and it is going up. It is projected to go up every year of the forwards. This is the legacy of this government.

We have seen business confidence fall down and down and down. With this measure, which is designed to boost business confidence, we see it rising slightly, to about the level it was immediately before last year's budget. So, again, when you look at the trends, it is really quite a flat-line trend. There is an incredible amount of work to do to boost confidence in the business sector.

I say to the government: if you want to do that, you do not go out for your own political ends and create uncertainty where there is certainty. You are already creating uncertainty. You have created it in the renewable energy space. You have created it in the car industry. You have created it in the many small businesses that support the submarine industry. You have created it in the childcare sector. You have created it with GPs and with community pharmacists. You name it, you have created uncertainty.

This is in an area in which you had certainty; this is an area that required certainty in order for it to have the stimulatory boost that you wanted it to have. You had certainty and you had agreement; and you went out and, in a wilful way, trying to create uncertainty where there was none. That is an extraordinary thing for a government to do.

You did it in opposition. You did it effectively in opposition, to the detriment of the country. But you do not do that in government. Stimulation requires certainty. You had it. You destroyed it.

Ms Marino (Forrest—Government Whip) (11:54): In the remarks of the Member for Parramatta there was a lot of talk about politics, but the majority of the speech was directed exactly that way. So it was contradictory in itself. In relation to small business, if you are in business—and in small business in particular—and you are looking down the barrel of $123 billion in deficits and $667 billion of future debt, which is what the previous government left for us, it really makes you reconsider your plans in business.

Small businesses are a key driver of Australia's economy, underpinning growth and innovation and providing jobs for millions of Australians. The measures in this bill give even greater confidence and encouragement to the small business sector. These are the people who have a go every day in our communities. Small business is our priority, and that is very clearly demonstrated by the bills before the House today.

I really want to acknowledge the persistent efforts of the Minister for Small Business, Bruce Billson. I want to acknowledge his passion and dedication to this portfolio. There is no substitute for either passion or dedication; whether you are the minister or one of those small businesses out there working in and on their businesses every day. They have a lot of
challenges. But that is what they do. They are persistent, they invest their own money, and they have a go. We are encouraging them to do that through these bills.

Small business knows that they have an absolute warrior on their side in this minister. He has been the epitome of persistence both in opposition and now as the minister. They can see the fruit of those labours here in these bills. And it is not before time.

During my time here, during the Labor years, they played musical chairs with the portfolio. I forget whether it was five or six ministers for small business, but it was something like that under the previous Labor government. And, unfortunately, Labor treated becoming a minister for small business like drawing the short straw. That was shabby, dismissive treatment indeed.

We have a totally opposite approach. The coalition government's Small Business Minister is in cabinet and is part of the Treasury portfolio; we are literally putting our money where our mouth is when small business is concerned. For the first time in Australia, small business is at the table every time decisions are taken. It is not enough to simply mouth the words 'we support small business' like a throwaway line from the other side. The government must actively deliver policies that foster and grow small business, as we are doing, in part, through these bills.

Small business is more important than ever in the Australian economy.

*Mr Matheson interjecting—*

*Mr Champion interjecting—*

**Ms MARINO:** I hear the disrespect across the chamber for small business—that is appalling—in this debate. Small business is more important than ever in the Australian economy. As we are all graphically aware in this place, the Australian economy is in transition and faces structural challenges from both domestic and international factors. Mining investment is now detracting from GDP growth. The move to broader based growth is happening, and small business is a key part of this growth. These are the people who literally invest their own money and have a go. So we need small businesses to have even more confidence to invest and grow, and to employ even more workers, because small business employs nearly half the workforce in Australia.

Often, the first job opportunity a keen young person has is in a small business. The owner of that little business, often in a small community, gives that young person a go. We also see—particularly out in my electorate—that the last job a mature-age person has is also in small business, where that owner once again, gives that mature-age worker a go.

I see this over and over in my electorate. There are at least 12,716 small businesses in my electorate. And, of course, they are even more important with below-trend economic growth, which has driven increased unemployment, especially youth unemployment.

So what we are facilitating through these bills is each one of these small businesses that gives a young person a go. We know that a combination of factors such as low interest rates and the falling Australian dollar will encourage employment and business growth over the longer term; there have been positive signs already that this is happening, and we have seen job advertisements increasing.

This government's Growing Jobs and Small Business package is the biggest economic recognition of the small business sector in Australia's history. Make no mistake about what
we are offering. We are offering the lowest small business company tax rate in almost half a century—in fact, since 1967. We are cutting the corporate tax rates from 30 per cent to 28.5 per cent for small businesses with an annual turnover under $2 million. Not only that, we are offering the same incentive to unincorporated small businesses. We are doing this through a discount of five per cent, or up to $1,000, for the 1.7 million small businesses that are unincorporated, giving them the same incentive. We recognise their contribution and the contribution ahead. We are providing accelerated depreciation arrangements to small businesses and primary producers that are also small businesses. We are simplifying depreciation rules in the tax laws, to increase the threshold for immediate deductibility from $1,000 to $20,000. Farmers will be able to immediately deduct all eligible capital expenditure on fencing and water facilities. Fodder storage assets will be deductible over three years.

Our budget measures reflect our very deep understanding of the complex nature of small businesses across our country. Small businesses have the advantage of being adaptable and flexible. They are able to change and respond, often profitably, to a range of changing circumstances. Studies indicate that small businesses are often the entities that test and pioneer innovative ideas and business practices. They are critical to future economic growth, job prospects and improved living standards, and they will literally have a go. They invest their own money, and they have a go. They mortgage their homes, as we have heard repeatedly, and they take huge risks.

While small companies play a significant role in the Australian economy, they also face a unique set of operational challenges, often having higher failure rates than those for larger companies. Again, they often have a go and take a risk. Sometimes it can be their second or third go. It does not deter them: they learn each time, and they have another go. Often access to finance is an issue for them. Funding for small businesses is essential for productivity, growth and job creation. Improving small business access to finance is a key part of what we are doing.

I was in Augusta recently and came across a fellow who had moved into the community. He was opening up a new fast-food outlet—it was a fish and chips store. He had put all of his capital into it. He is having a go. He knows what the local economy is, but he is still having a go. I take my hat off to every one of these small businesses. I meet them everywhere. They are in every field; they are in every one of my communities—Nannup, Dunsborough, Margaret River or anywhere throughout my electorate—bailing up the local economy. I see that these small businesses are often the ones that support local charities, not-for-profit organisations, local sporting groups and sporting clubs. They donate prizes; they support our local communities.

Because I live in a small community, if it was not for those small businesses in my part of the world investing their own money and having a go, I would have to travel for at least 40 minutes to get what I need for my dairy business. But those local businesses front up in my electorate, they employ local people, they open their doors and I can get in there and get what I need. It is a huge challenge for them in small communities all of the time, but they still offer that opportunity to people like myself. That is why I am particularly pleased to see the support that we are providing to the farming sector through these bills. We are delivering support to farmers, farm businesses and rural communities, because small businesses matter in rural communities.
Each single business matters, and every time we lose one, we lose part of our community. We lose people who are involved in our community, as small businesses and small business people are; they are an integral part. Often it is the local small business where the local community gathers in their own world, and they fix the problems in the world. The small business offers them that opportunity. You see it frequently. Even in a little place like Myalup at the general store, the local people will go down there each morning, pick up their papers and talk to the local business owner. They sit there and talk about the affairs of the day, and it is that small business that helps to hold that community together. That is so underestimated around Australia—the fact that small businesses are a key part of our local communities, particularly our rural and regional communities. So the assistance to primary producers—to be able to claim more favourable accelerated depreciation for water facilities, fodder storage and fencing from July of 2015—is very important for those in the rural sector. These are really down-to-earth practical measures that they appreciate, and the measures allow them to get on with what they do really well.

I support the bill before the House, but in doing so can I acknowledge once again the huge commitment made by small business. It is hard to understand unless you have done it yourself, and unless you have actually put your home and your future on the line. You do not sleep at night when you have a massive debt, as I know from experience. One small problem in your business can cause massive problems, and you may not survive. Let me tell you that every there are those who will tell you that you are not going to survive. My husband and I know it well. We had $12,000 worth of equity and $118,000 on the day that we married, and everybody said, 'You will fail'. Well, we did not, but it took a lot of hard work. It took an absolute focus on our business, on income generation and on keeping control of our costs. When I talk to small businesses, I know that that is what they do every day. That is why I am pleased that we have not only a minister who is passionate and persistent but a government that is, as well.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): It is a good story.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (12:07): I rise to support this bill, the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015, and support it wholeheartedly. I note the member for Forrest was talking rather wistfully about some of the businesses in her electorate and how they form the real heart of the community. I remember, when I was a young lad growing up in Kapunda, Reg Rawady owned the local deli, which had exactly that role. Rawadys Deli was a mixed business in Kapunda, and it was where people would come and chat. Of course, it was a good business as well.

Indeed, I see good businesses all over my electorate. When I am back at my electorate office, I often go across to Jack's coffee shop in Munno Para and have a talk with Mark. Mark is an ex-employee of Bridgestone, so he knows something about working in a big industrial environment; of course, it has been a big change for him to go into business for himself. He never lets me pay for coffee, unfortunately! He is certainly making a go of it there and he is always busy whenever I am there. Similarly, Dave and Lisa over at Forty Winks in the Munno Para shops, are a great local small business. They are great supporters of the Elizabeth footy club and of the local community. We know that there are so many people out there putting themselves on the line and creating good businesses that employ other people. Whenever I
have had an issue with my car, I have always sent it along to Smithfield crash repair, to Larry and the boys, and they do a very good job.

There are lots of small businesses throughout my electorate, including farming businesses and businesses in small country towns and regional centres like Gawler, throughout Salisbury, Elizabeth and Munno Para. They all deserve our praise and admiration because, obviously, they put a lot of their own capital, as well as their own labour and their own ingenuity and effort into those businesses, and they employ so many people. They are really active and good corporate citizens in the local community, which I think is terribly important.

That is why it is so disappointing—when you have people out there doing the right thing and looking to Canberra, as they look to their state capitals as well, for a bit of support, a bit of consideration and a bit of acknowledgement—that, here in Canberra, political games are being played with their futures. In this government’s first budget, we saw the demolition of Labor’s small business package. Instead of bipartisan support, instead of bipartisan consideration, we saw the demolition of Labor’s small business package, the one that we had when we were in government. That package was $5 billion worth of support for small business in terms of taxation considerations which we had put in place as part of our response to the global financial crisis and to the post-GFC economy. Part of our package was to try and spread some of the benefits of the resources boom that was going on at the time. But what did we get from those opposite? As the Leader of the Opposition said, we got a pavlovian response because Labor had promoted it, put in place and legislated for it. Whatever you might say about the last Labor government, legislatively the Rudd and Gillard governments were some of the most productive governments in this country’s history. They really did push through a lot of legislation that was good for the country. Some of that was about small business and some of that was repealed by the current government.

So, what do we have in this 2015 budget? We know how much trouble the government and the Prime Minister were in, out there in the community. Having smashed consumer confidence, having smashed small business confidence and having smashed the Australian economy, knocked it for six, they then had to turn it all around and try to reinvigorate the Australian economy. What we see in this budget is, in some instances, the reintroduction of Labor’s package and, in others, some support for small business, lowering tax rates and the like.

Since those measures were announced in the budget, we have had, on the one hand, the government demanding that we pass these bills and, on the other hand, the furious response from the opposition, saying, ‘Yes, we’ll pass them.’ On budget night, the shadow Treasurer indicated our support for these bills, for these measures, and gave them bipartisan support—because we do not have that sort of pavlovian opposition response; we have a commitment to this country and to what makes this country great. We all know the figures for how much is invested and how many people are employed, and how important those investments and that employment are to our local economies. You do not have to spend much time in the community to know how important that contribution is. People rely on these businesses.

Before the bill was even in the House, we had the Prime Minister demanding that we pass it. On 1 June 2015, he said:

With the economy in transition, it is important that these budget measures to help small business get through the parliament as quickly as possible—
they are key words, 'as quickly as possible'—
as some small businesses are reluctant to invest until the measure has passed the parliament. I say to the Leader of the Opposition, let us not let politics get in the way of economics. Let us not let self-interest get in the way of national interest. Let us pass this bill straight away.

'Let us pass this bill straightaway.' But what happened this morning? Labor moved that the question that this bill be read a second time be put right away, this morning. It could have been passed. It could be on its way to the other place. And it would have had a speedy passage through the other place, too, due to the bipartisan support. We would have had none of the shenanigans with the crossbenches, none of the haggling or the horse-trading. We would have had bipartisan certainty for small business. And what did the government do? The government voted against putting the question. It voted against passing the bill! We had this bizarre spectacle where the Prime Minister demands that we pass a bill and then his party votes against that proposition. It is pretty strange!

Mr Deputy Speaker, you could have thought that maybe there was a bit of confusion there—maybe there were some crossed wires somewhere along the way. But look at what the Treasurer said in question time on 1 June:

So here is a challenge for the Labor Party. This legislation is going to go through the House of Representatives this week—absolutely right. Then it goes to the Senate, which has only two weeks to sit. That indicates an urgency, doesn't it? I will continue the quote:

I lay down the challenge to the Labor Party: help us to get that legislation through the Senate as quickly as possible.

Well, the quickest way to get it through the other place would be to pass it through the House of Representatives promptly—not to have a long list of speakers, as we have on this bill. A long list of windbags from those opposite, who want to talk about this stuff rather than getting on and doing it—getting on and passing it.

And then we had the small business minister, who was lauded in the member for Forrest's speech. On 28 May he said:

The legislation is in this place. Let's get it through this place in a hurry and let's see if Labor is true to its word. It is not about the backswing; it is all about the follow-through. Let's follow through and get these measures enacted.

These are great sentiments. I see the minister at the table nodding enthusiastically. We all think that this place should be productive; we all think we should get on with it. And yet what did they do this morning? They voted against pushing this bill through the House of Representatives and into the Senate. They voted against bipartisanship. They voted against certainty. They voted against productivity in this place.

If you were out there working in a small business you would have to scratch your head. You would think, 'Well, why don't they just get on and do it? What's going on here?' Mr Deputy President, I will tell you what is going on here with the Prime Minister and his ministers: they operate from this song sheet—this bit of political strategy—'We are prepared to put our own political interests ahead of the national interest and, in this case, ahead of small business interests'. They could not care less about the national interest or small business interests where they conflict with their political interests.
And their political interests are Nixonian. They are all about division, all about partisanship and all about dividing the country, trying to squeeze out a small electoral majority. They could not give a damn: if it is 50 plus one then that is enough. They will even be satisfied with less than the popular vote so long as they can win those marginal seats. This is a quest for power at its most rank and most basic.

And we saw it this morning, this sort of Orwellian bravado from the government, from the Prime Minister, from his ministers and from the Treasurer. Orwellian bravado: pass the bill, pass the bill, pass the bill! We kept on demanding that they put it in the House. Pass the bill! And yet when it comes to this House, and when the opposition leader provided bipartisanship and offered to put the bill, what did we have? Not just opposition on the voices but a division—a division in this place about whether we should put the question, put the bill, pass it through the House on its way to the Senate and on its way to certainty and to being law. Instead, we are going to have to listen to a bunch of drones from the other side, droning away for half the day and half the night. They are all positive contributions, I am sure, if we had time for them!

This is a bunch of people standing around the front bar of the local pub in the country, talking about how they are going to fix the world but never actually getting to work. They never actually get out there on the farm. They are a lot of 'gunnas'. You have heard of that before, haven't you, Minister? 'Gunna'?

Mr Joyce: Yes, 'gunna'.

Mr CHAMPION: 'Gunna do this; gunna do that'?

Mr Joyce: Gunna shearer!

Mr CHAMPION: Gunna shearer! Of course, it has confused those in the fourth estate too. Mr Deputy Speaker, imagine you were a journalist. You would be scratching your head, because they had all these demands, this Orwellian bravado and this beating the chest. We always get that out of the Prime Minister. That there is one in every town. He is a good talker and you think, 'Oh well, you know, I guess he must be right. He's saying it with such forcefulness. He's so adamant; he must be right.' And then you find out he is wrong, and you think, 'Oh right. I wonder how that's going to go?' Then the next time he is so adamant again, and he is wrong. Sooner or later you work out that a man's word is his bond and that you have to be careful with words.

Those in the fourth estate, those up in the gallery, know. We know what Phil Coorey thinks. He has an article online, 'Government declines Labor offer to pass small biz tax package'. That is a headline. That is a headline you would not have expected to see. You would have thought that those opposite, after all the quotes, the hoo-ha, the bravado and the beating of the chest—'We're gunna do this, we're gunna do that,' all those 'gunnas'—would have taken up the offer of bipartisanship. You would have thought they would take up the offer for certainty. You would have thought they would have had this bill through this House. And if ever a guillotine should apply, it should apply on these measures because there is broad agreement on them. There is no need for the drones from the backbench to drone on for a day and night. We should pass this bill and have no more Orwellian division and no more of this 'Gunna do this and gunna do that'. We should have no more delay. Let's have certainty, let's have economic growth and let's back small business in this country.
Mr BROAD (Mallee) (12:22): There are lots of words that are said in this parliament and sometimes those words are recorded for posterity. People must sometimes wonder about the debates that take place in this parliament, but one of the things we should take time to do in this place is to reflect on the small businesses we have in our communities.

We have 15,000 small businesses in the electorate of Mallee. I do not mind taking a little bit of time to talk about some of those small businesses and to celebrate their contribution. Since we have come to government, we have gone on a bit of a journey. We have had to get finances back on track; we have had to set the strategic framework for those small businesses to function. A lot of those businesses in my electorate are exporters. I reflect on the fact that the currency has moved from 105 cents down to 75 cents, and that has helped those exporters, many of whom export to the Asia-Pacific region. I reflect too on the fact that we spent so long fluffing around the edges of free trade agreements, but, since the coalition has come to power, we have locked away a free trade agreement with China, locked away a free trade agreement with South Korea and a free trade agreement with Japan. These have certainly helped the small businesses in my electorate.

There is a great diversity of small businesses in my electorate. There is Oscar Furniture that make aids, appliances and furniture for people with disabilities and for senior Australians—my wife is an occupational therapist who often gets things from that small business. We have Mocha Mecca that makes coffee. Did you know Mildura was the second place in Victoria to have its own barista? We have a very strong Italian community and, if you do not serve good coffee, you do not make a living in Mildura. We also have Phil Hand Electrical—he's a small businessman who employs a couple of people doing electrical work—and we have a guy called Frank Pedulla, who grows wine grapes. We have people in our electorate who do so many exciting things, and it is a good use of the parliament's time to celebrate them and their contributions to the Australian economy.

Having a low currency and free trade agreements creates opportunity, but the changes that we are talking about are about taking that opportunity and turning it into reality. If you look at these small businesses, there is always something they could purchase that could drive their productivity—perhaps help them to market their product better or do their payroll better or get them some infrastructure. This is not a $20,000 grant; this is in fact a tax deduction. There is a difference which needs to be understood. This is something that says, 'We will stand behind your business—now that we have the currency settings right and now that we have the free trade agreements and opportunities in Asia-Pacific region—and we will instil some confidence and strengthen your arm by allowing you to have accelerated depreciation or instant tax write-offs of purchases up to $20,000.'

Over the last few years we went through some very dry times in the Mildura area. The federal Labor government, which left water management to Penny Wong, delivered perhaps one of the most damaging policies to our irrigation community. They purchased the water from a block of land on the conditions that the irrigation infrastructure was pulled out and that that land could not produce anything agricultural for five years. Think about that for a moment: the federal Labor government purchased water on the conditions that not only we do not produce anything but we also pull out that water infrastructure. In my opinion that was one of the worst policies we ever saw from a water minister in the history of the Commonwealth—we used federal funds to take out productivity.
By contrast, our government has committed $103 million to build a modern irrigation system and, now that we have developed free trade agreements and great opportunities, people are asking to get their land back into productivity. They say: 'Can I start producing something back on that land? It is a shame that land had to have that irrigation infrastructure pulled out.' The five years are nearly over, and they are able to bring that land back into productivity. Not only are we batting for them and helping them to bring that land back into productivity, but we are also giving them an instant tax write-off to put that irrigation infrastructure in so that they can go back and actually produce something. The contrast could not be starker. The previous government's view was: 'Shut down, pull up, wind down. There are no jobs, no productivity, no exports, no irrigation infrastructure for your rural community.' That was their way forward. It is our government that has invested in the delivery system, that has developed the markets and the free trade agreements, that has the currency at the right level for them to hit those markets and capitalise on that opportunity and has put the irrigation infrastructure through tax write-offs. All of this says that we stand behind the producers and that we believe in what they can do. This is the real reason the polls are going up. People are realising that one view wanted to shut down regional Australia while the other view wants to grow regional Australia.

Politicians do not create wealth; I said that in my maiden speech. We think we do, and sometimes we get a bit ahead of ourselves and think we are the ones who are creating the wealth. We are only the custodians of the wealth that the Australian people develop and grow. A key factor to growing our wealth is the men and women who get up every day to run a small business, along with the people they employ. Collectively, the hard work of Australians grows our prosperity, and we are entrusted with that prosperity to distribute it equitably to look after senior Australians, to create educational opportunities for our children. We also take care of defence; we build the roads; and we look after health care. It is the small businesses that we should celebrate. I think it is wise that over the coming hours that speaker after speaker in this place present the stories of those they represent and highlight those small businesses, because we value those small businesses. We commend them for their contribution to the country. We stand behind them, and we are demonstrating that through these major changes—changes that are a complete contrast to those of the previous government. People will see them as green shoots. They will literally see these green shoots as vineyards, table grapes, almonds and citrus. They will see them in my electorate, and they will say, 'Aren't we happy that we finally have a government that believes in our future rather than one that thinks the future is only made by shutting us down.'

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (12:30): I must say that the member for Mallee, whom I consider a good friend and a great champion of rural Australia, is living in a different world than the one I see. This idea that the measures in the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and related bills are somehow in stark contrast to what Labor does in government or, indeed, what Labor did when last in government is just a ridiculous proposition. This is a government without its own economic narrative—we know that. That is an incontestable proposition. While Labor welcome all the measures taken in these bills—and we made it very clear from budget night that we would be supporting the bills—many of the measures, if not most of the measures, are a reinstatement of the tax breaks that Labor put in place when in government, which this government repealed as one of its first acts as a new
government. So for the member for Mallee to suggest that this bill highlights the contrast between the two major political parties is just simply a ridiculous proposition.

As I said, this is a government without an economic narrative. It has no economic reform program of any merit or of any substantial weight. That this government is cutting funding to those least able to afford to have their income cut or to have the government support of their community organisations cut does not fall under the definition of 'economic reform'. It certainly does not fall under the definition of 'structural reform'. This government has no idea about fiscal policy or social policy, and it certainly does not have any idea about agriculture policy—and how fortuitous it is to have the Minister for Agriculture at the table, as I speak.

But it gets worse than that, because this government talks about small business as if it is homogenous, as if each and every one of our small businesspeople, organisations or entities is the same. We all know that that could not be further from the truth. Our small business sector is very, very diverse. It comprises larger and smaller businesses; those motivated to grow, those not motivated to grow; those motivated to increase revenues, those who are not; those motivated to employ more, those not so motivated to employ more. They are in retail, wholesale, manufacturing, IT, the services sector, entertainment, farming and trades—the list goes on and on and on. The motivations vary considerably. As I said, some want to grow, some do not. Some want to employ more staff, many do not because of all the complexity, responsibility, regulation and red tape burden that comes with such a proposition. Some want to innovate, some do not. Some are effectively just buying themselves a job. That is the truth of it. Many tradies are perfect examples of that. Many truck drivers provide another example. They are buying themselves a job by necessity, or they are motivated to do so. They are happy with a reasonable income stream and to maybe work five days a week rather than seven—many, of course, do work seven, but many do not.

So we are dealing with a very diverse range of people and business entities, and this is well acknowledged and understood by those in academia who follow small business policy and, indeed, promote small business policy. I am very grateful to know one of them, a very good friend of mine, Professor Scott Holmes, who is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Western Sydney. He has relied on very extensive survey data in breaking down small businesses into five groups. This is interesting, because the groups not only are very different in their make-up, motivation, profit and ambition et cetera but also see themselves as affected or challenged by different areas of government policy.

The first segment is a group he calls 'financially constrained growth aspirers'. He said these are younger businesses mostly seeking growth but struggling to achieve it. Two-thirds of them feel they are not performing to their expectations. He describes the second group as 'externally impacted growth seekers'. He says they are mature businesses mostly seeking growth and, like segment 1, struggle to achieve it, with something like 65 per cent of them performing worse than they had hoped over the past 12 months. He describes the third group as 'broadly impacted stability seekers'. These are businesses with lesser growth aspirations, yet they are only moderately satisfied with their performance, with almost half reporting their business performed under their expectations. The fourth is the 'stress free stability seekers'. He says they are a well-established group and there seems to be no area that really impacts upon them in terms of their business ambitions. They are, of course, the group we like most. They do not have any trouble with government, apparently; but there is good reason for this, and I
will return to it. The fifth group is the 'technology oriented growth achievers'. These businesses tend to be relatively large and involved in the production of technology-related products and services. Most of these growth-oriented businesses are successful in achieving their goals, with a higher proportion performing better than expected, in their minds and in their assessments of their own businesses.

One of the key points about all this is, as I said, that they see government putting up different sorts of challenges for them. The same survey work demonstrates that the key issues across all groups are as follows: first of all, economic uncertainty—and I think I could spend some time talking about the economic uncertainty this government has created over the last 20 months by constantly talking down the economy and by its fearmongering campaign on debt and deficit et cetera—followed by, second, the maintenance of and growing revenues; third, managing cash flows, costs and overheads; fourth is competition; and the fifth is red tape, taxation and compliance. This goes to the point about the mantra surrounding this bill. Despite the diversity of the small business sector, the Prime Minister would have you believe that what is contained within these bills is the panacea for all ills—that for small business, the world is now its oyster because of these tax measures—when the reality is, I remind the House, that many of these measures are a reintroduction of what Labor had done in government. While they are still welcome—it is a welcome thing that the government has had a rethink—the mantra from the government strongly implies that they see this as the end of the road for government: that government has now done its work, and small business can sail on happily now because of all these wonderful things the government has done within these bills.

The thing about Scott Holmes's work is that of those five segments I spoke about, various government roles and responsibilities are given different weights by their businesses, depending on which segment they fall into. For example, segment one, the financially constrained growth aspirers, is mainly concerned about maintaining and growing revenues, managing cash flows, costs and overheads, and access to finance. But when you get to segment two, for them it is all about economic uncertainty and competition—I suspect that is competition amongst businesses, and perceptions about market power amongst some of their competitors. In segment three, it is all about red tape, taxation, and managing cash flows—you would expect that these bills would be most welcomed by the 17 per cent of small entities that fall into segment three. In segment four, more than 70 per cent are satisfied with their business's ability to meet their goals, and they are not really concerned at all about government intervention or the way in which government policy impacts upon them. Segment five, the technology oriented growth achievers, are concerned most about technology changes and competition. So you can see the diversity, both in the make-up of the entities—the nature of the entities—and in the areas of government policy which concern them most.

The point I am making here is that small business policy cannot end at some taxation changes, as welcome as they might be. This government—just like with its broader economic narrative—has no story to tell about where it aspires to take our country's small entrepreneurs into the future. There are also some agriculture initiatives in this bill, and I welcome them—and tax breaks generally of varying kinds, particularly in the area of depreciation. The big criticism I had on budget night, which of course has now been repaired by a very significant backdown by the minister at the table, was this idea that farmers who had been in drought for
three years were not worthy of a new depreciation schedule—a tax break—until sometime after 1 July 2017. Well, that would have been a great load of help to farmers in drought! In fact, it would have been no help at all. So I welcome the backdown, and the fact that that tax break will come earlier. But it is a good initiative to give accelerated depreciation schedules to farmers facing drought, who have some need for investment in things like feed storage, water initiatives, or fencing—one of the biggest challenges facing many of our people on the land is wild dogs; fencing, for many reasons, is of course a good thing—and we welcome this initiative.

Of course, this has to be seen in the context of some of the lesser achievements in agriculture. The cuts to FAGs grants will not help people in rural communities very much: that is a billion dollars out of councils; money that could have been spent on local initiatives to stimulate drought-affected economies. The drought policy has been an absolute failure: the minister is borrowing at just over two per cent and lending at between three and four per cent—and he still cannot spend the money. That is why he keeps re-announcing his drought money, because either farmers are just not taking up the measure or the support because they do not see that it will help in their circumstances, or they are not eligible for the assistance. I urge the minister again to take another look at the failings of that policy. The opposition stands ready to support any change in direction that would help. I thought the minister’s rebate on water initiatives was a worthy initiative, and I would welcome the transfer of some of that loans money that he cannot spend into that initiative to provide more support.

The other big thing—I would describe it as a clanger—is the minister’s decision to force the APVMA out of Canberra. This is an organisation that is not funded by government. It is an organisation which works on a fee-for-service basis. Its money comes from the companies it serves—that is, companies that are not based in Armidale, in the minister’s electorate; they are companies that are typically based in our capital cities including Canberra. This is going to be a catastrophe for the APVMA and for the agriculture sector. I call upon the minister to have a rethink. He is doing the same thing with our research and development corporations. He promised to spend more money on R&D; he has done nothing but cut it—not ‘nothing but cut it’: he has put some extra money in, but he has taken more out than he has put in. So that is a clear breach of his election promise. And now he is forcing them to move—the GRDC to Wagga Wagga, the Fisheries RDC to Hobart, the Rural Industries RDC to Albury-Wodonga and of course the APVMA to Armidale. He had already cut the RDC funding, by the way, which is worth noting.

Minister, I appeal to you. You know that all of these organisations are distraught over this measure. They believe it is going to have a significant adverse impact on the commodity sectors they serve. You know, Minister, they are going to lose a lot of good people. You are forcing them to pay for this move! This is more than $40 million out of research going not to research but to an office move and redundancies. Please, tell me how is this a good idea? Decentralisation, in principle, is a good thing. It can work. It rarely does but it can. But it only works when there is a strategic plan which is well thought out and when we have consultation with those who are going to be affected. You have done none of that, Minister. This is no more than a thought bubble on your part. I would like to think it is not pork-barrelling in your electorate. That is for you to explain. But it is a bad idea, Minister. You should rethink it and
Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture) (12:46): It is a pleasure to rise on something—the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and cognate bill—that shows the dedication by the coalition to small business and to agriculture. I might take the shadow minister up on some of his issues. I think a department—possibly the mines department—has been moved, by the state Labor government, to his electorate. So the whole idea that he does not believe in moving departments so quickly falls over when there is one in his own backyard. And, of course, we also had the Department of Agriculture that has been moved to Orange. It has not fallen over. It is working quite well at a state level. Another department was moved by the Labor Party down to Nowra. So the rhetoric changes depending on the day. We have a policy of the Labor Party right now in Western Australia wanting to move departments to Albany and to Bunbury. So this is quite evident.

Just to take the member for Hunter up on this issue, where we have co-located departments, RDCs, such as in Narrabri, we now have the highest yielding cotton in the world. It has been a success. It has created a centre of excellence. It would have to be called that because if you are the best in the world then what you do speaks for itself. The member for Wakefield talked about how we had to truncate this debate so we did not have to suffer the sins of people droning on. He then proceeded to speak for 15 minutes and was followed up by every other Labor Party member speaking for 15 minutes.

I have been an accountant much longer than I have ever been a parliamentarian. My life in small business was how I got ahead. I still have a small business. My wife and I are cattle and sheep producers now. What we do has been built on a foundation of lived experience. On our side of the chamber, I am proud of the fact that we have people who have actually been in business, who have actually had that fear that comes on a Friday evening—and, no doubt, Deputy Speaker Kelly, you have done this yourself—of working out where the wages are going to come from. That is a sense of realism—understanding your responsibility to your staff, because the staff are what make a business work. It is from that basis, from that vessel of experience, that the coalition is moving forward with a plan to reinvigorate the business community. And it is working.

If we look at some of these measures, how they work in small business generally and in agriculture in particular, you can see the difference they make. The immediate write-off for plant, for businesses with turnovers of less than $2 million, for as many items of plant as you wish as long as that item of plant does not exceed $20,000, has had an immediate effect. We have now seen specials on second-hand utes for $19,999. So we know that this is actually landing as we speak.

If you look at the plant around a farm that is turning over $2 million—if you are selling $1.9 million worth of cattle, you are doing quite well for a family—it would mean that, immediately, as of budget night, for the post-hole digger you would get 100 per cent write-off; the compressor, a 100 per cent write-off; and the welder, 100 per cent write-off. These are things that are actually manufactured in our nation and we must make sure that we stimulate the manufacturing industry. Cattle crushes are made in Australia—a 100 per cent write-off immediately that night, as well as for stockyard panels. A lot of the attachments and farm
implements are made in Australia. This is stimulating growth, as well as making sure that properties are refurbished.

As part of this process we are also reaching out to these small businesses. If they are a corporate entity, they get 1½ per cent tax deduction. That is certainly of assistance. If they are not corporatised—and, to be honest, a lot of farming entities are partnership sole traders—they get the advantage of a five per cent reduction in the tax, to the value of $1,000—a rebateable item. These are all statements that say we understand your life; we have people in the coalition who have lived that experience. We understand the whole philosophy of small business.

The thing that is beautiful about small business is this: it gives you the opportunity to find your highest level of freedom because you become master of your own ship. You live by your own corporate manual. The results of your endeavours are directly attributable to the money that you actually get and can actually bank. In essence, you aspire to try and find the highest level of freedom by the sweat of your own brow. Sometimes it is successful; sometimes it is a tough game. Sometimes it comes unstuck and that has been the way of business for eternity. But we know that it stands behind the capacity for people. If they are in their own business they can say what they like; they do not have to abide by the corporate culture. They can actually go forward and present their own views clearly and unambiguously because there is that greater freedom.

When I was thinking about a political career I knew that it would be unfair to try to do it in a corporate setting. You had to basically be in your own business, because you cannot have other people in the workplace basically being encumbered by your views and whether they agree with them or not. So this is another great thing that stands behind the liberty of the individual as expressed in its most pronounced form through small business.

I also want to note three issues that were part of the white paper that have been announced in the budget—the 100 per cent write-off for water reticulation as an assistance to security, especially security against drought; the 100 per cent write-off for fencing; and the write-off over three years for fodder storage, including grain, which is pertinent to dealing with drought. These are incredibly important. In so many areas, if you can get some silage in and get some country laser levelled and put a lateral in, you have a capacity to better prepare yourself for droughts. Refurbishing what is on the place will go hand in glove with the dams policy, which we will be announcing imminently. These things work together. It is part of a plan. We are inspiring people to develop their places, and the government will be part and parcel of the construction of dams.

Mr Fitzgibbon: When will see the white paper? Give us a hint, just a tease. Next week? The week after?

Mr JOYCE: I will take the interjection from the member for Hunter. The grand plan for the Labor Party was the food plan—$30 million. That was it! That was as much as we could get from the shadow minister. Our beef road announcement alone is worth $100 million, which is three times bigger than their total food plan. What have we done so far in drought? $400 million. That is more than 10 times his food plan. The Labor Party does not even have a farmer—the once great party of Mick Young! There is no-one there.

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—
Mr JOYCE: Member for Hunter, I will credit you with one thing: I think you might be one of the only small business people who has ever been in business in the Labor Party.

Mr Fitzgibbon: I certainly am a small business person, but I don't know about 'the only one'.

Mr JOYCE: Who are the other ones? You must be able to answer that. Is there another one in the whole of the Australian Labor Party at a federal level?

Mr Fitzgibbon: Shane Neumann.

Mr JOYCE: Shane Neumann—a solicitor. Fair enough. They have got two small business people in the Labor Party. That is why it they do not have the lived experience of being in business. They do not know what it is like. That is why there is no formation around their policy. But let's go back to those measures I was talking about. If we have a three-year write-off of silos and sheds, that also stimulates the contractors who build the silos. And guess where they build silos? In Australia, in our nation. So this actually stands behind the manufacturing sector of our nation. So we are getting the people who are build the crushes; we are stimulating the growth of the people who build the silos. We are actually delivering the outcomes that not only—

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

Mr JOYCE: He is back to tell us about the white paper which will be released imminently. He has gone to the telephone, he has rung up to see how many small business people there are in the Labor Party. And do you know what they have said? 'You're correct, there are only two of you!' There are only two of them—that is it. An alternative government—as they see themselves—that does not even have people who have the capacity to run their own business has no hope of running the nation. And you can see that in the how they worked. Their operation of the nation was a debacle, a soap. And the soap is on at night now—we watched it last night! And guess who was part of that soap? The member for Hunter was. The soap of Gillard, the soap of Swan, the soap of Kevin Rudd—and that is the soap of Labor Party economic policy.

It is great to come to the dispatch box to talk about the complete vacuum from this babbling brook, this wandering drone, on the other side. There is no depth. But we have put forward a plan. You get a 100 per cent write-off for refurbishment of your irrigation infrastructure to assist with drought. This is incredibly important. You get a 100 per cent write-off for fencing. So that is all the farm produce suppliers and hardware suppliers—they are also in place.

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

Mr JOYCE: I will take the interjection again. He said: 'If you are not making a profit.' It is under our government that we have had record prices in cattle and record prices in sheep. We now have wool at over 1,300 cents a kilogram—the price is up again today. We have record low interest rates. We have the lowest interest rate—and we are providing them.

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

Mr JOYCE: The member for Hunter talks about what we have done. We now have now lent out over $280 million at concessional rates. We have over 550 people taking those applications. More than 5,000 people have had access to Farm Household Allowance. Under
the shadow minister, 367 people accessed it. But we have had more than 5,000 people access it. This is the difference. Do you know how many people they put out concessional loans to? Eight! We have got over 550. The difference is profound. But this is all part and parcel of the plan.

Mr Joyce: We will imminently see the white paper. You keep talking about it. You are giving me oxygen. You are a great advertisement for what we are doing. You are a great advertisement for the fact that we have put $100 million on the table for beef roads. You are a great advertisement for the fact that we have put $400 million on the table for drought thus far. You are a great advertisement for the fact that there are only two people in the Labor Party—and you have gone up to the phone and checked—that have ever been in business. You are a great advertisement in general for the Australian Labor Party and I credit you for the work you have done.

When he looks to the plan he says, 'Oh, you can't dare start centres of excellence to try to bring about a form of decentralisation to inspire centres in Australia to be expert at what they do.' No, he does not want that. He wants everything in Canberra, because that is where they live. That is the only place they exist.

It is great to be a former accountant and to come in here and be part of a government that understands business, to come into a place where we have colleagues who have actually been in business, to be part of a government that has been part and parcel but that now sees record prices in cattle, record prices in sheep, a huge turnaround in wool. And there is the work we have done on such things as three new free trade agreements, six new live animal destinations and the lowest interest rates on record. We are part of a government that actually talks about agriculture. Mr Swan—what was he, the Treasurer of the millennia?—the member for Lilley: how many times in his budget speeches did the Treasurer of the millennia mention the word 'agriculture'? The answer is quite simple: he never did.

Mr Joyce: We will imminently see the white paper. You keep talking about it. You are giving me oxygen. You are a great advertisement for what we are doing. You are a great advertisement for the fact that we have put $100 million on the table for beef roads. You are a great advertisement for the fact that we have put $400 million on the table for drought thus far. You are a great advertisement for the fact that there are only two people in the Labor Party—and you have gone up to the phone and checked—that have ever been in business. You are a great advertisement in general for the Australian Labor Party and I credit you for the work you have done.

When he looks to the plan he says, 'Oh, you can't dare start centres of excellence to try to bring about a form of decentralisation to inspire centres in Australia to be expert at what they do.' No, he does not want that. He wants everything in Canberra, because that is where they live. That is the only place they exist.

It is great to be a former accountant and to come in here and be part of a government that understands business, to come into a place where we have colleagues who have actually been in business, to be part of a government that has been part and parcel but that now sees record prices in cattle, record prices in sheep, a huge turnaround in wool. And there is the work we have done on such things as three new free trade agreements, six new live animal destinations and the lowest interest rates on record. We are part of a government that actually talks about agriculture. Mr Swan—what was he, the Treasurer of the millennia?—the member for Lilley: how many times in his budget speeches did the Treasurer of the millennia mention the word 'agriculture'? The answer is quite simple: he never did.

Mr Joyce: We will imminently see the white paper. You keep talking about it. You are giving me oxygen. You are a great advertisement for what we are doing. You are a great advertisement for the fact that we have put $100 million on the table for beef roads. You are a great advertisement for the fact that we have put $400 million on the table for drought thus far. You are a great advertisement for the fact that there are only two people in the Labor Party—and you have gone up to the phone and checked—that have ever been in business. You are a great advertisement in general for the Australian Labor Party and I credit you for the work you have done.

When he looks to the plan he says, 'Oh, you can't dare start centres of excellence to try to bring about a form of decentralisation to inspire centres in Australia to be expert at what they do.' No, he does not want that. He wants everything in Canberra, because that is where they live. That is the only place they exist.

It is great to be a former accountant and to come in here and be part of a government that understands business, to come into a place where we have colleagues who have actually been in business, to be part of a government that has been part and parcel but that now sees record prices in cattle, record prices in sheep, a huge turnaround in wool. And there is the work we have done on such things as three new free trade agreements, six new live animal destinations and the lowest interest rates on record. We are part of a government that actually talks about agriculture. Mr Swan—what was he, the Treasurer of the millennia?—the member for Lilley: how many times in his budget speeches did the Treasurer of the millennia mention the word 'agriculture'? The answer is quite simple: he never did.
passing this legislation. I suppose I am grateful that they did, because it gives me the opportunity to talk about small business, and small business in my area. But I would have thought that the overriding imperative would be to actually pass the small business legislation by agreement.

Let it be clear: we were all for speeding up the process. We were all for seeing passage through this place as quickly as possible. I am not sure what went through the head of the minister sitting at the table at that stage who decided to vote against it.

Mr Fitzgibbon: Not much!

Mr HAYES: As my colleague says, not much. Not much thought went into it. And not much thought went into how this will be perceived by the hundreds of thousands of small businesses out there who maybe do not tune in to parliament as regularly as some. But certainly they will get the message that this was not high on the list of priorities of those opposite, who just wanted the opportunity to have a bit of a talkfest, play around with this, and get to it when they felt like it.

That is basically the difference here. We came to the table with a very clear view that we wanted to hasten the passage of this legislation through the parliament. We had the position very clearly laid out, and they trundled in here and walked to the other side simply so other colleagues could spend their time waxing lyrically about small business. And they say they are the friends of small business! I have to say, with friends like that you do not need enemies. And do not forget: last year's budget, which I think would go down candidly as a ruthless budget, saw some $5 billion cut away from tax assistance from micro and small businesses. That included the abolition of the instant asset write-off, which this government is now bringing back, and we actually welcome that. But they abolished that last year. Labor increased the instant asset write-off threshold for small business to $6,500, with an unlimited number of eligible assets. Together with the changes of accelerated deductions for motor vehicles and the introduction of the loss carry-back for companies, small business saw a boost of more than $5 billion while Labor was in power.

These measures were put in place to help small business improve its cash flow and to make it easier to invest in the business. The big question here is why those measures were abolished in the first place. They cannot quite bring themselves to say that Labor was right that we should support small business. They have been taken to this position screaming and kicking, faced with reality, and that is why they have had to reintroduce those measures that Labor had already introduced.

The Abbott government is already on record. It does not have a very good record when it comes to small business. Their first action in coming to power was to cut the instant asset write-off. They knocked out that tax loss carry-back as well as the accelerated depreciation on motor vehicles. They striped that. That was their first action in coming to power. It is not difficult to see that the turnaround in the government's attitude is about jobs. But it is not about the jobs of people in small business or their employees, it is about the jobs of those opposite—in particular, the Prime Minister's job.

The justification for these cuts was supposedly the dire economic situation—a budget emergency, as they put it. Twelve months down the track, what happened to that? In terms of all the negative speeches they made for 12 months following that budget they managed to
drive down business and consumer confidence. If you tick that up on their track record, I think they get to own that. The deficit has gone up. Net debt is just a tad over 17 per cent of GDP, for 2015 2016, and both look like they are continuing to climb.

So what happened to that budget emergency they used to justify stripping all those benefits that Labor brought in for small business? Clearly, creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty about the future did not instil confidence in people, certainly not confidence in business to help drive and fuel our economic performance. The truth is, small business contributes about $330 billion to Australia's GDP and employs more than half of all private-sector employees.

There is no doubt, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, in your electorate—like mine—small business is at the front of our local economies, any research will show that small business sits front and centre of our country's economic activity as well. It deserves not only to have a plan laid out for the next two years but also to have a long-term plan for assistance and growth. We need to assist with the driving of small business. We need to help people make it easier to reinvest in their businesses, not simply lay a plan out for two years. This government has only put forward measures to assist small business over that two-year period. There is no plan to go beyond the 1½ per cent tax cut for small business.

It has been said on numerous occasions, and this morning the Leader of the Opposition outlined it, that we on this side of the House are quite prepared to work at ways of even further lowering tax on small business. As the Leader of the Opposition said, he would like to see it get down to 25 per cent. So there is a real opportunity in this place to work on a fair and reasonable plan to reduce the taxes of small businesses down from 30 per cent—sure, but it should not stop at 28.5 per cent. Let us see what we can do together if we are serious about doing something for small businesses, in helping them drive the economy and bringing that figure down as far as possible—hopefully, eventually landing at 25 per cent.

The sentiments on the approach of this government have been echoed from some very prominent business leaders. I will reflect on a couple of them. The CEO of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, Lee White, described the government's 'fair go' budget as 'healthy housekeeping but isolated from the long-term plan needed for Australia's future success'. He went on to say, 'Tonight's budget provides welcome relief for small businesses, but it fails to provide an adequate road map for the years ahead.'

The chief executive of CPA Australia, Alex Malley, said 'The small-business package was one of the only high points in the budget, where it was evident the government had been spooked by the negative reception it got for its 2014 budget.' That is probably a fair comment. Despite the lack of long-term vision, the measures before us do represent a positive step. There are approximately 7,600 small businesses in my electorate of Fowler, and I would expect that the vast majority of them would benefit from these measures.

The proposed measures have the support of various leading bodies in our electorates that look after or support small businesses. For instance, I recently attended a meeting of the Cabramatta Chamber of Commerce. The meeting was chaired by the secretary, Ken Chapman, a very good friend of mine. The president, John Medich, is still recovering from surgery. This is a chamber that works very hard in our community to assist and support the high number of small businesses in the Cabramatta region. They welcomed the small-business measures that flowed from the budget, as did the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, through
its president, Harry Hunt OAM. He does a very good job in reflecting and advocating for businesses of Liverpool.

Another group looking after the interests of small business—not simply advocating for them but helping establish the mechanisms supporting small businesses—is the South West Sydney Business Enterprise Centre, formerly known as the Macarthur BEC. I know very well the group's chairman, Bruce Hanrahan AM, a local solicitor in Campbelltown, and David Waudby, the CEO. I know they have both worked very hard not only in advocating for businesses in their area but also in laying down the foundation and advice for people wanting to start and grow a business. I commend them for the work they do on behalf of our community.

In the few moments I have left I will reflect on a couple of the 7½ thousand local small businesses I have operating in my area. These are people who have started business ventures from nothing and who now employ a great number of people, contributing to our local economy. For instance, there is a business run by a friend of mine, Jensen Tran. He established and manages the Roseland Import and Export company. He does a tremendous job in our local community. Hung Ly established and now manages Dragon Home Loans. He is certainly very significant in the financial areas of Cabramatta and Canley Vale. Thay Lim OAM, a refugee who came to this country some years back, established and now manages the Janbay Home Timber and Hardware business in Canley Heights. Simon Grima established and manages the Bonnyrigg Tyres & Mechanical business and Sam Rigoli owns and manages the franchise of Crust Gourmet Pizza at Bonnyrigg. These people have all taken on a certain amount of commercial risk in establishing their businesses and have worked very, very hard, together with their families. We should be proud of what they have been able to achieve within our local community not only through creating jobs but adding to our local economy.

In concluding, Labor supports all the small business measures before us, particularly the accelerated depreciation measure—and I might reiterate that it was Labor who originally introduced it. Small business across Australia deserves our support. They deserve every piece of assistance that we can offer, because we look to them to help grow our economy and to generate employment. Labor clearly is not on the side of standing in the way of these matters being delivered.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (13:16): One might have been forgiven for thinking in the first 14 minutes of the member for Fowler's contribution on the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and cognate bill that there were no small businesses in his electorate, because he spent a lot of time there talking about the 2014 budget, which was the year before this budget which has these very, very welcome measures. He did reflect for a short time on the Leader of the Opposition's budget-in-reply speech. This was the contribution by the Leader of the Opposition where there was $220 million spent, unfunded, for the 29 minutes. Thank goodness he did not go for the full 30 minutes!

I have just been upstairs, as part of my role with the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment. One submission that was made to the national inquiry we are holding at the moment was from Mark Brennan, the Australian Small Business Commissioner. Indeed, the member for Gorton and also the member for Perth were there, and I thank them for their constructive questions and contributions in that really important forum.
This debate is about looking at the impediments for small businesses to employing more people. I suspect that they, if they had had a choice, would have certainly not wanted to try and gag the opportunity that all members in this place have—those on the other side and in the government—to talk about the value that small business creates in this country. Indeed, we want to ensure that Australia is the best place to start and grow a business. That is what I want to do in my electorate. I think we all came into this place to do good, to give something back and to let the innovative Australians that we know do what they do best. At the end of it all, it is about people. And we believe that the people in charge of small businesses in our communities—in regional Australia, in the cities—are the ones who know best. They are the ones who know best what to do with their own money and that is why we are giving them back money. We are giving them back their own money. It is not our money, it is their money, and that is why we are giving it back to them as part of the measures in this year's budget.

I want to ensure that my electorate of Lyons in Tasmania is a place where small business gets all the support it needs to thrive and to flourish. More than 95 per cent of all of Australian businesses are small businesses, employing more than 4½ million people, producing more than $330 billion of our nation's economic output every year. We know that it is the right time to invest in business as a driver in our country's positive economic future. This is what we as a nation must now be doing and we are giving the tools and the opportunity to those people who know best how to do that.

That is why it is the right time to introduce the first of the proposed legislation to guarantee a solid footing for these businesses. These tax law amendments have already been welcomed with open arms, particularly by small businesses, in the country areas of my electorate. Schedule 1 of the bill proposes amending the Income Tax Rates Act 1986 to reduce the company tax rate, from 30 per cent to 28½ per cent, for companies that are small business entities with a turnover of less than $2 million annually. We do know though, of course, that a relatively small proportion of small businesses in Australia are incorporated entities, so those that make up the majority will be given a five per cent discount on their taxation, up to a value of $1,000, which is commensurate with the measure in terms of taxation reduction. The amendments will apply for the first income year from 1 July this year and the measure was announced as part of the jobs and small business package in the budget last month.

The reaction to this move has been overwhelmingly positive. I travelled around my electorate of Lyons talking to the many, many people that it will benefit. I spent the Saturday morning in New Norfolk, one of the larger population centres in my patch. It was extraordinary to see. We copped a bit of flak last year in our efforts to reset the finances of our nation, so I was not feeling too sure. I had my brochure but, when I walked into the hairdressers, they already knew—it was amazing how quickly good news had travelled! They all knew that there was an opportunity here for them and that there was something in the budget. They all knew that this was a government that was focused on them and their small businesses—whether they are cafes or hairdressers. I was quite taken aback. I could go on—I could list so many small businesses that will benefit from this in my patch. Indeed, as I say, it has been welcomed.

I have mentioned before Jane Shaw at the Ingleside Bakery at Evandale; Jane and her husband have a staff of 15 people. Most of them are casuals, two are full time, and she said
that the size of these proposed tax measures would make a significant difference to their business. Keith Rice operates Primary Employers Tasmania, which is contracted to, for example, the poppy growers association. When I rang Keith about another matter he said, 'My wife has gone out and bought a new computer already.' These are the sorts of things that are happening on the ground.

While the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No 1) Bill will reduce corporate tax rates by 1.5 per cent, the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No 2) Bill will provide accelerated depreciation arrangements to small businesses and primary producers. Can I say—as I know I go on about it a fair bit in this place—that this is perfect timing for the irrigation development going on within the state of Tasmania. I do not want to sound like a broken record, and I apologise for that. It has bipartisan support, and I acknowledge the contribution, particularly, of David Llewellyn, the former minister in Tasmania. It was good public policy, it had bipartisan support, and I acknowledge the contribution of former Minister Llewellyn in the former Tasmanian Labor government.

It is just beautiful timing for so many farmers. I was talking to Richard Hallett, who is in the Southern Highlands Irrigation Scheme, a couple of days ago about this. They have already developed parts of their property and they have infrastructure in place. With the Southern Highlands Irrigation Scheme now confirmed, thanks to $60 million from the Commonwealth government, and the tax offsets, these immediate asset write-offs, the capacity for them to take advantage of the increased cashflow, which they will be able to generate from that opportunity, is truly significant. This will have enormous benefits for their local economy, as it will on the East Coast. Brown Brothers on the East Coast and Spring Vale Vineyard on the East Coast are all planning expansions on the back of the irrigation scheme, and this gives them a simple tool to be able to do that.

I think of Tim Schmidt from Deloraine. Indeed, for those that are paying tax it is toss-up whether or not to buy an $18,000 second-hand irrigator to smaller business. He will be able to write off that under the $20,000 instant asset write-off. Or, maybe, he buys a new irrigator, because as a primary producer he would be able to write off that $34,000 for the equivalent new version of the same irrigator. I also think of Howard Hansen. Howard is an interesting case study. Howard has significant orchards in the member for Franklin's electorate, and he also grows cherries in the Derwent Valley which is in the electorate of Lyons. He is planning on planting an additional 10 hectares of apples in the Derwent Valley, putting in a dam and putting in an additional 10 hectares of cherries in the Derwent Valley this winter. He is about to order between $150,000 and $200,000 worth of irrigation pumps, mains, filters and drip tubes. The additional investment of this money was not going to occur this year, but now Howard is seriously considering bringing it forward into this year. What it means is jobs. It means expansion of his business and it means more jobs for people in the Huon Valley in the member for Franklin's electorate, and it means more jobs for the people in the Derwent Valley in my electorate. This is all good news.

The bill will amend the small business simplified depreciation rules in the tax laws to increase the threshold for immediate deductibility from $1,000 to $20,000. As I have mentioned, this is a significant increase in the threshold, as the business owners in my electorate have been telling me. It will provide a major improvement in cashflow for many, many small businesses. While it is businesses that create jobs, there is a clear role for the
government to address impediments and create the right conditions for small businesses to grow and become more productive so that more jobs will flow. That is our fundamental responsibility.

The Australian economy is in a transition. The declining terms of trade and the ageing of the population, which is something we should celebrate of course, are placing downward pressures on income growth. Obviously going into the production phase of the mining industry, there is a real need to see small business rise to the top. Small businesses are a key driver of Australia's economy underpinning growth and innovation and providing jobs, as I have said, for millions of Australians including thousands of Tasmanians.

These tax proposals have been carefully thought through after specific consultation with businesses, tax specialists outside of government and the ATO. As Minister for Small Business Billson says, 'We know from the Intergenerational report that there will be a significant challenge to maintain our country's current rate of income growth.' Future growth in living standards must be driven by higher levels of Australian productivity. It will need productivity growth to increase to about three per cent, which is well in excess of what Australia has achieved in the past 50 years, and more than doubles what has occurred in the past decade. Growth will need more and better quality goods and services to be generated from the resources we already have. Again, that is why this government has made small business the absolute cornerstone of the budget this year. It is the biggest small-business package in Australia's history, and at the heart of the package are the tax cuts and the instant asset write-offs for all small businesses, as we have mentioned.

The government are working to support jobs and small business. If you look at our record over the last 18 months, it really is a record of success and achievement, and we are a government that are delivering for the engine room that is small business in our economy. We have repealed the carbon tax, and we have repealed the mining tax. We have finalised three free trade agreements with South Korea, Japan and, most recently, China. There is more to come. We have announced $2.45 billion in annual red-tape savings, which does not sound very sexy, but let me assure you that this is the thing that stops people investing. We have established the $484.2 million Entrepreneurs' Infrastructure Program. We have created new employment opportunities through a significant $50 billion investment in transport infrastructure. That manifests itself in my electorate into things like new bridges and better roads and being able to get the products that are produced by the small businesses in my electorate to the markets, which we are opening up in Asia through the free trade agreements, more easily.

We have established a $6.8 billion job-active employment service. If you want to have a go, if you are a job seeker, if you are an employer, we want to support you. If you are a family with somebody looking to go back to work, we want to support you. We are supporting the VET sector. We have introduced Restart for those over 50s that have the experience and want to get back into the workforce, because we are going to need you. We are going to need you in the small businesses. They start to work on their businesses rather than in their businesses. This is something that we want to increasingly see. We have expanded tax concessions for employee share schemes and for unfair contract protections to small businesses. We know that many small businesses are doing it tough. The government know, and they believe in you and will support you. We need you to be working increasingly, as I said, on your business, not
in it. Get advice. We will support you. We want your small business to become a big business.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott):** The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the member will have leave to continue his remarks should he so wish.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

**Open and Accountable Government**

**Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (13:30):** One of the most disturbing aspects of this government is the ever-increasing trend towards secrecy and away from transparency and accountability. This is especially evident in the area of immigration, where privatisation and militarisation combine to prevent details of asylum seekers arriving by boat and of the operations of onshore and offshore immigration detention centres being made public, due to so-called 'commercial in confidence' or 'on-water national security' matters. Applications that would previously have been determined within a humanitarian or migration framework are now viewed through a security, even a military, lens, with the associated secrecy, as well as the stigma that attaches in the public mind.

We have had overwhelming evidence presented at parliamentary hearings and to a number of inquiries, including the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Moss review, regarding the horrific abuse of asylum seekers, including women and children, at detention centres on Manus and Nauru. There have been a number of deaths, through murder, suicide and negligence, yet the government's response is to attack the whistleblowers and refuse all forms of accountability, including prohibiting media access and independent oversight of these facilities.

The government is presently endeavouring to abolish the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner and to make it harder and more expensive for the community to obtain information from government. The government has withdrawn Australia from the Open Government Partnership, joining Russia as the only other country to do so. It has defunded community organisations engaging in advocacy, whether on the environment, homelessness or health. It has engaged in secret negotiations on the TPP, which will have far-reaching consequences for future governments' ability to regulate in the public interest. This is the very opposite of open and accountable government.

**Electorate of Wannon: The Serra Terror Endurance Event**

**Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (13:31):** I rise today to inform the House about an event called the Serra Terror that will occur over the forthcoming long weekend in the Grampians National Park. It is an 80-kilometre endurance event that takes place over two days. Teams of either four or up to eight people will walk for 45 kilometres on the first day and do the remaining distance on the second day, uphill and down dale, through the Grampians. The course changes each year. It is put on by the local community to raise money for the local community. It is a fantastic event. This will be the third year that I will be entering a team—the Wannon Wanderers—and I look forward to participating once again over what is a gruelling course. One of the special things about this year's event is that will be walking along the Grampians trail, which the government has just provided $10 million for, so that people, and especially tourists, can now walk from the northern part of the Grampians to the southern
part. The $10 million we announced in the federal budget will finish the trail and mean that we have a wonderful tourist attraction in the wonderful electorate of Wannon.

**Stubbs, Mr John**

**Mrs ELLIOT** (Richmond) (13:33): I rise to pay tribute to John Stubbs, who passed away last week. John was a Walkley Award-winning journalist, an author and he had a highly respected career as a political staffer, including working for the Whitlam government and also for Labor governments in South Australia and Queensland. John moved to Rosebank on the NSW North Coast with his wife, Romey, many years ago. They later moved to Bangalow, and it was there last Sunday that his family and friends gathered to celebrate what was an extraordinary life.

John Stubbs was, in many ways, larger than life. He was always generous with his time and generous with his advice—which was always very astute. John was born in Cunnamulla in Western Queensland, in 1938, and he worked for a variety of newspapers throughout the nation and throughout the world. As his friend Dennis Atkins noted:

John Stubbs's commitment to equality—economic, social and racial—was an unrelenting constant in his life. He saw poverty and racial exclusion up close in Cunnamulla and he never gave up highlighting the consequences and agitating for change.

John was regarded by his peers as one of the greatest political journalists of his generation. He was an inspirational person because of the life he led and because he actually made a difference. He was also a big story teller with a great sense of humour. His career in journalism started after he won a prize for an essay on the temperance movement—a story he would often tell with joyous laughter, especially after a few red wines.

John will be sadly missed by his friends and his community, and especially his good mates Craig McGregor, Mungo McCallum and Kerry O'Brien, who frequently took him for lunches at the Bangalow Bowling Club. John will also be fondly remembered by all his friends in the Labor Party on the NSW North Coast and, in particular, the Byron Bay branch. Our deepest condolences to his family: his wife, Romey, and their children Will, Susie and Sasha. Rest in peace, John Stubbs.

**In Sight of Dreams Foundation**

**Ms SCOTT** (Lindsay) (13:34): I rise today to announce that on the Monday, 1 June, the In Sight of Dreams Foundation came to life. This is a wonderful charity that was the brainchild of local man Ben Felten. It was begun with the noble aim of providing people with a disability with hope, inspiration, mentoring and life skills. I commend the vision of the board, which includes: Stephen Barnes; Pamela Habek, who today becomes an Australian citizen; Kevin Magee; Nadia Kentera; Leo Felten; and, of course, Ben Felten. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Richard Glover and Stephen Toomey, who have done so much work on a pro bono basis.

Ben Felten is an exceptional local man. He was born with a degenerative eye disease, and has dedicated his life to helping people with a disability. By his late twenties, Ben was fully blind. Ben represented Australia in rowing and cricket, and set up the Nepean Blind Sports Club. At the moment, Ben has his heart set on setting the world speed record on a motorbike for a blind man. Currently, he has got his motorbike up to 220 kilometres per hour, but he is after the Guinness Book of Records: Ben Felton is after 268.33 kilometres an hour. I commend
Ben Felton for this wonderful organisation, and congratulate the In Sight of Dreams Foundation for the dreams that they have to provide opportunity for people with disability.

**Trade**

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (13:36): Last night more than 100Canberrans turned out in the cold to hear from top trade experts and our very own Jim Chalmers on some of the potential benefits and costs of the Trans-Pacific Partnership proposal. Former trade minister Craig Emerson gave us the history of the TPP and provided an informed view on free-trade agreements, while Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network coordinator, Dr Pat Ranald, ran through some of the potential negative implications for Australia. I want to congratulate Gai Brodtmann, member for Canberra, and her staff for hosting such a fantastic event.

As an exporting nation, Australia has much to gain from free trade, but we need to be clear about what each agreement requires us to surrender and whether the deal represents a net benefit. People are genuinely concerned about the TPP. That much was clear from last night. The government needs to shed far more light on the proposals and to provide far more by way of independent analysis on how this scheme will deliver for Australia. Labor’s next TPP forum will be in Melbourne in early July and we will look forward to seeing even more engagement with the local community. Watch this space for further details.

**Casey Electorate: Thanksgiving Day Breakfast**

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (13:37): On Saturday I was pleased to attend the annual thanksgiving day breakfast hosted by the Mayor of the Yarra Ranges Council, Councillor Maria McCarthy. The breakfast was a wonderful opportunity to thank eight outstanding community contributors, people who do so much for the Yarra Ranges and Yarra Valley community. The theme for this year’s breakfast was 'Laying down our lives', and it was appropriate that the special speaker was local Colonel Hal Oxley, who has such a rich history of service, having served with distinction through the Second World War.

Hal is 98 years of age. He was one of the youngest colonels in the Australian infantry forces. He served in Tobruk and Greece, returned to our headquarters in Port Moresby, where he served in the critical battle for New Guinea, and later was transferred to General Douglas MacArthur's forward battle headquarters in New Guinea to coordinate the Australian plans with the Americans. So I was pleased to host a table from Lilydale High School. They had a wonderful time and it will contribute greatly to their studies. Briefly, I will mention their names: Blake Wynne, Molly Grant, Shelby Morrison, Emma Morrison, Shelby Parsons and Otis Heffernan-Wooden.

**Moroney, Mrs Beverley Ann**

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (13:39): I would like to speak about the passing of a special person that made an enormous contribution to our local community in South West Sydney. Bev Moroney passed away on 24 May, after battling cancer for several years. Bev regularly volunteered for various charities, including the annual McHappy Day for Ronald McDonald House and worked at her local McDonalds because, as she said, 'I like working there.' Even last October, while extremely sick, Bev was still out there fundraising for McHappy Day. Bev never let her illness get her down and often said that there was someone worse off than she was.
Bev was the wife of former New South Wales Police Commissioner, Ken Moroney. Obviously, Ken led a very public life. But it was Bev who very quietly and diligently went about her community life and, in many ways, was better known in our community than the Police Commissioner himself. Bev was a genuine and selfless lady who loved life and loved her husband, her three boys—Michael, Peter and Andrew—and their seven grandchildren. Last Monday, Bernadette and I, together with many hundreds of mourners, attended Bev's funeral, which, by the way, was held on Bev and Ken's 47th wedding anniversary.

Boothby Electorate: Budget

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (13:41): Two weeks ago, I was pleased to welcome Bruce Billson, the Minister for Small Business and parliament's resident good guy, to my electorate of Boothby. As he always does, Bruce went out to talk with local small business owners, listening to their feedback, in this instance, to find out whether the budget's biggest small business package in Australia's history would make a real difference to them. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

Small businesses in Westfield Marion, such as Royce Chocolates and Charlie's Club Sandwiches, are already looking for opportunities to make improvements or expand their operations. Not only will they have the lowest company tax rate in almost 50 years, they will now be able to claim an immediate tax deduction for each and every asset purchase up to $20,000. We even spoke to one young man working at Marion Hair and Beauty who was looking to start up his own brand new hairdressing business in the future. He will now be allowed to immediately deduct professional expenses, such as legal expenses on establishing a company, trust or partnership, rather than writing them off over five years. This will provide a real and tangible boost as he takes the next big step in his career.

This new package will also help employers create jobs and will assist Australia's unemployed, particularly unemployed youth, to build the skills to get into work. Small business is the engine room of the economy. It is where new jobs will be created, and that is why we are committed to a better deal for small business.

Cooper, Ms Marlene

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (13:42): In parliament today I pay tribute to Marlene Cooper, a passionate leader, community volunteer and advocate for people who are vision impaired or blind. Marlene is a formidable woman. A few weeks ago she called my office to put a rocket up us, saying, 'We want the National Disability Insurance Scheme in our region as soon as possible.' In her eight years on the Wollongong City Council access committee, she has trained over 600 council staff in accessibility issues and advised over countless plans and access issues.

But I think Marlene's most profound example of leadership had to do with visiting her dentist. The dentist was not very keen on letting her into the surgery with her assistance dog. So she started by approaching the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. But, with the help of a friend and a talking computer, she chased down the policies of the Australian Dental Association in New South Wales. She found that, while their policies were otherwise really good, they were silent on the issues of assistance animals. So she found out when the New South Wales dental association was going to review their policies and set to work. Marlene put together her case and put it to them. Today, Marlene tells me, the dentists
have a policy that asserts the rights of people to access their dentist with assistance animals. Marlene Cooper's leadership has made a difference for people who are blind or vision impaired around the nation, and I commend her for her efforts.

**Moorebank Concrete Recycling Plant**

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:44): The New South Wales Planning Assessment Commission has no alternative other than to reject the proposal for the development of a concrete recycling plant at Moorebank. The reason is as follows. The New South Wales Department of Environment and Conservation published a document titled *Approved methods for the modelling and assessment of air pollutants in New South Wales*. This lists the statutory methods for modelling and assessing emissions of air pollutants from all stationary sources in New South Wales. At paragraph 3.1, it clearly states that the proponent must ‘identify all sources of air pollution and potential emissions’—all sources.

It is well documented that what is known as fine particulate matter PM2.5 is emitted from concrete recycling. The World Health Organization classifies PM2.5 as a source of a cancer-causing agent. The World Health Organization also sets threshold guidelines for PM2.5, yet the proponent's air quality monitoring reports simply fail to do any modelling of this dangerous air pollutant which causes cancer. This leaves the Planning Assessment Commission with absolutely no alternative than to reject this proposal. The reason why, I suggest, the proponent has not modelled it is that, already in Western Sydney, we have levels of air pollution for PM2.5 approaching those standards set by the World Health Organization, and this proposal risks pushing it above those standards. It must be rejected by the Planning Assessment Commission. *(Time expired)*

**Community Television**

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:45): I rise today about an important issue that has been raised by constituents of Lalor. In fact, I have been inundated by emails—they are coming in thick and fast—from people concerned about the future of community television. Community television programming is set to be switched off our televisions at the end of this year, impacting on many regional areas, including the area of Wyndham. Channel 31 in Victoria began regular broadcasting in October 1994. It transmits diverse programs from news, to sports such as the local Geelong district football and netball league games, to lifestyle and important multicultural community programs. It enables people to be connected to their communities through programs that are not covered by mainstream television.

There are 90 locally made programs every week produced by volunteers and independent television makers, and they will disappear from our television screens because the Minister for Communications fails to understand just how far-reaching community television is. It is time for Minister Turnbull to engage with this sector and start consulting with the stakeholder groups to ensure the preservation and enhancement of this not-for-profit community resource and allow time for transition to an online broadcasting regime. This is not a big ask; it is a reasonable request. I call on the minister: please do not pull the rug out from under this great community asset, Mr Turnbull.

**Illicit Drugs**

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (13:47): May I first take time to acknowledge my students at Jamberoo Public School. Last November, Nowra was the location for the first ice information
night. We listened to rehabilitation providers and health workers and also heard the stories, both tragic and heart-rendering, of the effects of this rotten substance on our children, families and young people. Following that, one of the attendees, Maxine Meech, has coordinated regular meetings for a parent support group, which has enabled a number of parents to have the courage and strength to continue the battle to keep their children safe, knowing they are not alone. Julie Danser has held Sanctuary Point community meetings, and in conjunction with Jervis Bay Lions is fundraising to develop some education materials for our local schools. I am proud of my community. I even have a local school captain, Jake Williams at Ulladulla High School, who has inspired a group of students to gather, meet and work on ideas.

On Wednesday, 10 June, we will be having an ice task force meeting with a difference in Ulladulla. We will of course be having representatives from all the groups mentioned but also members of the police force, mental health workers and other professionals who are affected by this behaviour-changing and dangerous drug that we are committed to addressing. We will be workshopping the questions, gathering the anecdotal experiences and preparing the community to lead and resolve their suggestions for ideas to go forward. The meeting, at the civic centre at 7 pm, is to engage as many in the community as possible to bring their thoughts and ideas forward. We all know that, whether in government, medical services, police services or other community groups, we absolutely must work together. There is no solution without complete cooperation.

**Indi Electorate: Building a Local Food Future Forum**

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:48): I rise today to say thank you to the organisers of the recent Building a Local Food Future Forum, which was held in Wodonga in early May. I was very pleased and honoured to open the event and welcomed almost 200 people from across the electorate to hear about and discuss important issues of food in our lives. At the conference, we stressed that the purpose of most agricultural production is to create a food supply. We acknowledged its importance in earning export dollars and we talked about its primary purpose of producing food to feed us. The event in Wodonga explored these issues and discussed options to ensure all Australians can feel confident of being able to secure a healthy, equitable and just food supply. There were very many important speakers, including Dr Jane Roots of Chiltern, Matt Grogan, a lawyer-farmer who, with his wife, Tamsin, grows amazing food at Allans Flat, and Jade Miles, who with her husband Charlie Showers has begun a food co-op in Beechworth. Well done.

There were three main outcomes from the conference—firstly, a clear focus for the local food network; secondly, work on a food policy being led by the Indigo Shire together with Wodonga and Wangaratta shires; and, thirdly, support for a regional hub, where people can distribute food locally. I would particularly like to congratulate and say thank you to Anna MacKinlay, Brydie Foran and Amber Croft for their work and the wonderful sponsorship of the North East Catchment Management Authority, Healthy Together Wodonga, and Beechworth and Indigo North health services. Well done. Congratulations, everybody. Please know I am on your side.

**National Security**

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (13:50): Protecting the safety of our community is the most important aim of this government. I therefore want to draw attention to the growing
community concern at the threat to our way of life posed by those who reject our values and who support and become involved with violent and extremist groups. At present, we know there are over 250 Australians engaged in fighting with or supporting terrorist groups overseas—raping and murdering innocent civilians. These terrorists, trained by groups such as ISIS, also want to do Australians harm on our own shores. So early last year I commenced a local petition in my electorate of Deakin calling for any dual citizen caught participating in terrorist related activities to automatically lose their Australian citizenship. Within a short amount of time, hundreds of my constituents supported this position, with many noting the privilege that Australian citizenship bestows and the values that must accompany it. I am therefore proud that the government has listened to their concerns and is acting decisively. The government's proposals to remove the citizenship of dual nationals engaged in supporting terrorist groups such as ISIS must proceed as soon as possible.

I also note the strong support from my community for the removal of citizenship for Australians who fight or support terrorist groups who are not dual nationals but have the ability to avail themselves of citizenship elsewhere. I thank the Prime Minister and encourage him in his commitment to protecting our nation from those who seek to do us harm.

Petition: Asylum Seekers

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:51): Today I rise to table a petition on behalf of the Bendigo chapter of the Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children. It has been to the Petitions Committee and been ruled in order.

The petition read as follows—

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

This petition of The Bendigo Chapter of the Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children

Draws to the attention of the House: The prolonged, cruel and inhumane detention of minors under eighteen in detention centres that causes them significant mental and physical illness and developmental delay and that is in breach of Australia's international obligations.

We therefore ask the House to: Immediately take action to free all minors into the Australian community from 385 citizens

Petition received.

I recently met with this chapter of the Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children, and their stories and what they asked was quite simple. Firstly, at the meeting, they spoke about the shame that they have about this government's approach towards children in detention. They spoke about the heartbreak that they have every time the government tries to politicise this very important issue. They spoke about the disappointment that, in their lifetime, they believe, this country has gone backwards in this important area of public policy. These people—grandmothers, and a few grandfathers—said that they are embarrassed and ashamed that policy that this government had when they were younger is better than policy that we have today in this country. This group argued quite passionately that they believe that human beings and the lives of these children should be at the centre of any public policy—not the politics, not votes, but the lives of these individuals—and that they want this government to act decisively; they want this government to start putting children first when it comes to policy on this issue. I am proud to table the petition on behalf of this local group.
Hume Electorate: Child Care

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (13:53): A short time ago I spoke in this place about families living in Boorowa in my electorate who do not have access to long day care for their children in their community. Local families have to either travel up to 150 kilometres to access services in neighbouring towns, use non-registered providers, or impose on family to look after their children.

Today, I am absolutely delighted to announce $500,000 in funding from the government for stage 2 of the Boorowa Preschool expansion project under the Long Day Care Capital Funding Exceptional Circumstances Grant. This funding will expand Boorowa Preschool into a multipurpose educational and care centre. The expected 76 places in this new facility will provide almost four times the number of childcare places currently available.

Preschool committee president Sarah Rose said: 'The funding means so much to the people of Boorowa and surrounding districts. It's not only the longer hours that make it appealing and easier for parents to return to work. The new centre will be licensed for nought-to-five-year-olds, providing positions for babies and toddlers that the preschool has been unable to provide before.'

This is outstanding news for the community. Enhancing the childcare options available to local and prospective families is part of this government's plan to help families into the workforce. I am delighted that we are making this happen for families in Boorowa.

Eddie Mabo Day

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:55): Today is Eddie Mabo Day—the day when we commemorate the life and work of a great Australian, Eddie Koiki Mabo, who campaigned all the way to the High Court for legal recognition of traditional ownership of the Murray Islands land by the Murray Islands people. After a 10-year battle by Eddie Mabo and his legal team, on this day in 1992 the High Court handed down a decision which overturned the outdated principle of terra nullius and paved the way for native title rights to traditional lands to be legally recognised for all Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Sadly, Eddie Mabo had passed away five months prior to that decision being made by the High Court.

Despite the opposition of the Bjelke-Petersen government and conservatives at the time, Eddie Mabo never gave up on his belief and passion for his traditional lands. Because of that passion and because of that belief, a historical injustice was overturned and undone.

I pay tribute to Eddie Mabo's legal team, Greg McIntyre, Ron Casten and Bryan Keon-Cohen, who also undertook quite a bit over the 10 years that they campaigned.

On behalf of the people of Kingsford Smith, thank you, Eddie Mabo, for your work and your legacy.

Beenleigh State School

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (13:56): It gives me great pleasure to share some of the wonderful news from Beenleigh State School's successful Great Futures program and their popular Breakfast Club. On Friday morning I attended the school's Great Futures Big Breakfast, to celebrate it serving over 100,000 breakfasts to students—a fantastic milestone—over the past five years.
The initiative of Beenleigh State School's Breakfast Club program is to provide nutritious food for healthy bodies and healthy minds. Through no fault of their own, many of the students are caught up in the cycle of poverty and are often sent to school without breakfast. This program alleviates the burden on struggling parents. It unites students, parents, teachers, local businesses and community leaders in a common cause to help our less fortunate families. Volunteers serve breakfasts for up to 200 students from eight o'clock in the morning to about a quarter to nine, and it follows a hands-up not a hand-out philosophy, with many students also volunteering in the Breakfast Club.

The teachers have found tremendous changes since the program was introduced, with students more focused and more settled at the start of the day and fewer complaints about hunger. Starving students will focus more on their hunger than on the task at hand.

I congratulate Beenleigh State School and the parents, volunteers, teachers and sponsors who have made the Breakfast Club program such a success in changing the lives of Beenleigh's less fortunate students.

Drought

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (13:58): I acknowledge Nuffield scholars with us in the gallery today, as I remind the House that the Abbott government's response to the drought has been an abject failure. Nowhere is that more true than in South Australia, where not one drought concessional loan—not one loan—has made its way to a drought stricken farmer. So you can imagine how bemused I was when, earlier in the week, I heard the member for Barker trying to blame the South Australian government for this policy failure—for the fact that not one farmer in South Australia has received a drought concessional loan. This is the state which Minister Joyce took money away from to help farmers in other states. We all know that the South Australian government administers the program on behalf of the Commonwealth, on terms agreed to by the Commonwealth. If the member for Barker, who I understand might be going through a bit of a preselection process, wants to attribute blame, he should look at the person who, to use Gina Rinehart's son's words, 'sits two down from the Prime Minister'. It is this failed minister he should be talking to, rather than ridiculously trying to blame the South Australian government for this policy failure. There is a reason that South Australian farmers are not getting drought assistance: because this government is an incompetent one.

Petrie Electorate: Sport

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (13:59): I rise to quickly talk about a great sporting club in my electorate, the Redcliffe Dolphins rugby league club. They employ hundreds of local people and provide a fantastic rugby league team to the Queensland cup and they have 800 juniors in their junior program.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 43 the time for members' statements has concluded.
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Small Business

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. On Monday, the Prime Minister said in relation to the small business bills before the parliament:

… let us not let politics get in the way of economics. Let us let self-interest get in the way of the national interest. Let us pass this bill straight away.

So why did the government vote against passing its own small business bills straight away?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We will have some silence!

Mr Pyne: This was once the party of Hawke and Keating! Look at them now!

The SPEAKER: We will have no comments, thank you very much! We will have silence while we have the Prime Minister's answer to the question asked.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:01): The parliament certainly should pass these bills straight away. If the Leader of the Opposition had his eyes open, he would notice that the Senate is not sitting—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The members for Rankin and McMahon will desist! The member for Chifley will desist! If someone needs to leave the chamber early to bring back quiet, we will have that. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: What we saw from the opposition this morning was yet another childish stunt.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Is the member for Port Adelaide anxious to leave?

Mr ABBOTT: It was yet another childish stunt from the Labor party—an attempt by the Labor Party to deny 11 Labor members and 31 coalition members the right to speak on this bill and ensure that they were able to demonstrate their support for the small businesses of Australia. This bill will, in the ordinary course of events, pass this House either later today or tomorrow, and the test for the Leader of the Opposition is: when it goes before the Senate, will he vote against referring it to a committee? That is the test.

Mr Hockey: That is right! Come on, be fair!

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will desist!

Mr ABBOTT: That is the test for the Leader of the Opposition. Will the Labor Party assist the government? Will the Labour Party assist the Senate to pass this legislation as soon as it goes before the upper house of this parliament?

Economy

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (14:03): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on the action the government has taken to strengthen the Australian economy? How do these measures support jobs and growth?
Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:03): I thank the member for Macarthur for his question, and for his support for the small businesses in his electorate. I can assure the member for Macarthur that the Australian economy is strong and getting stronger. I can assure him and the parliament that exports are up by 5 per cent in the March quarter—the strongest quarterly rise since September 2000. Housing construction is up by 4.7 per cent in the March quarter—the strongest quarterly increase since September 2009. Consumer spending is also up solidly, helped by lower interest rates, lower fuel prices and lower power prices.

The good news, the very good news, is that today's national accounts show that the Australian economy grew by a very strong 0.9 per cent in the first three months of this year—strong growth in our economy. Today's data showed that services exports, including items such as tourism and education, are up 8 per cent over the past year, in line with rising demand from Asia. This is the fastest growth since 2007.

There are other signs of a strengthening economy. Retail sales have risen for 10 consecutive months, and building approvals are at near record highs. The Westpac Melbourne index of consumer sentiment jumped 6.4 per cent in May to the highest level since January last year. The ANZ-Roy Morgan consumer confidence index is above its long-running average, and 11 per cent above the levels of a year ago. Over 200,000 new jobs were created last year. Jobs growth is quadruple the rate seen in 2013, and the ANZ job ads are at the highest level in two and a half years, having risen in 10 of the past 11 months.

None of this happens automatically. Strong growth is the result of a government and a country that is open for business. Since the election, this government has provided environmental approval for $1 trillion dollars worth of new projects. There have been three free-trade agreements. We have cut business red tape by $2 billion a year. Last year's budget achieved savings of some $30 billion, and in this year's budget we delivered the largest ever tax cut for small business—the best budget ever for small business. Economic security and national security are exactly what this government is delivering—a strong and prosperous economy for a safe and secure Australia.

Small Business

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:06): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Today, the minister ridiculed Labor's attempts to pass his small business bills because the Senate is not sitting, but yesterday in question time the minister said:

All we need is this parliament to pass the instant asset write-off and get it over to the Senate so that, when the Senate reconvenes, one of their early orders of business can be to get these measures passed.

Minister, what has changed in less than a day?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We will have some silence! The member for Grayndler!

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (14:06): Madam Speaker, hasn't the once proud Labor Party just shown how low they can go! I kid you not, colleagues: it has been 559 days since Labor has asked me a question about small business. That is more than a year and a half. The Leader of the Opposition masquerading as the shadow spokesman for small business—

Dr Chalmers interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin is warned.

Mr BILLSON: has asked more than 400 questions, but how many have been about small business? Absolutely none.

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield is warned.

Mr BILLSON: So here we are, more than 110 sitting days since I was last asked a question, and what do I get? I get a question about shabby Labor tactics. Isn’t that incredible! Not about the substance, not about what else we can do to support small business, just about shabby Labor tactics. All we got this morning was more lies from Labor.

They have come out saying that I voted against our small business package. No, I did not. We voted against you gagging a discussion about what small businesses need to support their role in the economy. We thought that, given the lack of interest from Labor when in government and now in opposition, small-business men and women who mortgaged their houses deserved a day to discuss their needs in the nation’s parliament.

What did Labor want to do? What did the member for Maribyrnong want to do? What did the shadow spokesman want to do? They put out tweets saying we are voting against our own small business package. That is just a blatant lie, and you know it. We voted to give the enterprising men and women a day in the nation’s parliament where they are front and centre, where their crucial contribution to our economy can be discussed and celebrated—where members on this side, who have more ideas than you could get from anywhere on your side, can talk about what else we can do to support small business.

We want to explain and communicate what the best small business package in any budget the Commonwealth has handed down means for small business in communities right across our continent. In that light, what do we get from Labor? They do not want to discuss it. They want to gag it. They want to shut the show down. They do not want to hear about the 519,000 jobs lost under Labor.

The real test about Labor—after flip-flopping around, bagging some of the measures, creating confusion and uncertainty, having shadow members contradict one another about the proposition—will be whether there is any funny business in the Senate. That is what I said to you yesterday, Leader of the Opposition. No funny business! We want certain sure-footed passage of this bill. Or are you going to try another political stunt in the Senate? Are you going to be true to form and deny the small-business men and women the best budget they have ever seen from the best government that small business can ever hope for? We are the best friend small business has ever had. We are happy to talk about small business every day while you want to gag the discussion of their needs. Shame on you, Bill Shorten. Shabby tactics, Sunshine.

Budget

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (14:10): That is a hard act to follow, I must say. My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on the March quarter national accounts figures released today? Why do these figures underscore the need for budget measures that will boost growth and create jobs?
Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:10): I thank the chair of the House economics committee for that question about the national accounts. He is asking about the serious matters; and it does matter because the Australian economy had one of the fastest-growing quarters in the world in the first quarter of this year. We were faster than any other G7 nation and one of the fastest-growing economies in the developed world in the first three months of this year. That is good news, isn't it?

Government members: Yes!

Mr HOCKEY: Yes, that is right. And we have helped to make it that way. We put in place an economic plan that has helped to give Australians the opportunity to get ahead. Do you know how we have done that? We have implemented a range of measures, such as: removing the carbon tax, removing the mining tax, and reducing the overall tax burden on Australians compared to what they would have had under Labor. We have seen job creation at nearly four times the speed as that of the Labor Party in their last year in office. In the first three months of this year, over 82,000 new jobs were created in Australia.

As the Prime Minister pointed out, one of the most impressive parts of the national accounts is that we have seen significant growth in services exports. I have stood here on numerous occasions and talked about how the services sector is 70 per cent of the Australian economy but only 17 per cent of our exports. Under our economic plan, we are lifting the services sector by giving them new free trade agreements with China, Korea and Japan. In our budget we are removing the burdens on small business, giving them the opportunity to invest in new equipment, to go out there and have a go. Those small businesses are going to be the innovators and the job creators of the 21st century Australian economy—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith is warned.

Mr HOCKEY: the one that is coping with a massive transition from a mining construction phase into a production phase. And, yes, we are exporting wealth but, importantly, this is broad growth. We have dwelling construction kicking in to meet the demand that is coming out of the market—particularly in Sydney, but also Melbourne.

We have record effort from the Australian people in wanting to have a go—certainly, in the wake of this budget. Because these figures do not even take into account the budget we delivered in May. They are before the budget. And, in that three months—despite the global headwinds, despite what is happening overseas, particularly in commodity prices—the Australian economy grew at 0.9 of one per cent, which is a strong figure. The momentum is there in the Australian economy. The best friend of the Australian economy is the coalition government.

Small Business

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (14:13): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. In November 2013 the minister criticised instant asset write-offs saying:

…some of the instant asset write off arrangements were sold as if they were great for cash strapped small businesses but you needed the cash to start with to make the purchase.

Given the minister's criticism of Labor's instant asset write-off apply identically to the bills before the parliament today, is this the reason the government voted against passing its own small business legislation straight away?
Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (14:14): A year and a half of famine, and what a feast! I can understand the member for Oxley getting a little excited and not being able to ask a succinct question. You have been denied the opportunity for so long. I admire the fact that you have finally had a chance and you have come out of the shelter. I sincerely thank the member for Oxley. He is talking about instant asset write-off—a measure, as I recall, originally introduced by the now Treasurer. It is a measure that Labor sought to present as some kind of sweetener for the sourness of your mining tax—a sweetener, as you stole a tax discount the Howard government put in place, that benefited more than 400,000 of our smallest businesses. Do you remember the entrepreneurs tax offset—that discount, that incentive, that important statement put in place by the Howard government that saw the income tax paid by our smallest businesses reduced? You abolished that. And then you went out to the small business community, who you had driven into a ditch through poor administration and through the introduction of a carbon tax, and said to the small businesses of Australia to either suck it up or pass it on to their customers when you knew darn well that was not possible. We are making a more attractive, better environment for small businesses. We have removed the carbon tax to take cost pressures out.

Mr Hawke interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Mitchell will desist.

Mr BILLSON: We are reducing red tape to take the compliance burden out of the economy. We are creating the economic ecosystem to let small enterprises thrive and prosper. Part of that picture is our $5.5 billion jobs and small Business package. Why is that a priority? We had to recover 519,000 jobs, while you guys were on small business nights and while you had a revolving door of small-business ministers—five in 15 months. The only small business to benefit under Labor was the printer. You had to keep printing new business cards. Five in 15 months! It was a printer-led recovery! I think it is time Labor fessed up to the fact that small business found the environment and the economy a harsh and hard place under Labor. We are turning that around to energise enterprise. It is a great small business package—the best this country has ever seen.

I tell you what, Member for Oxley, if you ever get to be a small business minister—oh, that's right, you are retiring, aren't you? You are being bounced out. If you ever got to be a small business minister, do you know what you would like to do? You would like to get the support of a great Prime Minister, a great Treasurer, a great bunch of government MPs that are all about having small business running through their veins. Gee, I bet you wish you had that opportunity. Good luck with your retirement, Bernie.

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We will have some silence! Bravura performances may not be acknowledged in that way. We will have some order.

Northern Australia

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (14:18): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister update the House on the government's plans for northern Australia? How will the government's plan unlock jobs and opportunity in the North?
Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:18): I thank the honourable member for Capricornia for her question. Situated as she is, with Rockhampton in her electorate, the 'gateway to the North,' and certainly the beef capital of Australia, and all sorts of honours of that kind, she is keenly interested in the development of the North. Northern Australia offers enormous potential for our country. We have been saying that for decades. Finally, there is a government that is going to do something about it.

The northern Australia white paper, which will be released over the next few weeks, is a blueprint for action. It is a blueprint to deliver the kind of potential that the North of Australia has. The North is located in the tropical zone, as is two-thirds of the world's population. So the North is uniquely situated to be a place of global leadership in tropical medicine, tropical research, education and agriculture. We need to take advantage of those opportunities. The budget, for instance, included a $5 billion infrastructure investment facility to help bring to fruition some of those vital projects that will be essential for the North—infrastructure like roads, railway lines, pipelines and power stations—to build on this potential.

In addition, we have already announced $100 million for beef roads to ensure that that industry is able to operate for a bigger part of the year so that when the tropical wet seasons, in particular, come through there will be the opportunity to still get to markets. We are committed to additional funding for the black spots and the local roads. That is the kind of infrastructure that is necessary.

Mr Perrett: What about the Bruce Highway?

Mr TRUSS: Yes, the Bruce Highway as well, as the honourable member interjected. The biggest program on the Bruce Highway—$8.5 billion. It is way beyond anything Labor had ever suggested.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lingiari will desist or leave. The choice is his.

Mr TRUSS: And, of course, there are significant projects in the member's electorate—the Yeppen Floodplain, which Labor talked about to rebuild—

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

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

The member for Lingiari then left the chamber.

Mr TRUSS: There are a range of other substantial developments of that nature. It is way beyond what Labor would ever dream of. We believe in the North, we understand its potential, we are determined to deliver on the opportunities that will be provided for Western Australia—the member from the Northern Territory will not get the chance to hear about them now. There will also be some great things for the Territory and, of course, the state of Queensland. Northern Australia is an area of great potential. We intend to ensure that that potential is achieved.

Mr Katter: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy will resume his seat. No. 6 was the crossbenchers' opportunity, but I will give you question No. 8.
Cabinet

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:21): My question is to the Prime Minister. On Sunday, the Prime Minister referred to leaks from cabinet on national security as false reports. But today the Minister for Industry and Science said:

There's certainly been some very accurate statements made in newspapers in relation to discussions that were had in Cabinet …

Prime Minister, who is telling the truth—you or your minister?

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:22): I know that members opposite obsess over who said what to whom and what happened when, but the Australian people want to know that their national security is in safe hands—and with this government it abundantly is. Yet again, I confirm to the Leader of the Opposition that this government has a very strong policy to strip the citizenship from terrorists who are dual nationals. Again, my question to the Leader of the Opposition is: what's your policy?

Ms Owens interjecting—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Parramatta is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: Our policy is to strip citizenship from terrorists who are dual nationals. It is a very good and strong policy. It is an important part of our national security policy because the first priority of government is to keep our people safe, and that is what this government will do by stripping the citizenship from terrorists who have dual nationality. Again, I want to know where the Leader of the Opposition stands on this. Let me make it absolutely crystal clear. Anyone who lifts a gun or a knife to an Australian because of who we are has forfeited any right to be considered one of us. That is the fundamental principle. Does the Leader of the Opposition agree that someone who raises a gun or a knife to an Australian because of who we are has forfeited the right to be considered one of us? That is what we believe. What does he believe? Yet again, we just don't know.

Budget

**Mr TAYLOR** (Hume) (14:24): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister update the House on measures in the budget to improve the health of all Australians?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (14:24): It is a delight to take a question from my neighbour in rural New South Wales the member for Hume. I thank him for his intelligent contribution to public policy in health. There are no intelligent contributions from the Labor Party—but more of that in a minute. I want to reinforce the Abbott government's investment in health in this budget; it will increase to a total of $69.7 billion in 2015-16, an increase of $3.2 billion on last year. Our investment in Medicare continues to grow—to over $21 billion—with our cornerstone Medicare policies around the review of the MBS, with 5,500 items. It is an ambitious task but we will create a Medicare schedule that reflects contemporary practice.

Our investment in primary care, including mental health, will see new approaches and new funding models for complex and chronic disease. We are undertaking sensible reforms. There is $26 million to add incentives to immunise. We know how important that is. We have a new national diabetes strategy. We are cleaning up Labor's e-health mess—a billion dollars and
where have we got to? Less than 10 per cent of the population are signed onto a health record. We are, of course, investing strongly in the PBS, with $10 billion this year alone, including the budget announcement of $1.3 billion on new drugs for melanoma, breast cancer, blindness and shingles. And I announced on the weekend a further $60 million for a drug that treats lung cancer. Despite Labor’s claims, total annual hospital funding is up by 25 per cent over the next four years, or $3.8 billion.

These are record levels of spending in health. This is a government that has a plan for health. I am waiting for the opposition, in the ‘year of big ideas’. There were three key speeches. In the Leader of the Opposition’s budget reply speech, health was not mentioned. In the shadow Treasurer’s speech at the Press Club, there was no mention of health. And then, at the AMA conference, I waited for the shadow minister for health to apologise for the comment by her predecessor, the member for Sydney, that ‘doctors earn enough and they can suck up a rebate freeze’. But she did not apologise to the doctors and she did not announce any health policy either. But then I found this gem from her: ‘The opposition would be kidding itself if it did not recognise there were challenges in the budget, that savings need to be found and no area is going to be exempt.’

Mr Bowen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: you have previously ruled that it is in order for a minister to be asked about alternatives, but where a minister has not been asked about alternatives, it is not in order for the minister to go there.

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

Ms LEY: It is clear that Labor’s policy, or non-policy, in this ‘year of no ideas’ is simple: they must be cutting hospitals, health, Medicare and medicines because, as the shadow minister said, no area is exempt from their savings cuts.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I did say I would give the call to the member for Kennedy.

Mr Katter: There is some confusion, Madam Speaker. I am told I am on the Liberal side and now I am told I am on the Labor side. I do not have any confusion, but the organisation of the House obviously has—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. The member has been in this chamber long enough to know that the sixth question is available to crossbenchers. I have granted him some indulgence to grant him a question other than that because he failed to jump. You can ask the question but without any preamble.

Northern Australia

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (14:28): My question is to the Prime Minister. Northern communities cannot afford fresh fruit and vegetables. This causes numerous deaths from malnutrition called ‘diabetes’. Bank finance for a market gardener, a commercial enterprise or even a home requires a title deed of security for a loan. A local tribunal—shire council, native title holders and tribal elders—is drafting title deeds. Will the government consider endorsing such legal instruments, the only highway out of the current desert of inaction?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:29): I thank the member for Kennedy for his question and I appreciate that there are many issues that are bedevilling northern Australia. His concerns are shared by a number of members right around this chamber. The
members for Leichhardt, Herbert, Dawson, Capricornia, Solomon and Durack are always raising with me some of the practical difficulties for our fellow Australians who are living in northern Australia, and the high price of food is certainly one of those issues. The best way to tackle this is to have a stronger economy and a higher population north of the Tropic of Capricorn, and that is exactly what the government's white paper on the development of northern Australia is designed to achieve.

I know that the member for Kennedy is interested in this, as are so many other members of this House. We have already made some significant announcements foreshadowing the white paper. There is the $5 billion concessional loan facility for economic infrastructure in northern Australia. There is the $100 million towards beef roads in northern Australia. There is the commitment foreshadowed by the government to build the Hann Highway, which will be a flood-free route, to the south. And one of the things that I know the member for Kennedy and indeed the members for Capricornia, Dawson, Herbert, Leichhardt, Solomon and Durack are interested in is better water storages in northern Australia, because that will certainly help with the food issue. There are a number of dams that I think should be looked at: the Nullinga Dam behind Cairns, the Rookwood Dam near Rockhampton, and Ord stage 3. What we do not want is a continuation of the dam phobia that operated for far too long in this country because of the antidevelopment alliance between the Labor Party and the Greens.

The northern development white paper will address these issues. And yes, the member for Kennedy is right: land title is an important issue in northern Australia. You cannot build a secure future if you do not have secure title. It will be important to try to ensure that Indigenous land in particular can be an economic asset as well as a cultural and spiritual one. All these issues will be addressed by the northern development white paper, and I do not think the member for Kennedy or indeed the other members of this chamber will be disappointed.

Employment

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (14:32): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Employment. Will the minister update the House on the government's plans to improve the job opportunities for older Australians? What obstacles stand in the way of helping mature-age workers get jobs?

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (14:32): I thank the good member for his question. The member for Moore is a member who understands the benefits an older worker can bring to a workplace. And the member for Moore understands the fact that we need as a nation to increase the participation of older workers if we are to maximise our standard of living and maximise our national productivity. The budget included new arrangements for the Restart program to help more older workers into work and to help more employers. Restart is a $10,000 wage subsidy for employers to take on older job seekers, aged over 50, who have been unemployed for six months or longer, and the program is assisting people in the good member's electorate.

I would like to bring to the attention of the House the fact that recently a 66-year-old was employed as an estimator at a small electrical business. That has been done through the assistance of the Restart program. And a 62-year-old has been working as a patient care assistant in the good member's electorate, assisted through the Restart program. But as part of the budget we are making Restart more attractive to employers by paying the $10,000 subsidy sooner. It will be as a result of the budget being paid over 12 months, not over 24 months.
Also, payments will be made more flexibly to better meet the needs of employers. Payments will be made up to fortnightly to assist employers with the cost of hiring and the cost of training new staff—a great subsidy being made more effective for employers.

But I have been asked what challenges the government faces in assisting workers into the workplace. I can say that the great challenge we face is the Australian Labor Party. Sadly, we had the opposition leader forgetting to mention young unemployed people in his budget reply speech. It pains me to say that he forgot to mention older workers as well. We have the year of the idea. The only ideas we have had in the area of unemployment so far have been a couple of talkfests and a $20 million youth pilot. As the year of the idea achieves a crescendo, we have had the announcement today of another talkfest. We have the member for Gorton and the member for Bendigo heading off on vacation—a talkfest vacation. We have people on the ground needing assistance to get into work. This government is doing that. The members opposite are just standing in the way and holding talkfests rather than coming up with real policies to help workers. We are about getting people into work; you are about talkfests.

**National Security**

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:35): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the unprecedented cabinet leak on national security. Given that the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Communications have publicly claimed that they were not the source of the leak, will the Prime Minister be seeking similar assurances from the Attorney-General, the Minister for Agriculture, the Minister for Defence and the Minister for Education?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:36): Yet again we have proof that the contemporary Labor Party is more interested in trivia than in the reality of national security, more interested in political gossip and trivia than in strengthening the national security of our nation.

Mr Dreyfus: Madam Speaker, a point of order: this was an unprecedented leak about national security—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. How many times do I have to say that it is not a point of order to rise and repeat a question? The next person to do it can leave.

Mr ABBOTT: This interjection, disguised as a point of order, comes from a member of a government that backstabbed two Prime Ministers. We are facing an unprecedented challenge to our national security, and all members opposite are interested in is gossip and trivia. Let me point out, for the benefit of members opposite, that we are facing an unprecedented challenge to our national security. The latest advice from our security agencies is that there are 110 Australians known to be fighting with terrorist groups, such as the Daesh death cult in the Middle East. There are well over 150 Australians now known to be supporting them with financing and recruitment.

I regret to inform the House that it is now thought that some 35 Australians have been killed while fighting for this Daesh death cult. This is an unprecedented national security challenge, and the Labor Party still cannot say—or will not say—where it stands on the vital issue of stripping citizenship from terrorists with dual nationality. We know where we stand—
Mr Dreyfus: Madam Speaker, a point of order on relevance: the Prime Minister has made no attempt to be directly relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: In the face of this unprecedented threat to our national security, this government is taking every reasonable measure to keep the Australian people safe. We do not want to play politics about this, because we know, instinctively, that anyone who raises a gun or a knife to an Australian because of who we are has utterly forfeited any right to be considered one of us. That is what we believe. What do you believe? Do you want dual national citizens to keep their citizenship? That is what they want.

Mr Dreyfus: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: under standing order 91 the Prime Minister is wilfully disregarding the standing orders and you should bring him to order.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order at all. Resume your seat. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: I was asked a question about national security and cabinet deliberations on national security. I am making the fundamental point that this government knows where it stands. Our view is that terrorists with dual nationality will be stripped of their citizenship, and I ask again: what does Labor believe on this?

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to have him table a copy of the bill he was referring to. He referred to specific provisions of a bill. I would ask him to table it.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. Normally, tabling is asked when a member wishes documents from which somebody is quoting to be tabled.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I distinctly heard the Leader of the Opposition say, when the Prime Minister resumed his seat, that our measures were 'dog whistling'. He said it twice, in fact. I find that very offensive and I would ask him to withdraw that statement.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition would assist the House if he would withdraw the comment.

Mr Shorten: I withdraw.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: the member for Solomon should withdraw her unparliamentary remark.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence! The member for Hunter will desist or leave. If the member for Solomon made an unparliamentary remark she should withdraw.

Mrs Griggs: Madam Speaker, my apologies for calling him a liar.

Opposition members: Withdraw!

The SPEAKER: I am sorry, that is totally unacceptable.

Mrs Griggs: I withdraw.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: members of this side have been thrown out for that precise behaviour. I draw your attention to—
The SPEAKER: I do not need gratuitous advice and, had you waited, action might have been taken, but now you have precipitated it. However, the member for Solomon is certainly warned. One more utterance and she will leave. There is no point of order.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I have a point to raise.

The SPEAKER: Go ahead and raise it.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, you cannot say the interpretation of the standing order changes because a point of order was raised.

The SPEAKER: It was not a point of order.

Mr Burke: That is what you just ruled! Had I not raised it, you would have kicked her out—but because I raised it you will not.

The SPEAKER: I said there was no point of order. You are attempting to give gratuitous advice. And that is not a point of order.

Trade Unions

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (14:43): My question is to the acting Minister for Employment. I refer the minister to the editorial in yesterday's Herald Sun regarding alleged union corruption. I ask: what action is the government taking to ensure the highest levels of probity in our community organisations, and what challenges are there to this approach?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:43): I do thank the member for Casey for his question. The member for Casey might have been thinking that the blood that is being spilled, at the moment, is all being spilled in The Killing Season that will be beginning next Tuesday night, on the ABC, from reports in today's press. It looks like it will be quite a good program to watch. In fact, there is plenty of blood being spilled in the royal commission into trade union corruption.

The member for Casey might want to continue to keep his eye on that, because he asks a very important question. It is a question not just for me but also for the Leader of the Opposition, and I will come to him. Unfortunately, in the testimony that is being received in the royal commission into trade union corruption, very serious allegations have been made against Cesar Melhem, a member of the Victorian parliament, who was the state secretary of the Victorian AWU.

There is a very serious claim that he sold workers down the river and saved a company called Clean Event $6 million of labour costs in exchange for $25,000 a year of fees to the AWU. This is a very serious allegation, because the workers at Clean Event did not pay as much as they perhaps could have. Because of Cesar Melhem's actions, they were not the highest paid workers in our society. They are very average workers, being paid low rates of pay. The government does take that seriously, and I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition, as a former union leader—in fact, he was the national secretary of the Australian Workers' Union at the time when Cesar Melhem was the state secretary of the Victorian union—would take that seriously as well. He can demonstrate how seriously he takes that in two ways: he can today distance himself from Cesar Melhem and the allegations that are being made and he can answer the question as to what, if anything, he knew about this practice when he was the national secretary of the AWU.
I am not suggesting that the allegations pertain to the actions of the Leader of the Opposition. But he could deal with this in two ways today: firstly, he could make it clear that, as the national secretary of the AWU he knew nothing of this practice or any other practices and, secondly, he could support the registered organisations bill in the Senate right now. That will stop these kinds of dishonest practices, because the Registered Organisations Commission supports honest union leaders and the workers, and the Labor Party is the obstacle to its passage. The Leader of the Opposition could really put his money where his mouth is and pass that bill and show that he cares about workers.

**Superannuation**

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:46): My question is to the Prime Minister. The government's Murray review found that 38 per cent of superannuation tax concessions go to the top 10 per cent of income earners. The cost of superannuation concessions will soon outstrip the age pension and, as reported today, the chair of the Murray review has said that the failure to reform our superannuation system will leave it more vulnerable. Prime Minister, why is the government stubbornly refusing to reform superannuation tax concessions?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:47): We do not support burdening the retirees of Australia with new taxes. That is our position. We made it very clear prior to the last election that there would be no adverse changes to superannuation in this term of parliament and that is a commitment we have abundantly kept. We have no plans for further taxes on superannuation beyond this term of parliament because we do not believe that the people's savings are a piggy bank to be raided by government whenever it is in trouble. But Labor do. Labor think that your savings are their piggy bank to be raided whenever they are in trouble. I am delighted that the opposition persists in asking questions about superannuation because it enables me to say again and again that we, the coalition—the Liberal and National parties—believe that superannuation is your money. But the opposition, the Labor Party, believe that superannuation is the government's money. How wrong can they be? It is becoming clearer and clearer as this parliament lengthens out that Labor cannot be trusted with your money, that Labor want to put your money in their pocket.

We know what the Leader of the Opposition was like, we know what Labor were like—Labor promised, going into the 2007 election, that they would not touch superannuation ‘not one jot, not one tittle,’ and then there were 12 changes. Members opposite made 12 separate changes to superannuation when they were in government and they ripped $9 billion out of the people's savings. Then of course there was the special achievement of the Leader of the Opposition: if you had not touched your bank account for three years it was not yours anymore, it was his. That was the 'trouser tax'—he put his clammy hands into your pockets to take out your savings just because you had left it untouched for three years and he wanted it. It is absolutely crystal clear what would happen if members opposite were ever to get back into government: the carbon tax would come back, the people smugglers would come back, the value of your house would go down—because hasn't he been trying to talk down the economy for the last few days? And your superannuation is going to be raided again and again to try to get a Labor government out of trouble. Like everything about this opposition, it just does not add up.
National Security

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (14:50): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister update the House on action the government is taking to keep the community safe at our borders?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:50): I thank the honourable member for her question and thank her very much for being such a strong voice in this place when it comes to issues of national security. As the Prime Minister has pointed out earlier in question time today, this government—any Australian government—has no higher responsibility than keeping our people safe and secure. Our frontline staff at the airports, our Federal Police—all of our intelligence agency staff—need support in this fight, because we face an unprecedented threat from terrorism. When Labor were in government, when the Leader of the Opposition was in cabinet, they ripped out $700 million from Customs and Border Protection services. That is $700 million that the Labor Party took away from our frontline staff in their fight against terrorism. It was a disgraceful action from a hopeless and incompetent government. What have we done over the last 18 months or so? We have restored much of that funding, because we want to give every possible tool and capacity to those frontline officers to make sure that they can keep our country safe and secure.

We have provided additional money, which has meant that Labor's cuts, which resulted in a 25 per cent cut in the screening of sea cargo and a 75 per cent cut in the screening of air cargo, are a thing of the past. That is what happened under Labor. We have been able to restore funding to make sure that that screening can take place so that we can keep our borders secure.

In addition to that, we have been able to put in $88 million to support counterterrorism unit officers at our eight international airports, which is something that could not be contemplated by Labor because they took money away from those frontline services. At a time when the threat to our country from terrorism is at its greatest, these officers have swung into action. They have already offloaded passengers from flights. Indeed, 288 passengers have been offloaded from flights after the CTU officers at our international airports intervened. They have conducted 108,000 real-time assessments of people who were catching flights. They are the ones who deserve the support of our government, and they get it from this side of politics.

Those people who are standing up to terrorism at the borders, at the airports, at the ports, deserve the support of a grateful nation and, unfortunately, when Labor was in power, they had money ripped out of their pockets and it was a disgrace. The fact is that we will provide support to these officers because they are stopping people going to the Middle East to fight, they are stopping them when they get back to this country, and this government will absolutely stand up with those officers to keep the Australian public safe.

Mr Watts interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gellibrand: I will apply exactly the same test as I did to the member for Solomon, he will withdraw.

Mr Watts: I withdraw that I called him a liar.

The SPEAKER: You, also, will be warned. As I said, I will place you on exactly the same footing.
Superannuation

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:54): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer reports of the Assistant Treasurer's statements today on changes to superannuation, and I quote:

The government will, of course, consider good ideas put forward as part of the tax white paper process and any changes recommended by that process will be taken to the Australian people at the next election.

Given that the Prime Minister has been rebuffed by the secretary of the Treasury, the Treasurer, and now the Assistant Treasurer, will the Prime Minister repeat his promise of 'never, ever changes to superannuation'?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:54): I am delighted to have a question on superannuation from the opposition because, yet again, it allows me to make this very clear distinction. On this side of the House the Liberal-National Party believes that your superannuation is your money. On the other side of the House the Labor Party believe that your superannuation is government money to be raided whenever government has a problem.

Labor think that your money is their piggy bank. That is what they think, and that is why a very clear message is going from this parliament to the Australian people: your savings are not safe with Labor. It is the clear message because earlier today the shadow Treasurer made a speech to the Committee for Sustainable Retirement Incomes, and let me read the relevant phrase from that speech. It said:

It is indefensible to suggest we can leave superannuation tax concessions for another day.

Let me repeat that.

It is indefensible to suggest we can leave superannuation tax concessions for another day.

It is a very clear message. They are coming after your super. They are coming after every dollar of savings that any Australian has put in a superannuation account. They are coming after the superannuation of the people of Australia.

The shadow Treasurer is indignant it seems that the value of superannuation concessions is increasing. You know why concessions are given? To create incentives to do something. The value of those concessions is increasing because they are doing their job and superannuation balances are increasing. These geniuses on the other side put a policy in place because they wanted to do something, and then when it did exactly that they said, 'quelle horreur'. It is very, very clear: the superannuation savings of Australians are safe under the Liberal and National parties. Your savings are regarded by the Leader of the Opposition as his piggy bank. This Leader of the Opposition is going from bad to worse.

Illicit Drugs

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (14:57): My question is to the Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism. Will the minister advise the House what the government is doing to protect families across Australia, including in regional communities like mine, from the scourge of the insidious drug ice?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism) (14:58): I thank the member for Mallee for that question. I acknowledge that he has been one of the members who initially raised with me the issue of ice addiction,
particularly in rural and regional Victoria. I also would like to inform the House that the final consultation of the National Ice Taskforce is actually occurring in his electorate today.

Since the establishment of that task force, under the chairmanship of the former Victorian Police Commissioner Ken Lay, both the task force members, Minister Nash, members on this side of the House and I have been consulting the community, and we have had consultations, significantly in every state and territory, about the menace of ice and what we can do about it. By the time the National Ice Taskforce gets to hand its interim report to the Prime Minister around the middle of this year, communities across Australia would have been able to have their say.

Separately from these consultations the task force has received 1,300 submissions from people who are concerned about the scourge of ice. Minister Nash and I have had frank and useful conversations with our respective state and territory counterparts. These consultations will inform a report to government and ultimately the development of a national ice action strategy. The strategy will seek to improve coordination and collaboration by all levels of government across law enforcement, health and education. We are doing this because the government is determined to do everything we can to target the creep of ice. We are concerned about it because, according to statistics about the use of ice, 200,000 Australians have used it in the past 12 months and, overall, we know that one in 14 Australians have tried methamphetamine. Because of these high levels of use we also know that 60 per cent of the most serious organised crime figures in Australia are involved in the distribution of ice, and the high price that we pay for the drug is acting as a honeypot effect, luring in organised criminals from all over the world to involve themselves in its distribution.

As the member for Mallee has reminded us, this is not just an issue for the inner-city areas of our biggest cities, as some other drugs are. This is an issue that, very sadly, is permeating our rural and regional communities as well. It is vital that our parents and young people understand that this drug is extremely addictive and that using it can have very significant consequences. The Australian Crime Commission says that they are more concerned about this drug than any other illicit drug type. They are concerned about it because of the violent, menacing and irrational way that people behave when they are under its influence. This is why we have rolled out a public education campaign. It goes hand in glove with the very significant work that our law enforcement agencies are doing on disrupting the distribution of ice.

I also raised it with my state and territory colleagues at the Law, Crime and Community Safety Council, where we agreed to have a national strategy that will stop the legitimate precursor chemicals from being diverted into the production of ice. We are doing this to stop our young people, in particular, from going down the dark path of addiction, and we will continue to work with communities about what we are going to do to stop ice affecting our communities around Australia.

**Superannuation**

**Mr BOWEN** (McMahon) (15:01): My question is to the Prime Minister. The chair of the Financial System Inquiry, David Murray, the Treasury secretary, John Fraser, and the government's own Commission of Audit all back reform of superannuation tax concessions. Will the Prime Minister admit he is wrong to rule out reforming superannuation tax concessions?
Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (15:01): It is quite interesting, isn't it? The member for McMahon has now put himself into a world of hurt, because he describes superannuation tax concessions as indefensible. Today he said it was indefensible to continue one more day with superannuation taxation concessions. Not only that, he is running around misrepresenting the tax expenditure statement.

Mr Morrison: What are those concessions?

Mr HOCKEY: That is a good question from the minister. What are those concessions? I will tell you. Most of those concessions were introduced by the Labor Party. They are so appalled at the concessions that they want to repeal the concessions they themselves introduced. Their problem with the concessions is that the value of superannuation is rising. People's superannuation is increasing as asset values improve and as individuals create wealth. How good is that? We want people to have more money. We want all Australian workers to have more money. We want them to have more superannuation. We want them to have more money in their pockets for their retirement. And yet the Labor Party says that is unfair. The Labor Party says that the wealthier you are, the more money you have in your super—as an average worker or anyone else—the more outrageous it is. And this is after they actually facilitated it.

They wanted to give certainty and stability to superannuation, but they changed it when they were in government. There were $9 billion of changes. They introduced 12 changes. And Labor is so appalled by the superannuation system which they helped to create that they say it is indefensible to continue with the existing system. How extraordinary. Let us get it right: Labor not only wants to raid your savings accounts and wants your house to fall in value, but they want you to have less money in your superannuation. What is it with you guys? You are always good at spending other people's money—in this case, the money of hardworking Australians who put aside money in their superannuation, and have saved up to pay off the mortgage on their home, and have put money in their savings account. Labor wants to raid every single bit of wealth creation by everyday Australians. Now, they are all indignant about it. I tell you what, it was a clanger from the member for McMahon. He has belled the cat on this one. He says, 'What is happening in superannuation is indefensible', and those words are going to swing around his throat.

Carbon Pricing

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (15:04): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. I refer to an email from Stephen Brockwell, of San Remo Fishermen's Co-Operative, advising that since the repeal of the carbon tax the cost of re-gassing his ice machine has fallen from $360 per kilo to $85 per kilo. Will the minister update the House on how much families and businesses in our communities are saving following the removal of the world's biggest carbon tax, and are there any threats to this approach?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Perth will desist.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (15:05): I thank the member for McMillan, who is not only an outstanding local member and neighbour, but he also cast an outstanding vote to repeal the carbon tax. He delivered lower electricity prices, lower gas prices and, yes, lower refrigerant prices for his constituents in Pakenham, in Wonthaggi and
in Drouin. For Mr Brockwell, whom he mentioned, there was a reduction in the cost of R404A for his ice machine from $360 a kilo down to $85 a kilo. That is a significant reduction. For the cost of re-gassing the ice machine, for 10 kilograms, that is about $2,750 in savings for the local fishing cooperative.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton is warned!

Mr HUNT: But it is not just the fishing cooperative. For his constituents in the electorate of McMillan, the member for McMillan helped to deliver a reduction in the cost of air-conditioning of $205 every time they wanted to re-gas with refrigerants. For a passenger vehicle there was a $20 saving. If you were running a milk truck in an electorate which has significant volumes of milk and dairy, it was a $580 reduction. These are real reductions for small businesses and families in his electorate.

But he does ask whether or not there are any threats to these savings, and there are. We now know that the ALP is deadset on bringing the carbon tax back. We know because the Leader of the Opposition has told us. We know because two weeks ago today the Shadow Treasurer told the National Press Club that he is going to bring back the carbon tax. Against that, it is very interesting that not only is the tax back but the architect is back. I was reading a very interesting article. I was drawn by the headline: 'Home insulation scheme was "appalling policy", says Greg Combet's chief of staff' by Latika Bourke. At the end of the article there was a little comment by Mr Combet about the carbon tax. Mr Combet predicted the hallmark policy of the Gillard government, the carbon tax, had not died, despite its repeal by the coalition:

"Those policy measures are important for Australia's future...so will re-emerge," Mr Combet predicted.

So the carbon tax is not dead, it is only sleeping, under Labor. Their plan is to bring back the carbon tax, and that means higher electricity prices, higher gas prices and higher refrigerant prices. At the end of the day, under us there is no carbon tax; there is lower gas prices, lower electricity prices and lower refrigerant prices. Under them, the cost of everything goes up.

Family Violence

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:08): My question is to the Prime Minister. This afternoon, Rosie Batty gave a remarkable speech that I and other members of parliament had the privilege of attending. About solving family violence in Australia, she said that it is up to you, it is up to me, it is up to all of us. Will the Prime Minister join me again in renewing our parliament's commitment to do all we can to eliminate family violence in Australia?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:09): I do appreciate this question from the Leader of the Opposition and, yes, I am very pleased to join with him. I am sure all of us would be very happy to link arms across this chamber in this very important cause. Who could not fail to be touched by the extraordinary story—the tragedy and the resilience—that has afflicted Rosie Batty who, rightly and properly, is triumphantly the Australian of the Year? As a husband, as the brother of three sisters and as the father of three daughters, I find any violence against women and children absolutely abhorrent. My message and, I am sure, the message of everyone in this chamber to our brothers, to our sons and to our mates—because, let's face it, overwhelmingly this is a problem of male perpetrators against female
victims—is: no more, never ever again. This is not a women's issue. It is a men's issue. It is a national issue. All of us—the men in this chamber, in particular—have a real challenge to rise to.

As you may recall, this was a subject that was extensively dealt with at COAG earlier this year. A COAG task force has been established, chaired by the former Victoria Police Chief Commissioner, Ken Lay, and deputy chaired by the Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, to look at this issue generally but, in particular, to look at the issue of a national domestic violence order, which will protect women everywhere in our country once it is issued. There is $100 million on the Second Action Plan against domestic violence, there is $30 million available for a further awareness raising campaign on this and there will be money available to respond to the recommendations of the Ken Lay-Rosie Batty committee.

Yes, it is about money. But, above all, it is about values. It is about a change of heart. It is about saying that we must always do the decent thing. If someone is weaker than us, if someone is more vulnerable than us, it is our duty to be a protector not a persecutor. That is the resolution that all of us must make. Towards that resolution, I am only too happy to continue working with the Leader of the Opposition and other members of this parliament.

**Infrastructure**

**Mr Whiteley** (Braddon) (15:12): I thank the Prime Minister for that response. My question is to the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the minister update the House on the government's commitment to invest in vital infrastructure across the country? Is the minister aware of recent claims about infrastructure spending? What is the government's response to these accusations?

**Mr Briggs** (Mayo—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (15:12): I thank the member for Braddon for the question. It was a pleasure to spend some time with the members for Braddon, Bass and Lyons—the Tasmanian trio—a couple of weeks ago where we released the first ever Midland Highway plan with the Tasmanian government. It is a comprehensive plan to do that highway upgrade over the next decade in a well-planned and efficient manner. We are getting on with the job of delivering that infrastructure in Tasmania. This government is committed to infrastructure investment because it is a key part of our economic plan. The infrastructure Prime Minister is focused on ensuring that we are not just announcing projects around the country but delivering projects around the country.

Today we have seen the national accounts and we are pleased with the results. But we know we can do better. We can do better with better infrastructure, we can do better with an economy that is more efficient, and we can do better with a small business sector that is thriving. That is what our budget plan is all about. Our economic plan is predicated on creating new jobs and creating new economic opportunities for all Australians. We have done that in government by investing in new projects in Sydney with a concessional loan, for example, the WestConnex project, not just stage 1 but stage 2. We are working with New South Wales on stage 3 and more.

There is the second upgrade in South Australia on the North-South Corridor—the Darlington upgrade—a project that the Labor Party opposes. There is the Perth Freight Link—another project that the member for Perth, in particular, is opposed to—where we are
focused on delivering a better freight link through Perth to deliver a stronger economy in Western Australia. There is the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing, a project that the Deputy Prime Minister is so committed to and the Minister for Industry is committed to. It will be delivered. Of course, we will retain $3 billion in a locked box to build the East West project, just like Sir Rod Eddington recommended.

We have also ensured that Infrastructure Australia is genuinely independent for the first time, where we will listen to Infrastructure Australia’s advice. We will not spend the biggest amount of infrastructure money of all time in Australian history on a project like the NBN without a cost-benefit analysis. We will ensure there are cost-benefit analyses done on major projects.

Over the last few days, the member for Grayndler has, unusually, made some claims which are not backed up by the facts about alleged cuts in spending. I can correct the member for Grayndler to ensure that he understands that we are spending $16 billion more than what Labor would have, had they been elected in 2013. In fact, in Queensland itself, we are spending $4½ billion more. It was actually the secretary of the department whom the member for Grayndler himself appointed who said this week, when asked this question: ‘We do not believe those assertions are correct.’

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr Bowen (McMahon) (15:16): Madam Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The Speaker: Does the member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr Bowen: Most grievously, by the Treasurer.

The Speaker: Then he has indulgence to proceed.

Mr Bowen: The Treasurer asserted during question time that I had said all superannuation tax concessions were indefensible. This is just not true. I had said that delaying reform of superannuation tax concessions would be indefensible. The only person who has said all tax concessions on superannuation should be abolished was the now Prime Minister in his book, *Battlelines*.

The Speaker: We are now going into argument, which is not acceptable.

Mr Hockey (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (15:16): Madam Speaker, I seek to make a personal explanation.

The Speaker: Does the member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr Hockey: Yes.

The Speaker: Then he may proceed.

Mr Hockey: The member for McMahon just misquoted himself, and I refer to the address to the Committee for Sustainable Retirement Incomes—

The Speaker: The Treasurer will resume his seat. The rule for personal explanations is simply that the member may show where he or she believes they have been misrepresented and then correct the record. They may not enter into debate. The member for McMahon, in
fact, erred with the last part of his explanation and the Treasurer erred at the beginning of his. The Treasurer can try again, on indulgence.

Mr HOCKEY: I apologise profusely, Madam Speaker. The member for McMahon just suggested that I made reference to all concessions; in fact, I said: 'It is indefensible to suggest we can leave superannuation tax concessions for another day.' I would table his speech for the assistance of the House, but I have written on his speech 'Never let this go'.

The SPEAKER: As a minister, you are entitled to table anything you wish at this point.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will return to his seat. We have two issues here. The first is that the Treasurer said he would table a document, which he has the right to do as a minister, but he is also entitled to keep private notes from being tabled. I would ask the Treasurer: does he have a copy of the document he said he would table which does not contain private notes?

Mr HOCKEY: No, it does have private notes, but I am happy to table it because the private note says 'Code 4, we are coming after your super', which is Labor—there you go.

The SPEAKER: The document is therefore tabled.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Questions in Writing

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (15:19): I have a question to you, Madam Speaker. In accordance with standing order 105(b), I ask that you write to the Minister for Defence seeking reasons for the delay in answering a question in writing. The relevant question appears as No. 720 on the Notice Paper.

The SPEAKER (15:19): I will so write.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Standing Orders

The SPEAKER (15:19): I have a statement arising from yesterday's proceedings. Yesterday, the Manager of Opposition Business raised with me an allegation that the member for Braddon took a photograph in the chamber. I have had the official broadcast footage reviewed, which does not capture the member for Braddon at the particular time, and therefore there is no evidence of a photograph being taken. The member for Braddon did rise to assure the House he did not take a photograph and I accept the assurance given to the House by the member for Braddon. But I remind all members that photography in the House when it is in session is not permitted.

COMMITTEES

Selection Committee

Report

The SPEAKER (15:20): I present report No. 26 of the Selection Committee relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and private members' business on Monday, 15 June 2015. The report will be printed in the *Hansard* for today and the
committee's determinations will appear on tomorrow's Notice Paper. Copies of the report have been placed on the table.

The report read as follows—

Report relating to the consideration of private Members' business.
1. The committee met in private session on Tuesday, 2 June 2015.
2. The committee determined the order of precedence and times to be allotted for consideration of private Members' business on Monday, 15 June 2015, as follows:

   Items for House of Representatives Chamber (10.10 am to 12 noon)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices
1 MR VAN MANEN: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:
(a) 96 per cent of all of Australian businesses are small businesses, employing more than 4.5 million people and producing more than $330 billion of the nation's economic output;
(b) in 2013-14 Australians started more than 280,000 small businesses; and
(c) the Coalition Government has developed and started to deliver as part of the Budget, the largest small business package in the nation's history—the Jobs and Small Business Package—worth $5.5 billion; and
(d) as part of the Jobs and Small Business Package, all small businesses will get an immediate tax deduction for each asset they buy costing less than $20,000; and

(2) acknowledges the work of the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the Minister for Small Business in putting together a package that will deliver for small businesses now and into the future.

(Notice given 28 May 2015.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mr van Manen—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

2 MR CONROY: To move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that alongside national defence, there is no higher obligation on a Commonwealth government than to support and promote the employment prospects of its citizens;

(2) condemns the record of the Government which has seen:
(a) an unemployment rate at a 12 year high;
(b) more than 81,000 Australians added to the unemployment queue since the election of the Government;
(c) a record underemployment rate of 8.6 per cent.
(d) a youth unemployment rate of over 15 per cent;
(e) 190,000 people long term unemployed, more than any time since records began; and

(f) one in four unemployed people being long term unemployed; and

(3) recognises that while support for small businesses is important to stimulating jobs growth, more is needed; and

(4) calls on the Government to invest more in education, training, industry and innovation policies to rectify this jobs crisis.

(Notice given 2 June 2015.)

Time allotted—40 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mr Conroy—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 8 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

3 MR NIKOLIC: To move:

That this House:

(1) recognises:

(a) the importance of Australia's Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), which now include nations in three continents—North America, South America and Asia;

(b) Australia's three most recent FTAs negotiated and signed in 2014 with Japan, South Korea and China and the positive security, stability and economic prosperity which will result from each of these mutually constructive agreements;

(c) the Government's intention to continue to enhance current and future trade and investment opportunities for the long term advantage of all Australian citizens; and

(d) the significant personal contribution made by the Minister for Trade and Investment in securing FTAs with Japan, South Korea and China in 2014;

(2) acknowledges the following advantages of FTAs to Australia as being:

(a) removing potentially billions of dollars of tariff impost for foreign produced consumer goods (including, clothes, shoes, car components, cars and electronics);

(b) enhancing capital flows into Australian agriculture, finance, tourism, infrastructure and mining as a result of streamlined approval procedures for foreign state owned investors;

(c) improving primary agriculture, particularly dairy, beef, lamb, wine and horticulture as a result of overseas tariffs being phased out over time;

(d) streamlining licensing and reducing restrictions on Australian services firms, including banks, insurance companies, financial fund managers, as well as law, architecture and engineering firms; and

(e) providing cheaper and more streamlined visa approval procedures, making it easier to undertake reciprocal travel, work and study in Australia and relevant trade partner nations; and

(3) notes the continuing importance of trade between nations and of Australian formal FTAs in supporting both global and regional stability, as well as Australian long term economic prosperity, all of which are emphasised by Australia's unique geopolitics.

(Notice given 1 June 2015.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.
Speech time limits—

Mr Nikolic—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Orders of the day

1 MARRIAGE AMENDMENT (MARRIAGE EQUALITY) BILL 2015 (Mr Shorten): Second reading—Resumption of debate (from 1 June 2015).

Time allotted—10 minutes.

Speech time limits—

All Members—5 minutes.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Items for Federation Chamber (11 am to 1.30 pm)

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Notices

1 MRS MCNAMARA: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) Bowel Cancer Australia ran an initiative throughout the month of February titled 'Prevent Bowel Cancer' to raise awareness of bowel cancer and encourage more Australians to screen for the disease with the tagline 'Don't Wait Until It's Too Late';

(b) bowel cancer:

(i) is the second most common type of newly diagnosed cancer in Australia affecting both men and women almost equally;

(ii) is Australia's second biggest cancer killer after lung cancer with more than 15,000 Australians diagnosed each year; and

(iii) claims nearly 4,000 lives every year; and

(c) when found early 90 per cent of bowel cancer cases can be successfully treated;

(2) acknowledges the Government's free National Bowel Cancer Screening Program initiative and the inclusion of people turning the ages of 70 and 74 in the program; and

(3) notes the requirement for greater awareness and promotion of available bowel cancer screening tests and the need for people from age 50 to undertake regular screening to prevent this disease.

(Notice given 2 June 2015.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mrs McNamara—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.
2 MR FITZGIBBON: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) that Australia has the most stringent and effective live animal welfare regulatory system in the world that is underpinned by the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System;

(b) recent alleged breaches of Australian's animal welfare standards in the live export sector; and

(c) the Government's:

(i) abolition of the position of Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports; and

(ii) failure to increase regulatory and supervisory resources to keep pace with growth in trade; and

(2) calls on the Government to build public confidence and to protect the sustainability of the live export sector by:

(a) appointing an independent Inspector-General of Animal Welfare and Live Animal Exports; and

(b) providing quarterly ministerial reports to the Parliament on:

(i) any new markets;

(ii) the number of head exported;

(iii) any allegations of breaches of animal welfare standards and investigations undertaken; and

(iv) any sanctions or other action taken against those who have breached or should have prevented breaches of Australia's animal welfare standards.

(Notice given 26 May 2015.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mr Fitzgibbon—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Orders of the day

1 MR BROAD: Resumption of debate (from 1 June 2015) on the motion of Mr Broad—That this House notes:

(1) that Australian small business is a major contributor to the national economy and should be acknowledged for its innovation, entrepreneurship and endeavour, as demonstrated by the 15,000 small businesses across the electoral division of Mallee and many small businesses across the rest of Australia; and

(2) the recent budget must be commended for assisting small business with accelerated depreciation for assets purchased under $20,000.

Time allotted—30 minutes.

Speech time limits—

All Members—5 minutes.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.
Notices—continued

3 MRS ELLIOT: To move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that:

(a) over 105,000 Australians are currently defined as homeless throughout the nation;

(b) on any given night this translates to 1 in 200 Australians homeless or sleeping rough;

(c) great work is done by organisations such as Homelessness Australia and countless local charities in their support for homeless people right across the country; and

(2) notes that:

(a) the current Government has made significant cuts to front line youth services putting more young people at the risk of homelessness;

(b) the current Government has made significant cuts to domestic violence services putting more woman and children at risk of homelessness; and

(c) more needs to be done to address homelessness in Australia.

(Notice given 25 May 2015.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mrs Elliot—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

4 MS MCGOWAN: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) by the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development's own statistics, two thirds of Australia’s export earnings come from regional industries such as agriculture, tourism, retail, services and manufacturing;

(b) Australian regional businesses and industries are highly exposed to global market forces;

(c) whether exporting or not, businesses and consumers alike are influenced and are in turn influencing regional Australia’s future competitive advantage; and

(d) the future of manufacturing and industry in this country requires extensive skills development, training and employee development in key sectors such as farming, food production, engineering and value-adding; and

(2) calls on the Australian Government to:

(a) prioritise investment in regional infrastructure that supports growth in rural and regional industries and manufacturing businesses, such as:

(i) improving telecommunications access for rural and regional Australians;

(ii) improving passenger rail and freight rail timetables and services; and

(iii) simplifying compliance for interstate businesses by reducing cross-border anomalies; and

(b) provide additional capacity for the regions to design their strategic vision to meet future industry, manufacturing and regional development demands in Australia.

(Notice given 26 May 2015.)
Time allotted—remaining private Members’ business time prior to 1.30 pm.

Speech time limits—

Ms McGowan—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes, each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS


Ordered that the reports be made parliamentary papers.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (15:21): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Budget

The SPEAKER (15:21): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Gorton proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The government failing to protect the living standards and working conditions of Australians.

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

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

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR (Gorton) (15:21): Indeed, I do want in this contribution to talk about the failure of this government to protect the working conditions of Australians, but I might start by dealing with the failure of this government to look after the living standards of small business.

In fact, what we saw today was a remarkable thing. What we saw today, after three weeks of the government misrepresenting the opposition in relation to our position on small business measures, was a government voting against the expedition of the passage of their own bill which introduced small business measures. We have seen this government, for 22 days, suggest we would not be supporting those measures. The fact is: we supported those measures. On budget night, the shadow Treasurer made clear and confirmed that we would be supporting the measures. The Leader of the Opposition on the Thursday night in the budget reply speech confirmed the fact that we were supporting those measures, and yet, despite that, the government continued to argue otherwise. Instead, today, led by the minister for immigration at the table, we saw the government vote against the expedition of that bill.
So you would have to ask the question: is this government fair dinkum when it comes to looking after small business? If they were fair dinkum, they would know that we were always going to support those measures. And the reason we were going to support those measures is: they are our measures. I had the privilege to be the small business minister when the then Treasurer, the member for Lilley, introduced those measures to protect the interests of small business. The instant asset tax write-off was a Labor measure. The loss carry-back initiative, which has not been returned, after being repealed by this government, was also an initiative that helped those incorporated small enterprises through cash-flow issues. The fact is: the instant asset tax write-off is a Labor measure. It was repealed by the Minister for Small Business and this government. It was repealed by this government and re-introduced this week. And they are claiming it as their reform! Well, we know, and two million small businesses, incorporated and unincorporated, around the country know that this was a measure taken away from them by the government and brought back as a supposed Liberal measure. But it is not a Liberal measure. It is not a government measure. It is a Labor measure.

You want to talk about the things we did for small business? Confronted by the global financial crisis, we dealt with the biggest economic shock to this economy for 70 years, and we did it by investing at a time when private capital contracted. And why did we do it? We did it to protect jobs. We did it to protect small business. And what was the response from the then opposition? It was to oppose those measures that supported and protected 200,000 jobs and many, many thousands of small businesses—those small businesses that relied upon those government measures to ensure that they did not hit the wall. But of course, as far as this government is concerned, there was no global financial crisis. That is why we went into deficit: to grow the economy, by more than 10 per cent, post GFC, to ensure that we had low unemployment—the second lowest in the OECD. We went into deficit to save and protect businesses and jobs, and we did, and we came out the other end the best economy in the developed world.

But in just over 12 months we have seen this government double the deficit. And what has happened? They have doubled the deficit and they have increased unemployment. Unemployment is going to hit a 14-year high. Eighty thousand more Australians will be on the unemployment queues. One hundred and thirty extra Australians have been lining up in the unemployment queues each and every day since this government was elected. And that is what is happening here. They have doubled the deficit. Unemployment is rising—the budget's own forecast is that it will rise to 6.5 per cent. So let us be very clear here: this is a government that has really badly affected this economy. And that is of course an attack on small business.

What we have seen since the election of this government is them talking down the economy. Then we saw the introduction of a contractionary budget that actually stopped employers from hiring and stopped consumers from spending, which killed confidence in the economy. Consumer confidence was down. Business confidence was down. That is why unemployment is rising and that is why we have underlying weakness in the economy, and that is as a result of this government. And no efforts by those opposite would actually, I think, contradict the reality that confronts businesses.
So of course we support the measures that are contained in that bill. They are our measures. Of course we support them.

In relation to the tax cut there is a great history too, because we proposed the tax cut for small business in the last term. And what happened? The opposition lined up with the Greens in the Senate and blocked the tax cut for small business in opposition. So it should have been clear from the outset, without us uttering a word, that we were always going to support those measures that were ours. We were going to support them, and support them we did today. Unfortunately, the government voted against the passage of its own bill. That is of course in relation to small business.

But the opposition is concerned about the protection of workers. And if there is ambiguity about what the government think about small business, despite them declaring themselves to be the friends of small business, there is no ambiguity about what they think about the 11 million Australian workers in this country. There is not one area of public policy where they are not trying to hurt Australian workers—not one area of public policy. If they had their way, we know that Work Choices would be back tomorrow. They are not able to do it today, but if they could do it today it would be done. That would be one thing they would do immediately, but at the moment they cannot.

So what do they do? Wherever they go in areas of public policy they attack Australian workers. We saw it with the Treasurer when he goaded Holden to leave and they left our shores. The contempt shown by this government for car-maker workers in this country was an absolute disgrace. We have seen it in terms of the way in which they have not supported workers on ADF contracts in Adelaide and in Melbourne and in other parts of the country. We have even seen it on a personal level, where we had the Prime Minister of this country—when asked a question about whether they would be cutting the rates of pay of cleaners on Commonwealth contracts—say at that dispatch box that they would not be cutting their conditions of employment. Well, what has happened? The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade contracted cleaners have cut the rate of wages for cleaners by up to $6,000 a year. So the Prime Minister should come back into this place and apologise to the cleaners who clean his office and clean the offices of the ministers for saying that their rates of pay would not be cut. Everywhere you look, wherever it is, you will see the government attacking workers.

We are going to hear more from the member for Grayndler, because I can tell you: the policy in the maritime and aviation sectors is deliberately designed to undermine Australian standards of employment. Let there be no mistake about this: they are seeking to undermine the conditions of employment and, indeed, undermine the Australian maritime industry and the aviation industry in this country. We know that wherever they go they are always looking at a way they can undermine the Australian workforce. It is in the budget as well—wherever they go.

We have seen a debate about superannuation in this place recently. Let's be very clear here. Before the election the Prime Minister promised that the co-contribution to 3½ million workers would be maintained. Upon election to government, that co-contribution has been taken away from 3½ million low paid workers. We have also seen it in relation to the delay of the increase in super contribution. Again, this was a commitment made by the Prime Minister, and it is something that has now been taken away by this government. It does not matter where you look in relation to public policy—whether it is abolishing small business measures
and then bringing them back as their own, or attacking workers in the car industry, or the maritime industry, or the cleaning contracts for their own cleaning arrangements. It does not matter where you look, this government will attack workers.

Workers in Australia can be assured that we will stand up for them. We will not allow radical industrial relations laws to be reintroduced into this country. We will stand up to prevent penalty rates being abolished and the minimum wage being abolished—the things that this government seeks to do—because Australian Labor not only supports Australian workers in this country, but we will also defend the interests of small business. That is why we want the bill that was introduced today in the House to be passed expeditiously—so those small businesses can get the measures they have sought and that they once had under the Labor government.

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (15:31): The shadow member for union protection, Mr O'Connor, would have you believe that they are so excited about our small-business package that they cannot wait to come in here and pass the bill. Let me give a couple of quotes to indicate exactly how strong their support is. This was Bill Shorten's quote in relation to the small-business package in his budget-in-reply on 14 May this year. He described small business package as:

A giveaway to start a fire sale at second-hand car yards and Harvey Norman … it doesn't go very far.

That was the quote from Bill Shorten, the opposition leader, in relation to a small-business package. I would not say that that is overwhelming support from the Labor Party. What about Bernie Ripoll? What did he have to say just before we announced our package. He is these shadow spokesperson for small business. He said:

… in an attempt to grab a headline and say his own skin, the Prime Minister is proceeding with his ham-fisted plan to introduce a two-tier corporate tax system against the wishes of Australian businesses.

Mr Billson: Gee, that sounds like support!

Mr TUDGE: That sounds like fantastic support! We know that the Labor Party does not support small business. We know that they are not the party that does that. When they were in government they had six small-business ministers in six years.

Mr Billson: Kim Beazley nailed it.

Mr TUDGE: As the Minister for Small Business is telling me, Kim Beazley himself nailed it, when said, in 2000:

We never pretended to be a small business party, the Labor Party; we never pretended that.

He was an honest Labor member. He was an honest Labor leader—Kim Beazley—when he said that, and he is exactly right. The Labor Party is not a friend of small business, because when they were in government they chopped and changed their small business minister every single year. They introduced the carbon tax. They introduced 20,000 regulations upon the small-business sector, and they introduced greater union laws to allow them to enter every single business in the country against the wishes of the small-business owners. The Labor Party often mistake the interests of the unions with the interests of the workers, and as we know from what is going on in the royal commission right now, that is not always the case. We know that exactly.

This matter of public importance really goes to the philosophical divide between our two parties, because it goes to the heart of how we support higher living standards. On the Labor
side, Labor believe that you can support higher living standards by providing more welfare, by expanding governments, by taxing more and by regulating business, whereas we on this side of the chamber know deep in our veins that you can only enhance living standards on a sustainable basis if you have productive enterprises, if you have profitable enterprises, and if you have a strong, productive, growing economy. That is the essential, fundamental difference between our two parties. They believe in tax and welfare, whereas we believe in jobs and enterprise. It is jobs and enterprise that fundamentally underpin the living standards of this nation. The reason we believe in jobs and enterprise, in part, is that the members on this side of the House have a philosophical alignment with jobs and enterprise, because most of us have worked in enterprise. Nearly every single member on this side of the House has been involved in the private sector, if not run their own small or larger business. On the other side, nearly every single member on that side has been a union official, and very few members of the Labor Party have ever run a private sector enterprise. In fact, 50 per cent of all the Labor members of parliament were former union officials. If you go to the Senate, 71 per cent of all the Labor members were union officials. That is where they get their direction; from the unions themselves.

In our first 18 months in government we have been doing everything we can to boost the economy, to drive productivity growth, and to enhance living standards. We got rid of the carbon tax. We got rid of the mining tax. We abolished $2.4 billion of red tape. We have $1 trillion of environmental approvals. We have signed three free-trade agreements with three of our four biggest trading partners—free-trade agreements that were in the too-hard basket for the Labor Party. We are getting on top of the debt and deficit disaster which is a handbrake on our overall economy. And, of course, we have announced the biggest small business package in Australian history in order to turbo-boost what is the engine room of our economy.

What does that actually mean? What do all of those measures we have prioritised in our first 18 months translate to? What it translates to is economic growth in the first quarter of this year that is amongst the fastest in the OECD. It is the fastest growth we have had since the year 2000—it was 0.9 per cent in this quarter—with a 2.3 per cent growth on an annualised basis, which is higher than what it was under the Labor Party.

We have had export volumes up five per cent in the quarter; the strongest quarterly increase since 2000; and 8.1 per cent higher over the last 12 months. The jobs growth is 250,000 new jobs created since we came to office. That is four times higher jobs growth in 2014 compared to the last year of the Labor government. That is what raising standards means; because if you have a job then you can look after yourself and look after your family so much better.

I know that the Labor Party are fond of quoting the NATSEM—the statistical modelling organisation. NATSEM did some analysis and found that the standard of living of Australian households rose by 1.2 per cent in 2014 compared to a decline in 2013 when Labor was last in power. NATSEM modelling says that living standards actually declined under the Labor Party—and they have gone quiet on the other side now because they do not like to hear this—where they have increased in 2014 under our government.

When we look at Labor’s record, we know what they were up to. We know the types of things that the Labor Party were doing when they were in government. And they are ashamed of their record, because it was a taxing record, a spending record, a wasteful record. And it
did not contribute to the living standards of Australians. They destroyed the budget. They had
debt and deficits so high, which of course meant that we are spending $12 billion a year just
on the interest payments alone.

They have put in 20,000 new regulations. Do you think that helps the small businesses and
the economy in our country? The numbers on the unemployment queue went up 202,000. And
they will remember the industries they directly—not indirectly—destroyed. They directly
destroyed industries such as the home insulation industry, and the live animal export
industry—cattle, in particular.

We have a very proud record on this side of the chamber of supporting business and
supporting enterprise. At the end of the day, you must have strong, supportive enterprises in
order to grow the economy. That is what it comes down to, and that is the fundamental
difference between this side of the House and the other side of the House. We believe in jobs.
We believe in enterprise. We believe in growing the economy. Everything that we are doing
is trying to make the economy stronger; whereas everything the Labor Party has done in
office and everything they are proposing to do involves higher taxes, higher expenditure,
more regulation, and more downward pressure on living standards.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (15:41): I must say that it is pretty hard to respond to thin
air. What we have had from the parliamentary secretary there is a complete failure to defend
the government's position at all. This is a political movement opposite us that have never seen
a working condition that they did not seek to undermine. They know that they cannot bring
back Work Choices through the front door, through industrial relations reform. But Transport
is just one example of where they are bringing back Work Choices through the back door. In
the maritime sector they have a policy of Work Choices on water. They have an aviation
proposal of Work Choices in the sky. It comes from the ideological position outlined in the
Harper review. The Harper review said that 'consistent with the approach the panel
recommends for other regulatory reviews, the panel considers that restrictions on cabotage for
shipping and aviation should be removed'.

What does this not very well known idea of cabotage mean? It means that nation states
understand that industries that are engaged in the global industries of shipping and aviation
defend their national interests by having a preference for industries within their own borders.
That is what it means. It is as simple as that. It is a national interest test. But what are we
seeing from them? In aviation, we have a proposal to allow foreign airlines to fly on domestic
routes. There is not a single country in the world that allows that to happen—not one. It is
unprecedented. But they would allow foreign airlines to come in and undercut Australian
wages and conditions, to operate in northern Australia.

This proposal is the thin end of the wedge. When they attack workers, they also attack
Australian industries. So this proposal is opposed by Qantas, Virgin, Jetstar, Airnorth and
Tiger. All of them employ Australians, with Australian wages and conditions—and,
importantly, Australian safety standards.

We heard a lot this week about the cabinet split amid—to quote the Prime Minister—the
'come to Jesus moment'. Cabinet solidarity again has gone to hell in a handbasket. Andrew
Robb is out there in the paper today bagging any suggestion that this proposal should not go
forward
He speaks about vested interests. When he says vested interests, those vested interests are Australian interests, Australian jobs, Australian wages, Australian conditions and Australian industry.

In the maritime industry, they have an extraordinary proposition. If you wanted to take goods from Sydney to Melbourne on the Hume Highway, you could not bring in a Filipino truck with Filipino safety standards, employ a Filipino worker, pay them Filipino wages and have them travel from Sydney to Melbourne down the Hume Highway. It would not be allowed. But what they want is a situation where, if that journey takes place carrying Australian domestic freight on the blue highway from Sydney to Melbourne, you can have a foreign flagged vessel paying foreign wages with foreign conditions and foreign safety standards.

We saw some examples of exactly why that is inappropriate just this week on the Four Corners program. Australian ships are not the ones that have hit the Great Barrier Reef. Australian ships are not the ones that do not have the same controls over the security cards that the aviation and maritime industries have. For a government that talks a lot about borders, they want a free-for-all on our coast. They want a free-for-all where there is absolutely no protection for Australian maritime interests—none whatsoever—as well as in the skies. They are showing that they are putting their ideology before the national interest.

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (15:46): In back-of-the-envelope ballpark figures, we have 11.7 million people that have jobs in the Australian economy at the moment. Of those 11.7 million, two million are public servants, as of the last round of state budgets, with more due coming up shortly; 2.5 million are employed in medium-sized businesses, 2.8 million are employed in large businesses; and 4.5 million are in small businesses. This is why this side of the House talks so much about small and family businesses. I include family business, because that is where I come from. We started from a small business, and we have worked hard and been lucky enough to grow it to a large family business. Of all the assets that my family has, the most important asset that it has is its staff. This is what comes out of small and family business. You cannot open the doors in the morning, you cannot take any money and you cannot close up at night unless you have your staff.

It is quite ironic, when talking about work conditions and standards of living, that the members for Grayndler and Gorton, who both come from a union background, stand up and profess a love of small and family business and then divert to talking about big business and unionised workforces. On this side of the house, we concentrate on the section of the economy where we will get growth. If you want to talk about policy development, what I would love to talk about is those opposite in government. I note that there is a member of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit over there. I refer to ADAO Report No. 23 2014–15: Performance Audit into the administration of the Early Years Quality Fund; this is how policy development works under the Labor party. I quote from a key finding:

Successful implementation of policy initiatives requires early, informed and systematic consideration of implementation issues. The design of the EYQF policy contained inherent risks and it was foreseeable that these risks—particularly the funding constraints, the first-in first-served approach and the short timeframe—would affect access to the program and its ultimate success.

Normally in policy you would rely upon briefing from the department. In this report, it bells the cat; the briefing went the other way:
This role was made somewhat more challenging for this program because many of the key elements of the EYQF policy were developed by advisers in the offices of the Prime Minister and Finance Minister in negotiation with the key stakeholder representing child care workers.

I thought that 'stakeholder' was a typo. Surely it has to be plural! But no, it was not. When questioning the Auditor-General, it was United Voice. They were in the offices of the Prime Minister and the finance minister, dictating policy and giving it to the department in a first-in, first-served approach. When we had this investigation—with the combined 40 years of audit experience between Mr McPhee, the Auditor-General in this country, and the lady from the Department of Education—they had never seen a first-in, first-served approach to funding. Was that the optimal policy approach? No, it was not. What happened? Well, $150 million went to the Labor Party's mates between 11 am and 2 pm on announcement of this fund.

**Opposition members interjecting—**

**Mr LAUNDY:** Here is the kicker: in the last federal election campaign United Voice donated $1.3 million to your election campaign. That is how policy development works in big business and unionised workforces. That is why we focus on the section of the economy which drives growth and employment in our local communities.

**Opposition members interjecting—**

**Mr LAUNDY:** I get why you are yelling. I would not like being accused of it either. But it is not me that is accusing you; it is the Auditor-General of this country. This is a disgrace, but it is not an isolated instance.

That is how those opposite operate their policy settings. The members for Gorton and Grayndler stood at the dispatch box and cried crocodile tears on behalf of workers and small businesses in this country; I call you for what you are: you are ex-union people representing unionised workforces, and this proves it.

**Ms CHESTERS** (Bendigo) (15:51): I do wonder if the Member for Reid has had a conflict of interest about penalty rates. The previous speaker has a large organisation of businesses that employ United Voice workers, people working in hospitality. Does this big boss, who is now in this House, have a view on penalty rates? Does he agree with all the other backbenchers that have said, 'We need to cut penalty rates'? If the previous speaker, the member for Reid, really does care about the people working in his establishments; and, if those opposite in this chamber really do care about working people, then why have they not ruled out attacking penalty rates?

I note that government backbenchers are very quick to talk about Sunday penalty rates, but they do not talk about the rates that workers in hospitality earn on Mondays. They do not talk about the base rate, the rate that most of these low-paid workers earn from Monday to Friday. They are very quiet about the Monday rates but they are very quick to talk about the Sunday rates.

Let's talk about another way that this government is attacking the working conditions of Australians. Let's talk about their attacks on the minimum wage. That is right: from their own terms of reference that they put before the Productivity Commission, they want to review the minimum wage rate. There is a reason why we have a minimum wage. It is historical. It was a decision made to say that people in this country need a basic income and standard of living to survive and to support their family.
In my part of the world, Bendigo, we have a history with this. John Arthur, who was a former federal member for Bendigo, was involved in the basic wage case. He was involved in that case to ensure that there was a minimum-wage safety net, a minimum rate of pay, for Australian workers so they could support their families. Now that condition is under attack. A hundred years on, that condition is under attack. This government wants to be the first government in a century to go after the minimum wage.

It is appalling the way this government is failing to support the lowest paid workers in this country. They are failing to protect the standard of living of working people. Every single measure in their budget attacks working people. It attacks their children. It cuts funding from their schools. It attacks their children who might want to go to university, by introducing $100,000 degrees. It attacks health and it attacks hospitals by cutting funding. This is an attack on working people and their living standards. It attacks their parents and goes after their pensions or part-pensions. It sees increases in the cost of petrol.

If you on the other side actually spent time talking to working people, you would discover that things are a lot tougher today than they were a decade ago. The cost of the basics, the costs of living, are going up. But, rather than supporting workers, rather than putting in a submission to the Fair Work Commission that says, 'Yes, our hardest working, lowest paid workers deserve a decent pay rise,' this government wanted there to be no increase. This government did not want to see our lowest paid workers get a decent wage increase.

The best example of how the government are going after low-paid workers is the attack on their own cleaners. This Prime Minister stood up in this parliament and said no cleaner would be worse off because the government abolished the Clean Start guidelines. What did we see a few months later? We saw a $6,000 pay cut—not a $6 pay cut, not a $600 pay cut, but a $6,000 pay cut to their own cleaners working in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It is outrageous that this Prime Minister has misled not only this parliament but the cleaners. These are people on the lowest incomes, who are surviving because of penalty rates.

It does not matter which way you cut it, this government is going after our hardest working, lowest paid Australians. Whether they be cleaners, nurses, people working in process work, people working in construction or people working in retail, the government has them in its sights. It is going after their children through cuts in education. It is going after their parents through attacks on the pension. It is going after our regional communities, which are some of our most disadvantaged communities. And we have not seen the end of it. This government is going after our lowest paid workers. It has failed to protect the living standards and working conditions of Australian workers.

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (15:56): There is a lack of engagement with this MPI by this side today because, as I always say about MPIs, 'This would have to be the single worst MPI in the history of the Federation.' And that always tends to be true when I say it. I looked at the MPI when I first got it, and I thought, 'What is this actually all about? What is the Labor Party getting at?' After the first three speakers from the Labor Party, I know even less what they are getting at. Is it about workers and conditions? Is it about the member for Bendigo's glass half-empty 'the world is heading off the precipice' monologue? Is it about the member for Grayndler's shipping obsession, although he was the single most important figure in shutting down the Australian shipping industry? But he wants to see the resurgence of the Australian shipping industry by getting rid of all foreign vessels. Or is it about what the member for
Gorton was obtusely saying? It is like in Shakespeare's play: 'The lady doth protest too much.' The Labor Party is protesting just a bit too much about small business today.

What we saw in the House today was that Labor suddenly discovered small business! Their small business spokesperson—we do not know who it is—

Mr Craig Kelly: Who is it? Who is it?

Mr HAWKE: well, we do not know who it is; we are still working that out—came forward today to ask a question for the first time in 529 days. They doth protest just a little too much about small business. They are the party of small business, we are now being led to believe. You have discovered it! Small businesses are only most of the businesses in Australia. They only generate most of the employment in Australia. But you have suddenly discovered them and you have brought up small businesses here today in an MPI.

Is this MPI today about removing the red-tape and regulatory burden from small business? Is it about introducing some flexibility into the industrial relations system? The most important thing that a small business can have is some flexibility in the industrial relations system, recognising they are not big corporations, they are not big business and they are susceptible to rigid and inflexible labour market conditions. Is it about giving a small business owner a hand up so they can get on with employing people, creating jobs and employment? No, it is not.

Instead, we had monologues of absolute nonsense from the Labor Party, a mishmash of nothing—which, really, summarises their position in today's world. What are they all about? They do not really know. How are they going to do it? Somehow. 'We've got all the promises in the world, we've no method of delivering them and we don't really know what we're all about.' So today's issue of the day for the Labor Party is small business. They have discovered it! They have brought it forward: 'We're going to be about small business for today.'

Mr Irons: They just need a road to get them there!

Mr HAWKE: If any road will get you there, as the member for Swan points out. If you do not know where you are going, if you do not know where you will get to, any road will get you there! But I can tell you one road that you will not travel. There is one road that the Australian Labor Party will not travel, and that is being on the side of a small business owner in Australia today. It would not be on the side of the self-employed person. It would not be on the side of the tradie in Western Sydney who is now his own employer and entrepreneur and who has been developing for some time. The Howard government saw the number of self-employed people exceed the number of trade union members for the first time in Australian history. That change had been coming for a long time.

So, Tony's tradies understand that this budget is absolutely about them. They understand that we are about self-employed people, about family businesses and about small and micro businesses, and that we are really delivering policies that will matter and will change their lives. That is why the instant asset write-off program is going to work for small business, because it is an amount that matters. It is not $5,000, it is $20,000! And $20,000 is a reasonable, practical amount for small business to be able to invest in their business and return that cash flow to them. Of course, $5,000 did not recognise the reality of the modern economy.
We heard about the one per cent tax cut from the member for Gorton. This was yet another of the Labor government's tax measures that was never legislated. Once again, it was government by press release, government by fiat and government by overinflated statement. 'This is the most historic reform we will ever see: we are going to give a tax cut!' Never mind that they never actually did it. Never mind that they never legislated it and that they never got to do it.

This government has said that we will cut taxes to small business and that we will change the company tax rate, and we welcome that on this side of the House—recognising that there is a difference between small and large business, recognising that they do need to be able to compete and recognising that we have an opposition in this country who are hell-bent against them and against reform that will improve the conditions for small and family businesses in Australia today. What we need in this place is less of this rhetorical nonsense that we hear in these MPIs and more support for genuine policy measures that will help small business. Those on that side should get off their negative, pessimistic rhetoric about our economy and get on the side of small business and on the side of this government, which is helping it.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (16:01): We are being lectured by members opposite, who self-profess to have the interests of small business at heart when, just this morning, they were given an opportunity to flag some legislation through to be there ready to be passed by the Senate when it reconvenes. This is a government that earlier this week said that the priority this week was getting this package through. We could not possibly have a debate about issues of equality going on in the country because we had to get the small business package through.

This morning Labor gave them that gift—here it is, let's vote on it right here and right now. And what happened? They all voted against their own legislation. It is the centrepiece of their budget, that was supposed to be about stimulating jobs in this country, and they could not back it up in this chamber. They crossed the floor and voted against their own legislation. Do not think for one moment that that will not go unnoticed by the Australian people!

Let us have a look at this budget. It has been nothing but a missed opportunity from a government which clearly is much more concerned about keeping its own job than in creating new jobs for the Australian people. The only jobs that this government are interested in are their very own, not the millions of jobs of Australians in work, those seeking work or those preparing for the jobs of the future; not the 8.1 per cent of people in Newcastle who are looking for a job; not the jobs of thousands of families with mums and dads struggling against cost-of-living pressures; and not the jobs of nurses, doctors, policemen and women, the cleaners, the ship workers, the builders or the hospitality workers. They are not interested in the TAFE students and their preparations for a career into the future. They do not care about the university students studying for a professional degree in their chosen field. They are just interested in protecting their own jobs.

Let's have a look. We do know one thing about this government, despite its self-professed interest in small business. Labor has always welcomed this package, as the member for Gorton pointed out—it is Labor policy that they are now implementing. We are very happy about that! We are always happy for the government to come forward, backing good ideas from the Labor Party. But we know that when this Prime Minister starts saying that he is here to help small business that it is actually worth having a bit of a look at the track record. It is always good to have a look at what governments do rather than just the talk. What we do
know about this government is that it has a solid record in failing to protect the living standards and working conditions of Australian men and women.

They dance to the tunes belted out by their mates at the IPA. The record is clear. Before the election, the Prime Minister tried to convince the Australian people that, if elected, he would not make any substantial changes to the workplace relations landscape. Remember that promise to the Australian people? No—Work Choices is dead, buried and cremated. We were not going to touch that. What have we seen since? We have seen no fewer than 10 coalition MPs come out calling for the abolition or cutting of penalty rates, including members of the front bench. Who was it who said:

… we cannot go on in a society where we are charging people on a day which is a normal operating day double what you would on any other, …

That was the junior minister for infrastructure, I do believe.

And who was it who said:

If you don't want to work on a weekend, fair enough, don't work on a weekend, …

I think that was the Prime Minister. Well, I can assure the Prime Minister that not all our nurses, our firefighters, our policemen and women, the low-paid hospitality workers and our retail workers actually want to work on a weekend. But, let's face it, none of them have a choice.

We have seen the government launch an all-encompassing Productivity Commission review into the Fair Work laws. That means every workplace right and every workplace condition is now potentially on the chopping block, including penalty rates and—as we have seen this week—the minimum wage.

But let's have a look at what is perhaps one of the greatest issues that we found with penalty rates in terms of the biggest backflip of all by this government, and that is the attack on paid parental leave. First we had, 'Paid Parental Leave over my dead body'. Then the Prime Minister tried to roll out his signature policy. Now, he just wants to attack 80,000 Australian mothers, who he labels as 'double-dipping, fraudulent rorters'. Shame on you, Prime Minister! What about the retail workers—(Time expired)

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (16:06): It is interesting that Labor has brought this matter forward today. It is a party that is opposed to economic growth and that is worried about the living standards of Australians—a party that is now opposing measures that they initially put forward to drive down debt and cut waste, but are trying to improve living standards? It is the party that put a chokehold on Australian industry with a job-killing carbon tax that cost every single household in the country more than $500 a year and yet is worried about our standards of living.

We on this side of the chamber know that the best way to increase the living standards of all Australians is through genuine economic growth. I want to take this opportunity to talk about some of the businesses in my electorate and how, under a coalition government, they are thriving, and how this is improving standards of living. I also want to talk about how the coalition government's small business package, announced just a few short weeks ago, is already creating quality, well-paid roles within the electorate of Solomon.

Brandit is a local business which specialises in uniforms and branded merchandise. Within a few days of the coalition's small business package being announced, Brandit had made a
significant investment in their business by taking advantage of the $20,000 instant write-off. I understand they are buying a brand new screen printing machine. This will make them more competitive and it means they are able to complete work locally that they used to have to outsource. Now they will be able to employ somebody to do that work internally. It means more jobs in Solomon. A lot of their merchandise is sold locally, and a lot of their money is invested locally. This means more jobs; people are buying, there is more business confidence and more people being hired.

Labor’s instinct is to regulate and tax the economy into prosperity. We on this side know that red tape does not help anyone—not business and not their employees. Mr Deputy Speaker, like yourself, I meet with a lot of local businesses; I talk to them about things that benefit them, things that they like and things that they do not like. Business such as: Elevated Boutique, Raw Cloth—Mr Deputy Speaker, you have commented on a number of my outfits and Raw Cloth is two fabulous ladies—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mrs GRIGGS: Don't laugh. You are crazy, because Mr Deputy Speaker has commented on my clothes that are being made from local indigenous fabrics in the Northern Territory.

Ms Claydon: Why would he comment on your clothes?

Mrs GRIGGS: I am allowed to comment about this, but you are not in your seat. I have said this to you before, member for Newcastle. You should be in your seat.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiteley): Order!

Mrs GRIGGS: The fact is that Raw Cloth is a wonderful local business that employs people locally, that uses Territory made products—indigenous products. It is fantastic because they will be able to take advantage of some of the wonderful business initiatives that we have put forward. Me and My Lama is another local business which I am really proud of. They are a local small business that will be able to take advantage of the announcements we have made.

All these small local businesses have very clever local people all working to make their businesses as strong as they can and are contributing to the economy of Solomon. Every one of these business is employing local people from Solomon. Every dollar that they spend boosts the local economy. A couple of my very clever constituents have just started a law practice. Cozens, Johansen Lawyers is a new business; they started up on 23 March this year. The budget has been great for them. Since hearing about the coalition’s small business package, they have already invested more into their business. They will also take advantage of the $20,000 instant write-off. For Cozens Johansen Lawyers this means that all the expenses of registering their business, creating their trust funds, registering their partnership are an instant write-off.

Being able to deduct these expenses has a real and immediate benefit for a business—cash flows improve, business confidence improves. Those on the other side would not know because they have only worked in unions. They have not worked in small business and they do not know about cash flows—(Time expired)

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (16:11): I thank the member for Gorton for his MPI topic of failing to protect the living and working conditions of Australian workers. Member for Gorton, is that not saying the bleeding obvious when we are dealing
with this government? How can you trust this Prime Minister after he said, 'We will not touch working conditions'? Do you trust him? Those on the other side have not said, 'Yes,' because they know that they, like he, are part of the party of WorkChoices. Some of us were here when they introduced this legislation into the parliament. They brought it in here, they did not want to debate it—no mandate—but when we finally got to the detail those opposite were embarrassed. When they looked at the detail they found for the first time in Australian history that they had made it legal to pay people below the minimum award rate.

That is the party of WorkChoices. When the Prime Minister says, 'Trust us, we are not going to touch working conditions'—

*Ms Butler interjecting—*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Griffith is not in her seat.

**Mr HAYES:** it is not a very smart move because these people have form. They have form; it is in their DNA. We know what they want. They actually call it 'flexibility'. They do not come in here to say, 'We want to cut working conditions' or 'We want to strip the minimum rates of pay,' but they do come and say: 'Look, for the productivity of the nation, we need flexibility.' The member for Mitchell over there, who is in the Prime Minister's pocket, was one of those who tried to urge the Prime Minister to get stuck into workers. They do not like the idea of 'We are not going to touch workers' pay and conditions' because they really have an agenda. They want to get back to where they were.

Just think about it: at the time they introduced WorkChoices there was exponential growth in one sector of our economy—senior executives' salaries. They were unrestricted and they went through the roof. They prefer to attack vulnerable workers—people on minimum rates of pay—and they made it legal to pay them below the minimum rate. That is what they did. As much as they whinge and bleat about it, they have history. If you want to be proud of that, put your hands up for that history

I know the population out there did not exactly see it the same way as that. Nail your colours to the mast! Be honest with yourselves! You are the party of Work Choices. It is your history.

I know that more recently the Prime Minister had his minister for workplace relations, Senator Abetz, instigate a new Productivity Commission inquiry. What do you think he got them to do that inquiry on?

**Mr Giles:** Fairness, maybe?

**Mr HAYES:** No, it wasn't fairness.

**Mr Giles:** Boosting living standards?

**Mr HAYES:** No. They said: 'Let's have an inquiry into the workplace laws of this country. Let's open it up so that we look at everything in the workplace, including minimum rates and penalty rates.' You would not have done that if you were not intent on getting back to where you were. It is like a dog returning to its vomit; it really is. It has gone back to where it wants to belong. It shows its true colours. It wants to get back to Work Choices, otherwise it would not have done it. This time they want to be able to come into this place and say: 'It wasn't us. We are simply implementing the recommendations of the Productivity Commission.' That is what they want to do. Just think about it. They want to say: 'Trust us. We're not going to touch wages.' Why don't you ask the cleaners when they visit your office here at night, or, if you get in here early enough—and I know the member for Mitchell does—
ask them in the morning, 'Have their wages been touched by this government?' Those opposite know what the answer is. That is why they have not asked them. The answer is: they have.

Do not forget these are the same people who said: 'There'll be no cuts to health, no cuts to education, no cuts to pensions, no cuts to the SBS and the ABC'—all that sort of stuff. They do not take these promises all that seriously. So, when they stand up here and say, 'We will not touch the working conditions of Australian workers,' do you want to believe them?

**Opposition members:** No!

**Mr HAYES:** They can't. And those opposite want to go quiet on that because they know that they have form. They have allowed the stripping away of award conditions in the past. They have allowed people on minimum rates of pay to be affected. Now they want the Productivity Commission to do it on their behalf. Shame, Tony Abbott.

**Mr BROAD** (Mallee) (16:16): The matter of public importance discussion today is: 'The Government failing to protect the living standards and working conditions of Australians'. I ask: where is the Labor Party of old—the party of the workers? Over the winter break, instead of going overseas, I suggest those opposite grab a car and a camper trailer and head out to Barcaldine and stand under the Tree of Knowledge. They might be inspired under the Tree of Knowledge to remember the Labor Party of old—the workers in the heat. I remember the heat in a shearing shed north of Broken Hill. I remember the flies, the burrs, the sweat under my arms. You bend your back working. You are away from your family.

**Opposition members interjecting**—

**Mr BROAD:** You used to represent these people—but no longer. There is not one shearer in the Labor Party. Not one! Tell me: where are the shearers? The shearers are here. The workers are in our party now, because we know what it is like for them.

I am getting a little old. In a few weeks I will turn 40, and my memory seems to be failing me. I was in small business in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012—the years when those opposite were in government. I do not recall the $20,000 instant write-off. I do not recall that. Do you recall that?

**Government members:** No!

**Mr BROAD:** I do not recall that. I do not recall the 1½ per cent tax cut. Maybe my memory is failing me. I do not recall being able to deduct irrigation infrastructure in one year. I do not recall it. I do not recall being able to deduct grain fodder and storage in three years. Maybe I need to sack my accountant! Maybe I need to get a better accountant. I do not recall that because it did not happen. You say you are the friend of business but you did not deliver for business.

But wait! My memory is coming back. I am having a moment. I recall a bill that I got for my transport had an itemised line for a carbon tax. I recall having to write out an additional $10,000 for a carbon tax. I was just a small businessman. My memory has come back. I also remember the water management policies under Penny Wong. I remember those policies because thousands of hardworking small businesspeople turned out to protest them, because you were robbing the confidence of those country people. That is what I recall. I also recall the hardworking truck drivers. You know the hardworking truck driver. If anyone has had to get into a truck and try to get wild cattle from the Northern Territory out of a truck they would
know that these truck drivers are hardworking people. I remember them being out of a job because of what happened to our export market. You shut it down. Overnight, you banned live exports. It was a disgrace! So don't come in here and talk about the working conditions of Australians, because I was there as a small businessperson. I was a worker when you were in government, and my living standards did not go up. My working conditions did not go up; they went down. And the hardworking truck driver and the hardworking shearer were keen to vote you out.

I will give you a great piece of advice: over the winter break, go for a drive, go to the Tree of Knowledge in Barcaldine and reconnect with the party that you once were: the party of the burrs in the hand, the dirt under the fingernails—the real hard workers—and you will remember what it is to lift the living standards of Australians. I suggest that, if you do not go for that drive, you will spend many years in opposition, because you need to remember why you were voted out in the first place. You need to have some honest reflection.

Australians know the truth. Their memory is better than mine—thank goodness! That is because they remember paying the carbon tax and its impact on their jobs. They remember that they did not have job confidence. They remember that you shut down exports. The hardworking truck driver had his truck parked and did not have a job. That is what they remember, and it is still fresh in their memory. Unless you go on the drive to Barcaldine, unless you go out and sit under the Tree of Knowledge and pause for a little while and reflect on what the Labor Party used to be—the party of the worker instead of the party the welfare—you are going to spend many, many years staying on that side of the parliament. Have a great drive. Get out and visit regional Australia, and it will be the first step to your learning the lessons that you still have not learnt.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): The time for the discussion has concluded.

CONDOLENCES

Johnson, Hon. Leslie Royston, AM
Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Chief Government Whip) (16:22): I declare that the resumption of the debate on the Prime Minister's motion of condolence in connection with the death of the Honourable Leslie Royston Johnson be referred to the Federation Chamber for further consideration.

BILLs

Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015
Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 2) Bill 2015

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:22): Deputy Speaker, I rise today to support these bills, the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 2) Bill 2015. These bills legislate a number
of measures announced as part of the government’s Jobs and Small Business package in the 2015-16 budget.

Before I go into the detail of these bills, and the impact of this government’s savage cuts and sustained attacks on Canberra and what the bills actually mean for small business, I just want to give a word of advice to the member for Mallee. The fact that he had no knowledge of the instant asset write-off and the loss carry-back schemes that Labor introduced when we were in government to help small businesses—particularly to steer through the GFC—is absolutely breathtaking. That he is ignorant of the fact that these schemes existed—the fact that he did not know about them—does not mean that they did not exist. They existed for a number of years. They were set up to help small businesses steer a course through the global financial crisis. It is almost like the member for Mallee sort of sticks his fingers in his ears, closes his eyes, and hums loudly—’I did not know about it, therefore it does not exist’. I do not know whether he still has his business anymore, what was it—I think a truck business, a shearing business, or was it all of the above? I am not really quite sure from the five-minute contribution he made as the last speaker—but all I can suggest is that he gets a new accountant. The fact that his accountant did not actually notify him of it is something that I would be very concerned about if I was running a small business, which I did before I came into this life. Deputy Speaker, I also remind the member for Mallee that small businesses also have responsibility. Small business owners have a responsibility to keep up to date with what is happening in the world, and to keep up to date with the schemes which are being introduced to help them out and to improve their businesses. And so, I suggest, if he goes back into that life—the trucking life or the shearing life; whatever business he had beforehand—that he listens to the news every now and then, and also that he finds a new accountant.

The first bill amends the Income Tax Rates Act 1986 to reduce the company tax rate from 30 per cent to 28.5 per cent for companies that are Small Business Entities with an aggregated turnover of less than $2 million. For all other companies over the threshold, the company tax rate will remain at 30 per cent. The second bill deals with the $20,000 accelerated depreciation for small business, and it also allows for accelerated depreciation for primary producers, which is a welcome addition. This increased threshold is available to all small businesses, including those who previously opted out of the simplified depreciation rules. The second bill also amends the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to allow primary producers to claim an immediate deduction for capital expenditure on water facilities and fencing assets, and to deduct capital expenditure on fodder storage assets over three years. Labor welcomes these measures, which are of course great news for small business.

In fact, I welcome the opportunity to speak on this legislation, because as a former small business owner I am always very keen to speak on small business, as you know, Deputy Speaker—and I think that you had your own small business before coming into this life. I am always keen to get out there and shout out to the Canberra community about the fantastic businesses that we have in this town—businesses that have been doing it very hard since this government was elected; businesses that have seen either their growth just plateau or their turnover fall by between 20 and 30 per cent. But I will come to that later. I always welcome the opportunity to talk about small businesses and the great work that they do, the great contribution they make to our economy, and the great contribution they make in creating millions of jobs each year. That said, I probably would have been more grateful if the
government had accepted the opportunity to vote on this bill and to pass this bill this morning. While it is wonderful to have the opportunity to speak about small business, what is best for small business is for this legislation to actually be passed. So while I welcome this opportunity, I would have welcomed even more the bill being passed through the House this morning.

We on this side welcome these measures because we understand that small businesses are the engine room of the Australian economy. I am acutely aware of the key role that small and medium-sized businesses play in the Australian economy, and the support and recognition needed from government and from parliament. At a time when unemployment is increasing, it is critical that this House acknowledges the important role that small to medium-sized businesses can play in turning this trend around. As I have said, before this life I had my own small business, I had it for 10 years and I absolutely loved it. I understand the challenges that small business owners are facing. Since entering parliament, I have spent a great deal of my time talking to small-business operators in my electorate of Canberra, and advocating for their needs and interests. I go out regularly on what I call business walkarounds. I go and speak to businesses in Woden, in Fyshwick and in Hume, and in Phillip, in Manuka and in Tuggeranong—in every part of my electorate. The most frequently occurring concerns that I hear from these small business owners are around what this government is doing to this town—what this government, since it was elected, is doing to Canberra, and what this government is doing to our public servants; our servants of democracy.

This government has again launched a savage and sustained attack on Canberra and on the public service. The damage that this has done to Canberra's economy is acute. Business confidence is down: it has been down since this government was elected; in fact, it started to fall in advance of the election. Those opposite say they stand for small business, but how does taking the axe to more than 8½ thousand public service jobs in Canberra help small businesses? Many Canberra businesses are struggling, and that is a direct result of the Abbott government's first budget.

'Since the 2013 election almost every facet of the ACT's economy has spiralled. Building approvals in the ACT are down by 41 per cent in the year to March 2015, whereas nationally the number of residential building approvals increased. While we are down by 41 per cent, nationally it has increased by 23.6 per cent. Our GDP increased by 0.7 per cent in real terms in 2013-14, compared to 2.5 per cent for the rest of the country. In the retail sector, through the year to March 2015 ACT retail trade turnover increased by 4.1 per cent, whereas nationally it went up by 4.5 per cent. More concerning, in January a survey of 1,000 businesses found that the territory had the lowest business confidence in Australia, with 31 per cent of businesses expressing grave concerns. According to the Canberra Business Council chief executive at the time, Chris Faulks, who has just been replaced by the fabulous Robyn Hendry, formerly of the Canberra Convention Bureau:

The big issue for the Canberra economy is the ongoing fragility of business and consumer confidence, which impacts on consumer spending and business investment. While rising unemployment levels will be a concern over the next three to four years …

As you can see, the Abbott government's track record on small business in this town is absolutely appalling. You cannot be proud of what you have done to this town since you have been in government. You cannot be proud of what you have done to this city—the nation's
great national capital. This is the national capital, too, that Sir Robert Menzies strongly believed in. He had a great vision for this city. This government has decimated it. And it is true to form. We saw it in 1996 under the last coalition government. We saw it then when business bankruptcies and non-business bankruptcies went up. Businesses closed down, people left town and house prices plummeted. We had 15,000 Public Service jobs cut here in Canberra, 30,000 nationally. It sent us into an economic slump for five years. It took a long time for us to recover from what you did to this economy last time. And you are doing it again now.

You have a complete contempt for the Public Service, a complete contempt for Canberra and a complete contempt for your own workforce. These are the servants of democracy. These are people who serve you, provide advice to you, write your submissions, write your question time briefs and your policy. These are people sitting over there, who serve you with loyalty, integrity and professionalism. And how do you repay them? You get rid of 8½ thousand of them just in the first year of being in office. And who knows what is going to happen. You have eight functional reviews actually taking place or planned in this budget. Who knows what is going to happen in terms of jobs. To me, 'functional review' is code for job cuts. That is what a 'functional review' means. It is code for job cuts. You are already doing functional reviews in health; you are already doing functional reviews in education. What is going to happen with those jobs? You have already decimated those departments, so who knows what is going to happen with these latest functional reviews. This government has taken the axe to Canberra. And, as I said, true to form, in 1996, when the coalition was last in office it decimated Canberra. We went into an economic slump for five years. You need to talk to businesses.

The Prime Minister was out this week and, from memory, I think he was out last week, in Fyshwick. The Prime Minister was with the member for Eden-Monaro in Fyshwick. I do remind the Prime Minister that Fyshwick is not in the electorate of Eden-Monaro. Fyshwick is actually in my electorate. He was out there talking about these fantastic new small business initiatives which, as I and my colleagues have said, we support. He was out there talking to franchisees. He was at, I think, a coffee shop last week talking to business people. Apart from actually advocating these small business measures which, as I said, Labor supports, I wonder if he actually discussed what the business environment was like for these businesses here in Canberra and what taking the axe to 8½ thousand public servants had done to business. I wonder what their growth figures have been like over the last 18 months since this government was elected. In my business walk-arounds, in my conversations with business people in the many forums I run for the community and where business is also involved, I know from those conversations that, as I said, growth has either plateaued or fallen by about 20 to 30 per cent since this government was elected. Business confidence has absolutely fallen. It has fallen through the floor since this government has been in power.

I wonder whether, again, they closed their eyes, put fingers in their ears and hummed loudly when the reality of doing business in Canberra was actually discussed with the Prime Minister and, curiously, the member for Eden-Monaro, even though the suburb of Fyshwick is actually not in the electorate of Eden-Monaro but in my electorate. I wonder what they actually said. Did they actually ask: 'How's business going? Have you had growth recently? How's it been going since we've been in government? How's it been going since we axed 8½
thousand Public Service jobs? How's it been going since our GDP has had this minimal growth rate? How's it actually going for you? Are people coming and buying coffees? Are people coming and buying furniture?" I would say that the answer is probably, 'No. Prime Minister, we are doing it tough. Canberra businesses are doing it tough.' If he was actually listening to these businesses, businesses that are run by Canberrans, that employ Canberrans, that are proud Canberrans, he would have heard that things have been really rugged for these businesses since this government was elected. He should be ashamed of it. He should be ashamed of the fact that he has a complete contempt for this city, this nation's capital and the Public Service. He has a complete contempt for our servants of democracy.

As I said, these are people who serve you so loyally, so professionally and with such integrity. All they get are not only job cuts but also attacks on their pay and conditions—attacks on their below-inflation pay offers. Basically, the message has been sent from public servants that they are not happy about it and it is going to be very interesting to see whether any enterprise agreements get through this first term of the government. But there are attacks not just on the pay but also on the conditions. These are proud public servants and proud servants of democracy. The Prime Minister's workforce, the ministers' workforce, this government's workforce have also been accused of being double dippers, of being rorters and fraudsters, as a result of the government's revised view—although it is very difficult to keep up with what the view is at the moment—on paid parental leave. We have had so many positions on paid parental leave—like we have had so many positions on the GP tax—who knows what the current position is? All I know is that the current position is attacking the workforce that serves the Prime Minister, the ministers and this government. It is attacking them, it is accusing them of double-dipping and it is accusing them of being fraudsters. It is an absolute outrage. The government should be ashamed of what it has done to small business in Canberra. (Time expired)

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (16:38): I rise to speak in strong support of the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015. It is great to see that the opposition is strongly supporting this budget measure. Sadly, the Labor Party has never been a friend of small business. We on this side know that small businesses are the engine room of the economy. It is great to see all the young ladies up in the gallery—they are waving to me—and I am sure that a lot of them will one day own a small business. It is a national economic, cultural and community reality that 96 per cent of all Australian businesses are small businesses. Combined, they contribute over $330 billion to our national economy, an incredible amount of money. They employ an amazing 4.5 million Australians. Everywhere you go in my electorate of Latrobe—whether it be driving through the suburbs of Emerald, Cockatoo, Gembrook, Boronia, Fern Tree Gully, Upper Gully or Berwick—there are small businesses. All the shops there are small business people. There are a small business people in the houses too. In fact, one in three Australians active in our economy is employed in small business and more than four of every 10 private sector jobs rely upon hardworking small business people.

These enterprising men and women—and it is great to see so many women taking up small business these days—represent what it is like to be Australian. They are truly out there having a go. They are taking a risk and giving their best efforts to succeed in life not only for themselves but for their children. They display an extraordinary work ethic and a deep
commitment to our country. They are prepared to mortgage their house. They are prepared to take a risk. That is what Australians are all about. Small business people are an amazing lot, because they are prepared to put their homes on the line to create jobs for their family. And they do without; they would rather put money into the business to see it grow. They apply all they have when it comes to finance and support to drive their venture and provide opportunities for themselves and the people they employ. They put dinner on the table for Australian families each night. They serve them, they feed them and they clothe them.

I congratulate the Treasurer, Joe Hockey, and also the Minister for Small Business, Bruce Billson. He has been an incredible ambassador for small business. We had him out in my electorate for a breakfast function. He makes small business very exciting. The company tax rate will decrease from 30 per cent to 28.5 per cent for small businesses with an annual turnover of under $2 million. That is fantastic news. Small companies will pay less tax for every financial year commencing on or after 1 July 2015. I recently had a small business event in my electorate. I was guest speaker with St Margaret's School. The principal, Doug Bailey, and the school community are doing a great job. Ron Wienzerl was another guest speaker there. These changes went down really well. They were excited about this government's changes to small business—in particular, the $5 billion injection to get small business right back on track and leading the economy.

This package will provide accelerated depreciation arrangements to small businesses and primary producers. This change is the centrepiece of the budget's small business package. Incorporated small businesses make an important contribution to the Australian economy. They, along with the unincorporated small businesses, account for the vast majority of active private businesses in the country and represent a large share of its employment. The Australian economy is facing significant structural adjustments. Small businesses are typically more vulnerable than larger businesses to shocks and changes in economic conditions. This makes it particularly important that, during this period of economic transition, the policy settings support small business growth and innovation. That is precisely what this budget does. This bill will amend the small business simplified depreciation rules in the tax law to increase the threshold for immediate deductibility from $1,000 to $20,000. This is a significant increase in the threshold and a massive gain to cash flow for small businesses. It is estimated that up to 780,000 companies could potentially benefit from this measure.

Looking specifically at my electorate of La Trobe, there are many local examples that demonstrate the benefits of this bill on the whole. I have spoken with many local business owners who welcome the support and recognition that the federal government will give in this bill. I know that Karen Rook, from Piccaninny Recycled, will be glad to have the $20,000 tax write-off available to her so that she can re-fit her store if she chooses to do so. I know that Michael Muarem, from Michael Muarem & Associates, will be pleased to have the 1.5 per cent tax cut. It will allow him more room for investment and further employment of even more local staff, as he already has been doing for the last 15 years, and I am sure he will be advising all his clients of the changes. I know that Ron Wienzerl from APT Engineering will be happy to see growth in our local small business development, thus providing a boost for the whole locality. I know that Christina and Anthony from Mountain Harvest Foods will be happy to immediately deduct all eligible capital expenditure on fencing and water facilities in their farming area. I know that Graeme Bulte of Aquaterro will be happy to hear of increased
employment in our area as a result of tax reductions, thus improving productivity in our whole region.

In conclusion, because I want to allow more speakers to speak on this bill, this is fantastic in order to get the Australian economy moving again. Small businesses are the people who cut our hair and our keys, sell our meat and our clothing, make our coffee and our furniture, do our taxes and our laundry, fix our cars and our roofs, and grow our flowers and even our potatoes. There is virtually no industry that small business does not operate in. Small business is the backbone of the Australian economy. It is the backbone of our nation. And the coalition recognises this with the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015. This bill helps our nation prosper and grow, and I proudly support this bill in the House.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (16:46): I rise, as have previous speakers, to speak on the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 2) Bill 2015. And, like my colleagues, I stand to say that I support both of these bills, as Labor supports these bills. Of course we support the 1.5 per cent company tax cut for small business and the $20,000 accelerated depreciation for small business and primary producers, and we have been absolutely clear about this. As the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, said this morning, we were not going to delay for a minute on this bill. And Bill Shorten made clear in his budget reply speech that we support this bill. But what a farce we have had in the past week: member after member on the opposite side calling for us to get out of the way and get this done immediately. Then this morning when we tried to immediately pass this bill, at the first opportunity the government blocked Labor and voted against its urgent consideration.

I came down for the division after listening to approps last night and this morning in the Federation Chamber. Member after member from the benches opposite was exhorting Labor. They all had a piece in their approps speech exhorting Labor to get out of the way, to let this go through immediately, without delay—member after member after member. And what did I come down for a division for? I was shocked to find that we were dividing on our move to get this bill out of the way, right away, at the first opportunity. And I was shocked because I had heard Tony Abbott, the Prime Minister, in question time saying, 'I say to the Leader of the Opposition, let us not let politics get in the way of economics, let us not let self-interest get in the way of national interest'—puffing himself up, getting to his last line—'Let us pass this bill straightaway.' He was leaning across the dispatch box, looking into the eyes of the Leader of the Opposition as though there was a problem on our side of the House with this bill. Then the member for small business—I mean the Minister for Small Business; I always get it confused, whether he is a member for small business or the Minister for Small Business—

Mr Husic: The small minister for business!

Ms RYAN: Yes, thank you very much, member for Chifley. He gets up at the dispatch box and says that the only thing that stands in its way is Labor: 'We need no more of this shiftiness, no more game playing, no more of Labor's blah, blah, blah. Do you know what the small businesses of Australia are saying, Bill? Pass the budget measures.' That was the Minister for Small Business, across that dispatch box. 'No more game playing', he said. Then this morning we had the government playing politics with people's lives, missing an opportunity to use government to change people's lives for the better, playing politics with people's lives. Then in a moment of chagrin we had Minister Pyne tweeting:
Labor are a joke. Ending the debate on small business won't get the bills to the Senate any faster - the Senate isn't in session!

I was stunned when I saw the tweet, absolutely stunned, because what had he done? He had exposed his own tactics. He had exposed the fact that for day upon day we have listened to this. And here he was, the manager of government business, saying that we were playing politics, that we cannot move it to the Senate yet, so what is the big rush in here, what was the pressure in question time, why were those opposite not missing one opportunity to suggest to the Australian public that members on this side, that the opposition, somehow had a problem with this bill, somehow did not support small business? It is outrageous, absolutely outrageous.

Of course we support these measures, because they reinstate sensible Labor measures. Of course we support them. Interestingly, though, there was a bit of to and fro today about why the government blocked it. Perhaps it is because once upon a time they did not believe in these measures; in fact, they opposed two of these measures and completely scrapped the third when they came into government. So, it is a very confusing day for the Australian public. They are not quite sure what that government stands for. Then again, the electorate is getting used to that. Most days they do not know what this government stands for, because you cannot trust this government to do what they say they are going to do.

There is a lot of scurry around why small businesses are not out there borrowing money. The government would like to blame Labor and suggest that somehow they thought Labor was going to block this measure in the Senate. We made it clear that that is not what we were going to do. It was made perfectly clear. I would suggest that the reason small business was worried is that they have learnt that they cannot trust this government. They have learnt that this government will say one thing and do another. They heard the Treasurer say in his budget speech that the government was going to do this. They may have even seen it in the budget papers. But trust is low out there. Trust is low in my community; it is incredibly low in my community. But my community knows where I stand on small business. It knows that I know the value of small business, and it knows that Labor knows the value of small business, because we spend time on the ground in our communities every day with people who run small businesses, with people who own small businesses and with people who work for small businesses. Despite the brouhaha and protestations from those opposite, Labor members know and appreciate small businesses in their communities and electorates, because we live and work every day with those people. We stand beside them at the football club. We cheer our kids on, with them, at junior sport. We share meals with them around our kitchen tables and at community events—because they are our families and our friends.

In Lalor there are 11,000 small businesses. I would suggest small business is the largest employer in the electorate of Lalor, and many of these are owner-workers running a business that allows them to draw a salary. In fact, nearly 7,000 of the small businesses in Lalor have no employees. In this debate about small business we should note that many who would once have worked for a company are now companies themselves operating with an ABN. Many of them are modest earners, tradespeople working on small margins in the affordable-housing industry. They are retail owners, food businesses, and those working in hairdressing and personal training. They are operating on small margins. Many of those in my electorate are drawing very small salaries and are recipients of the family tax benefit. So they stand to win
on the small-business measures but will have it taken by the other hand, by this government, off their kitchen tables.

When I stop for a chat with small businesses they are concerned about lots of things. They are concerned about staying afloat while they wait for overdue payments, the cycle that is late payments creating late payments down the line. What causes this late-payment cycle that chokes the cash flow, that threatens the viability and profitability of the small businesses in Lalor? Uncertainty and low consumer and business confidence. That is what causes those cash-flow problems, both of which have been festering under this government and its priorities, that have been spelt out so clearly in their first and second budgets. Both these budgets have packed inside them detrimental impacts on our local economy.

The debt-and-deficit emergency damaged confidence, and the cruel measures, the cuts, outlined to family budgets—in a community already under pressure from low-employment levels and job insecurity—means limited disposable income. That impacts on our local businesses. People are not buying new furniture. People are thinking twice about getting that landscaper in to do their garden. There are thinking twice about starting that renovation, getting their nails and hair done or taking the family out for meals and movies.

I welcome these measures because they may give a gift to our local economy. I welcome these measures because they might help everyone in Lalor. Everyone who sits on this side of the chamber sees the value of that. However, moving through the electorate over the weekend I found there were other views, some of which those opposite might be interested in hearing. Some small-business owners who have low turnover and uncertain work also have young families. There are very concerned about the cuts to the FTB. They have also seen the schoolkids bonus cuts and the changes to pharmaceutical benefits.

In 2014, at one point, it was calculated that the changes to the GP tax threatened $11 million out of our local economy. That is still on the table—coming through the back door—so they are worried about that. Small-business people understand the economy and they know that cuts to the tune of $84 a week for a family earning $60,000 with two children are going to hurt their small businesses. Others are not sure about borrowing money to purchase, because they are worried about what will happen in two years. They are worried this could be a short-term sugar hit and this government will leave them stranded. They are worried about the risk—that trust factor—coming in again. Some of the local businesses I spoke to last weekend knew that these were Labor initiatives, because they had looked forward to those Labor initiatives. In fact, one I spoke with had to redo his tax return after clumsy handling by the government, last year, when it did not believe in these measures. But today it does. Some of them know exactly who they are dealing with, in terms of this government. The local economy is of very big concern for local businesses in Lalor.

I and others on this side of the chamber really hope that these measures go some way to building confidence in the local economies across this nation, because that will help families and working Australians. Others understand a bit more about this government. They are worried that they have limited investment in road and rail infrastructure. They know that business would be better with fewer clogged roads. Lots of people in the electorate of Lalor are employed or own businesses that work in transport and logistics. They understand what clogged highways mean. They understand that if public transport were better and workers were on trains to go to the city—and not on the roads next to them—they might be able to run
their small businesses more efficiently. These are important points. Those in Lalor understand
that this government is giving eight per cent of the infrastructure budget, over the next four
years, to Victoria. It has 25 per cent of the population and eight per cent of the infrastructure
spend. They are very right to feel dudded.

Small business also wants employees who are ready to work. In my area they are puzzled
that the apprenticeship support programs valued by small businesses—that supported our
young apprentices, locally, to get through their apprenticeships with mentoring and support or
by buying tools and other equipment—have been cut.

They are puzzled that the trade training centres program has been cut. My community needs a
real commitment to education, skills and jobs. These measures will not deliver sustained
improvement in these areas. This government needs to get to work— it needs to get to work
around jobs, around skills and training, around supporting apprentices so they complete their
apprenticeships without taking on a debt burden. People in my electorate are very interested
in Labor's plans for education and skills.

In conclusion, I would reiterate that the economy in my area has been suffering under this
government. Businesses in my area understand that Labor reacted with stimulus when the
GFC hit, that a deficit was created to save business, to save this nation's economy. This time
they are asking: 'Are we going into more deficit?' Has this government doubled the deficit to
save the Prime Minister's job?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiteley): The question before the chair is that this bill
be now read a second time, and I take the opportunity to remind all members that, under
standing order 74, it is not normal practice to adversely reflect on votes or proceedings of the
House.

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (17:01): It is my pleasure to speak on the Tax Laws
Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and cognate bill, emanating from the
most recent budget. I want to say at the outset that this budget delivered a very good outcome
for small business. We have heard so many people talk about the role of small business in the
Australian economy. We know that it accounts for 96 per cent of the business economy.
Everyone talks about being attached to large business et cetera, but when I say '96 per cent' I
do not mean 96 per cent of the volume; I mean 96 members of the business community. We
will have the Minerals Council dinner here tonight—there will be BHP, there will be
Peabody, there will be a whole range of large businesses and multinationals here. And of
course the large companies—the Rios et cetera—employ a lot of people, but none of them
employs as many people as the small businesses in Australia today.

We have heard testimony after testimony from people here who have been involved in
small business. This was a business package that brought a $5.5 billion outcome for small
business. It was loosely described by some as 'a tradies budget'. In my electorate of Canning,
for example, I have 10,000 small businesses. Some of those are businesses of one—as we
heard one opposition speaker say, they operate from home. Some of them do not even have an
ABN number; some of them just work for a personal contract. Some of them are cleaners—
what is the matter with an honest day's work as a cleaner? But you have to be given some
relief in the taxation system, as we have done by reducing the tax rate from 30 per cent to
28½ per cent and, of course, there was a tax offset of 20 per cent for those who were willing
to invest in new equipment. That was an absolute boon and I will refer to that later on.
We on this side of the House know something about small business. My wife and I dared to venture into a small business by owning a bakery. It started off as an absolutely marvellous thing to do. It was delivering a very good result until the shopping centre decided to destroy most of the businesses in the shopping centre by developing it and then bringing in competitors. We were a sole baker and, by the time we had finished, there were four bakeries in that shopping centre. They were more interested in selling space than they were in maintaining their tenants. That is the sort of thing that small business people go through all the time. I do not want to be too partisan, because I see the member for Chifley nodding, so I will try and be as generous as possible. But if you go through the list of people on our side of the House, you will see we come from very diverse backgrounds. The member for Canberra says that she is a small business woman of 10 years experience and I take that as a statement of fact. I have heard her speak here before. I actually listened to her maiden speech and she is somebody who does know something about small business. But there are not many on that side who have had to use their own hard-earned cash—

**Mr Neumann:** I have been in business for over 20 years!

**Mr RANDALL:** I am pleased to hear that, Member for Blair, and I acknowledge you. You probably would not acknowledge this but there are not a lot on your side compared to this side because of the traditional background that members opposite come from. We do have skin in the game and dirt under the knuckles when it comes to small business. We have seen a whole range of people on our side—the member for Forrest is a dairy farmer. It is not a big business, because we know that a small business is one that is described as not turning over more than $2 million annually. Her farm might be worth a lot more than that in Harvey but, at the end of the day, when times get tough some of these people have to use their own credit card to pay their workers and do not take a wage themselves. That is the challenge of small business. So we need to give them relief.

Let's face it: after the GFC the Australian economy went through quite a downturn. Business confidence was down and for a whole range of reasons we needed to ensure small business realised that we needed to create this ecoclimate for them to grow and develop again, not overtax them and see them as a cash cow. Again, I will tend to be generous, but because these small businesses are not very unionised, because they either are sole traders or employ only one or two people, they do not get the same attention as other businesses do. They often have to fight for themselves and fight for their own terms and conditions. If you are a corner store or if you are somebody who has decided to start up a mechanical business from your house or you do CVs for somebody as a part-time job from home, you are not unionised. You are on your own and you have to create your own business climate and struggle to do your best to get an income. This is the climate that we are having to create for those in small business. They create about $330 billion of Australia's annual output. It probably does not do the argument a lot of good to compare and contrast, but we do know that on our side of the House we have been touted as those who are champions of small business, mainly because we understand it.

We have a different view on collective bargaining and enterprise bargaining and on a whole range of other matters. Other speakers will compare and contrast further than I will. I take at face value that every member in this House is interested in supporting people in their electorate, whether they be families or whether it be an issue like schools or roads et cetera.
They also support small business people because they are their constituents. It is just about how you go about helping them. In his budget reply speech the Leader of the Opposition said that they would have gone further. Well, they had six years to do that and they did nothing. I just want to put that on the record.

In my electorate of Canning, as I said, we have a range of people in areas where jobs are tough to get. In fact, the southern part of my electorate around Mandurah has a huge youth unemployment problem, mainly because Mandurah is seen as a dormitory suburb. There is not a lot of industry around Mandurah or in the Peel region. A lot of people leave Perth and, thanks to the Perth to Bunbury Highway, instead of taking an hour and a quarter to get to Perth, they can be there in 45 minutes, and students get on the train to Perth, which I am sure the member for Perth would take a lot of credit for. Unfortunately young people have to leave the area to either educate themselves or to look for work.

My electorate of Canning has a lot of FIFOs in that area. In fact during the boom time my electorate was the second highest, believe it or not, to the member for Brand's electorate for the number of FIFOs that flew in and out. Being less than an hour from Perth, people bought lifestyle blocks and a whole range of accommodation that suited their purposes so that, when they came off after their two weeks on, they could sit down and have a bit of a lifestyle.

I also have drive-in drive-outs in the electorate. I have the Boddington Gold Mine which is now exceeding the super pit in Kalgoorlie in terms of production, which is something like 700,000 ounces of gold a year, which is a massive amount of gold. People drive from Mandurah and the Peel region to jobs at the mine. I even met a day-care person in Boddington, which is nearly 100 kilometres from Mandurah, or thereabouts, who drove from Mandurah just to get the job. Youth unemployment in particular and unemployment generally in the Mandurah region is tough. We need to do what we can to foster anything that will help small businesses starting there.

There is a production called 'Peel away the mask' which was authored by a lady called Dorothy Lucks. When I first became the member for Canning in 2001 she had produced this to give a snapshot of the demographics of the area and the challenges. The area has a mixture of young families, affordable accommodation and a large component of retirees. It is an area with a lot of complexities. As I said, the area still suffers from the fact that it needs greater support to allow businesses to foster and grow. In that area is the City of Mandurah as well as the Shire of Boddington, the Shire of Murray, the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale and the Shire of Waroona. All those areas find it pretty tough. If you have a mortgage and your wife cannot get a job, you struggle to pay your mortgage. Even part-time work, casualisation of the workforce, is something that happens a fair bit in that area. If a small business cannot flourish and make a profit, it cannot put on workers, even casual workers.

What we have done in this budget is to recognise that those wanting to develop in that area have the climate to do so. Alongside that we have had the Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, reignite what was called the Green Corps into the Green Army. That does a lot for young people. I was out last week looking at a Green Army project at Birriga Brook near Byford in my electorate. The young people told me that they need the opportunity to get their first job so that they could get a CV which was transportable somewhere else. A lot of them have done minor courses from TAFEs but they could not get a job because they did not have a CV which they could take to someone and say, 'Look, I've been in the workforce'. There is a
saying that the hardest thing to getting the job is to get the first job. In this case the first job for these young people was the Green Army.

We know that the previous Green Corps was a highly successful program. The trouble is that, when the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government came in, they combined it with long-term unemployed and work for the dole and totally destroyed it, so it was essentially switched off. We have started it again and we are looking at having many, many projects in the electorate of Canning for young people who want to get their first job. It does not matter if it is in the horticultural industry or a related industry as long as they can get that first job where they get on-the-job training and certification to take it somewhere else. Australia-wide small businesses provide for four and a half million Australians with jobs, providing four in 10 jobs in the private sector, six in 10 in the construction industry, and eight in 10 in agriculture. Measures like, as I said, reducing the corporate tax rate will lead to more jobs and even better wages.

In the remaining time that I have left, I would like to say that the small-business package in the budget was absolutely grabbed with two hands by people from my electorate. I have had nothing but positive comments from people in the electorate in relation to it. I will give you an example. The Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries said: ‘Cheap tradie utes bolted out our showroom doors last month.’ They had to be bolted down because people came in as quickly as they could to take them up. There is something like a 45 per cent increase in the sale of utes in Australia at the moment—today—because of this package. As we know, when people spend money it then goes around. The person in the car yard makes money and the mechanic servicing the car yard makes some money—it goes around and it helps the economy in general.

The 2015 budget is a historic budget for the growth of jobs and small businesses around Australia, and also in the electorate of Canning. This will take away a lot of the red tape that has also been a hindrance to small business. We are committed to doing everything possible to assist the small-business sector to continue as a source of growth and unemployment relief, by also seeing that they get involved in innovation.

Innovation and productivity are the keys to economic growth. Just getting a job is not necessarily the only thing—getting productivity out of people working has a multiplier effect. We know that small-business men and women and their employees are one of the driving forces for our future prosperity. While those opposite do not necessarily oppose this, and we know that Bill Shorten said he would go further, we need their support. We know that we are going to get that support when it goes to the Senate. The sooner we can get this package in place the better it will be for small businesses and the employees of Australia.

Mr Husic (Chifley) (17:16): Why are we debating this? Why are we talking about two pieces of legislation that both sides of this House support? There has been unequivocal, concrete, definite support from the opposition to vote on this, to get this through, and to make this happen. Why? Because it is reinstituting measures that we introduced, measures that we believed in ourselves and that we thought would be able to provide support and help to the small businesses of this country, aiding them in investing in new equipment, helping them with their cash flow, ensuring that they could grow, or, through the course of the impact of the GFC, helping them through difficult economic times and then putting them on a trajectory for further success. We believed that.
What was the first thing this government did on coming into office? They cut it. They took these measures away, claiming they were unfunded and claiming that they should not be in place. We have heard the Minister for Small Business, in times past when he was the opposition spokesperson for small business, criticise the measures that he is championing today. So, I ask again: why are we discussing this?

If the coalition are supposed to be arguing that this is something new, I think it is new in two places. One is that they are overcompensating for what we had in place. Why? Because when they cut there was a hiatus in the level of support for small business. They are now having to make up for that by putting in a bigger payment than we had when we were in government. They are also doing it because they have to. Economically, they are forced to because the impact of their 2014 budget on confidence, on consumer spending, and on business investment means that they now have to put the money in to see this investment happen. When you see investment, when you see capex at the levels that it is—and that it is failing to lift—you can tell straight away that they need to do something to support it, which is why they are putting money in at the level that they are. We are happy that they are putting these measures back. Let us get it done. There is no need for us to continually debate this. The government, through the week, called on us to support their measures. In fact, I am reminded of the words of the Minister for Small Business when in question time on 28 May he said:

The legislation is in this place. Let us get it through this place in a hurry, and let us see if Labor is true to its word. It is not about the backswing; it is all about the follow through. Let us follow through and get these measures enacted.

That was said on 28 May. The only problem is that on 12 May, when the budget was brought down, we indicated there and then that we would support these measures. We actually supported them and commented favourably on them. Why wouldn't we? As I said earlier, we introduced these measures. We have reconfirmed that in a number of other places, not least of which being in this place during question time. Today we said, 'Let's put it to a vote.' We said, 'Bring it on. Let's have this vote, move on, and get the legislation to the Senate.' And yet, what happened? We were denied it.

Why? Because those opposite wanted to have a speech-led recovery. They had all their members ready to let loose with their soliloquies, telling us about how close they were to small business and how much they supported small business. Instead of action and getting the support for these pieces of legislation, those opposite did not want the resolution. They did not want the matter to be put and did not want the vote to happen. They believe that those coalition speeches are the engine room of Australia's small businesses—that those speeches alone would power Australian business. That is why we were forced to endure speech after speech from the coalition, to ensure that we heard how close they were to small business.

We are continually told how close those opposite are to small business. They believe that they are closer to small business and that they have an affinity for small business. They tell us that so many of them have been small business operators themselves. That is great. I am absolutely supportive of that, and I congratulate them on it. But if they are so close to small business, why did every single one of them support a cut to those small businesses when the government removed those measures. And it not only removed them; it made them retrospective. This had an impact on small business. They tell us they have an affinity with small business and that they understand small business, yet they voted to stop measures that
supported those businesses, and made that retrospective. They put that pain on small businesses.

They are not friends of small businesses. They betrayed the small businesses of this country with their measures and actions and the way that they refused to support them on the way through. And now, in an attempt to rebuild their credibility with small business, they have put forward these measures that reinstitute the measures we had in government and that should have been in place for a lot longer.

Instead we have to listen to them, like windup toy monkeys banging away at their cymbals, telling us about how close they are to small business. They have been told, I understand, that they are only supposed to speak for five minutes to try and get this through more quickly, and the reason they have been doing this is because they have been embarrassed. When we had a chance to get this legislation through they refused to take it because symbolism rather than action matters more to those opposite, and now we are forced to go through this. I will not speak for the full 15 minutes. I am more than happy to cut my contribution. I am happy for them to cut their contribution because I would rather we get to a vote, put these measures in place and get this up to the Senate and through. We have also indicated we will not submit it to an inquiry process. We are happy to see the vote put to the other place so we get these measures in place ahead of 1 July.

But on the way through, I will make a few quick observations about the government's claims that this budget is friendly to another section of small business: start-ups. Those is the start-up community, while they may be small businesses, are in a league of their own. They have a productivity and an employment generating capacity that makes them quite different from other small businesses. It is something that will be a national priority for us to see how we are able to create an environment in which start-ups in this country can flourish a lot more. My comments take nothing away from other small businesses in this nation, and I recognise their contribution to the strength of our economy. But we should recognise the powerful ability of start-ups to drive productivity and economic and employment growth in this country.

You cannot keep saying in a federal budget that you support start-ups but not do anything to support them. By that I mean that we saw very little to advance the types of things that start-ups are concerned about, for instance, the critical skills shortages that have been in place for a number of years that affect start-ups and their ability to progress. We do need to see more in investment in education, particularly, as we have said on this side, in terms of STEM skills in this nation. We do need to see, for instance, more to deal with the capital issues that confront and inhibit the ability of start-ups in this country to move much more quickly, much more strongly.

Certainly, we saw money assigned in this budget for a legal framework for the establishment of crowd source equity funding platforms in this nation, but we still have not got the legislation before us. We have indicated to the government we are more than prepared to work with the government on a bipartisan basis to fast track the introduction of legislation in this place that would see a framework that will allow crowd source equity funding platforms to emerge in Australia. I have had some initial, very positive discussions with the small business minister, and we are certainly happy to do that.
But my criticism of the lack of initiatives and support in the start-up space is not something that I have just come up with. It is not something that is without any sort of substance or evidence. I have, for example, seen the comments of some that have said that there is a gaping hole in the budget where there should have been a vision for a digital future—people like Matt Barrie, who have helped found start-ups that have had a massive impact not only here but elsewhere. Matt Barrie, who is involved in Freelancer, has said, for example: Government does not know the difference between the word startup and SME at all … Every time there is a discussion about startups it morphs into SMEs, and that's why we don't see anything major happen … but I can't think of a greater industry for producing multiples than technology. The fact a 20-year-old can start a company worth $20 billion in a decade is mind-blowing.

They say that we should be working a lot faster to help start-ups in this country. He is right. Andrew Johnson from Australian Computer Society says:

… many initiatives in the budget were supportive but it was worrying not to see a significant focus on STEM skills.

Rui Rodrigues, from Tank Stream Ventures, says:

Overall, it's positive that the government has mentioned startups twice in the budget but specific incentives are still lacking …

We need to see more in this space not less, and I certainly commend the government. If they were prepared to work with us, we will work with them in advancing the interests of this sector because it will have a massive benefit to the nation and will ensure that we have jobs for the next generation of Australians in years to come.

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (17:27): It is a pleasure to speak on the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 that is of so much benefit to small business. I will deal with some of the measures within this package of bills that is coming alongside these shortly. But I cannot resist starting where the member for Chifley left off. The member for Chifley gave the parliament a lecture on the importance of start-ups, and we wholeheartedly agree startups are important. I know the member for Chifley pretty well. The member for Chifley follows these issues closely. But the member for Chifley, unfortunately, airbrushed away some of Labor's history. He lectured this side of the parliament on start-ups when it was his side of the parliament that did all they could to stop the start-up sector with respect to employee share ownership. I say to the member for Chifley you were—

Mr Husic: We did the wrong thing.

Mr TONY SMITH: That is an interjection I am happy to take. Let's put it on the record. He said: 'We'—being Labor—'did the wrong thing,' and that is a good acknowledgement. I think you are the first member on your side to acknowledge that. We had the legislation on employee share ownership just a week or so ago, and I will check the Hansard whether you acknowledged it then, but speaker after speaker airbrushed away the catastrophic damage your tax changes in 2009 did to the start-up sector and employee share ownership more generally. I welcome the fact that you acknowledge you did the wrong thing. You were not there at the time, but you were there for a few years in government where at no point did I hear one single Labor member say, 'We did the wrong thing and we've got to fix it,' and fix it when you had the chance, and you have the chance. Maybe you were arguing this in the party room—maybe you were—but, of course, the start-up employee share ownership killer was your shadow Treasurer. He became Treasurer. If he thought he had done the wrong thing, you
would have thought that the first thing he would do was do something about it, but he did not. I think the member for Chifley is passionate about this area, as am I, but at least acknowledge that failure. Acknowledge the six lost years—and that is what they have been: six lost years.

Now we are rectifying and rebuilding what Labor wrecked. I am the first say I want to go further—of course—but when it comes to these small-business measures, Labor airbrush away the history of their failure on employee share ownership and start-ups. They were not listening to or quoting the start-up sector then. You would not find too many quotes of the start-up sector from Labor members during their six years in government.

Mr Husic: Or from you.

Mr TONY SMITH: That is absolutely not true. You will find lots of quotes from me.

Mr Husic: No, sorry, your side.

Mr TONY SMITH: You will see me, because you will go back to your office. I know you will; you are a diligent—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiteley): Order! We are not having a conversation. We will have comments through the chair.

Mr TONY SMITH: It is friendly banter, Mr Deputy Speaker, but we will follow the procedure. You are a diligent member. You will go back and read the Hansard, and you will see me pleading with your shadow Treasurer in the days after that catastrophic budget to stop, to pause and to rethink. You will see your side defiantly moving on and causing the damage it caused.

When it comes to this bill and the bills that will follow it, those opposite say they support them—and that is great—but they distort their own record. It does them no justice to say that the instant asset write-off is something they did when the amount they were talking about was $6½ thousand compared to $20,000, trying to pretend it is the same. As everyone in small business knows, it is a monumental difference. The head of the Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia said it best on budget night. In an interview with Macquarie radio, he said: 'The $20,000 is big. That was unexpected and unseen. No-one saw that coming, but it's everything else that goes with it and it's the message out to small-business people we are thinking of here, and that's what the government's done, in a way I've never seen before. And all those things you bring up, Ross, you're right to bring them up. They're very important in the real world of running an individual business.'

The tax cut for all small businesses under that $2 million threshold is comprehensive; it is real. The instant asset write-off for items up to $20,000 is a huge benefit. Those opposite say that they had an instant asset write-off and refuse to acknowledge its smaller size and its smaller benefit. But there is another thing they refuse to acknowledge. They paid for that by jacking up income tax on small businesses, because they abolished the entrepreneurs tax offset. They abolished it, as the very dedicated and passionate Minister for Small Business pointed out in this House, back in 2011. They abolished the entrepreneurs tax offset, which was a modest 25 per cent rebate, for the 400,000 smallest businesses. So what Labor actually did was put up income tax for 400,000 small businesses—the smallest; the micro-businesses. They were those start-ups—people starting out back then.

Then, of course, we had the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply, where he said our ½ per cent cut to company tax was not enough. He said that Labor would go to five. Of course,
in doing so he did not have the comprehensive policy to benefit, in a tax sense, all small businesses under that $2 million threshold. Apart from having no real costing around it or how he would deliver it, what we do know is that he left out the majority of small businesses—because about two-thirds of small businesses are not incorporated. That clearly shows how we had a comprehensive package, with a 1½ per cent cut for those that are incorporated and, for the small businesses that are not, which is the majority, a tax discount of five per cent up to $1,000, which roughly equates to that same 1.5 per cent. But the Leader of the Opposition left those small businesses out. You could say he left them out because he does not know they exist. That would be a harsh criticism—and do you know what, Mr Deputy Speaker? I am not going to make that criticism. I am going to make a harsher one. He left them out so he could make his speech sound better by saying he would have a five per cent cut in the corporate rate and make all small businesses think they would benefit from something he is never going to deliver and something that is not comprehensive.

These measures are the most significant small-business measures in any budget in living memory. They are critical measures to help start small businesses, to support existing small businesses to grow and create more jobs, and to strengthen our economy at a critical time of economic transition. There are measures there for those just starting a small business to be able to instantly write off their costs of setting up. There is the tax cut for small business that this bill deals with. There is the instant asset write-off. And, as the small business minister outlined last week at the National Press Club, there are other measures for the farming community as well.

Some of us have electorates that are partly suburban and partly rural. I represent the Yarra Ranges and the Yarra Valley, and, on the ground, the small business owners see this as a breath of fresh air. I was at the Wandin football club on the weekend. Knowing you, Mr Deputy Speaker Randall, you would have been at a local football club somewhere in your electorate, over the other side of the country. Wandin were playing Monbulk in the seniors. This is a country league football-netball club. I wandered up to watch some of the netball, and a small business owner asked me about these incentives and where he could get more information, and said, 'That is absolutely fantastic!' Those measures are going to help enormously and they are going to be a real benefit to his business and to his staff, and of course they will have flow-on effects to the other small businesses in and around the electorate.

Those opposite would do themselves a favour if they acknowledged these good measures without distorting their own record and without failing to acknowledge the areas in small business policy in particular where they took the wrong decision. We have said many times in this chamber that we are the party of small business. And the member for Chifley spent some time on this. Those opposite will criticise what we say. But I say to those opposite: you need a long memory in this business. And I am saying to them: the Labor Party is not the party of small business. The reason I can say that in a compelling way—because it is not just my opinion—is: Labor has long thought this. And I will finish on a quote from your former leader, Kim Beazley, who said, back in 2000, when he was leading the Labor Party: 'We have never pretended to be a small business party, the Labor Party; we have never pretended that.' He was right then. He was telling the truth. So you can take his word for it, because you will never take ours.
Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (17:40): I love being lectured by the other side about what the Labor Party is and is not! Perhaps, if people are so well versed in what the Labor Party is, they might consider joining the Labor Party! I can tell you right now that the Labor Party is a party that stands for small business.

I, like many in this House, grew up in a small business family. I can remember: on the weekends, I was in the shop. It is how I learnt to count; I was helping with the cash register. CJ Discount Furniture was my family business. We sold second-hand furniture, and we had one employee. So it was a small business that employed one person who helped out and was paid award wages. But largely it was my mum and dad who did the work.

I was reflecting on how my parents, as owners of this business, would have engaged with this debate and whether they would have had the confidence now, because of these measures, to go out and buy new assets for that business, whether that be a truck, or a new cash register—one of the electronic ones. And I thought to myself, 'Probably not, because this government just can't be trusted.'

This particular policy is a fabulous example of this government's ability to backflip. There have been so many backflips from this government in a short period of time that they could almost qualify for the Australian Olympic team—seriously. When these measures were put forward by the former Labor government, those people, who are now claiming to be the best friends of small business, voted against it. They voted against increasing the instant asset write-off and they sided with the Greens in the Senate to block cutting the company tax rate for small businesses, but now we see them in this bill, the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015. One of the very first things they did when they got elected into government was to scrap Labor's instant asset write-off of $6,500. How could you do so many backflips in such a short period of time, when your record states your position on these measures, and think that small businesses are going to trust you this time and have confidence in you? What is going to happen next month? What is going to happen next year? In a three-year term of government, the first year you repeal it; in the second year you bring it back; what is happening in the third year? I understand why small businesses in our communities might be a bit sceptical about this government and their measures, because their talk is quite cheap, because of their track record. They are backflipping over and over again on policy, particularly in this space.

In Labor, we have said consistently, since before budget night, in our contributions after the last budget and after this budget, that we will support the company tax cut of 1.5 per cent. We said that in our contributions because we believed it was a good idea when we were in government; we believe it is a good idea today.

When this government came to power, one of the first things they did was to cut assistance to small and micro businesses by $5 billion. That is what they did in their last budget. They also slashed the instant asset write-off for small businesses—the very measure that this government is trying to bring back in this bill. These cuts have hurt small businesses, particularly in my own area of Bendigo.

Yes, in Bendigo and in regional areas, we have a very strong network of small businesses. The Bendigo small business network meets every Friday morning. They reviewed the measures that were in the budget and when it was put forward that the instant asset write-off was back they went, 'Then why did they get rid of it in the first place?' They were the words at
the breakfast the Friday after the budget night. They were scratching their heads going, 'So now it's a good idea? They're bringing it back.' They have lost and broken the trust of so many small businesses out there. These cuts, as I have said, have hurt small business cash flow, they have hurt consumer confidence and they have also hurt the confidence of small businesses to get out there and invest. Now, in an effort to save their own jobs, their own backbenchers, their own marginal seats and their own ministry jobs, they are proposing to bring it back. Their track record, though, means that they cannot be trusted.

Labor believes in small business. In government we had a good record on supporting small business with a number of the tax incentives that we introduced. Labor increased the instant asset-write-off threshold for small businesses from $1,000 to $6,500. The number of assets that this could apply to was unlimited. Labor also introduced the accelerated deductions for motor vehicles and increased the tax-free threshold, something that had not happened in this country for a very long time. Labor tripled it, not only helping low-income earners but a number of our sole traders. The sole traders that I have met in small country towns like Maldon and Elmore have said that that measure, that particular introduction by Labor, helped out their small business.

This is in contrast to what we have seen from this government, and their appalling record since they came to power—the backflips that we have seen. We have members of the government who voted against these measures when they were in opposition, who then voted to repeal them after last year's budget, and who are now going to vote for them. Can you imagine the score card that is going to go out in their electorates? We talk about trust and credibility in this place. On this issue, which they are championing so loudly, you would think that they would be a little bit embarrassed. You would think that they would be a little bit humble about it. Instead, they have gone and made this big song and dance about the fact that they have backflipped, and about the fact that they are now supporting Labor reforms that we put forward when we were last in government. I am quite surprised that people are quite openly going out there and promoting the fact that they have backflipped on these policy measures, because it is not going to take long for the score cards to be developed and distributed.

As I said, in the Bendigo small-business network, in my own electorate, the day after the budget, the question was asked: if they support it, then why did they scrap it? It is not just the backflips, and that they are now agreeing to really good Labor policy. They have also tried to overreach by suggesting that this policy will create thousands and thousands of new jobs. Sure, there might be some jobs that it creates in retail, but they will not create jobs in small business. Sure, they will help the productivity of some of these businesses. But when I have asked small businesses if they will hire an extra person they have said no. They might by a coffee machine for the workplace. They might be a TV. They may or may not by an asset that they do need, but it is not enough for them to hire a new person.

I really think they have overreached on how many jobs they believe this measure will create. This policy is not about creating jobs. It may create some retail jobs, but it is not the silver bullet to solving Australia's unemployment problem. It is not the silver bullet to reducing our unemployment rate, which is now at the highest level we have had since the Prime Minister was the employment minister in the Howard years.
There are other examples about how this government is failing small business—in government procurement and in cleaning. Cleaning companies by and large are small to medium businesses. They work on margins. This government scrapped the Clean Start Guidelines, meaning that contract prices are going to fall. Contract prices will fall as a result of this government. This government has failed cleaning companies that are competing for contracts. They are now undercutting each other and going to a lower rate and smaller contracts as a result of this government. That hurts those businesses.

Defence manufacturing is another area where this government is hurting small business. Some people may think it is all large businesses that are involved in Defence contracting; it is not. In Bendigo we have Thales, which built the Bushmaster, but 120 companies are part of that supply chain. The mufflers on the Bushmaster are made at a small business up the road in Long Gully. At that business, they are worried about future work at the site, because this government is dragging its feet on signing the Hawkei contract, which is the next vehicle that we want to build out of Bendigo.

This government is hurting small businesses in other ways. I think it is important that in this debate we highlight the other attacks this government is making on small businesses. Consider petrol prices and the fact that this government is increasing the fuel excise, and that it will be passed on to motorists, including small businesses. Petrol prices are going up for our courier drivers—not the ones who use diesel—but for the simple car for small businesses. In regions like mine, people drive further. To get from A to B means that you spend more on petrol. It is a hidden cost that is going to hit our small businesses. Now consider farmers. We all know that our farmers are small businesses, yet what this government failed to do when they were first elected was to support the farmers who supply SPC. They refused to support SPC, and left it up to the state government to help SPC modernise and survive. They hurt the small businesses—the farmers—around Shepparton, by not supporting SPC.

GPs, too, are small businesses. We have heard time and time again that they are small businesses. What does this government do to our GPs, which are small businesses? They tried to hit them with the GP tax. They tried to introduce a GP tax and make them be a collector of tax to pass on the government. What is this government now doing in this budget to our doctors? They are freezing the Medicare rebate—another hidden attack on small business. I could go on and on about the hidden attacks in this budget by this government on small business—whether it be procurement; whether it be their ridiculous red tape repeal days that involved abolishing minimum pay rates and standards in the Clean Start Guidelines; whether it be their budget; whether it be their failure to invest and support industry development and growth; or whether it be the backflipping they are doing on important, key, core legislation like this. This government is failing our small businesses. They are creating uncertainty. We have seen more backflips in this area of public policy, more backflips here than elsewhere.

As I said, these are good ideas that Labor introduced when they were in government. It is great to see the government change their mind and join us and vote with us. Let us hope that it is for longer than 12 months. Let us hope that in next year's budget we do not see another backflip and that it does not go from 20,000 back to 1,000. Let us hope that these measures are genuine and real and that they have finally caught up and are on the same page as Labor when it comes to small business.
Let us also hope they get on with supporting industries and the small business industries that we have, like Defence manufacturing, like contract cleaning, like government procurement. Let us hope that this government realises that the support for small business also includes supporting industry, the industries that we have.

Let us also hope that they get behind trades, get behind our skills and ensure that we have the skilled young people ready to work for these small businesses. When I talk to small businesses—when I am out there in Kyneton talking to the shopkeepers, when I am talking to the Bendigo Small Business Network, when I am talking to the Bendigo Business Council—they talk about a couple of key areas, and one them is trades.

One of them is the fact that another thing this government they scrapped was Tools for Your Trade. Small businesses want to talk about how this government withdrew so much money from the apprenticeship scheme. They want to employ young people; they want to find skilled young people, but this government has made it harder for them. This government walked away from ensuring that we have skilled young people ready to go into their business.

They also talk about the need for this government to buy what we make; to have genuine, decent procurement policies for local goods and services. Again, all we see is stalling from this government. These measures are welcomed. We on this side have said that we support them. It is great to see the government backflip the right way and support these measures.

**Mr VAN MANEN** (Forde) (17:54): I know the member for Bendigo is a new member here but I think a bit of history lesson is due in relation to the previous government's wonderful dismissal of small business and their importance to our economy. The member for Bendigo touched on the instant asset write-off that Labor introduced; that was funded by a tax that raised no money. But that is not unusual for the former government. She touched on increasing the tax-free threshold to $18,000, as though that was some magnificent achievement. In reality it was compensation for the increase in the carbon tax. I would like to remind the member for Bendigo that it is actually this government now that has repealed the carbon tax, but we left the increased tax-free threshold in place. So individuals and small businesses that are not structured as companies are far better off under this government as a result of the fact that we got rid of the carbon tax.

In regard to Defence procurement, I have a couple of small businesses in my electorate that supply services to Defence, and I can tell you from discussions we had when the previous government was in power, when they removed $16 billion from Defence, those businesses suffered at the hands of that previous government. So to be lectured by the member for Bendigo about what the previous government did or did not do for small business is a little bit rich.

I have great pleasure to rise today to support the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 2) Bill 2015. The 2015 federal budget's $5.5 billion Growing Jobs and Small Business package is the biggest economic recognition of this sector in Australia's history. Introducing policy initiatives to grow Australia's small business sector is imperative in boosting confidence in our nation's economy.

Small business makes up 96 per cent of all Australia's businesses, employs more than 4.5 million people and produces over $330 billion of our nation's economic output per year. In
2013-14 alone, Australians started over 280,000 small businesses. What a transition, compared to six years of Labor where around 519,000 jobs were lost in small business—equating to around 1544 job losses each week.

When the Howard government left office, Australia ranked 68th on the global competitiveness index when it came to government regulation. After six years of Labor and six different small business ministers, our nation was wrapped up in red tape and slid down the ladder to 128th.

The hardworking women and men of Australian small businesses are the engine room of our economy, and it is our belief as a government that they deserve a better, fairer and more competitive system that supports—not hinders—small business growth.

Small business owners are the 'have a go' Australians who follow their dreams, take a risk and dive in to the world of business. They are the people who provide services; train and employ people; and contribute to the economic growth of their local communities. There is no doubt small business is at the forefront of Australia's jobs and growth, and the coalition is delivering for small businesses now and into the future with this legislation.

The first small business measure is about the reduction of small business company tax rate, a measure that will boost cash flow, profits and productivity of Australian small businesses, and give them the opportunity to grow their business, become more competitive in the market, take on new employees and retain more earnings for reinvestment to provide the capital that they need to grow their businesses. Providing the ability for businesses to reinvest leads to existing output being produced at a lower cost, new and improved ways of doing business, and overall improving our nation's productivity.

We want to see higher investment leading to higher employment and wages over time, and the measures undertaken in the Growing Jobs in Small Business package is the first step in achieving this. Reducing the company tax rates for incorporated small businesses is at the heart of this Growing Jobs and Small Business package. This will be achieved by reducing the company tax rate by 1.5 per cent to 28½ per cent for companies with aggregated turnover of less than $2 million, from the income year commencing 1 July 2015. I am proud to say that this is the lowest tax rate for small business since 1967. This proposal will create a two-tier company tax system whereby companies with an aggregated turnover of below $2 million will be subject to the lower rate and those above $2 million will be subject to the current 30c tax rate.

Some 780,000 small businesses in Australia will benefit from the 1.5 per cent tax cuts. The flow-on effects will be instrumental in boosting our economy. Along with other Growing Jobs and Small Business package measures, reducing the company tax rate will assist small business to grow and compete more effectively with larger businesses and will create more jobs for more Australians. More people in work means fewer people on welfare and more money for individuals and families, resulting in a stronger Australian economy.

The second small business measure will do three things. It will provide accelerated depreciation arrangements to small business as well as primary producers, will encourage the prosperity of small businesses and will improve the resilience of Australia's farming community. Helping more small businesses become profitable and sustainable will put small business owners in the best position possible to hire new employees and provide more jobs,
particularly to Australia's younger people and older workers. I will use the example of one of our local businesses shortly.

This bill will amend the small business simplified depreciation rules to increase the threshold for immediate deductibility of assets, from $1,000 to $20,000, and an unlimited number of assets provided they are each less than $20,000 in value. This is a significant increase in the threshold and will create significant gain for small businesses, with around 96 per cent of all Australian businesses able to access the accelerated depreciation and to potentially benefit from this increase.

I was speaking to the owners at one of my local businesses, CG's Coffee & Grub at Bethania, who have been open about six months. They said that there was not a single piece of equipment in that shop that was worth more than $20,000. So under these measures they will now be able to write-off that whole investment of $70,000 or $80,000, which they used to set up that new business six months ago, in this financial year.

Small businesses are complex in nature. These budget measures strongly reflect our government's understanding of this. Small business is at the very heart of rural and regional Australia. With this in mind, the second thing this bill will do is amend the tax law to provide simplified accelerated depreciation rules for all farmers.

I am very proud to have seen these two important measures introduced to encourage a more prosperous and economically sound business climate in Australia. As I have touched on many times, our small business sector is vital and important to where we want our economy to grow, develop and prosper because, more often than not, it is where the innovation and creativity is reflected. Many of the large businesses that we see today not only in Australia but globally were once small businesses that were innovative and leading the pack. Through that innovation they have grown to now be major global businesses that, in some cases, employ thousands, if not tens of thousands, of people.

Along with the Growing Jobs and Small Business package measures, I think we need to reflect on some of the other things that we are doing in the broader context of employment. The member for Bendigo touched on Tools For Your Trade loans. I would like to remind the member for Bendigo that we introduced trade support loans for apprentices, to the value of $20,000. If they complete their apprenticeship, they get support in the form of a discount on that for having completed their apprenticeship. There are many other things that we are doing in the employment arena to support small businesses both in this budget and in the previous budget, because we recognise that if we can get people into the workforce it is better for all concerned. It is interesting to note the comments from the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry CEO Kate Carnell. She said:

… the government is looking after those 1.7 million unincorporated small businesses—
with these measures—
including trades, sole operators and partnerships …
She made the point:
Making it easier for small businesses to claim tax deductions for their expenses will make it easier for small businesses to invest.

Another item in this budget to assist many small business producers, particularly in our rural areas, allows primary producers to receive accelerated depreciation on a wide range of
matters. Australia's primary producers have been dealing with tough conditions both naturally and economically. These budget measures will improve the resilience of our primary producers who face drought by assisting with cash flow and reducing red tape by removing the need for primary producers to track expenditure over time.

The three main changes to the depreciation rules for primary producers will see all primary producers being able to immediately deduct capital expenditure on fencing. Currently, the effective life of fences is 30 years. I think it was the Minister for Agriculture who, in reflecting on his previous life as an accountant, said, to paraphrase, 'I never saw much repair and maintenance occurring on the fences. They were always fixed.' Secondly, primary producers will be able to immediately deduct expenditure on water facilities such as dams, tanks, bores, irrigation channels, pumps, water towers, windmills and water facilities that are currently depreciated over three years. Thirdly, primary producers will be able to depreciate, over three years, all capital expenditure in forage storage assets such as silos and tanks. Currently, the effective life of fodder storage assets can be up to 50 years. The capacity to write these things off, and also the fact that you do not have to keep all of the associated paperwork for that length of time, reduces the paperwork burden on many small businesses. It will also reduce the cost of getting their accounting and book work done every year, so that is another cost saving to small business.

Our government is focused on strengthening the competitiveness of the whole small business sector in agriculture and manufacturing. The member for Bendigo touched on GPs but neglected to mention pharmacies. We have put an extra $2.8 billion back into community pharmacies through the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement. The Australian economy is currently facing some structural adjustments as the mining boom wanes, and we see that effect flowing through the economy. Small businesses are typically more vulnerable than large businesses to shock and changes in economic conditions. So during this period of economic transition it is important that the government's policy settings support small business growth and innovation. We have also done this in the employee share ownership space. We have removed some of the onerous restrictions on employee share ownership that the previous Labor government introduced in 2009. We have made it much easier for businesses to start issuing shares to employees to balance the remuneration mix—start-up businesses might not initially be able to pay higher rates of wages. Helping small businesses become profitable, sustainable and competitive is in the long-term national interest.

I commend these bills to the House.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (18:09): It is a pleasure to speak on these small business bills and indicate my support for them. It has been amusing to watch the government's contortions in its attempt to create a sense of concern that Labor was ever going to not support the bills given that all the indications we have given since the initiatives were announced on budget night have indicated quite clearly that we were intending to support the bills. As many others, including the Leader of the Opposition, have said, the ALP's position reflected the fact that many of the initiatives were actually ones that we had put in place and that the government actually abolished in the 2014 budget. So, of course, it is a pleasure to be able to support these initiatives. It is a pleasure to be able to welcome a positive backflip by the government and to see the opportunity to support measures that we, when in government, felt were important and useful for the wellbeing of small businesses. We were very disappointed to see the
government abolish these measures at the last budget so, of course, we support the bills that are before us.

I want to outline some of the major initiatives under the bills and talk about the implications in my seat of Cunningham. I also want to talk about a less happy side to this story, which is my portfolio area and what is happening with small businesses in the skills space. The first bill before us, the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015, amends the Income Tax Rates Act 1986. Its purpose is to reduce the company tax rate from 30 per cent to 28.5 per cent for companies that are small business entities—that is, those with an aggregated turnover of less than $2 million. For all other companies over that threshold, the company tax rate will remain at 30 per cent. The government's estimate of the financial impact of the bill is approximately $1.45 billion over the forward estimates.

The new tax rate of 28.5 per cent for incorporated small businesses will take effect from 1 July this year, and it commences a two-tier tax system for business in Australia. Labor supports the bill. Schedule 1 of the second bill before us, the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 2) Bill 2015, amends the accelerated depreciation rules for small businesses by temporarily increasing the threshold under which certain depreciating assets, costs incurred in relation to depreciating assets and general small business pools can be written off. The increased threshold of $20,000 applies from 7.30 pm on 12 May 2015—budget night—until 30 June 2017. From 1 July 2017, the threshold reverts to $1,000. The increased threshold is available to all small businesses. Schedule 2 of that bill amends the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to allow primary producers to claim an immediate deduction for capital expenditure on water facilities and fencing assets and to deduct capital expenditure on fodder storage assets over three years. The date of effect for that measure also is 12 May 2015.

In relation to the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015, which deals with the tax rate, I want to put on record the fact that Labor has supported, and had a significant commitment to, reducing the tax rate for small businesses. In fact, we had a proposal to do just that when we were in government. For the record, it is interesting that those opposite actually voted down that small business increase at the time. They said it was unaffordable. It is hard to see what the difference is now, given that they are a government that claims there is now a debt and deficit issue that must be handled. Apparently, this is now a positive stimulatory measure. The only difference really is that that was a Labor government proposal and now it is a Liberal-Nationals government proposal. It is interesting to see that what was, when Labor was in government, an unaffordable measure has now become a critically important one. But we welcome that.

I also want to touch on what I believe was an important contribution by the Leader of the Opposition in his budget reply speech. He indicated that we would be keen to talk to the government about the opportunity to make that a more significant, five per cent, decrease. Given that there has been quite a history now, across the Rudd-Gillard governments and the Abbott government, to look at ways to stimulate small business activities in all our communities, that that would be a good opportunity for the government to take up.

I think it is particularly critically important to also acknowledge that the measures in the second bill before us, which introduce accelerated depreciation for small business entities and primary producers, are something that we support. We support them because we actually
introduced them, just a few short years ago. We in government increased the instant asset write-off from $1,000 to $5,000 and then further increased it to $6,500. In fact, it was this government, in its first budget, that then wound it right back, to $1,000. It is hard to understand why something they did not like only 12 months ago they now do like, but we can only be grateful that that is the direction they have taken, rather than cutting something again.

The instant asset write-off and other tax measures that are designed to help small business and business more broadly are important initiatives, and they are proposals that will make a difference to small businesses in many of our communities. We agree that they are great for small business, and we have done so since budget week.

I also want to talk about the other side of the debate that is occurring around these initiatives. Obviously many members on both sides of the House have talked about the role these initiatives will play in stimulating activity, innovation, business development and the opportunities for improved efficiency and productivity in small businesses across our area. I think that is true, and I certainly hope that that is how it plays out.

The other area that is talked about quite a bit is the capacity to address jobs, and this is what I specifically want to focus on. I have expressed in the parliament my serious concern that there was no vision for jobs in the budget and specifically no articulated vision for how we would ensure that we had the flow-through of people to take up whatever new jobs the government proposes will flow from these small business initiatives. I have concern about this because there are ongoing and consistent reports from business about a skills mismatch, about their inability to access the skilled people they need for the emerging job opportunities they have. Only today, on the front page of the Daily Telegraph, there was another story about feedback from businesses, about their concern that there has been such a significant drop—over 20 per cent—in commencements of apprenticeships. They are concerned that the ability to find young people who are the right match to undertake an apprenticeship is getting increasingly difficult. And I should point out that there has also been more than a 20 per cent decrease in completions of apprenticeships. So, even those they take on are not actually completing their apprenticeships.

I think that is a major failure of the government, and it has a direct relationship to small business opportunities. When I talk to small businesses in my region—and I know that members across the House would have the same experience—for many of them the No. 1 concern is not just that they get the right skills to match the jobs that they might have available; they are just good people who want to give young people a go. That is the consistent message I hear from so many small business people, particularly as many of them have themselves gone through trade training or some of the paraprofessions that are available in our TAFEs and VET sector, and they have used that qualification, that skill and experience, to set themselves up as small business operators. They have families and nieces and nephews. They are connected into their communities—of course they are, very much so, probably more significantly than is the case in the big businesses that many of us have in our regions. Small businesses are significantly community people, and they really want to give young people a go.

So, it is a particularly important task for government to be supporting the next generation of tradies and small business people, giving them the opportunity to get a leg-up and a start their own small business. That is why I have been particularly critical of a number of cuts the
government has made. The first one I want to talk about is the program Labor had, in government, that specifically addressed this. It was called the Apprentice to Business Owner Program. It recognised that many apprentices finish their training period, quite often with a large employer—which, to its credit, has had an ongoing apprenticeship program and puts people through the program—and only a few are kept on at the end, and the others need to go out and either find alternative employment or, as so many do, set themselves up as their own small business. That requires a whole range of additional skills and knowledge quite separate from the sort of training they got in their apprenticeship—business regulation requirements, marketing and promotion, or a range of other skills and knowledge. This program offered training to post-apprentices so that they could actually get those skills and knowledge and get themselves set up and operating as a small business. What happened to that program? It was abolished in the 2014 budget.

The other issue that is raised by small business and reflected in today's Daily Telegraph story is getting young people with the right level of skill to actually undertake an apprenticeship. Employers, people wanting to take on an apprentice—and I am sure all the members here have had similar experience in their areas—will often say that they cannot get someone who really has the ability to undertake the apprenticeship. They need some more language and literacy, numeracy and other forms of job-readiness training for the employer to have the confidence to put them on as an apprentice.

In answer to that, in government we had a program called the Apprenticeship Access Program. This enabled organisations to take on a young person who was really keen to do an apprenticeship but was not quite ready for it. They gave them the training and skills, and it was highly successful in translating those young people into full-time apprenticeships. When I was a minister I met a great example of that, at Parramatta, with the Motor Traders' Association. They were heavily committed to providing this access point—and had a great relationship with a whole lot of traders across Parramatta—to give disadvantaged young people the opportunity to skill up and be ready to undertake an apprenticeship. It showed you how all of those small- to medium-sized businesses across that area were dedicated to giving young people a go. What happened to that program? It was abolished in the 2014 budget.

The last one I want to touch on—although there are many of them in my area that have been cut—is the Joint Group Training Program. Group training organisations have been fantastic for decades in employing apprentices and then having them placed with small- to medium-sized businesses in order to get the training. They were set up because people recognised it was difficult for small- and medium-sized businesses to manage the employment, mentoring, support and all of that administration and additional work that needs to be wrapped around an apprentice to make a successful completion. In big organisations you have HR departments and people who have the capacity to do that, but small businesses were missing out on taking up apprentices or trainees. So the Joint Group Training Program was funded by government to boost training organisations—to ensure and guarantee that small- and medium-sized businesses would be supported to take on apprentices. I am very sad to report to the House that in the MYEFO last year it was cut by 20 per cent, and it has been completely axed this year.

We want to talk about providing opportunities for the next generation of small businesses and meeting the requirements of current small businesses who want to get the right skills-
match for emerging jobs or just give young people in the area a go. This government needs to have a really good look at the decimation created in the skills portfolio. There is not a single new initiative in this budget. They are failing the next generation of small businesses, tradies and people who want to give young people a go.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (18:25): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on these two bills, Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 2) Bill 2015. In fact, the 10,000 small businesses in my electorate of Lyne will probably frame these bills, they are so useful to their businesses. What does 'small business' mean? A small business means you are putting your family's wealth and income on the line and taking responsibility for your life. You are also often putting a mortgage on your house to fund your small business. If anyone in Australia has ever been 'having a go' in difficult times, it is people in small business. It is the employees who get paid first. It is their super. The boss is the last one to get paid in a small business and, until you are very successful, that is the lot you lead. But you are taking control of your life, you are backing your own judgement, you know your product, you know your market and away you go.

I am so proud to be part of a coalition government that is giving small businesses—finally—some concrete, tangible help that will improve their bottom lines. For incorporated businesses a 1½ per cent tax cut in the company tax rate is delivery on a promise we made in the 2013 campaign. If your aggregated turnover is less than $2 million, it will happen straight away—in fact, retrospectively, once this gets up to the Senate and through the Senate. It would be a very brave senator in the other house to knock back this legislation. Even the opposition is trying to claim credit for it, it is that good. So bring it on, I say. There is also a five per cent tax benefit—

Mr Ripoll: Bring it on is what we did! We tried that today.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Randall): Order! Let the member speak in silence, please.

Dr GILLESPIE: Unfortunately, the other side does not realise the Senate is not sitting today. Maybe they just wanted the legislation to sit on an empty bench on the tables up there. The attendants have it all locked up. Democracy is what it is. There are lots of coalition people who want to speak, so I do not want to dwell too long—because good news is here. If you are an unincorporated company, a sole trader or the like or a tradesman and you are operating in the Lyne electorate, once this legislation is through it will be backdated to that magical date that the biggest minister for small business has spoken about—that golden day of 12 May—and you will have a five per cent tax cut up to the value of $1,000.

There is also the matter of simplified depreciation. This means that instead of the charade of working your accountant to the bone with various depreciation schedules, each and every piece of equipment up to the value of $20,000 is immediately written off in one year. If you have equipment greater than $20,000 it can go into a pool and then it gets an accelerated depreciation—10 per cent in the first year and 30 per cent for the next three years—rather than having some items depreciate over 30 years. If your whole pool of small equipment is less than $20,000 you can put it into the less-than-$20,000 one and write it off directly. That will give you an improvement in cash flow of about $4½ thousand for the average small business. That is to your bottom line.
In the Lyne electorate we have about 1,800 registered agricultural businesses. They all have fences, troughs, dams, tanks and bores, and some of them even have windmills, but the benefit to them is that the write-off on this equipment, whether it be a fence, comes up in one year. You do not have to depreciate it over three years. That is going to be a huge benefit to your bottom line, particularly whilst we have got good commodity prices, and for once in your life you are going to make a profit out of your farm and you have the opportunity to have a tax break. It is a question of intersecting good things happening: a tax break when you are making a profit and you have more tax liabilities. And we are giving you a head start on that.

Also, for fodder storage, for putting aside grains or all sorts of things in sheds, you have the ability to accelerate the depreciation over three years instead of 30 years. Those who run their businesses with franking credits will have their franking credits remain at the 30 per cent rate, even though their tax rate is at 28½ per cent.

That will keep things simple, it will be beneficial to your bottom line and will improve your cash flow. All sorts of other things that we have done for small businesses and for apprentices have been mentioned by other speakers, like the $20,000 up-front trade support loan for apprentices, with a $5,000 discount if they complete their apprenticeship on time. We have recently announced Work for the Dole and work experience programs. There are so many good things in this budget, but the small business tax changes and the accelerated depreciation are such a tonic.

Compare that with what happened with the Labor government in the last administration: we had 519,000 fewer people employed and the percentage of small businesses went from over 52 per cent to about 43 per cent. The proof of the pudding is in the results: you have one government, led by the ALP, that did not have small businesses flourishing. And you have what we have happening now, where small businesses are going to have a better outcome and a better cash flow. I commend these bills to the House.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (18:31): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and cognate bill. I begin by acknowledging the importance of small business to our nation. Small business employs some 47 per cent of private sector employment throughout the country. Small business operators, as other speakers have quite rightly said, risk their own money and often their life savings to set up their businesses. They work long hours, they make huge sacrifices and they provide training and apprenticeship opportunities for young people. It is often small business operators who are the innovators and entrepreneurs in a rapidly-changing economy and, very notably—and I am sure this applies not only in my area but across the country—it is small business operators who are the major sponsors of local community sporting clubs. Indeed, small business contributes some $330 billion annually to Australia's GDP. Can I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the good work of two small business organisations in my electorate—the Business Enterprise Centre Tea Tree Gully and the Salisbury Business and Export Centre, both of which provide training, business advice and guidance to the many small businesses that exist in the region.

This legislation, as the opposition leader made very clear today, has Labor's support. It has Labor's support because we support the reduction of small business tax by 1½ per cent, from 30 per cent to 28½ per cent, and we support the instant asset write-off provisions within this
legislation. They are worthwhile policies and, as other speakers on this side have also made very clear, they imitate a policy that had been put in place by Labor in response to the global financial crisis that this country was also confronted with only a few years ago. They are policies that we acknowledge will stimulate the economy and they are policies which, regrettably, the Abbott government stopped once they came to office after the 2013 election. Yet we now have them, some 18 months later, effectively reintroducing policies that are framed on previous Labor government policies. Perhaps a little honesty from members opposite would do them no harm in respect to this matter and it may even help their credibility.

Most importantly, what matters for small business is a strong economy, confidence in the economic outlook and confidence in consumer spending. With respect to those matters the Abbott government has failed. We see this year's deficit being $41 billion; next year's projected deficit $35 billion and we will not see the budget back in the black under the life of this government. Indeed, net debt was 12.8 per cent of GDP in 2013-14 and it will rise to 17.3 per cent of GDP in the 2015-16 budget—that is in the government's own budget papers. In other words, the government is falling further and further behind. Consumer spending is equally falling as a result of that. That is partly because it was this very government that ran the narrative that debt and deficit is bad, that it is terrible for the economy and that it will only make things worse.

They now have to respond to the very things that are happening which have been partly contributed to by their very narrative in the lead-up to the 2013 election.

Last week's reports that capital expenditure will fall by 25 per cent in the 2015-16 budget to what they had previously expected is and should be of real concern to people around Australia. It means that there will be about, perhaps just a little over, $30 billion less expended by private enterprise in capital expenditure across the country—and $30 billion means a lot of work and a lot of jobs. It also means a huge stimulus to the economy. We saw in the March quarter that spending on equipment and buildings fell by 4.4 per cent and I understand that was the steepest fall since the global financial crisis. Capital expenditure by the private sector is a major driver of economic growth and economic activity. Those figures should be, and I am sure are, of concern to people around the country.

Financial analysts have also reported falling consumer confidence, and there are several reports that point to that. I noted that in question time today the government tried to rebut those perceptions with a series of questions. Simultaneously, I also noted that in his budget address the Treasurer said that the measures we are dealing with in this legislation were intended to boost growth and create jobs, in other words to stimulate the economy. Why would you need to do that if the government was not concerned about the state of the economy at the time? My own interaction with small business in my electorate, confirms the reports and perceptions that the small business sector in this country is doing it tough, and that they are very concerned about the future of our economy.

I note that household savings are still at historically high levels. My view is that household savings reflect consumer confidence concerns, because, when people are concerned about the future, they do not spend but put their money away to save or pay off debt. That was understandable during the global financial crisis years, and I do not believe there is anything
wrong with doing that, but it is not understandable that it is happening now. Indeed it sends out the wrong message. I suggest to government members that consumer savings are at the levels they are is because the people of Australia continue to have concerns about the future of our economy.

The government has direct responsibility for the loss of consumer confidence. It has responsibility for that because of the actions and the policies it implements each and every year when it hands down its budget. In its first budget we saw $3.8 billion of tax assistance cut from micro and small business. Then we had another $845 million cut in industry assistance programs. These were meaningful programs that were helping businesses across Australia. They were programs like Enterprise Connect and Commercialisation Australia. That is only one part of the picture.

The cuts to social spending equally impact on the economy in Australia. Cuts were either made or proposed in the budgets of both last year and this year that included: $2.5 billion of cuts by changing the assets test threshold and taper rate for pensioners; $48 a week cuts to 22- to 24-year-olds who are unemployed by transferring them from Newstart to Youth Allowance; $21,000 loss to families with two kids on $65,000 a year over four years as a result of other social cuts and tax measures that the government wants to introduce; $11,500 cuts to some 80,000 people across Australia who will lose paid parental leave as a result of proposed changes by the Abbott government. In addition to that we saw the $500 million cuts to Indigenous programs across the country and, worst of all, the $80 billion worth of cuts to health and education spending.

All of those cuts directly translate to job cuts. All of those cuts have an impact on communities right around the country. All of those cuts directly mean cuts to the income of businesses around the country, because that money would have been spent in one way or another, which has a flow-on effect to all of the small businesses in this country. Indeed the cuts not only impact on businesses but also impact on jobs which, in turn, mean that the consumer spending power of people in this country has been diminished. You do not have to be an Einstein and you do not have to be an economist to work out that, when you make those kinds of cuts, you will affect the income of people right across the country. That is exactly what is happening as a result of the policies of this government, which are affecting consumer confidence, which, in turn, means money is not being spent or has been cut by government, and that, in turn, means it does not flow on to the small businesses of this country.

The Abbott government policies go much further than that, and they are also effectively responsible for the collapse of the auto manufacturing industry in this country. The effects of losing car making in this country are already being felt around the nation, and they are particularly being felt in my home state of South Australia where jobs are already being lost. When I went to some of the small businesses in the very precinct of GMH they told me how they are struggling. Many of them are now looking to the next year or two with a view to closing down the business because they believe that they will no longer be able to continue to be viable once GMH closes. These are not auto component companies that I am talking about, these are ordinary small businesses dealing with a whole range of other matters such as in the food industry and so on. They can see that their business will be directly impacted by the collapse of the car industry in South Australia.
We had a debate only yesterday in respect of the renewable energy target. We saw investments in renewable energy in this country dive by 88 per cent. Some 21,000 jobs were in that industry at its peak. When you have that kind of investment slump, that directly means that jobs will be lost. I made reference to that in my contribution to the debate on the renewable energy target when I talked about local businesses in my own electorate that either had to shed jobs, or are likely to, as a result of the uncertainty that this government created with respect to the renewable energy target.

I have not even touched on the naval shipbuilding problems nor on the hundreds of jobs that have already been lost with respect to that sector. In South Australia we also had the uncertainty created by this government by not committing to build the 12 submarines in South Australia, as it promised to do prior to the election, and the uncertainty that that has caused, particularly at the Australian Submarine Corporation and the many support industries that are associated with naval shipbuilding in South Australia. Again, the impacts flow on to not just shipbuilders but all of the other businesses that depend on a strong economy.

There have been huge job losses across all sectors, and we see that unemployment in this country is rising. If unemployment rises again, consumer confidence falls, because if unemployment rises people do not have the spending power. If they cannot spend money because they do not have it that directly impacts on small business across the country. To most small businesses I know of, the most important thing that affects their future and that matters to them is to ensure that we have a strong economy.

The tax cuts and the accelerated depreciation do help support small business, but they only help if a business is making a profit or if a business has money to spend. I note that the accelerated depreciation provisions only apply for two years, unlike Labor's policies, which were ongoing. I hope that this government considers continuing them, but it is clear that in limiting the policy to only two years it is a policy that has been brought in to rebuild the political stocks of the Prime Minister and the Treasurer, and that is its prime purpose. It is little wonder that people do not trust this government. Labor does support these measures, because Labor understands and values the contribution that small business makes to our nation, and we want to provide them with help whenever we can and in any way we can.

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (18:46): It does not matter whether you are Inn Style Mensland, in Hervey Bay, or are the IGA at River Heads; whether you are Hartel Electrical or you are the Booyal service station; whether you are Bundaberg Sandblasting or you are the little shop down at Woodgate—the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 is the bill for you. It is certainly not the bill on the other side of the House.

This is the bill that supports you and support yours business. As someone who has grown a business from the back of my ute, I recognise that every great venture starts with an idea. Even the world's most successful large companies have come from humble beginnings. Small business is the economic lifeblood of regional communities like mine, and the coalition government wants to see them prosper. There are some 8,600 small businesses in the Hinkler electorate, operating across a range of sectors, including construction and manufacturing. Many are family businesses run by mums and dads, aunts, uncles and siblings. I know that many employees who are not related often become family. They work long hours, take few holidays and sometimes wear enormous risk to provide important services and products to our community. Across the country, small businesses employ more than four million people. In
Queensland, they are responsible for over 90 per cent of all employment. We are working to give businesses the confidence they need to invest and employ, because it is the private sector, not the government, that creates jobs. What fantastic news we had today on the growth numbers for the quarter: at 0.9 per cent, our budget and the measures of this government are working to support the economy and businesses in Australia.

From 1 July this year, all small companies with an annual turnover of less than $2 million will have their tax rate lowered. That is right: it will be lowered from 30 per cent to 28.5 per cent. This is the lowest small business company tax rate in almost 50 years. Most small businesses are not run as companies though, so we will also provide an annual five per cent tax discount of up to $1,000 a year for the unincorporated businesses. Small businesses can now claim an immediate tax deduction for each and every item they purchase up to $20,000. Every item purchased since 7.30 on Tuesday 12 May, when the budget was released, can be instantly written-off to reduce your tax liability.

This measure alone will benefit 96 per cent of Australian businesses—more than two million of them. If you run a cafe, you might buy new kitchen equipment or new tables and chairs. If you are tradie, you might buy new tools or a computer for the home office. Cars and vans, kitchens or machinery—anything under $20,000 is 100 per cent tax-deductible. But I would advise you to get specialist taxation advice. We are abolishing the fringe benefits tax on portable electronic devices used for work, like mobile phones, laptops and tablets, and farmers will get an immediate tax deduction for new investment in water facilities and will be able to fully deduct the cost of new fencing from their tax bill. Silos and storage will be brought down to a three-year depreciation rate. Can you imagine just what this does for the small business and the small farmer? They will be able to go and invest in things that help to drought-proof them. Hopefully, they will purchase that equipment from local producers and local manufacturers. That will create jobs. That will create employment. It will give them work. It is of great benefit to the nation and I am very pleased that it is there.

However, in the brief contribution that I intend to make, I would like to talk about what local Hinkler businesses think of the budget and the measures for small business. Debranette, at Take Time Out for Yourself, in the small town of Howard, a little township in the middle of my electorate, said she was very happy with the budget measures for small business. They allow her to buy new equipment that needs to be replaced right now. Mark and Cara St Ledger, who own The Tuckerbox, a famous source of food and sustenance at Sugarland Shopping Centre, wish it had been brought in two weeks earlier, because then they could have used it to put in the new deep fryer that they had to purchase when the old one broke down. Unfortunately, they have missed out, but they will have more opportunities in the future. Bill Trevor, a farmer from Childers, said he is very happy. It allows people to upgrade equipment, which has been very difficult because of the drought and the low returns in farming at the moment. It is a great opportunity for the people in my electorate, and it is an absolute pleasure to be here to speak in support of this bill.

The government are getting on with the job. We are building a stronger economy and a stronger future for this country. Small businesses are the backbone of the nation, and they will drag us forward. They are the ones that employ. We know that, and I am sure they will do a great job.
Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (18:51): With all these speeches about the Tax Laws Amendment (Small Business Measures No. 1) Bill 2015 and how wonderful it is, I thought there must be something here that I do not see. The average difference is about $2,000 to the average small businessman. I am sure they are out there celebrating and breaking out champagne bottles on the $2,000 that is involved here! Most small businesses that I know of in North Queensland do not have much profit, so they would not be paying much tax to start with.

The speaker before last said that it is about jobs, and that we live in a country that has now run straight into a brick wall. People like me have been yelling and screaming, but nobody is listening. The government is telling everybody that they are going to have this big, huge development in North Queensland. I hate to tell them but they have only got about 15 or 18 months of their term in office to go, and I do not think any dams are going to get built in the next 15 months. So what exactly are they talking about and doing here?

I never bothered to go to any of the white paper meetings because the green paper comes out after the white paper, and I am told they will then have a blueprint. I think we will all be colourblind by the time we are finished, having had all these papers, and there will be many giant forests felled to fill all the paperwork. I can honestly say that I do not think there has been a single report done in this place that has been read entirely by one person. I always felt a bit weird because I would not be game to admit in public to reading some of the reports that I have read, and I suppose I should not have done it now.

We have been given some concessions for spending money on farming. The sugar industry will not be taking it up, and I was very surprised to hear the member for Bundaberg say that he had farmers that were taking it up. There would be no farmers in my area that would be spending money on new plant. They could not afford to take the risk. They would be very foolish people indeed because they are battling on the margins now. In the cattle industry we are battling well below the margins.

I do not want to criticise the government, because we will be putting these propositions up to government shortly. We have a thousand cattle stations in North Queensland. If the government had taken a different approach and if they had said that each of those cattle stations could now have 200 hectares of untrammelled, unfettered, unrestricted land, freehold title with irrigation rights, then, quite frankly, droughts would be over for us because in a time of drought, instead of fattening cattle on that 200 hectares, you green-chop. You cut the grass and put it in a trough. In that way, you can run not five beasts to a hectare but 15 beasts to a hectare. You can bring 1,500 or 2½ thousand breeders through the drought by use of the green-chopping arrangement.

A very famous North Queenslander, Freddie Tritt, and I spent a pleasant afternoon in the Richmond Hotel and we worked out that over 80 per cent of the stations in North Queensland have a river or creek that runs every year. There is an odd year—one in 25 years—in which some of these rivers and creeks may not run. It might be two years in 30 sometimes. But, basically, it is a fair call to say that every one of those stations is on a river or creek that runs every year. That means that every year they can put in some big flood lifter pumps—like the cotton farmers do—to lift water out of the river and utilise it.

It is quite staggering to contemplate that Cape York Peninsula is bigger than Victoria. When you are talking about creating opportunities for small business, all of our small
businesses are in towns that are dying. Cape York Peninsula has nearly three times the rainfall of Victoria. Victoria has four million head of cattle. We have 140,000 head of cattle. There are two problems. One is that we are not allowed to use the water. The other is that heaven only knows what process of logic could have seen government arrive at not giving us the water. The Goss government, when the last Country Party government fell back in 1990, told us it could not make any decisions till it did a proper assessment, and it spent $24 million doing proper assessments. Then the LNP came in. They could not make any decisions until they did a proper assessment. They spent another $20 million. Then Mr Beattie came in, and he could make no decisions till he made proper assessments. Each of them got out white papers and pink papers and blueprints and everything else, but $126 million has been spent.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr KATTER: Mr Acting Speaker, I do not mind people speaking, but I do not like them shouting. Could you shut him up?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough): Order!

Mr KATTER: My mummy told me it was rude to speak while somebody else was speaking. But obviously their mummy brought them up differently.

Mr Butler: I remember you interjecting on me once.

Mr KATTER: I love interjections. Please, be my guest.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will be heard in silence.

Mr KATTER: In North Queensland we turn off only one ox out of six that we carry. In the rest of Australia they turn off four out of six. With irrigation, we can move to four out of six. That means the number of cattle being produced in North Queensland will double and treble.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr KATTER: Maybe I should shut up and listen to them.

Mr Champion: You would learn something, Bob.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will be heard in silence. Please continue.

Mr KATTER: I doubt that. I would be very careful about accepting that proposition, I can tell you. Regarding overcoming the massive consequences of drought, each drought that we have sets our numbers back, and it takes us 10 or 12 years to build those numbers up again. You build up and then you just go down, and you do not get back up. It is a continuous loss and bleeding away of the cattle herd. If we move up to where we should be, running an extra four million head of cattle, and if we are turning off four out of six, the same as the rest of Australia, instead of one in six, the benefit for Australia will be $8,000 million a year. I do not regard a farmer as any different from a small business, and if all of those hundreds of small businesses are running at a dramatic profit, the little towns of Georgetown and Normanton and Karumba and the mid-west will benefit. In the mid-west we have a different proposition.

Before I leave the gulf country, it is important for me to say that it was a most extraordinary decision to cut off the food supply to Indonesia. It went down similar to swallowing a porcupine with the people of Indonesia. To repair the damage, we undertook to build a super-fast, efficient highway for our beef into Indonesia. To do that, we need 30 1,200
hectare irrigation blocks, big irrigation blocks that would enable us to move a lot of cattle onto ships to go for processing overseas. They would also facilitate the building of quartering works to make into big meatworks at places, we hope, like Charters Towers, where we will have big abattoirs. All of these little towns will no longer be little towns. A town like Georgetown would become a town of 10,000 people.

Let me move onto my own home country, the mid-west plains. All of inland Queensland is beautiful rolling black-soil plains. With how we are husbanding them, that seven million hectares of beautiful Mitchell and Flinders grass plain is growing prickly acacia trees—a weed—and we have the most endangered species in Australia, the little Julia Creek dunnart. Hughenden, in my opinion, is shovel ready if the money is made available tomorrow. Our superannuation money is going into the highly inflated property market—overinflated, I would argue, at $1 million for a house in Sydney—and it is going into the share market. That is nothing more than a roulette wheel these days, but, again, it is highly inflated by $25,000 million worth of superannuation money being pumped into it each year. In the days of more enlightened government, 60 per cent of all superannuation moneys went into government securities—government bonds—where they were paid five per cent. Heaven only knows that the—Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not normally complain—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order at the table!

Mr KATTER: I think the gentleman here are really a bit over the fence.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, the member will be heard in silence.

Mr KATTER: In a different situation, I would deal with them differently, but I am in a gentlemanly environment, so I will act in that manner.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, please continue.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr KATTER: But I would ask, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your cooperation in impressing upon them some common, normal manners, which, as I said previously, they obviously did not pick up in the education system that they went through.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, the member will be heard in silence. Please continue.

Mr KATTER: The town of Hughenden has dropped from 4,000 people about 40 years ago to a little over 1,000 people now. We are talking about small business. All of those small businesses have collapsed, gone broke or are struggling to stay alive. Why not consider a simple contribution of some of that superannuation money with a government guarantee on the money? Heaven only knows superannuation loves water rights, but they will not put money into building a dam. So what we are saying is: we do not want a dam; we just want a few rocks in the river with some concrete poured over it to divert the water into off-stream storage, where it can be held very cheaply and then distributed. I believe that in my lifetime the towns of Hughenden and Richmond would again rise up to towns of nearly 10,000 people. Little Richmond is struggling at well below 1,000 people now. Switching subjects to Charters Towers, we have the third biggest river in Australia, the Burdekin River, running past Charters Towers. It is a town that has lost 2,000 jobs in mining. Five of our goldmines have closed; we only have one going, and a lot of that workforce comes from Townsville. The dam on the upper Burdekin was proposed by Dr JC Bradfield back in 1929.
Mr Fletcher: Hear, hear! A fine Australian.

Mr KATTER: I think he was truly one of the greatest of Australians. He built the Sydney Harbour Bridge. He built the underground railway system in Sydney, which is still being used today almost as it was then, which gives you some idea of the man's foresight. Dr Bradfield won the international engineering prize for the underground railway system. He built the Burrinjuck Dam, which provides the major contribution of water to the MIA, the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, and ensured Sydney's water supply with the other dam that he built outside of Sydney.

Dr Bradfield also built the University of Queensland, by the way, and the Story Bridge of Brisbane, but he is most famous for what he did not build, which was the Bradfield scheme. The idea was to take a little bit of the huge mass of floodwaters of North Queensland, where we get 200 and 300 inches of rain every year, put it back into Central Australia, put it into Lake Eyre and make it rain, with 30,000 megalitres of evaporation and precipitation falling over the Murray-Darling, doubling and trebling the amount of water in the Murray-Darling. For what it is worth, I read the reports and I think that he was dead right. He was a man far smarter than anyone in this place, I can assure you. His alternative was to dig a ditch from Spencer Gulf, fill Lake Eyre up with water and make it rain that way, but we would choose the revised Bradfield scheme proposals, using that water on the rolling black-soil plains—the richest soils in the world—of inland North Queensland. Bradfield stage 1 is in fact—(Time expired)

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (19:06): Labor supports the proposal to let small businesses instantly write off assets worth up to $20,000, and we could not have been clearer about this.

Mr Katter interjecting—

Dr LEIGH: On budget night, my colleague the shadow Treasurer, Chris Bowen, directly and firmly stated:

… of course we will support more tax support for small business.

Mr Katter interjecting—

Dr LEIGH: It is curious that the member for Kennedy does not seem to be following his mother's advice right now. On budget night, the shadow Treasurer announced that Labor would be supporting this package, and, as the government knows, the Australian Taxation Office administers tax laws as though they had been immediately enacted upon announcement; it ensures that parties do not somehow make use of a sudden loophole. So, had the coalition not suggested to the Australian people that there was any uncertainty over Labor's support for this package, their announcement could have had full stimulatory effect, but, because they have spent the last week since budget night scaremongering and peddling the falsehood that Labor will not pass the small business package, they are beginning to undermine the stimulatory effect of their own package. It is extraordinary that, at a time when Australians are concerned about confidence—when they are looking for certainty—this parliament has one of the major parties saying they were going to support a small business tax measure, and yet we have the other party suggesting that there is not bipartisan support. The Australian Taxation Office will administer this law as though it had been immediately enacted, and the only risk to confidence is from the Abbott government themselves. But if they want this passed quickly, passed quickly it can be.
Today we have seen absolute hypocrisy, despite the fact that last week in question time we saw Bruce Billson saying:

The only thing people are uncertain about is whether Labor are going to muck around with this. Are they going to stand in the road? Labor, you did not do anything for small business when in office.

He forgets about the instant asset write-off as he says that.

Make sure you get behind this package and secure its early, safe and certain passage.

As the Prime Minister said on Monday:

Let us pass this bill straight away.

The same challenge was handed down by the Treasurer in question time on Monday:

This legislation is going to go through the House of Representatives this week …

And then he said:

I lay down the challenge to the Labor Party: help us to get that legislation through the Senate as quickly as possible.

Yet, despite saying that they were absolutely keen for this bill to be off and racing towards the Senate, they passed up the chance to have it stamped, signed and delivered to the Senate before lunchtime today. Instead, we have the extraordinary spectacle of the Minister for Small Business, Bruce Billson, coming in here to vote against his own package going to the Senate. That is how extraordinary it is.

Mr Champion: It's not often you see this government oppose a gag motion.

Dr LEIGH: As the shadow minister at the table points out, the opposition of a gag motion by the government is itself bizarre! But, in the context of what the government has been saying about the urgency of getting this bill to the Senate, it is amazing that they were not willing to take up Labor's constructive proposal to get it there quickly. But this sort of opportunistic, short-term approach perhaps should not surprise us, given the government's approach to long-term policy making.

Superannuation taxation concessions are rising in value at a rapid rate. We know that soon they will exceed the value of the age pension, and they are of concern to the secretary of the Treasury and to every serious economist in Australia—to, indeed, the Assistant Treasurer. But the Prime Minister is still saying that he does not want to deal with superannuation tax concessions, despite having put out a tax white paper one of whose questions is whether or not our current superannuation tax concessions approach is sustainable. Let us be clear: our superannuation tax concessions are not fair and they are not sustainable. The top one per cent of Australians get more superannuation tax concessions than the bottom 40 per cent of Australians.

We have a multinational tax package from this government which is not even costed. In Senate estimates yesterday, the Minister for Finance said: 'We do not have a credible figure for it.' Senator Dastyari said: 'You have not costed it?' The Minister for Finance said: 'Well, they are your words. What we have decided is—' Senator Dastyari: 'The question is: have you costed it?' Mathias Cormann: 'Well, the answer is: we have not, because we do not have the necessary information to credibly do that.' So what we have from this government is a multinational tax package whose elements, if you add them up, come to just $30 million.
Thirty million dollars is less than one-sixtieth of what Labor's carefully costed multinational tax package would raise; indeed, a package which not only raises $2 billion—

Mr Fletcher: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The member is speaking about matters that are far away from the subject of the bill before the House this evening, and I ask you to direct him to return his remarks to the bill before the House this evening.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough): Please, Member for Fraser, restrict your remarks to relevance.

Dr LEIGH: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, but the key question of relevance here is the impact that this will have on the Australian economy and the way in which it fits in to the decisions that the government is making. On superannuation tax concessions, their unwillingness to act has been hurting confidence in Australia in their economic skills. On multinational tax, their unwillingness to put on the table a proper package, again is deeply inadequate.

Labor supports a fair and sustainable small business package. But what concerns us is the impact that it will have on bringing down the unemployment rate. We have the unemployment rate now up to 6.2 per cent, well above where it was when Labor left office. Will this small business tax package on its own bring down the unemployment rate to below six per cent? I would like to think so, but, when you have a government which is preventing young job seekers from getting any assistance for an additional month, and when you have 769,500 Australians looking for work now, then you have to worry about whether or not this small business package will be enough to get the Australian economy going.

When he was the shadow Treasurer, Joe Hockey described the cash rate as 'at emergency levels'. The current cash rate, two per cent, is half a per cent below where it was when the Treasurer said that it was at emergency levels.

We have consumer confidence now seven per cent lower than when the coalition came to office. And consumer confidence is not helped by the government's needless fearmongering about Labor's support for this small business package. Private capital expenditure is now down 11 per cent from the last federal election. The March quarter result is the worst since the global financial crisis. Following the Abbott government's second budget, Dun and Bradstreet's business expectation index dropped seven points from 20.7 to 13.4 points.

So much for the much-promised shot of adrenaline to the economy. Instead, the chaotic mismanagement, the cabinet leaks, and the inability to deliver sensible tax reform have been like a double dose of Mogadon. This measure is one that takes a risk. That risk arises because of the sudden end to the instant asset write-off package. We know that when governments put in place time-limited measures and then take them away it can be like taking away the punch bowl just at the time when everyone needs to have a drink. We have seen this recently from the example of Japan's consumption tax. Japan attempted to stimulate their economy by cutting their consumption tax rate. Then recently—last year—they raised it from five per cent to 8 per cent. The result was to plunge the Japanese economy into recession. That is what you get with temporary measures that are not carefully thought through in terms of their long-term effect on business.
Labor supports small business because we want to create jobs in Australia. We saw this in the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply. He spoke not only about the importance of small business but offered to go further and work in a bipartisan fashion with the government on small business tax reform. We are also aware of the impact of start-ups and new businesses as a major driver of job creation. Two-thirds of Australian workers are employed by companies with fewer than 200 staff. The OECD has found that small firms younger than five years old create 42 per cent of new jobs. If we want to create good jobs by the thousands, we need to work harder at building an economic ecosystem in which innovation and entrepreneurship will flourish.

It was my pleasure to join the Leader of the Opposition at Dickson College today to meet a range of young Canberrans who are working on coding and robotics and learning the skills that they will need for the modern economy. That is why Labor is committed to expanding the opportunities for young Australians to study coding at school. We are committed to boosting the number of people studying science, technology, engineering and maths at university. Many of the young people we met today at Dickson College may well end up as Canberra entrepreneurs contributing to the innovative entrepreneurial businesses that I am so proud to see in this ideas city.

Facilities such as Entry 29 and the Australian Academy of Interactive Entertainment, which encourages gaming and the coding of computer games here in ACT, are part of building the start-up enterprises of the future. Labor has also said that to encourage more small businesses we are going to establish a $500 million Smart Investment Fund to co-invest in early stage and high potential companies. We will be partnering with venture capitalists and licensed fund managers to make those investments. We are going to ensure that this money is spent on start-ups with real potential to make it big and to create local jobs in the process.

While this budget contains measures for small business, it does not create sufficient measures for innovative businesses. There are still obstacles to crowd-sourced equity funding. There is still a lack of appropriate venture capital investment to allow enterprises to flourish. I was recently at BlueChilli in Sydney, a venture capital incubator that works with a unique model. It provides shared engineering skills to the firms there. Seeing the start-ups there gives you real hope about the potential promise of these new start-ups, if only they had a government that is willing to back innovation and entrepreneurship. In Wollongong, the University of Wollongong's iAccelerate centre provides opportunities for small businesses there to grow and innovate. One business we spoke with there is working on creating 3-D printers for use in schools. The great thing about having 3-D printers in schools is that students are able to learn coding and boost their robotic skills. At Dickson College today the students were working on robotic hands. That required both the coding skills in order to code the robotic hands, and also use of the in-house 3-D printer. These skills, which once upon a time would have been the preserve of graduate students at university, are now being engaged in by 16 and 17-year-olds such as the ones we met today.

Labor will support these bills and support them with more enthusiasm than the government. We would have had these bills passed 10 hours ago if we had had our druthers. Those opposite who are complaining about the duration of my speech would not have had to put up with it had they been willing to join us in sending this bill over to the Senate.
The Australian people also need a government that is committed to innovation and entrepreneurship, that is interested in teaching's kids to code, and that is interested in investing in science and innovation. At a time when one in five CSIRO jobs are on the chopping block, the scientific community in Australia is genuinely asking the question: is this a government that is interested in innovation and science? We know that Australia ranks too low on overall investment in science and research. Part of the challenge there is boosting not just the government effort but also the business effort as well. Labor is committed to that challenge because it answers the question of where the jobs of the future will come from. Australia needs a government committed to the future and to creating jobs in that environment. (Time expired)

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (19:21): Dr Leigh's speech was very revealing about Labor's attitude to small business. Because the member for Fraser is the shadow Assistant Treasurer he was given a 15-minute timeslot to talk about the small business package, but after approximately 4½ minutes the shadow Assistant Treasurer ran out of content and started talking about anything other than small business. In fact, most of the topic of his conversation and his speech from then on was trying to talk down the national economy. I think today the reason they tried to guillotine the debate on small business is really because they did not have anything to say. If the shadow Assistant Treasurer can only speak on small business for 4½ minutes, then presumably very few of the backbench can speak on it for much longer than that either.

On this side of the House we know that small businesses are the engine room of the economy. They contribute $330 billion towards our national economic output. They employ 4.5 million people. And we know that when small businesses are doing well we all do well—they are growing; they are thriving; they are profitable; and they are employing people and creating wealth. That is known deep in our veins on this side of the House—in part, because so many people on this side of the House have been small business owners themselves. They have run businesses; they know what private enterprise is about. I think the reason there is so little interest in small business from the Labor side of the chamber is because so very few have even worked in a small business, let alone run a small business. But most of them have been union officials, and I think that tends to guide the overall attitude to this sector.

We are very proud of this small business package. It forms the centrepiece of this year's budget. The most important measure of it was, firstly, an immediate tax cut—from 1 July—of 1.5 percentage points. That does not just apply to incorporated entities; it also applies to unincorporated businesses, who tend to form the bulk of small businesses. The second key measure in the package is a $20,000 instant asset write-off measure. This is a very significant measure. It means that any small business owner can go out there—from a week ago—purchase any asset worth up to $20,000 and immediately write that asset off against that business's tax income for the year. That has an immediate impact on cash-flow perspective for small businesses, and that means they have a greater ability to invest in other things, to employ others, to grow and to become more profitable as well. These are very important measures. It is a $5.5 billion package in totality. We think it will have an absolutely profound impact on small business growth and, therefore, on the economic growth of our nation.

The shadow Assistant Treasurer was talking down the economy throughout his speech. I would like to point out a couple of statistics for him. Today was the day the national accounts
were brought down, and I would have thought that the shadow Assistant Treasurer would have referred to those national accounts, because the headline figure of those national accounts was that there was 0.9 per cent growth for the March quarter. That makes us one of the fastest-growing wealthy economies in the world. It puts us at a considerably faster growth rate than where we were in the last years of the Labor government.

Of course, everyone in this chamber knows that the jobs growth is four times higher than in the last year of the Labor government. We know that retail sales are up. We know that there are record new businesses started and we know that there are record residential housing approvals. These are all the fantastic economic green shoots in our economy. We think that this small business package will add to that and continue to support economic growth across the nation.

Labor's attitude to small business is well known—in fact, perhaps the most honest remark from the Labor Party came from their former leader Kim Beazley who, in July of 2000, acknowledged very frankly: 'We have never pretended to be a small business party.' He was exactly right. They have never been a small business party. The future minister for small business, Craig Emerson, ramped up Labor's anti-small-business rhetoric when he stated in the House of Representatives in February 2006:

Labor, as a party, was born of the trade union movement. We are proud of our bonds with the trade union movement—we say it long, we say it hard and we say it often. The Liberal Party knows its origins and so do we. We recognise our origins, and we are very proud of our bonds with the trade union movement.

I that those two quotes encapsulate it. Leader Kim Beazley says, 'We never pretend to be a small business party', and then Craig Emerson says, 'Our bonds and our roots are with the trade union movement'. That, I think, summarises the key differences between the Labor Party on that side and the Liberal and National Parties over here.

Another indication of Labor's interest in this topic—other than the shadow Assistant Treasurer only being able to speak on the topic for 4½ minutes of a 15 minute speech—is that there were six small business ministers in six years, and none of them had any small business experience. You would think if you had six in six years you could at least find one. But, no; we had: Craig Emerson, who was an economist and a Public Servant; Nick Sherry, a union official; Mark Arbib, a union official; Brendan O'Connor, a union official; Chris Bowen, a union official; and Gary Gray—guess what?—a union official. No, sorry, he was the ALP National Secretary and Executive Director and he did have some experience with Woodside. Out of six small business ministers in a row they could not find a single member on their side of the House that had any small business experience.

Mr Champion interjecting—

Mr TUDGE: I have an interjection from the other side as to the current small business minister. Yes, he was an owner of a small business, with his wife. And he frequently talks about that and he brings that experience and that passion for small business to his job.

Of course, now that Labor is in opposition nothing has changed. The opposition spokesperson for small business was the national secretary of the AWU. Bernie Ripoll is the shadow minister assisting the minister for small business and he was a union organiser for the State Public Services Federation of Queensland. So that almost brings it up to eight in a row where we have not had a single small business person who can fill that spot on the Labor
benches. Surely, there must be one person who has had some small business experience on that side of the House.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) (19:30): It being 7.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Access to Government Services

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (19:30): I would like to bring to the attention of the House problems that my constituents are having when they visit Medicare and Centrelink offices. And I suspect that it is not just constituents in the Shortland electorate who are experiencing these problems. It was brought to my mind very graphically this morning when a constituent, Brian McLean from Swansea, rang my office. He was particularly upset. He had just been to the Medicare office and was told he had to either fill in a form and put it in a box or use a computer to fill in the claim online. Mr McLean is not computer literate and really did not understand the whole process. He and his wife were told to fill in the form and then put it in a drop box in Medicare. He was not quite sure what a drop box was. He ended up going home and ringing the Medicare hotline. When he rang the Medicare hotline he was advised by the person on the other end of the hotline that this was one of hundreds of calls that he had had already today.

Later this morning we had another phone call from a constituent on exactly the same issue. In addition, we have had numerous phone calls during the week and over the preceding weeks about this one issue. We are getting a number of complaints from constituents who go to the Centrelink office, are told to go away and are directed to a computer—and the same sorts of problems exist there. They ring the Centrelink line and, once again, they have to wait. Invariably, after around an hour and a half, the call would drop out.

Back to Medicare. There are a lot of elderly people in my electorate of Shortland and they do not know how to use computers. It is very difficult. In addition, there are some people that are actually illiterate. You may have a young mother there with children and she finds it difficult to fill in these forms and put them in a drop box in the Medicare office. Medicare has advised people to try to get their GP to lodge their claims electronically, but not all GPs do it. Podiatrists use a different system, which works by a person using their debit card. They must either log online or use the drop box. That really is not good enough.

Another constituent contacted me a couple of weeks ago. He was so upset that he rang the office a couple times. I met him in a coffee shop to discuss the matter with him. He had been to both Charlestown and Kotara Medicare offices. The second time he complained about the completion of the online forms and the fact that they did not work, he was told to try again. He went home but had difficulty downloading it. And this is a man who is an executive teacher—a very well educated and highly intelligent man. Both he and his wife tried to register the birth of their child and update their records so that they could claim paid parental leave. In both locations they were told to go away and to do it online.

If a couple as well educated as these people have trouble dealing with the online registration and in dealing with the Medicare office, I can assure you that there would be a lot of other people in the community who also do. A shopfront with person-to-person contact is
needed so an older person can go in and have their Medicare claim processed by a person whom they talk to, where a family can go in and talk to somebody in the Medicare office. They should not be directed to a computer or asked to fill in a form and put it in a drop box. They should not have to wait on a telephone line for hours to talk to a person on the other end—be it at Centrelink or Medicare. This is not good enough and the government needs to do something about it.

**South China Sea**

**Dr HENDY** (Eden-Monaro) (19:35): One of the key themes emerging from the recent Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore was the need for strategic certainty in the South China Sea. Defence ministers from the United States, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Germany and the United Kingdom all expressed concern about strategic uncertainty in the Indo-Pacific. Thus, there is a definite utility in Australia articulating a clear and deliberate position on the basic structures of Asia's regional order. That is precisely what Australia has done with respect to the building of artificial islands in the South China Sea.

To be charitable, the purpose of these islands is not entirely clear. But it is not entirely fanciful to consider them as China's unsinkable aircraft carriers. The Minister for Defence and the Secretary of the Department of Defence have both made clear and deliberate statements articulating Australia's opposition to the extensive land reclamation. In times of uncertainty, this degree of clarity about what Australia values is extremely important. In fact, it is critical.

The Chinese conundrum is exercising some of the best minds in the country and the government has made a high priority of signalling our strategic intent with clarity. Australia made a clear and deliberate expression of concern in 2014 about China's sudden announcement of a unilateral air-defence identification zone over the East China Sea. On that occasion the foreign minister said:

The timing and the manner of China's announcement are unhelpful in light of current regional tensions, and will not contribute to regional stability.

Australia has made clear its opposition to any coercive or unilateral actions to change the status quo in the East China Sea.

Whilst Australia takes no position on the competing territorial claims in the South China Sea, as with the East China Sea, it does object to unilateral and coercive action. Furthermore, Australia calls on all parties to resolve their disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law. It is in that context that last week the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Dennis Richardson, voiced his concern at the unprecedented pace and scale of China's land reclamation activity in the South China Sea. Mr Richardson said:

Over the last year alone, China has reclaimed nearly four times the total area of the other five claimant states combined.

He went on to say:

The speed and scale of China's land reclamation on disputed reefs and other features does raise the question of intent and purpose.

Further, the Defence Minister had this to say at the Shangri-La Dialogue:

We are particularly concerned at the prospect of militarisation of artificial structures. It is therefore important that countries agree as soon as possible on a substantive Code of Conduct for the South China Sea between ASEAN members and China.
He went on to say:
Disputes must be resolved peacefully, and Australia urges all parties to exercise restraint, halt all reclamation activities, refrain from provocative actions, and take steps to ease tensions.

And why? Because, as the minister warned, when tensions are high the risks of miscalculation resulting in conflict are very real. Like others, I wish for a rising China to be fully incorporated into the rules-based Asian order that we all—and China in particular—have benefited from over the last several decades.

Indeed, there is reason to be cautiously optimistic. It can be argued that in the case of China and the other big strategic power, the United States, the typical structural forces that push major powers toward direct conflict are weak. Unfortunately, that is not to say that the risk of conflict is not real—it is very real—in particular, conflict between neighbouring countries that could potentially drag in the US. A miscalculation arising from a secondary dispute, particularly in North Asia, could present the most likely catalyst for confrontation.

So let me be clear and deliberate. China cannot be allowed to impose a solution. Attempts by any nation to establish a military presence with the intent of defending contested sovereignty claims or a unilateral air defence identification zone in the South China Sea is destabilising and dangerous. There is plenty of room for China to rise in Asia. We welcome it and benefit from it. However, provocative moves can play to the region's worst fears about China's rise and endanger the rules-based Asian order by which we will all rise or fall. The future of the region depends on co-operation, not confrontation.

**Kirner, Mrs Joan Elizabeth AC**

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (19:40): I want to pay tribute to Victoria's first female Premier, and Labor icon, Joan Kirner. Sadly, Joan passed away on Monday, 1 June after a long and brave battle with cancer. Joan Kirner has been properly remembered for her passionate advocacy for education reform, for her trailblazing role for women in politics through the founding of Emily's List and for her strength, determination and humour. In all these attributes, she inspired people throughout Victoria and, indeed, Australia. There is great affection for Joan Kirner in Victoria, and in Melbourne's west, Mrs Kirner was a formidable presence. She was a proud champion of the western suburbs of Melbourne. She was born in Essendon and, although she spent many years in Melbourne's outer eastern suburbs, she came back to the west when she commenced her parliamentary career. Joan was first elected to the Victorian Legislative Council in 1982 as the member for Melbourne West Province and later moved to the Legislative Assembly as the member for Williamstown in 1988.

She understood the western and north-western suburbs of Melbourne and championed this diverse, multicultural cluster of communities with great passion and commitment. I was delighted to see in *The Sydney Morning Herald* 's obituary yesterday a lovely photo of Joan in the early 1990s with design students at Broadmeadows TAFE in my electorate, now known as Kangan Batman TAFE. Even when she was a minister and Deputy Premier in the Cain government, and then as Premier herself, she remained a dedicated local member for her electorate. Joan continued to fight for her region even after she was no longer a parliamentarian. She campaigned hard to save the Williamstown railway line from closure by the then Kennett government. She helped to establish Victoria University and Scienceworks, an innovative science and technology museum in Spotswood. She also advocated for a metropolitan ring road in the west.
As Premier of Victoria her strength and no-nonsense approach helped her withstand the intensive and relentless media campaign run against her by the conservative media. The *Herald Sun* in particular was relentless in its depiction of her and constantly sought to draw attention to her gender. Joan never shrank from, nor was fazed by, the *Herald Sun*’s daily depiction of her, while Premier, as ‘a suburban housewife with an apron and mocassins’, a depiction that she herself said was because she came from the western suburbs. She was always depicted wearing what was later to become an iconic polka dot dress—a dress which she herself said on many occasions she had never worn. Joan always said that the best way to handle this was to turn it into a joke and play it up. This spirit of good humour also inspired her now famous appearance on *The Late Show* as Joan Jett, complete with leathers and a guitar. Joan was the founding patron of the Williamstown Literary Festival. She loved the arts as much as she loved sport, especially footy. A keen Essendon fan, Joan was also supportive of the Footscray Football Club as they were then called, which also has a strong community base in the west. She was a strong feminist but she could hold her own with any bunch of men in a pub and be perfectly at ease.

I was fortunate to have worked for Joan during the period when she was Minister for Education, in 1989, and witnessed firsthand her enormous energy, passion for reform and toughness. Her leadership in establishing the Victorian Certificate of Education has been rightly hailed as important in making secondary education in our state more equitable and merit based. This reform has made a huge difference to many students from the north-west of Melbourne. Joan Kirner’s lifelong commitment to education came from her own background as a working class girl who had the benefit of a good education. She was determined to ensure that these benefits would be available to all children, regardless of their circumstances.

As a fellow former teacher and member for a diverse electorate in Melbourne's north-west, I deeply appreciate all that she strove for and achieved. While a very tough and sometimes fearsome person, Joan always maintained many warm and genuine friendships throughout her career and life. She never lost her compassion, her humanity, her humour or her warmth. I think her own words sum up best how she managed to keep afloat despite the difficult circumstances during her premiership and beyond:

I learned that the best way of convincing the community about your abilities and your care for them and your passion was to be yourself, not to try to be somebody else.

I think she did this well to the very end. Vale Joan Kirner.

---

**Mr HOGAN (Page) (19:45):** I want to talk about a number of things that are happening in my community. One that I am very excited about, as obviously we all are, is about fulfilling an election promise. In April I announced the successful tenderer to install 52 hi-tech infra-red CCTV cameras around the Casino CBD. They are being placed in prominent positions throughout the town to make the community safer. The total cost of this project is $463,000. A live feed from all the cameras are sent to the Casino police station and is monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The infra-red cameras can recognise a face from several hundred metres. Four of the 52 cameras, known as PTZ cameras, can make a 360-degree sweep of the environment, change angles to look at objects both above and below the cameras, and zoom in to give objects greater detail. Evidence shows that surveillance is a
useful crime prevention strategy. The infra-red cameras will be placed at the intersections of Barker, Canterbury, Centre and Walker streets and will cover all adjoining areas, including the Irving Bridge and McAuliffe Park. The PTZ cameras will also be situated on Centre and Walker streets, Centre and Barker, and Barker and Walker as well as near the Caltex service station. Casino's cameras are part of this government's $50 million program over three years to make our streets safer. The second round is opening in the next couple of months, and I encourage all communities in the electorate of Page to apply for this. I congratulate the Richmond Valley Council on the way they have managed this program.

The second thing I would like to talk about is that this Saturday my community will be Walking the Walk for Lifeline Northern Rivers. It is an eight-kilometre walk, but it is mostly downhill. The people who participate in this annual walk will be raising money for Lifeline, and every dollar counts. Why would people be doing this walk? Because Lifeline saves lives every day. Lifeline is often the only 24-hour, seven-days-a-week service available to Australians in crisis. People who, for one reason or another, are struggling to cope with life's challenges often find this service lifesaving.

Lifeline Northern Rivers volunteer crisis supporters will answer more than 15,000 crisis calls this year. Many of those calls will come from people who are at imminent or significant risk of taking their own lives. Why will people do this walk? Because more than 2,500 Australians take their own lives every year, and Lifeline plays a key role in suicide prevention and intervention in the Northern Rivers. Also, Lifeline Northern Rivers is an important part of our region's social infrastructure. I recently had the honour of attending the opening of Lifeline Northern Rivers's new crisis support centre in Lismore, which was officially opened by Lifeline Australia CEO Jane Hayden. I would also like to acknowledge all the walkers and organisers of Saturday's event—in particular, Niall Mulligan, the counselling centre manager of Lifeline Northern Rivers. From personal experience, my own mother, who was a Lifeline phone counsellor, found it rewarding in the sense that she was doing volunteer work, but it also very much improved her life skills. She was always a very good listener, but she became an even better person after doing the training with Lifeline and gaining the skills they give you when learning that role.

The third thing I want to talk about is the Lantern Parade. People visiting my Lismore office will soon see giant star lanterns hanging from the roof. Many shops in my area are doing the same. It is all part of the annual Lismore Lantern Parade. This is an iconic community event on the streets of Lismore. It attracts literally thousands of people who line the street to watch the parade. It has a very festive atmosphere and has an amazingly large crowd. It is made up of community groups and schools, including preschools, who often attend lantern-making workshops in the lead-up to the parade. The parade is run by volunteers and funded by donations, and I would like to acknowledge everyone who is involved in putting this event together and all the people who come along and watch and make it the great community event that it is.

**McEwen Electorate: Broadband**

**Mr MITCHELL** (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (19:49): Before the election Australians were promised that:

Under the Coalition's NBN all premises will have access to download speeds of 25 megabits per second to 100 megabits per second by the end of 2016.
The Prime Minister repeated this promise on election night. He said:
I want our NBN rolled out within three years and Malcolm Turnbull is the right person to make this happen.

In my electorate of McEwen the government has failed spectacularly to deliver on this promise. The government now does not expect to finish this second-rate patchwork network until 2020. That is more than twice as long as they promised before the election. Before the election, Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull also promised that the total cost of their second-rate network would be $29.5 billion, but they have failed to deliver on this as well. According to the latest forecast, the total cost of the NBN will be about $42 billion. That $42 billion does not count the cost of upgrading the network down the track. And now they want to tax you for a connection. What you get for this price is a network that uses copper. Around Seymour in my electorate this copper is labelled KGV—not Telstra, not Telecom; it is King George V. This gives you an idea how old this stuff is—and the government expects to run high-speed broadband through it. It is a technology that NBN director Simon Hackett recently said 'sucks'.

Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull promised before the election that:
Suburbs, regions, towns and business districts with the poorest services and greatest need for upgrades will receive first priority.

That is simply not happening in my electorate of McEwen. I receive daily complaints of no broadband access or poor access in the suburbs of Doreen and Mernda. But are these people being prioritised? No. They are not even mentioned in the government's latest 18-month rollout plan. Our communities are being completely ignored.

The same goes for Gisborne. Gisborne is not even mentioned in the rollout plan. We have even had businesses move out of Gisborne because they are unable to get access to the internet. The minister's office does not even know what areas are getting the NBN. We received a letter dated 4 March 2015 stating that the minister is 'pleased to advise that Sunbury is included in the new NBN Co rollout plan' and that it 'will take place within the next 18 months'. Good news, you say. We received a letter two weeks later, dated 19 March, that said, 'A search of NBN Co's website indicates that Sunbury is not currently included in the national rollout plan.' Incompetent, out of touch and generally misleading, describes this government. I wrote to the minister on behalf of Mark and Kylee Leeson, of New Gisborne South, in January this year. We still have not had a response.

We could also talk about the government's ridiculously under-funded and slow-moving Mobile Black Spot Program. McEwen communities meet all criteria for the funding: we encompass several rural communities, we live near busy transport routes and we are constantly under threat from natural disasters. In the Bend of Islands almost half the community have issues with their telecommunications, including little or no mobile-phone coverage. I included this area in my submission to the government as part of their Mobile Black Spot Program. There is still no response. We have even seen Tony Abbott's own MPs criticise the government's program, with the member for Mallee saying, 'We have been in government for 17 months now and we are still fluffing around over it. Frankly, it is too slow to roll out. It is time we got it done.'

Let us look at Australia Post. In our community of Craigieburn, a decision has been made to relocate the current post office at Craigieburn plaza to Craigieburn Central shopping centre.
With post offices located at Highlands Shopping Centre and the new service at Craigieburn Central, they will be only three kilometres apart. A cursory glance of Craigieburn will show that almost 90 per cent of the suburb will be without a post office within close proximity. There is also concern that the plaza post office closure will contribute to the already difficult retail environment for traders at that shopping centre.

This House has recently received a petition from some 2,000 Craigieburn residents who are rightfully angry about the decision to close the plaza post office. The Minister for Communications needs to end the self-ego fondling. He needs to do his job and start listening to the very real needs and concerns of our communities across McEwen, instead of focusing his energy on trying to become the Prime Minister.

Queensland: Infrastructure

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (19:54): My home state of Queensland is being short-changed by the Palaszczuk Labor government on infrastructure development. They turned their backs on billions of dollars of infrastructure money associated with asset recycling. Queensland was to have access to the $5 billion first-come-first-served asset-recycling pool that would have allowed the Queensland government to work with the private sector to build billions of dollars of new infrastructure for Queensland. But thanks to Labor, Queensland will get none of this money.

So while the Palaszczuk government is rejecting money that will develop infrastructure and create jobs in Queensland, New South Wales and the ACT are expected to generate more than $15 billion of infrastructure activity from their involvement. As if that stupidity was not enough, the Palaszczuk government refuses to outline their own plan for job-creating infrastructure projects. Sadly for Queenslanders, they do not have a plan.

Much of what Labor has done in Queensland since they came to power has been to scrap, sideline and stall major projects, and they have no ideas of their own to boost jobs. Back in April, the Labor Treasurer in Queensland, Curtis Pitt, could not even name the infrastructure projects when he was seeking funding from the federal government. On 1 May he tried to take credit for major projects initiated and funded by the LNP. After that he tried to claim that Queensland was in recession. There is no doubt about it, the Palaszczuk Labor government is completely clueless. On the one hand, the Queensland Treasurer says he wants to be positive about the Queensland economy and, on the other, last month, he falsely claimed that Queensland was in recession.

It is not just me saying that the Palaszczuk government has no idea. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland Director of Advocacy, Nick Behrens, also disagreed with Mr Pitt's assessment, last month, when he said: ‘The danger of talking down the economy is that it undermines investment.’ The logic of this should be very obvious to most people, except Mr Pitt and the Labor Party.

That is in direct contrast to the extensive list of infrastructure projects the LNP has and will deliver for Queensland. They are: the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing, $1.6 billion; the Government Wireless Network, $457.3 million, net present value; the New Generation Rollingstock, $4.4 billion; Queensland Schools, $1.38 billion; the Queens Wharf Integrated Resort Development, which will be a multi-billion-dollar project that will create many jobs; the Commonwealth Games venues, which are three new venues and upgrades to eight existing
venues; Yeerongpilly Green, 250 jobs and $850 million; Pacific View Estate on the Gold Coast, 3,500 homes and 2,700 new jobs; the Beaudesert Bypass, to help unlock new industrial jobs at the Bromelton State Development Area; and the Coomera Interchange, exit 54 on the Pacific Motorway, which will ensure that a new $1 billion commercial and retail precinct goes ahead at the Coomera Town Centre.

These are just some of the many projects that the LNP have delivered for the state of Queensland. All the Queensland Treasurer is doing at the moment is talking down the economy, depriving Queensland of major infrastructure projects that will increase the economic activity of our state, and many investors are throwing their hands up in the air. The government keep changing their minds from one day to the next. All that does is increase the sovereign risk of firms wanting to invest in our wonderful state of Queensland, when Queensland should be booming.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is inexperienced, incompetent and incapable of taking Queensland forward or building the much needed infrastructure that our state needs to take it forward, and it is incapable of fostering the business confidence that the business community so very desperately needs to ensure they have the confidence to invest in those projects and create jobs.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It being 8 pm, the debate is interrupted. Question agreed to.

House adjourned at 20:00

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Truss: to present a Bill for an Act to amend the Airports Act 1996, and for other purposes.

Mr Morrison: to present a Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to social security and veterans' entitlements, and for related purposes.

Mr Morrison: to present a Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to Australian and foreign travel documents, and for related purposes.

Mr Frydenberg: to present a Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to energy grants, customs and excise, and for other purposes.

Mr Frydenberg: to move:

That:

1) this House refer the following matters, relating to the impairment of customer loans, to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services for inquiry and report by 31 March 2016: the

(a) practices of banks and other financial institutions using a constructive default (security revaluation) process to impair loans, where constructive default/security revaluation means the engineering or the creation of an event of default whereby a financial institution deliberately reduces, through valuation, the value of securities held by that institution, thereby raising the loan-to-value ratio resulting in the loan being impaired;

(b) role of property valuers in any constructive default (security revaluation) process;
that practices of banks and other financial institutions in Australia using non-monetary conditions of default to impair the loans of their customers, and the use of punitive clauses such as suspension clauses and offset clauses by these institutions;

(d) role of insolvency practitioners as part of this process;

(e) implications of relevant recommendations of the Financial System Inquiry, particularly recommendations 34 and 36 relating to non-monetary conditions of default and the external administration regime respectively;

(f) extent to which borrowers are given an opportunity to rectify any genuine default event and the time period typically provided for them to do so;

(g) provision of reasonable written notice to a borrower when a loan is required to be repaid;

(h) appropriateness of the loan to value ratio as a mechanism to default a loan during the period of the loan; and

(i) conditions and requirements to be met prior to the appointment of an external administrator; and

(2) in undertaking this inquiry, the Committee take evidence on:

(a) the incidence and history of:

(i) loan impairments; and

(ii) the forced sale of property;

(b) the effect of the forced sale of property in depressed market conditions and drought;

(c) comparisons between valuations and sale price;

(d) the adequacy of the legal obligations on lenders and external administrators (including s420A of the Corporations Act 2001) to obtain fair market value for the forced sale of property; and

(e) any related matters.

Ms MacTiernan: to move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that in its 2015 budget, the Government has slashed investment in science, research and innovation agencies and programs, including cuts of:

(a) $114 million from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation;

(b) $75 million from the Australian Research Council (ARC);

(c) $27.5 million from the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation;

(d) $80 million from Cooperative Research Centres;

(e) $173.7 million from the Research Training Scheme;

(f) $260 million from the abolition of Commercialisation Australia;

(g) $84 million from ceasing National ICT Australia funding from 2016;

(h) $120 million from Defence Science and Technology Organisation;

(i) $16.1 million from Geoscience Australia;

(j) $7.8 million from the Australian Institute of Marine Science;

(k) $263 million from Sustainable Research Excellence for universities;

(l) $27 million more from the Cooperative Research Centres program; and

(m) $27 million from its own Entrepreneurs’ Infrastructure Programme;
(2) calls on the Minister for Education to explain the decision to provide $4 million in funding for the establishment of the Bjorn Lomborg Australian Consensus Centre at the University of Western Australia without any reference to the ARC; and

(3) condemns the Government for the lack of transparency around the decision to fund the research centre, while at the same time making significant funding cuts to science, research and innovation.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hawke) took the chair at 09:31.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Holt Electorate: Casey Cultural Precinct Regional Arts Centre

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (09:31): A major challenge that I have been committed to since I became the member for Holt has been ensuring that families who live in the outer suburbs have what I call the social infrastructure that they need. My electorate could be characterised as a growth-belt suburb. It is a suburb to which many young families move to live and create a better future for themselves. I think the responsibility of government is to ensure that, if you are inviting people to live in the outer suburbs, you provide what I again call the social infrastructure that they need. In that vein, I would like to talk about two positive things, and unfortunately I will touch on one negative thing, with respect to providing that necessary social infrastructure. Firstly, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for the $10 million contribution that has been recently made to the City of Casey to build the new Bunjil Place Casey Cultural Precinct Regional Arts Centre in my electorate. This project will result in 1,200 new jobs during the construction period and over 53 ongoing jobs. It will enable the City of Casey to build something close to a $130 million world-class regional facility. It really is a splendid concept and I fully supported that concept. I wrote to Minister Truss supporting this. This has received bipartisan support. The member for La Trobe has been a strong supporter and the member for Flinders has been a strong supporter, so we have all come together for the common good, if you like, to lobby the federal government to get the funding. I congratulate the Prime Minister on providing that $10 million.

The other thing that I want to talk about in a similar vein is the opening of the headspace facility in Narre Warren on 22 May 2015. This is as a consequence of a long campaign by young people like Dani Rothwell, who has been at the coalface with experience, and there is the challenge of the rate of youth suicide in our area. When those things were occurring, that necessary social infrastructure was not there. Now it is there as a consequence of the lobbying of these young people. To Dani and her fellow students who lobbied long and hard and lobbied me for a period of time: mission accomplished. That facility is there. I would just like more ongoing support for that in terms of certainty about the management.

In the time remaining, the third issue that I would like to raise is the Medicare office at the Fountain Gate shopping centre. I lobbied for many years for that to be present. It was opened by the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, in 2004. Again, it was a bipartisan measure, with the then member for Latrobe, Bob Charles, and I. It is going to be closed. It is going to be taken out of the Westfield shopping centre and put into the Centrelink office on Webb Street. It is not a move that I support and I really do regret that something that is absolutely necessary to the needs of people who go into the shopping centre—(Time expired)
Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (09:34): In my travels throughout the Paterson electorate, I constantly meet residents who work extremely hard for others to make our community a much better place. These unsung heroes, who do such amazing and inspirational work, generally do not seek reward or recognition for their efforts. It is particularly timely to responsibly recognise their efforts. It is in this light that I call on my constituents to nominate individuals within our community who they feel have been inspirational or deserve recognition for the Paterson Citizen of the Year Awards. This will be an opportunity to praise the achievements and the services of so many amazing individuals and groups who we encounter in our daily lives. There are seven categories for nomination: there is the Citizen of the Year for 18- to 65-year-olds; Senior Citizen of the Year for those aged 65-plus; Young Citizen of the Year for those aged 18 years and under; the Community Organisation of the Year, the Corporate Citizen of the Year, Sports Achiever of the Year for those aged 18-plus, and Young Sports Achiever of the Year for those aged 18 years and under. I will be honouring these citizens personally at the Paterson Citizen of the Year Awards later this year accompanied by a very special guest.

There are heroes and there are villains in the community in which we live. I was discouraged to hear that there are allegations of rorting of the disaster recovery payments following the April storms in my region that impacted so many people. These disaster recovery payments schemes were designed to help those who have been hit hard by the storms and the floods, to provide them with some financial assistance and to help them get back on their feet. The government proposed to do this through offering $1,000 per adult and $400 per child payments to those directly impacted. Out of the 54,000 claims that have been made—and paid for—for this one-off disaster recovery payment, I was deeply troubled to hear that some 450 claims have been identified for further examination as potential fraud. Although the vast majority of people in receipt of these payments are genuine and honest, it is still open to exploitation, with a number of people potentially obtaining payments to which they are not properly entitled. It is a priority of government to ensure that the people impacted by this storm receive the necessary assistance as soon as possible. What makes this situation difficult is when people are falsely claiming entitlements.

I am also pleased to report to my primary producers in the electorate of Paterson, and indeed throughout the Hunter region, that, after much lobbying, the state government has now lodged its application for Category C assistance with the federal government. I understand this is being processed as quickly as possible.

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (09:37): Melbourne's west is lucky to be home to many small and medium-sized arts institutions and independent artists. I am proud to be a financial supporter of institutions like the Footscray Community Arts Centre, the Williamstown Literary Festival, the Newport Substation, Western Edge Youth Arts and a range of independent artists working in our community. On the wall of my parliamentary office there is a piece by Phuong Ngo, a Substation contemporary arts prize winner. In my Melbourne...
office there is a series by Pamela Debrincat, created as part of FCAC's ArtLife program. On my bookshelves are books by authors from Melbourne's west, including Alice Pung, Jane Rawson and Leigh Hobbs.

I personally support the arts in Melbourne's west; not only because my family and I patronise them—although we certainly do!—but because they enrich all of our lives, strengthen our community and contribute to the creative economy that has been emerging in the west for some years. Our artists tell our stories. They remind us that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. They inspire us and console us and challenge us with our shared humanity. This is why successive Australian governments have publicly supported the arts in Australia. Yet now, Minister for the Arts George Brandis has cut funding to the Australia Council for the Arts and put himself in charge of over $100 million of funding over four years. Young and emerging artists, like so many of the artists in Melbourne's west, are bearing the brunt of these changes.

As a result of the Abbott government's budget measures, the Australia Council has announced that it will not proceed with the next round of arts funding grants and has stopped a number of programs and suspended funding for some organisations. The ArtStart, Creative Communities Partnerships Initiative and Artists in Residence programs will not be offered in the future. Many of these Australia Council programs are targeted at small and medium-sized organisations and at young and emerging artists—the artists in my community that I was talking about. The future of these organisations is now at the whim of Senator George Brandis. Yet weeks after the announcement of this decision, the minister still cannot explain how these decisions will be made. There is no policy rationale for this decision. It is just a naked, political attack on independent arts funding. The consequences of these changes cannot be overstated. They will devastate the fragile ecology of the Australian arts sector for a decade to come, and recovering from these cuts will be a long road indeed.

At its core, the arts is about storytelling. In standing against these cuts, I want to finish by sharing a local artist's story. This is his story about what these cuts will mean:

To be an artist in Australia, you have to be hard working, resourceful and frugal. And tough. Unlike the US and Europe, we don't have a tradition of philanthropy;

I worked as an artist, had some success, solo shows at good galleries, won a few prizes. Sold work. It was a difficult way to live. In stark contrast to the idea many people have of artists, it was time consuming, emotionally draining and lonely.

What these artists did have until the last federal budget was a system of small grants to help artists make their work—money for materials and that sort of thing, money that more often than not went straight back into the local economy, assisting and making art along the way. Art is a wonderful and brilliant part of being human. Australians should be making art. Australia should look after its artists.

Agriculture

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa—Deputy Speaker) (09:40): Last night I had the great opportunity of joining with part of the alumni of Nuffield scholars for a dinner here in Parliament House. Yesterday and today they will be visiting Parliament House and many places here in Canberra before they leave tomorrow on their agricultural scholarship for their Global Focus tour. They are an inspiration to be with, and I know that when they return they
will be part of the future of agricultural leadership in Australia. I wish them well on their study as they leave tomorrow. It is in the context of them being here last night and the issue that we so often talk about—world food security—and the opportunities that we have in this nation to be part of the solution long-term for agricultural and food production that I want to talk briefly about Australia's agricultural land base. Since early European settlement in Australia we have been able to just go and find more land—it has been there in abundance. We have been able to expand with demand and grow that expansion.

Mining is very important to Australia. It creates jobs, wealth and export income that we all benefit from. But what I have seen with the expansion of the mining sector and urban encroachment, as well as some prime agricultural land being sold for nothing more than lifestyle reasons, is that our agricultural land, particularly our prime agricultural land base, could be at risk. Let me give you some examples. We have all seen the well-documented expansion of the coal industry in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales. Whilst the coal industry is important, it is the expansion into productive agricultural land that worries me. In my own electorate, with coal seam gas in the Surat Basin around Warra and Haystack the mining companies want to open up a coalmine on this magnificent, irreplaceable agricultural land. Some of the rehabilitation I have seen by the mining sector has not been good. It is not world-class. I am very concerned about our prime agricultural land base.

I know that states have responsibility not only for regulations but also for planning. We in this place have said that we want to know more about who owns the land, whether it is urban, housing in the cities or agricultural land; we want to see that register which has been kept in the past by states. I think it is time that we looked at our whole agricultural land base in Australia. We need to have a register of our prime agricultural land and we need to know how it is being developed so that, in the long term, we preserve our prime agricultural food-producing land and secure its future. Mining will come and mining will go, but agricultural production and the need for it will go on forever.

**Irrigation**

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (09:43): Very shortly we will be putting forward a program to government which requires that each of the landholders in North Queensland at station properties get 200 hectares per station of freehold irrigation land. Anyone holding less than 200 hectares can get total irrigation on their lands. At present there are 162 million megalitres of water in North Queensland. We are using one million megalitres of that. It is not only a very poor reflection on government; it is also immoral. Our nearest neighbours have some 80 million people going to bed hungry every night.

On top of that, we need 30 by 1,200 hectare fattening blocks, growing-out blocks, to feed our live cattle going to Indonesia. It is the most inefficient of industries. At the present moment the cattleman gets $1.60 and the shipper gets 90 cents—so that is $2.50—and $1.50 is not going into profiting the in-betweens but to inefficiencies. This will enable us to walk the cattle from block to block onto a jetty onto a barge straight out into deep-water big ships. I will not go into what is happening at the moment.

The populations in the towns of Cloncurry, Normanton, Georgetown and particularly the mid-west towns of Hughenden, Richmond and Julia Creek have dropped to a quarter of what they were 30 or 40 years ago. They are just vanishing, as are all inland towns in Queensland, off the face of the earth. The irrigation scheme in Hughenden is shovel ready now and those
in Richmond and Einasleigh will be soon. The UBurIS south of Charters Towers involves the production of $1,200 million worth of ethanol every year and the production of about $200 million of electricity a year, while the value of cattle fattening could be $400 million but is most certainly $200 million. That scheme requires nothing of government except a guarantee on the funds needed—(Time expired)

Australian Natural Disasters

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (09:46): On Monday, the Prime Minister signed off on nearly $30 million in Category D funding to further help regions affected by Cyclone Marcia, which occurred earlier this year. I have spoken to local governments in my electorate of Flynn and they are pleased and relieved with the announcement. It shows our government does care about regional Australia. North Burnett and Banana Shires are confident the Category D funding will help repair most of the damage to infrastructure in their areas.

There are four important recovery initiatives included in this funding package: $20 million for the Queensland Betterment Fund; $6 million for the clean-up and restoration of recreational assets; $1 million to assist councils with green waste clean-up; and $750,000 for three industry recovery officers to support primary producers and small businesses and help them with their claims. This is a significant package for communities and local councils, which the member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry, and I have both fought hard to get. The package will provide a boost for the four shires in the region—Keppel, Rockhampton, Banana and North Burnett.

These initiatives are in addition to the assistance our government has already made available under the NDRRA—that is, covering Categories A, B and C—which are helping to reconstruct the area. These categories cover emergency and recovery support for affected individuals, concessional loans and clean-up grants for small businesses, primary producers and not-for-profit bodies. The federal government has also funded local council and state agencies to rebuild damaged infrastructure. More than $5 million has been given to restore social networks and build community resilience throughout the recovery process. Small business and agricultural industries were wiped out by Cyclone Marcia.

This is a pleasing result and it shows our government is committed to ensuring people in regional areas are looked after. I know we have had many disasters in New South Wales and Queensland already this year. It is clear, from these actions, that this government stands up not just for the cities but also for the regions of Queensland. It is clear that this is a government for all Australians, and not just a few.

Multiculturalism

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (09:49): As you well know, Australia is a tolerant society, but on the weekend we saw some of those views challenged. There were frightening scenes when a rally organised by the United Patriots Front—a misnomer, surely—appeared on the streets of Melbourne. Thankfully, they were confronted by a counterprotesters from the Campaign against Racism and Fascism. I hope the reported violent clashes between these two protest groups is not an emerging trend. Closer to home, in Moreton, last week a 22-year-old woman was convicted after using social media to target a community advocate with vile anti-Islamic abuse. I do know that gutless, vile and cowardly abuse on social media definitely is an emerging trend.
My electorate of Moreton is very multicultural. I represent a large number of different religious and ethnic groups—there are communities from Sudan, Bosnia, Vietnam, Taiwan, China and Korea, and many others, scattered throughout my electorate. Some of my own constituents have reported to me that these incidents of abuse have been increasing. It can be a challenge to live harmoniously in a multicultural society—living next door to somebody who is different—but obviously since white settlement began we have not always treated minority groups in Australia as well as we should. I am particularly reminded of that today on the 23rd anniversary of the Mabo decision. Back then the High Court's Justice Brennan in his landmark judgment said:

A common law doctrine founded on unjust discrimination in the enjoyment of civil and political rights demands reconsideration.

Mason's High Court spoke 204 years after 1788, so it is helpful to be reminded that we do not always get it right. But what is important is that when we are wrong, we must admit it and make changes, whether that be to the law or to our individual behaviour.

Intolerance manifests from a natural fear of the unknown. It will always be present in Australia but politicians and community leaders must do all that we can to reach out and keep such intolerance in check. That is our responsibility. None of us are perfect but we can all do better and do more. It is only when we get to know our neighbours that we lose that fear of the unknown. Our own history shows that to be the case: if we ignore or, even worse, demonise minority groups—be they from a culture or a religion—then we are not only escalating the intolerance but we are not giving ourselves the chance to enrich the Australian story. In my electorate the Muslim community are very valued members of the larger population. They are playing a great role in countering radicalisation of young people. Their contribution to society should be applauded and encouraged.

(Time expired)

Lyons Electorate: Campbell Town Show

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (09:52): It gives me great pleasure to rise and congratulate the Midland Agricultural Association on successfully conducting the 177th Campbell Town Show—this is in fact the oldest show in the southern hemisphere. It is a wonderful community event and is very important to the small community of Campbell Town and also the broader community within the northern midlands.

It is run by volunteers one and all. It starts with the children and young people at the Campbell Town District High School and it extends to: John Taylor, the president; David Taylor, the incoming president; Jo Dowling; Daniel and Sue Fish, long-time supporters of the Campbell Town Show; George Gatenby; Georgie Wallace; Bridget Walch, who runs the exhibition hall—and I commit myself next year to entering in the man cake competition; Alan Phillips, who runs the wool exhibition; Peter Blackwood, who does the prime lambs; Georgie Pengilley; Jack Monks, who does the shearing competition; Amanda Beams, who does the chopping; Philip Melrose, who runs the sheepdogs and smithfields; Lisa Lucas, who runs the hunt exhibition; Isabel Casey, who runs the equestrian events; Lauren Clomp, who runs the excellent fashion parade which is an iconic event at the Campbell Town Show; Sophie Affleck, who runs the gala ball held on Saturday night this year, and to the Campbell Town combined churches, who put on the lunches on the two days over the Friday and Saturday, and Cataract on Gorge, who runs the bar.
Congratulations this year go to the sheep exhibitors who came from Tasmania, South Australia—for the first time—Victoria and New South Wales. The supreme merino exhibit was won by Robert Harding from Glendonald in Victoria. The grand champion fleece went to Trefusis—congratulations to Georgie Wallace. The New England Wool award, presented by my good friend Andrew Raeber, went to Julian Cotton from Kelvedon on the east coast of Tasmania. The most valuable fleece went to Frank and Josie Chester of Camelford at Campbell Town.

A show like this would not run without sponsors. A long-term sponsor of the Campbell Town Show is Roberts Limited, in their 150th year of operation. Congratulations to them, also. Many others—agricultural businesses and individuals—support the Campbell Town Show. These volunteers have my thanks and my admiration for the amazing job they do. Congratulations to all on another wonderful Campbell Town Show this year.

**Infrastructure**

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (09:55): I rise this morning to speak about infrastructure in Victoria. We have had the Prime Minister down in Victoria a few times over the last few months, talking about congestion and tweeting from Punt Road; running an A-frame and adding to the congestion on Victorian roads, and erroneously and defiantly claiming that Labor, both state and federal, do not care about transport. And yet the truth of the matter, when you look at the figures, is very clear. It is very clear that this Prime Minister, although he claims to be the Prime Minister for infrastructure, is anything but the Prime Minister for infrastructure.

In Victoria we know this because the federal government will not be making a contribution to the Melbourne Metro, even though Infrastructure Australia has it as its No. 1 priority. We know it because we are finally going to get the upgrade to the Western Ring Road. The Western Ring Road is something that people in my electorate use regularly; they are often caught in what is left of the tangle because this government stopped the funding to complete the upgrade of the Western Ring Road when they came into power. That is right—it would have been finished some time ago but for this government. Now this government would like to take questions in question time on the $150 million they are going to contribute, as if they are doing Victoria a favour—as if we missed the fact that although we have 25 per cent of the population in Victoria, we are only getting eight per cent of infrastructure spending across the next four years.

People in Victoria—people in Lalor—are wise to this Prime Minister. They are wise to the broken promises. They are wise to the fact that he will say and do anything to make the people of Australia believe that he is going to do something only to, weeks later, turn around and do the exact opposite. I welcome the Victorian Labor government's commitment to completing the upgrade of the M80 Western Ring Road, where we are slowed to two lanes. I welcome this work going ahead, and everyone in my electorate welcomes this work going ahead, because it is Melbourne's second-busiest highway and it needs to be completed; this upgrade needs to be completed. We need the Whitten bridge to be widened. We need that bottleneck to be removed. But it is no thanks to this so-called Prime Minister of infrastructure, because he has reduced the federal contribution that will be made in Victoria and has committed only eight per cent of the infrastructure spend over the next four years to Victoria.
Why he is treating Victoria so unfairly, I will leave for the Prime Minister to answer. (Time expired)

**Lindsay Electorate: Youth Sports Grants**

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (09:58): It is fabulous to see here in the chamber a fellow traveller from Western Sydney in the member for Mitchell, a fellow enthusiast for local sport right across Western Sydney. I stand here today proud of nine wonderful young Australian athletes from our region in Western Sydney. These nine athletes have been working hard in their clubs. They have been working hard in their zones. Some of them have been working hard in their states, and some of them are even representing Australia at national levels.

I am announcing today that these nine individuals, these wonderful young athletes, will be receiving sporting grants for the sports they are pursuing. These nine athletes are very passionate young people—like Aimee Carlin of Emu Plains, who participated in the youth triathlon championships in May. Amy writes:

I have worked my way up to this level in triathlon over the last couple of years, representing my regional area in state and recently the Oceania competition. Competing against the best athletes in Australia at the championships will improve me as a competitor and also give me a chance to learn from these athletes how to prepare myself for competition.

Brennan Rymer, from Claremont Meadows, competed in the under-18 Australian Junior Basketball Championships in April. He trains four nights a week. He writes:

I have just begun assisting a couple of the younger children right across the sport and I'm very looking forward to this championship.

Elise Izzard, from Glenmore Park, writes how much she loves basketball and competing in the national women's league.

James Dare is a softball player. James writes that he has participated in the under-15 regional championships in Rockhampton. He also was in the Western Sydney Academy of Sport.

Then we have Georgia Britton. Georgia is a wonderful, young softball player. She has competed at the New South Wales Metros earlier this year and is in the esteemed under-15s competition.

Emily Imber, from Emu Heights, has qualified for the Australian figure skating competition. She has been training and working hard for the last three years. She talks about the sacrifices and the commitment of her family to allow her the opportunity to participate at the levels she does.

Cheyne Easthorpe, from Cranebrook, talks about her goal to play in the Australian Regional Softball Championship and has now qualified to play in the one-day championship and represent the Australian team.

Samantha Thrupp played softball for the Australian under-17s championship and Amy Kellett, attending Westfield Sports High, played in the New South Wales Junior State Cup in 2015.

We will be presenting these young athletes with $500 grants to help them participate in their sports at Westfield over the weekend. (Time expired)
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Irons): In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.

**BILLS**

- Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016
- Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015-2016
- Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016
- Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2014-2015
- Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2014-2015

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (10:01): I will continue from where I left off last night when I was speaking about the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016 and cognate debate, and what a wonderful budget this was. At that time I was particularly quoting Mr Behrens, of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland, who said the budget:

... will materially benefit the State's 403,000 small businesses that employ more than one million Queenslanders ...

He went on:

The budget will benefit many small businesses through boosting confidence rather than detracting from it, as occurred last year.

When coupled with the range of stimulus measures small business is obviously the biggest winner from this budget. In 20 years I cannot recall such a small business friendly federal budget.

Mr Behrens also said that the budget recognised the imperative to tackle the embedded structure deficit that existed and to commence paying down the debt. The CCIQ also sounded a warning to the opposition on these budget measures and, in so doing, he had this to say:

The Senate and Opposition needs to avoid holding the Budget to ransom with a populist, negative campaign.

The Senate has struck fear into the business community and the general lack of collaboration between the Federal Government and independent Senators has unquestionably undermined business confidence and in turn investment.

This Budget, in our view, strikes the right balance in trimming government spending, but also in securing sensible tax reform and, in turn, economic growth and job creation.

Getting Australia and Queensland back on a strong growth footing must be the top priority. We cannot afford another year of reform gridlock.

So my message to Labor is this: simply listen. Listen to your small business constituency out there. Get on board and get out of the way. They want to grow. They want to employ people. They want to improve and add to the economic growth of this country.

In terms of infrastructure for Brisbane and Queensland, the government is investing some $13.4 billion to build infrastructure, with $1.6 billion to be funded in the 2015-16 period, with a further $16,170,607 being provided to the Brisbane City Council in the Roads to Recovery...
program. This is a very good program. It funds roads at a grassroots level and it has had an enormous impact in communities in Brisbane.

Under the Stronger Communities program, Brisbane also will receive $150,000 per year over two years for small capital projects. A number of community groups, schools and sporting organisations will benefit enormously. It will make a big difference to the many hundreds of volunteers who roll up on Saturday mornings during the week, who contribute to our local society and who are an important part of the fabric of our everyday communities. Under the Community Development Grants program, the Brisbane Broncos will receive $5 million in 2015-16, $250,000 will go to the Jeeps Rugby Club for a facilities upgrade and $750,000 will go to the Brisbane inner north sporting community to develop a community centre at Hickey Park.

I am absolutely delighted by a smaller amount—while it is only $125,000, it is fantastic—that is going to OzHarvest, which has expanded into Queensland. They have a really valuable program to help the homeless. The grant will fund a new van that will help them distribute food to shelters and groups that provide assistance to homeless people. I will be launching that program and its new funding next week. Matt Moran, one of our country's most famous chefs, will also be on board—he is an ambassador for OzHarvest—along with Ronni Kahn, who was one of Australia's Local Heroes a few years back. She won that much coveted award for her work in starting OzHarvest. I am delighted to be joining them at the formal ceremony to hand over the money to buy that much needed van. I commend the excellent work that OzHarvest does around this country.

I want to make special reference to those measures in the budget that impact on women. We need to get the country out of debt, we need to ensure the economy is strong and we need to ensure that services are targeted to those in need. There is a simple fact here that seems to completely elude Labor and the Greens: no woman can be better off in a country that spends beyond its means. That is a recipe for long-term disaster. The good news is that under this budget Australian women and their families will be better off. The budget supports women in achieving that better balance between their work and family life, as well as helping them to improve their economic security while contributing to a strong economic future for Australia.

That is what is in this budget. We are delivering $4.4 billion to make our childcare system much more affordable, accessible and flexible. This will help bring more women into work. The families package will provide greater choice to more than 1.2 million families by delivering affordable access to quality child care and early childhood learning, particularly to low-income families. It was a pleasure to have the Hon. Scott Morrison visit the Lyndhurst childcare centre last week.

The Jobs and Small Business package will provide tax relief and other incentives to encourage investment and grow small business. This will help the 480,000 women who are small business owners, as well as entrepreneurs and job seekers. We have designed wage subsidies, including a new subsidy for parents on income support who register with Job Active and have been dealing with employment services for six months or more. This will particularly help young mothers.

I am excited about the additional investment of more than $63 million in new and existing microfinance initiatives that will also help to build the financial resilience of women and ensure the wellbeing of their families, as well as the $600 million investment in better access
to medicine, in supporting women affected by late stage breast cancer and in providing more effective cervical cancer screening that will save the lives of 140 women a year. In addition to these very important initiatives, there is $25 million of additional funding to deliver front-line legal support to women and children experiencing domestic and family violence and there is $230 million for a two-year extension of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, which will prioritise those victims of domestic violence facing homelessness.

The budget will help shiftworkers. The pilot program that will provide $246 million for the nanny trial is very well thought of, and it will help nurses, police and other emergency services in my electorate in particular, so I am absolutely delighted by that. I am also delighted by the opportunity for women to participate more fully in the workforce. They are the most underutilised source of skills and entrepreneurship. Every woman that participates in the workforce contributes to our GDP; and, if we had six per cent more women participating in work, it has been shown that GDP would increase to $25 billion a year. These are staggering figures.

I am particularly impressed by the Green Army spending in the budget, $179 million over the four years. We will have the largest on-the-ground environmental Green Army program and it will continue with funding of $704 million over the forward estimates. It was great to see Green Army projects in my electorate funded: the Banks Street Reserve, Kedron Brook catchment and Ithaca Creek. These are fantastic local projects that will be delivered this year.

I thank the Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, for the investment in the Great Barrier Reef and all that he is doing to protect our waters. We are investing $100 million in the Reef Trust, in addition to our election commitment and initial contribution of $40 million. There has been much improvement through water quality and coastal habitation initiatives, as well as the protection of threatened and migratory species, especially dugongs and turtles. I also applaud Minister Hunt for the UNESCO result the other day and I thank him very much. Since coming into government, we have taken unprecedented steps to address the concerns of the World Heritage committee which were raised while Labor were in government, so I was very pleased to see that Barrier Reef result the other day.

In the short time left for me to speak, I also want to commend the allocation of $10.2 million to be spent on the Enhanced Land Force stage 2 project at Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera. Queensland is home to 22,000 Defence Force personnel, and I thank them for all they do for our country. (Time expired)

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (10:12): This is a budget that delivers the growth, jobs and opportunities that people on the Central Coast deserve. It is a 'have a go' budget that builds on the commitments this government has already made to the people of my electorate, and I am proud to be part of a government that is delivering not only a great plan for our nation but a fantastic plan for the Central Coast in a way that Labor never did over the six years that they represented people in my electorate on the Central Coast.

As I will outline in this speech today, we are standing up for the coast by delivering more jobs, more growth opportunity for small businesses and more opportunities for our community to thrive. This is a budget I am really proud of. It is a budget that has already been well received across the electorate by families, small businesses and indeed my community. It is fair, it is balanced and it is good for the Central Coast because it unlocks the potential of
our region. As a passionate 'coastie' I believe we are on track to build a stronger region, thanks to many of the initiatives in this budget.

One of the major highlights of this budget is our Growing Jobs and Small Business package. There are practical measures to help small businesses on Central Coast to invest, to hire, to grow and to thrive. There is the lowest company tax rate for small businesses in almost 50 years. There are tax cuts of 1.5 per cent for incorporated small businesses with an annual turnover of up to $2 million. Unincorporated small businesses will get a five per cent tax discount, up to $1,000 a year. Start-ups will be allowed to immediately deduct professional expenses, providing cash-flow benefits. We are also expanding tax concessions for employee share schemes.

In some of the best news from this budget, small businesses with a turnover of less than $2 million can claim an immediate tax deduction for each and every asset purchase of up to $20,000, up to 30 June 2017. For many businesses on the Central Coast, this means they can now buy machinery or equipment costing up to $20,000 for their businesses and deduct the full amount immediately from their taxable income. This is about creating an environment where people with real ambition and enterprise are out there creating jobs, because we know it is not government that creates jobs; it is business that creates jobs. Our small businesses, who are the engine room, the backbone, of our economy, can have a go and can grow, thrive, prosper and succeed.

Labor claims that they had a scheme as well. But Labor linked it to a failed mining tax which did not actually raise any money, whereas we have integrated it into our responsible long-term economic plan which also involves us getting back to surplus in a credible way. Labor put something on the table that was not funded and which was designed to distract people, but our budget engages our local businesses and encourages them to help boost our economy. I spoke with the regional manager of the New South Wales Central Coast Business Chamber, Dan Farmer. He said that five years ago the small business community was not even mentioned on budget night, but now it is front and centre of the budget commentary. He described this budget as a 'small business budget.' He said that the cut in company tax rate and the asset purchase reduction is a massive boost and that this may allow the small business owner to employ that extra apprentice, or extend the hours of a current employee.

I spoke with Logan, Erika and Peter, the owners of a very popular cafe called Fahrenheit Cafe in East Gosford. It is a great cafe. They actually taught me how to make a coffee a couple of weeks ago! They said they are actually thinking of buying a new fridge to get their cafe up and running in the local community. Edgar Adams, the editor of the Central Coast Business Review—a very esteemed business publication on the Central Coast—said, 'At last, a budget that recognises small business. Accolades to Minister Billson.' Accolades to Minister Billson indeed, and to this coalition government led by Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

This budget is also a jobs budget for the Central Coast. We have committed to locating a Commonwealth agency in a purpose-built building in Gosford CBD. There will be 600 new jobs for the region—600 new jobs that will be a game changer for the Central Coast. This will be the catalyst for an economic multiplier effect of hundreds of more jobs. There are 500 coming from the Australian Tax Office and 100 from complementary agencies run through our region.
As I have said in this place many times before, we originally promised 300 new jobs and we have now doubled that and this budget confirms that we are working with the ATO to have this centre of excellence up and running by the end of 2017. I am pleased to say that the ATO has advised that they have received an extremely positive response to the expressions of interest, with significant interest in building this in Gosford. This is great news, because it helps to drive innovation and competition, and it attracts serious investors to our region. John Mouland, the CEO of Regional Development Australia Central Coast told me that for so long in our region we have had plans and strategies but now we are finally moving forward as a region. He said that we are getting smarter, that we are using really good data and that we are getting results.

Residents from across the Central Coast are welcoming this budget. Raymond Field from Umina Beach was one of the first to respond on my Facebook page, saying 'It's nice to see the Central Coast being taken seriously as its own region.' The budget also revealed a $10 million funding injection to Somersby Industrial Park as part of the National Stronger Regions Fund, which is part of a $28 million project being driven by Gosford City Council. I do commend them for this initiative. Economic modelling demonstrates that this upgrade is set to create more than 3,000 new jobs on the Central Coast and to bring a $267 million boost to the local economy. It will do this by helping to transform the industrial park in Somersby, with significant upgrades to roads, stormwater drainage and sewerage pipes, making it business-ready and making it easier and cheaper for businesses to locate in the Somersby Industrial Park. It is believed that this will see over 960 jobs coming directly from the upgrade, with new businesses locating there, and another 2,100 across the Central Coast once the project is complete as part of an economic multiplier effect.

These 3,000 jobs are another important way that this budget delivers for our region. But, sadly, Labor opposes the National Stronger Regions Fund. I have previously said in this House that by opposing it they are actually opposing the more than 3,000 jobs that the economic modelling indicates could be created by this $10 million investment in the Central Coast. Recently, I called on Labor's representative for the Central Coast, Senator O'Neill, to explain why Labor opposes the National Stronger Regions Fund. And while the Senator responded with a media release, she ducked and avoided the question. Senator O'Neill's media release said, 'There is not one Coastie who has a single one of these jobs because they only exist on Lucy's Christmas wish list.' She said, 'I'll believe this government can deliver jobs for the Coasties when it happens.'

I say to Senator O'Neill and I say to the Labor Party: believe it. Believe it, because it is already happening. There have already been around 250,000 more jobs created since September 2013, when we came to government. Locally, as I have indicated, the economic modelling suggested around 3,000 jobs could be created in addition to the 600 new jobs that are coming to Gosford. I say to Senator O'Neill, please stop complaining about our plan for the Central Coast just because it is not your plan. Get behind our plan and start supporting it to make the Coasties Christmas wish list not just Lucy's Christmas wish list come true. I know so many people on the Central Coast want to see more local jobs for Gosford, more local jobs for the Central Coast, more jobs for our young people so they can have a go and get ahead.

This budget also demonstrates that we are delivering on the $7 million we committed to the Kibbleplex Centre in the Gosford Centre in the Gosford CBD. As it stands, the Department of
Infrastructure and Regional Development is working with the council so a final funding agreement can be prepared. The department and Gosford City Council are working with the State Library of New South Wales, who is producing a final report on the fit-out. We have also committed to other projects in the growth plan for the Central Coast, including $3.5 million for the upgrade of Woy Woy oval. This upgrade is well under way, and I was out there just the other week to see Gosford council demolishing the grandstand and commencing to build a structure that will be a fantastic civic centrepiece for the peninsula and a great home ground to our local sporting clubs like the Woy Woy Roosters and the Woy Woy Lions.

We are also building the roads infrastructure the Central Coast needs—$675,000 to help fix the black spot at Langford Drive and Woy Woy Road at Kariong has been confirmed in this budget. The budget also delivers $1.6 million of roads funding for the Central Coast for black spots in my electorate of Robertson at places like East Gosford, Green Point, Umina Beach, Gosford and Woy Woy. On top of that, we have also seen a doubling of funds for the Roads to Recovery program, which also helps our local councils meet local priorities.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 10:22 to 10:37

Mrs WICKS: As I was saying, in relation to roads we have also doubled the Roads to Recovery investment for the next financial year, which means that Gosford City Council will receive $1.9 million next financial year to direct local road funding to where it is most needed. Importantly, we are also delivering NorthConnex, the M1/M2 missing link. Funding of $405 million has been committed and construction is underway. This means that there are around 8,700 jobs on the way as well.

This is a government that is also determined to help job seekers, especially young job seekers, to find and to keep a job. There is the $18 million national work experience program that provides job seekers on the Central Coast with the opportunity to undertake work experience in businesses for up to 25 hours per week for four weeks. There is a new $1.5 billion wage subsidy pool so that more job seekers are eligible for wage subsidies sooner. It also helps employers to access wage subsidies earlier to help with the up-front costs of hiring and training. This budget provides a new $212 million transition to work service to help young job seekers most at risk of long-term unemployment improve their chances of finding and keeping a job, and we announced $106 million for new pilot programs to help young job seekers, such as those with a mental illness or those from a refugee or migrant background, to move from welfare to work.

This budget also delivers for families through our $4.4 billion Jobs for Families package. This is about giving Central Coast parents more choice and more opportunity to work. I have spoken about this in the House before, and I intend to continue doing so, because it is fantastic news for the Central Coast. As part of a consultation process in relation to balancing work and family responsibilities, I have consulted with thousands of families from my electorate. The feedback I have received from people who live in Kariong, Kincumber, Woy Woy and many other suburbs in my electorate is that so many Central Coast families are faced with significant costs when parents want to return to work, and this budget helps to make it easier for families to be able to juggle and to be able to access child care. I commend the government for their initiative.
The response to the budget measures for pensioners has also been very, very positive. Importantly, pensions will continue to rise twice a year, just as they always have. More than 90 per cent of pensioners will have no change to their pension and will receive a higher pension. Because of this budget, more than 170,000 pensioners with modest assets will have their pensions increased by an average of $30 a fortnight. We are also reversing our proposals on indexation and, unlike Labor, we will not increase taxes on superannuation.

Local organisations on the Central Coast could also receive a significant boost in the 2015 budget through the stronger communities program. This program will provide $45 million over two years across Australia to fund small capital projects in local communities, which is great news for my electorate of Robertson. Our community in the Robertson electorate will receive funding of $150,000 per year over two years to support projects that deliver social benefits. This is a great initiative. I already know of several local projects that could really benefit from this. There are several local community organisations who I am sure will really welcome the opportunity to apply for this grant program. I will certainly consult widely with local community organisations across the Central Coast in Killcare, Springfield on the peninsula, Avoca, Terrigal and Gosford to identify high priority projects. Under this program between $1,000 and $20,000 will be made available to not-for-profit organisations like Rotary groups or progress associations that reflect and truly represent the lifeblood of our community on the Central Coast. Grants will fund projects that will yield significant social benefits and that can be delivered within the two-year life span of the program and that will help them get ahead. I look forward to seeing new local projects for a stronger community and also to the people of the Central Coast being able to benefit from this program.

Time does not permit me to speak on the many other positive aspects of this budget, including national security and our measures to assist with domestic violence. I hope to be able to do so in the House at another time in the near future, but may I just say that this budget, which I have been able to respond to today, is the next step in the government’s responsible long-term economic plan to build a strong, safe and prosperous future. (Time expired)

Mr WILSON (O’Connor) (10:41): The 2015 budget, as contained in the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016 and related bills, is a big win for families, small businesses and farmers. My electorate of O’Connor has an abundance of families, small businesses and farmers, so that means the budget is a huge win for my electorate. While the budget has been generally well received across the board, there are some budget measures that specifically benefit the different regions of my electorate.

Before I discuss some of the budget measures I am really proud of, we cannot forget the reason Australia is in this situation. This government inherited a deficit of $48 billion. The deficit for the 2015 budget is estimated to be $35 billion and is forecast to reduce each and every year to below $7 billion over the next four years. Gross debt in a decade will be more than $110 billion lower than we inherited from the previous government. Net debt is projected to peak at 18 per cent of GDP or $313.4 billion in 2016-17 before falling considerably to 7.1 per cent of GDP by 2025-26. Our action on the budget has allowed us each year to lower taxes. In 2014 we removed the carbon and mining taxes. In 2015 we are reducing taxes for 90 per cent of all Australian small businesses. Taken together, all of our decisions since coming to government have reduced the overall tax burden by $5.4 billion.
The government's 2015 budget is a historic, unprecedented game-changing budget for small business. The Growing Jobs and Small Business package is the biggest economic recognition of the sector in Australia's history. Small business has been and continues to be the engine room of the economy. It is an enduring focus and priority for this government. We are committed to working to ensure that Australia is the best place to start and grow a small business.

Our budget package was developed from extensive consultation with small business owners and employees. The corporate tax rate will be reduced from 30 per cent to 28.5 per cent for small businesses with an annual turnover of under $2 million. Small business will pay less tax for income in years that commence on or after 1 July 2015. The accelerated depreciation arrangement for small business and primary producers is the centrepiece of the budget's small business package. The change will amend the small business simplified depreciation rules in the tax law to increase the threshold for immediate deductibility from $1,000 to $20,000. This is a significant increase in the threshold and a massive gain to the cash flow for small businesses.

Our budget measures reflect our understanding of the complex nature of small businesses across our country. We know small businesses are at the very heart of rural and regional Australia and, with this in mind, changes have been implemented to amend tax laws to provide a simplified acceleration depreciation rule for all farmers. Farmers will be able to immediately deduct all capital expenditure on fencing and water facilities, while fodder storage assets will be deductible over three years. In an unprecedented move, we are simplifying the tax system for farmers and encouraging investment that will improve our farming communities' resilience to drought and other extreme weather events.

The accelerated depreciation arrangements for farmers and small business can be claimed for expenditure from budget night, making it more attractive for them to invest in new assets and grow. The changes will assist farmers with cash flow, improve resilience and reduce red tape by removing the need for farmers to track expenditure over time. A farmer can immediately deduct the cost of a water facility or fencing—for example, an $80,000 irrigation system previously was deducted over three years but now can be deducted immediately, giving a $53,000 deduction in the first year and so reducing the farmer's tax burden. A $25,000 new fence was previously deducted over 30 years but now can be deducted immediately, giving a $24,167 deduction in year one.

In my electorate, child care is a huge issue. The farmers that we have just been talking about and the shift workers, like many people in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, find it hard to get carers for their children. The Jobs for Families package will provide greater choice for these people by delivering more affordable access to quality child care and early childhood learning. Eligibility for the childcare subsidy will be determined by a stronger activity test. The good news is a broad range of activities will meet the activity test requirements. These include being self-employed, doing unpaid work in a family business such as a farm, looking for work or setting up a business and studying. The activity test includes a requirement to undertake a minimum of eight hours of activity per fortnight to access any subsidy, unless exempt. Eight hours of activity per fortnight results in up to 36 hours of childcare subsidy.

Another important issue is the zone tax offset. In the goldfields, specifically in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, I know that many are happy with the change to the zone tax offset. From 1 July
2015, the zone tax offset is only available to individuals genuinely living in remote and regional Australia. It is very important to my constituents to be recognised as genuinely living in a remote area for the purposes of the zone tax offset. The zone tax offset was introduced in 1954 in recognition of the disadvantages of residing in remote parts of Australia, in particular the isolation and high cost of living associated with living regionally. For too long Perth residents involved in fly-in fly-out and drive-in drive-out roles have had access to this allowance. In the 2012-13 financial year, more than half a million Australian residents with taxable income claimed zone tax offsets totalling $284.3 million. It is estimated that around 20 per cent of all those claimants do not live full-time in the zones.

While this allowance is only small for most of my constituents, it does recognise the high cost of living in regional WA. As my constituents know, FIFO workers do not face the same challenges of remote living that the zone tax offset was designed to address, as their genuine place of residence is elsewhere. FIFO workers do not have any additional costs; they eat at the work mess; they are not buying bread and milk at the local shop or paying for the increased freight costs; in fact they do not spend one cent in the region they work in.

The system was rewarding people in circumstances where they are not spending any money in the area, and this has now changed. On top of being of benefit to my constituents, this budget measure will gain revenue of approximately $110 million per year starting from the 2016-17 financial year. I would like to see some further reform on the zone tax offset, including the addition of a greater range of farm areas and, most importantly, for the offsets to be increased. People living in remote areas do not have access to the same level of publicly funded services as metropolitan areas, and they pay substantially more for the services that are available. We should increase the zone tax offsets to compensate for that.

The current zone tax offset is split into three categories: zone A, an offset value of $338; zone B, an offset value of $57; and special zone areas, an offset value of $1,173. I find it hard to believe that someone living in Esperance, some 700 kilometres from Perth, is financially only $57 worse off compared to someone living in Perth. I would like to see the zone tax offset for zone B reflect the real cost of living in such a remote regional town.

Youth allowance is an issue I have fought very hard for, and there were two very important issues I took to the 2013 election. One was rural health and the other one was youth allowance. I want to take a moment to discuss two recent announcements that substantially affect regional Australia and my electorate. Recently the government announced positive changes to youth allowance. From 1 July 2016, the family asset test and the family means test will be removed from the youth allowance parental income test. These changes will mean that farming families will not have farm assets counted toward the test for their children accessing youth allowance. Another change is that all family tax benefit children in the family pool will be included in the income-testing arrangements. These changes are great for rural and regional families, and specifically for students aiming for dependent youth allowance. As more students achieve dependent youth allowance status they will not have to take a gap year, which will lower university deferral rates.

However, the job is not done. I would like to see a reduction in the youth allowance waiting period from 18 months to less than 14 months, at least. This would allow each student in my electorate to start university after a one-year gap rather than a two-year gap. The current 18-month waiting period means that many students in my electorate are disadvantaged.
Instead of taking a one-year gap to qualify for an allowance, they have to wait two years or start university without accessing the independent youth allowance. If a student finishes school in late November, that student is looking at May, at least, before qualifying for youth allowance. Without a job in the city, this makes starting university in late February almost impossible. I often receive calls from parents of children who are struggling to make ends meet while studying in the city and waiting for the allowance. In one instance, a student had started university after one year but was down to his last $150 while he waited for Centrelink approval for youth allowance.

I commend the students in my electorate who do the hard work to attend university despite being disadvantaged. A city student, of course, has the option of living at home with their parents while studying at university, and may also be able to continue in the same part-time job they had during the holidays while they were at school. A country student has to move to the city and find a new job—ideally one that pays reasonably—to support themselves because they are not living at home. A country student has to move out of home for the first time and move to the city, sometimes hundreds of kilometres from their home, and then pay to make ends meet in that city. The costs of covering rent, food and travel to and from home is a lot to ask from students who cannot work in their home town. Reducing the youth allowance waiting period will ensure regional and rural students in my electorate are only one year behind students who come from the city. I will continue to fight for a reduction in the youth allowance waiting period for as long as it takes, to ensure country students can further their education without being disadvantaged.

Rural health is another critical issue in my electorate. Eleven towns will now find it easier to attract doctors under the overhauled General Practice Rural Incentives Program. Under the changes, 450 Australian country towns will receive increased subsidies to attract and retain doctors. The overhauled, much fairer GP rural incentives program means that smaller rural communities will be able to more easily attract and retain GPs. The system will be fairer for small towns, redirecting money to attract more doctors to towns that have genuine difficulty attracting and retaining them. It made no sense that, under the previous system, $50 million a year was being used to pay incentives for doctors to live in 14 large regional cities—including Townsville, which has a population of 175,000, and Cairns, which has a population of 145,000. This money will now be spent attracting doctors to towns like my home town of Katanning, which has a population of 5,000, and our neighbouring town, Kojonup, which has a population of 2,000. It makes more sense to use the GP fund to attract doctors to where the greatest shortages are—small and remote communities, not big regional cities. The highest incentive paid to work in remote regional Australia will jump from $47,000 to $60,000 per year. The maximum incentive to work in a town of less than 5,000 in regional Australia will increase from $18,000 to $23,000. Other changes include that doctors will be able to take leave from a rural practice for up to five years with no loss of their incentive status on their return. Four existing programs have been streamlined into a single group retention payment, and doctors will need to stay in a regional or rural longer than two years, up from the current six months, before they receive the incentive.

As a final note on regional health, I am very pleased to announce that the Royal Flying Doctors received an extra $20 million over two years, increasing their funding from $58
million per annum to $68 million per annum. It is a vital service in my electorate of O'Connor.

To conclude, I want to touch on the government's commitment to infrastructure and how important infrastructure investment is. While I am disappointed to have only one successful project under round 1 of the National Stronger Regions Fund, I was thrilled the city of Albany was successful in their application for the relocation of the Albany Visitor Centre. This project will deliver an iconic building that will house a new tourist information hub and showcase regional produce, involving co-location with the Albany Visitor Centre and the Albany Public Library. This news is on top of the Roads to Recovery program, the Black Spot Program, the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program and the Bridges Renewal Program.

Roads to Recovery has $350 million allocated, and this year an extra $350 million is being funded. More than 2,300 projects have already been listed for funding under the current 2014-19 program. The Black Spot Program has $60 million allocated annually to target dangerous areas where crashes are occurring. We have almost tripled black spot funding for the next two years, with an extra $100 million being allocated in 2015-16 and 2016-17 to accelerate road safety improvements. A total of 382 projects across five states and territories have already been announced for 2015, with further announcements being made in the coming weeks. Then we have the announcement of the Stronger Communities Program: $45 million over two years to fund small capital projects in local communities. Between $1,000 and $20,000 will be made available to reputable not-for-profit organisations for local projects. When the guidelines are released, I will be promoting this program in my electorate and encouraging eligible organisations to apply.

The 2015 budget is a great budget for Australia and particularly for O'Connor. I congratulate the Treasurer, the Minister for Small Business, the Minister for Finance and the Prime Minister on their hard work. For me, it is a good combination of repairing Australia's financial situation and giving people a chance to have a go.

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (10:56): It is my great pleasure to rise and speak on the appropriation bills before the parliament. I am delighted to reaffirm our government's commitment to a budget which is responsible, measured and fair. It is a budget for small business, for families, for jobs growth and for opportunity. It is responsible because we remain committed to stabilising the nation's finances and reducing Labor's debt, key to building a stronger economy for Australians. It is measured because we understand the importance of balancing the fiscal challenge with the need to drive confidence and jobs investment. And it is fair because it delivers for those who most need our help—pensioners, low- and middle-income families, young people, job seekers, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged.

Before I speak about the wonderful benefits the budget delivers to my electorate of Corangamite, I want to remind everyone—those watching and those reading this speech in Hansard—that we must never forget Labor's legacy: $123 billion of cumulative deficits; $667 billion of net debt; the world's biggest carbon tax, which destroyed jobs, destroyed incentive and damaged small business; and of course six years of chaos and dysfunction. I am reminded of that chaos and dysfunction today in a report in The Australian newspaper under the heading 'Rudd was a bully; Gillard betrayed me: old wounds reopened'. It is a report about a
documentary made by the ABC, The Killing Season, which is going to be aired next week. It talks about Ms Gillard alleging that Mr Rudd was physically intimidating towards her, describing a bullying encounter in which he acted in a menacing and angry way after a dispute about parliamentary tactics in 2007. It opens deep divisions of the chaos and dysfunction that absolutely crippled the government for six years and really set this nation backwards. Mr Rudd rejects this accusation. He says it is false. He accuses Ms Gillard of treachery and betrayal, falsifying events to justify her ambitions and colluding with former minister Mark Arbib to bring him down. For Australians who want to be reminded why we must never elect Labor at the next federal election, I think The Killing Season on the ABC next week is compulsory viewing.

There is wonderful news in this year's budget for the electorate of Corangamite. I want to start by speaking about the National Stronger Regions Fund grant to the Norlane community hub, which delivers a community space, affordable housing and aged care. It is a wonderful $40 million project with a $7.2 million grant by the federal government.

When it comes to the National Stronger Regions Fund—and I reflect, Madam Deputy Speaker Wicks, on your comments—it is very disappointing that the Labor Party is opposing this $1 billion being invested into regional Australia over five years. It is a wonderful fund, driving incredible investment into regional Australia. I would encourage all eligible organisations, including local councils, to look at the criteria and make an application for this round, which is currently open.

There is $1.3 million for our local jobs fund, Geelong Employment Connections. I have been very proud to deliver this very specific fund which is geared towards retrenched workers, particularly in the manufacturing sector. It adds to another $500,000 that we have already delivered. It is a $1.8 million fund for the Geelong region. It is very proudly an example of how we are working at a grassroots level on the ground to help those who have lost their jobs move into new work. I am very, very proud of that.

There is our stronger communities program. This is a new program which will deliver $300,000 over two years for every federal electorate, including Corangamite, to fund important local projects to deliver social benefits. That is another great program. I say to all not-for-profit organisations across Corangamite, 'When the criteria are announced, please have a look at that program. It is a wonderful way for the federal government to support your organisation and to support the wonderful work that you do.'

I have to say with enormous pride that I was so proud to turn the sod on our $371 million duplication of the Princes Highway between Winchelsea and Colac just a number of weeks ago. This is an incredible project and one that I fought so hard for for so many years—since 2009. What a joy it is to see this being delivered. It is an incredible commitment for the people of Corangamite and south-west Victoria. It will be a duplication that will drive jobs investment, make the road much more safe, which will help families, and really open up so many opportunities for places such as Birregurra, Winchelsea, Colac and beyond. I am very, very proud.

That is along with our $50 million upgrade of the Great Ocean Road, with $25 million from the federal government. This is a project that I fought so hard for. This is an iconic road. Very unfortunately, this is funding that the Labor Party oppose, which is extraordinary. This is one of Australia's most iconic roads. It is a road that was built by returned servicemen.
between 1919 and 1932. It is extraordinary that the Labor Party continue to oppose the upgrade of this road. Now we read that the Victorian government, state Labor, want to put a road tax on the Great Ocean Road, imposing a $10 fee on anyone who visits the 12 Apostles. It is an absolute and utter disgrace. I will fight that tooth and nail. It just goes to show how little Labor appreciate and understand the importance of regional roads, particularly one as important as the Great Ocean Road. It is a very important project and one that I am very proud of.

Speaking of roads, we have our $3 billion commitment to the East West Link which remains on the table. I cannot find the words to describe the utter recklessness of state Labor, with the opposition leader, Bill Shorten, and the member for Corio standing by and doing absolutely nothing when Labor tore up that contract, costing at least $640 million and 7,000 jobs. We need a proper western link from Geelong into Melbourne. I am fighting tooth and nail for that link. We are looking at the Western Distributor. We are considering it. But it falls well short of the benefits that were going to be delivered to the people of Geelong with the western section of the East West Link. What a grotesque waste of money. What a grotesque act in destroying those jobs. In Victoria we are now left with very little infrastructure happening at the moment compared to states like New South Wales. It is a very poor reflection on Labor.

In our budget, we are also seeing the rollout of $3.5 million for Ocean Grove's Shell Road Reserve and $2½ million for Colac's Central Reserve. I was there on the weekend, at the Colac Tigers—another great win for the Colac Tigers. Boy, oh, boy—there is great excitement at our very substantial commitment to upgrade Central Reserve and to build a new community pavilion and grandstand. Again we see Labor completely deserting that project. From the Labor candidate for Corangamite, who previously ran in the state seat of Polwarth, there was not a dollar of commitment. She deserted the people of Colac by not fighting for an extra train service, she deserted the people of Anglesea by not committing to funding for the Anglesea Bowling Club, and she has deserted the young people of Colac by not fighting for or delivering a dollar to assist with the upgrade and redevelopment of Colac's Central Reserve.

For Torquay's Banyul-Warri Fields, there is a wonderful $500,000 commitment. There is over $4 million for the Golden Plains food production and employment precinct, a wonderful reflection of our commitment to agriculture and the benefits that flow to our region from that. There is $10 million for the new Geelong Library and Heritage Centre project and $3 million for the Geelong Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases.

One of the other fantastic projects of which I am so proud is the new Australian Bureau of Statistics Centre of Excellence which will be established in Geelong in early 2016, bringing with it 250 jobs. Here we have another Commonwealth agency moving to our region after a very hard-fought battle, bringing those jobs, and here is a government that I am very proudly a part of, delivering those jobs to our region. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is being rolled out across Geelong and Colac—across Corangamite—with offices in both Geelong and Colac for the Barwon trial and with the NDIA national headquarters in Geelong. That is incredibly exciting.

The NBN is being delivered to some 40,000 premises across Corangamite, areas of Corangamite that were completely ignored by Labor but that we are strongly committed to—
the small towns that matter: Alvie, Coragulac, Cororooke, Barongarook, Forrest, Warncoort. They go on and on. This is a government which cares about small regional communities, and that is why we are rolling out the NBN to those communities which need it the most. My battle and my fight to make sure that the NBN is expedited into Geelong continues, because we know how important fast broadband is to ensuring that we can become an innovation hub of Australia—and Geelong has that enormous potential.

There is no doubt that one of the absolute highlights of our budget is our Growing Jobs and Small Business package. Boy, oh, boy—there is great excitement on the ground. We have held small business forums with the small business minister, Bruce Billson, in both Geelong and Colac. For the first time, small businesses have been heard, and that is what they are saying. There is a 1.5 per cent cut in the company tax rate, to 28.5 per cent, the lowest in almost 50 years. Unincorporated small businesses will get a five per cent tax discount, up to $1,000 a year. The unincorporated small businesses, which make up two-thirds of all small businesses, were completely forgotten by Opposition Leader Bill Shorten in his budget reply speech. He just left them out altogether, as if they do not even exist, which just goes to show again that Labor do not get it. They do not understand small business, and we are the proud champions of small business.

Another incredibly popular measure is that small businesses can claim an immediate tax deduction for each and every asset purchased up to $20,000 from budget night until 30 June 2017. This is an extraordinary opportunity. It is already seeing great consumer confidence ripple throughout the community and delivering immediate benefits not just to small businesses which are eligible—those with a turnover of $2 million or less—but to the bigger companies which act as an important supply chain to small business. I was very proud to speak on our Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (Employee Share Schemes) Bill, and that is another wonderful measure in our support for small business, particularly start-up companies.

Importantly we are very focused on getting people back into work; we have had a terrible failure of Labor, particularly with youth unemployment. We are focused on driving incentives and opportunities, particularly for young people. Through our $1.2 billion National Wage Subsidy Pool, there will be $6500 for employers who hire job seekers under 30. We also have the important $331 million Youth Employment Strategy, which includes the $212 million Transition to Work program to help young, disengaged people aged between 15 and 21 become job ready. Of course, we also have our National Work Experience program for young job seekers and the new weekly $10 Newstart bonus for those who do some volunteer work. We are also reversing the six-month waiting period for Newstart, bringing it down to five weeks—which reflects the fact that we have listened. I am very proud to have made representations to the social services minister on this, and I am incredibly impressed with the package that he has helped to deliver to ensure that we can drive these important opportunities for young people.

We have just seen a charade in the main chamber where the Labor Party was trying to shut down debate on our small business measures—it is very unfortunate. Perhaps they are trying to hide the fact that some 519,000 people lost their jobs in small business over six years under Labor. Small business is the engine room of our economy. There are two million small businesses, which employ 4½ million people. Our government is incredibly proud of the
support we are giving small business, families and, of course, farming enterprises. This is a
great budget for jobs, for opportunity, for small business and for families. I commend the bills
to the House.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and
Regional Development) (11:11): As this 2015 appropriations debate draws to a close, I want
particularly to summarise some of the highlights and features of this budget, especially in my
own portfolio area, for regional Australia and my electorate of Wide Bay. This year's budget
certainly delivers a wide range of initiatives that support families, promote small business and
create jobs, while continuing the budget repair after the wasteful and reckless spending of the
Rudd-Gillard-Rudd Labor government.

The coalition's Jobs for Families package will provide $4.4 billion to make it easier for
working families to access child care. The package also includes $840 million to extend
preschool education for all. The budget recognises that small business is the powerhouse of
our economy and the 2015 budget contains tax cuts to small business and improvements to
depreciation so small businesses can keep more of the money that they earn. Jobs are a
priority for the government and the budget contains initiatives to strengthen the economy and
encourage jobs growth, especially in areas of high unemployment.

The 2015-16 budget is good for all Australians, but it is especially poised to deliver better
outcomes for rural and regional Australia with the coalition government committed to driving
growth in the infrastructure, employment and small business sectors. The initiatives contained
in the budget are the second step in the coalition government's economic strategy to build a
strong, prosperous economy for a safe and secure Australia. The federal government's new
jobs package is an important initiative for electorates like Wide Bay where the unemployment
rates are traditionally higher than other parts of the country. It contains wage subsidies for
older and younger unemployed people to encourage businesses to create more jobs to give
older and younger job seekers more opportunities to work. The Work for the Dole scheme
will also be expanded to help keep job seekers active and learning while providing them with
experience and encouragement to find work.

Small businesses will receive a major boost from accelerated depreciation for items under
$15,000, freeing up more money to invest in new equipment and to increase their efficiency
and productivity, and there will be a tax cut for all small businesses to stimulate growth and
job creation and encourage entrepreneurship. The federal budget contains a wide range of
initiatives to help ensure that our tax system is fairer—including cracking down on
multinational companies and ensuring that they pay their fair share of tax. GST will be
imposed on imported services to create a more level playing field for Australian-based
businesses. An extra $603 million has been provided to fund new PBS listings, allowing
people to access new pharmaceuticals for the treatment and alleviation of diseases. Especially
of interest to people in country areas like my own, around 450 communities will find it easier
to attract doctors under an overhauled General Practice Rural Incentives Program. Under the
previous government's scheme, around $50 million a year was being used to pay incentives
for doctors to live in large regional centres—regional centres that are able to offer their own
attractions without the need for this additional support. By concentrating the assistance on
needy small rural communities, the provision of rural medical services across the country will
become more balanced, and it will ensure that some smaller country communities, including
many in my electorate, will be able to attract and maintain and keep a doctor for a long period of time.

The government has saved $278 million by closing immigration detention centres because the government's Operation Sovereign Borders has been successful in stopping illegal boat arrivals. Our regional and rural areas are also certainly benefiting from our record $50 billion infrastructure investment program, the biggest in Australia's history. It is creating tens of thousands of jobs, it is working on eliminating congestion in our capital cities, and it is increasing the economic capacity of our freight routes and improving safety for all road users. In my electorate of Wide Bay, the budget commits funding to progress the Cooroy to Curra four-lane upgrade of the Bruce Highway. It delivers funding to complete section A of the Cooroy to Curra project and to start work on section C between Traveston and Gympie. When sections A and C are completed, there will be a four-lane highway all the way from Melbourne to Gympie. This is an investment that will have an enormous benefit for the local community and for industry as the highway is a part of the lifeblood—it is the lifeline—of our communities. The upgrade will deliver a faster, safer road and one that is less prone to flooding.

Some are concerned that the new Queensland government may not support funding of regional roads, or may seek to walk away from some of the projects that were committed to in the Commonwealth-state road rail partnership agreement. I have received assurances from the new state minister that the new government is indeed committed to that contractual program, so we look forward to their cooperation in ensuring that the upgrade of the Bruce Highway will continue. I acknowledge that there has been a slowdown in some of these projects with the election of a new government; perhaps that is to be expected with the new government still endeavouring to find their way. But I hope that there will be early approval of the various projects that have been committed to, so that there will not be any delays in the job creation and in the work that is currently underway, and so that this exciting and visionary project can be seen promptly through to fruition.

There are lots of other projects on the Bruce Highway, including some in my electorate which have been committed to as part of the government's $8.5 billion Bruce Highway Upgrade Programme. For instance, $16 million is being provided to commence the reconstruction of the Tinana interchange, which will deliver a safer and more welcoming entrance to Maryborough and the Fraser Coast. There is also additional money for passing lanes and for safety improvements to the highway. These kinds of projects are very important for the future of my region, but upgraded roads and rail will also make a difference to the efficiency of our nation. The program also includes a wide range of new initiatives in that regard: there is funding for black spots; and there is funding, also in my electorate, for the heavy vehicle upgrading program to ensure that roads are able to carry the new heavy vehicles that are on our roads and to do it more safely.

The government has committed to a range of measures under the Roads to Recovery Program. Local governments in my electorate and right across Australia will receive a double payment—an extra $350 million for local roads and streets in this budget. More than 2,300 projects have already been listed for funding under the 2014-19 program. These are projects that will make a real difference to local roads and streets.
The Black Spot Program will continue to reduce crashes on our roads, with $60 million allocated annually. We are almost tripling the black spot funding for the next two years, with an extra $100 million being allocated in 2015-16 and 2016-17 to accelerate road safety improvement. That work includes some projects in my own electorate that were announced quite recently. Projects to improve the intersection of Lennox and Albert streets in Maryborough, the intersection of Pilwera and Yerra roads at Yerra, and Sandy Creek Road at Victory Heights have all been funded as part of the Black Spot Program.

We are also working enthusiastically to deliver the Bridges Renewal Program, a commitment of the federal government at the last election—and, for that matter, the previous one at which we were not elected. We are providing $300 million over four years to help repair and replace some of the nation's dilapidated bridges. Applications for the second round of that program will be called fairly soon.

The government's new Stronger Communities Program will provide $45 million over two years to help fund small capital projects in local communities. In addition, the first 51 successful projects in our billion-dollar Strong Regions Program were announced on budget night. That starts the process of trying to provide some support and impetus to those parts of Australia which are disadvantaged—areas with high levels of unemployment and low socioeconomic profiles. These are projects that will make a difference, that will help redress the imbalance, help address the reasons those areas are disadvantaged and ensure there are opportunities.

Right across the nation our government is funding major projects, including in our capital cities. There is the Gateway North in Brisbane. There is the Toowoomba Range project, a truly visionary project to provide a new bypass around the city of Toowoomba. In Sydney there is WestConnex and NorthConnex and the magnificent work that will be done on the Pacific Highway. There is sufficient funding in this budget to complete the Pacific Highway at least a decade ahead of when it would have been completed by the previous government. There is funding in South Australia for the north-south corridor and for a range of projects in Perth, as well as for the rural roads and highways between Perth and Darwin and in other locations.

There was also funding in the budget for Victoria—substantial funding. But unfortunately the state government has chosen not to accept the funding for the biggest project in Melbourne. That is going to have a serious impact on the economy of Melbourne and will be a blow to the national road-building program. Victoria has no other projects that are ready to start that have anything like the scale of that east-west project. So several years are likely to be lost in Victoria.

I have been particularly amazed that the Labor opposition continues to make outrageous claims that somehow or other funding for roads has been cut in this budget. Labor throws the word 'cut' around with gay abandon, but they are being dishonest in those claims. Even the Leader of the Opposition in his budget reply made erroneous statements, presumably fed to him by the shadow minister, claiming that there was going to be a 17 per cent cut in the federal budget for road and rail.

That is completely wrong. If you go to the budget papers, it is absolutely clear that expenditure for road transport will increase from $4.214 billion in 2014-15 to $5.935 billion in 2015-16 and increase again to $8.401 billion in 2016-17. That is almost a doubling of the
funding over that period. It is not a cut; it is a doubling of funding. Likewise, with rail transport, the funding will increase from $740 billion in 2014-15 to $1.079 billion in 2015-16 and up to $1.303 billion in 2016-17—again, not a cut; almost a doubling of funding over that period.

And we get similar stories about cuts to health funding and cuts to education funding, when in fact the budget papers make it absolutely clear that funding is increasing to the states for health and education. Indeed, the Queensland Minister for Health was commenting in my local newspaper just a few days ago about the improved performance of hospitals in my area. There is no question that the hospitals improved enormously under the term of the Newman government, and they deserve great credit for that. But the Queensland Minister for Health acknowledged that a significant part of the reason for the improvement in health was increased federal funding—increased federal funding—and yet the next day he was out complaining about cuts in funding. In fact, health funding for Queensland will go up by 27 per cent over the next four years—not cuts; increases by 27 per cent, way above the level of inflation.

The opposition needs to be honest about the budget. No, we cannot do everything that we would like to do, but this is a budget that is about building a better future for Australia, and it is about ensuring that we are able to live within our means. But we can do that by boosting the economy, making it stronger and giving opportunities to Australians, and they will be with us then in building a stronger nation. \textit{(Time expired)}

\textbf{Mr PALMER} (Fairfax) (11:27): This budget, we feel, does not take up the challenge or take up the torch for what Australians really want to happen in our country at the moment. There are so many challenges which remain unanswered. The main issue facing Australians today is what Australians can do to regain Australia’s status as a lucky country. Australians want to know and Australians need to know how their life can be better, how their life can be improved for them and their families, not, as we constantly hear, in 30 years or 20 years time but right now. Domestic demand is at an all-time low. Interest rates are at an all-time low, not because the economy is doing well but because there is no economic demand. Because our economy is spiralling down and shrinking, our people hold their savings in fear. We are all on Struggle Street together. It is our country, and it is our responsibility to do all we can to make the lives of all our citizens better.

Since the last budget, the Palmer United team in parliament has, as you have seen in this budget, stopped the co-payment, stopped changes to university, stopped $10 billion in cuts in social security, freed over 436 children from detention and 1,500 people from Christmas Island, assisted the government in resolving 30,000 cases in detention and come up with the idea of the safe haven enterprise visas. We have moved in the Senate to save the low-income super for over two million Australians and kept the schoolkids bonus. When the carbon tax was abolished, we ensured that electricity prices were reduced by 10 per cent Australia wide. We moved 15 changes to Direct Action in the Senate, which all passed, and then we passed Direct Action. We have seen the results of our amendments in the recent announcements by the Minister for the Environment. We have saved the Climate Change Authority, saved the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and saved ARENA, and we have helped set a new renewable energy target.
We have fixed pensions for all veterans and ex-servicemen over 55 in accordance with our policy, and we have seen the defeat of the Campbell Newman government. During the course of parliament, we have set up, with the government, three new inquiries: into trade and investment growth, into the Australia Fund and, more recently, into the Queensland government. We voted to abolish the carbon tax and abolish the mining tax. We have recently introduced a bill on the foreign death penalty. We have protected maritime workers' jobs and proved that the government debt was not a problem for Australia, as we heard last budget.

And we are happy that the Prime Minister adopted our policy, once he was elected, to ban lobbyists from party positions. We have introduced in the House of Representatives a private member's bill to kill off the GrainCorp takeover before the Treasury make this decision, and in electoral reform we now have pens taking the place of pencils. We voted in the Senate to keep Qantas in Australian hands and we have stopped changes to the income tax threshold and stopped the financial incentive to sell public assets, saved Australian jobs offshore in the gas industry and stopped the slashing of university research grants.

Australia is the only developed economy in the world to have recorded no annual recessions during the past 23 years, placing it alongside high-growth economies such as China and India. Australian government debt is one of the lowest in the world. In October 2014 the IMF estimated the Australian government's net debt would be 16.6 per cent of GDP in 2015, well below the 74.1 per cent forecast for advanced economies. Actually, Australia's debt is only around 14 per cent of GDP, less than the 40 per cent under Bob Menzies' government, which many Liberals would say was a highlight of Australian administration.

Australia's pool of funds under management is the third largest in the world and the largest in the Asian region. Growth in productivity is outpacing labour costs. Australia has enjoyed a sustained period of labour productivity growth, exceeding the growth in real wages. Over 23 years, with Australia's compound annual growth rate of 1.8 per cent, real unit labour costs have fallen by 0.5 per cent each year. There has been strong labour productivity growth of 1.9 per cent in 2012-13 and 2.6 per cent in 2013-14. Real unit labour costs have broadly remained stable, and the effective cost of labour has remained in line with productivity improvements. You would not believe that if you heard the rhetoric that goes on in this place.

Australia is No. 1 in the world in tertiary education entry rates. Australia's entry rate into tertiary education is at 102 per cent, including international students. This is well above the OECD average of 58 per cent, the USA at 71 per cent and the UK at 68 per cent. Australia's tertiary education rate is also much higher than South Korea, at 69 per cent. Japan is 52 per cent and China is 18 per cent. High rates of tertiary education underpin Australia's position as the No. 1 developed country in terms of real GDP growth over the last 24 years. Australia is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the OECD. The availability of multilingual, culturally diverse and highly skilled personnel means Australia has access to a workforce well equipped with cultural understanding and language capabilities to service international business in their own images.

Australia has the second-largest stock market in the Asian region, and the eighth largest in the world. With total capital exceeding US$1.12 trillion, Australia's market capitalisation is greater than China's, at US$1.06 trillion, and double Hong Kong's, at US$528 billion. It is around four times the capitalisation of the Singapore market. Australia's $1.6 trillion superannuation system is the fourth largest in the world and is a major driver behind
Australia's globally significant funds management industry. The pool of assets is expected to
grow to $7.6 trillion, or 180 per cent of GDP, over the next two decades. We should not
tamper with the pension—we do not need to. Our superannuation pool is strong—Australians
provide for their long-term retirement through their own efforts.

This budget is flawed. Reducing company tax by 1.5 per cent for small business will not
stimulate the economy. Companies and small businesses have to make a profit before they
pay tax. With such low-level demand in the economy, companies are not making a profit.
Small businesses are not making a profit so tax is not relevant to them. Profit comes before
you pay tax. With low demand and limited money supply, small businesses are losing
profitability. We must create demand by increasing the money supply. People have to have
money to buy goods and services for companies to make a profit before paying tax. Projected
company tax receipts for 2015 exceed $70 billion. Instead of companies paying tax before
they make a profit, the $70 billion should be left in enterprises' hands for 12 months to boost
the economy. Australians can spend it better than government. This would create real demand
and massive job growth, wipe out deficits and make our economy stronger—$70 billion spent
by individual taxpayers gets the government 10 per cent GST each time the money is spent.
We could have better hospitals, better schools and better services from our government.
Money should be circulating in the economy, creating jobs and family enterprises. At the end
of the year the government gets the $70 billion tax as well. If money circulates four times a
year before government gets it, we get an extra $28 billion. It will cost around two per cent, at
current interest rates—about $850 million—to implement such a change to provide an extra
$30 billion or more in government revenue.

This budget had the opportunity—but failed—to stimulate our construction sector. We
need to make the first $10,000 paid on a home loan each year tax deductible. Australia needs
to again have the dream of homeownership. We can boost the construction industry and
increase homeownership to satisfy demand and increase revenue for the government. By
growing demand and government revenue, we could have the opportunity to reduce tax by 15
per cent for all Australians. The Australian taxpayer would have an extra $2,500 in their
pocket every year, or $50 a week. This increase in demand and activity could boost jobs and
investment in small business, and it is an opportunity which has been lost by this budget.

We need to stimulate our economy. We know our citizens can spend money better than the
government can. We see that the budget and the government need to support the states.
Attempts to privatisate our schools and our hospitals, and turn people away, were rejected by
the people of Queensland at the recent state election, and they will be rejected at the next
federal election if the government continues with that policy. We need to stimulate our
economy as President Obama has done in the United States and as Europe is doing now for its
economy. We have to act, rather than follow the example set by Greece of constant
contraction of the economy and reduction in fundamental demand levels.

The cost of health care in the United States is 17 per cent of GDP; still, 60 million
Americans are not covered. In Australia, the government spends around nine per cent of GDP
on health care and complains that it wants to make more cuts in the four coming years. We
cannot desert the sick and dying. In the days of Prime Minister Menzies, our debts were
around 40 per cent of GDP, which would still only make us 60 per cent or the OECD average.
We need to use this ability we have to generate more capital and more demand, to push our
economy to even greater heights than it is at today. We must do whatever is needed to be done to fix health once and for all.

The Australian government is the main petitioner of bankruptcy and company liquidations across Australia. As companies close, employees lose their jobs, the government loses group tax, people are transferred from gainful employment to Centrelink, company taxes are destroyed and services spiral down. Government must stop driving businesses to the wall. We must keep the system going to keep people employed productively. Transferring people from gainful employment to unemployment just guarantees misery. We need a chapter 11, like they have in the United States, where, when companies fail, the business continues—so families keep their jobs, government keeps their taxes and the nation keeps its exports.

As has been said, ignorance and illiteracy, unskilled workers and school dropouts are the failures of an education system in the past that bred failures in our social and economic system, such as delinquency, unemployment, chronic dependency, a waste of human resources, loss of productive power and purchasing power, and an increase in tax-supported benefits. The loss of only one year's income due to unemployment is more than the total cost of education to high school level over 12 years. Failure to improve our educational performance is not only poor social policy; it is poor economic policy. At this time, we need to invest—and the government has not done enough of that in this budget—in ourselves. If we do not have confidence in ourselves, who will have confidence in us? We must educate our children, as our most valuable resource. The problems that have been made by Australians can be solved by Australians as well, so we need to attack the issue of confidence to show leadership and vision for this country.

We need to support regional Australia. The government had a great opportunity to introduce regional zonal taxation but missed it with this budget. Japan has become the world's third largest economy by processing Australian resources. The cost of energy in Japan is more expensive. Japan suffers from the tyranny of distance and its wages are higher; yet Australia sells its mineral resources at $40 to $100 a tonne to Japan, they process it and sell it for $20,000, creating exports for and an economic powerhouse of Japan, while Australians in South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales and Queensland, and even Western Australia, go without any hope for themselves.

Minerals from Western Australia and Queensland should be processed in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania or elsewhere in Australia. Let Australians do what they do best, using our natural advantages in the world so that we can provide real competition on a massive scale. No longer should we give up the future of our children in this country or the opportunities that we have to countries in Asia and others north of us. Some of those resources can be processed in this country. Because of the high cost of establishing plants like this—$6 billion or $7 billion or more—the Japanese, Chinese and Korean governments have learnt that it requires government leadership and innovation to make this happen. Yet our government has done nothing in this area for over 30 years and we have lost these opportunities in Asia.

We see declining unemployment in places like Tasmania and other places. We would have to grasp the nettle and realise that there is a real opportunity in the future to process our resources in this country, to return Australia to a large, highly skilled technological manufacture base. This is an opportunity that could have been addressed in this budget, as
could the chapter 11 provisions, which were not. They are opportunities lost and forgotten for Australians, and I think it is a matter of great regret. We can only look to the future and hope the government in next year's budget will look at some of these things that they could have done today.

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (11:40): It is a pleasure to sum up the second reading debate on the supplementary additional estimates appropriation bills and the budget appropriation bills. These bills underpin the government's expenditure decisions for what remains of the current financial year and the financial year to come.

Before I go on to recap the appropriations that these bills give effect to and the major items associated with those appropriations, I would like to touch on some of the issues canvassed in this wide-ranging debate. The centrepiece of this budget is undoubtedly our small business package. We are giving Australian small businesses a reason to have the confidence to invest now, to hire now, to back their ingenuity and to have a go. As the economy continues to transition from mining-led growth to broader based growth, we need small business firing on all cylinders. The member for Page hit the nail on the head when in this debate he remarked:

... every public sector dollar, every taxpayer dollar, that you want to spend on many worthy causes has to come from a healthy private sector.

That is why in this budget we gave small business a real incentive to invest in growing their business, to back their ingenuity and, as I said before, to have a go.

A common refrain in this debate has been just how enthusiastic small businesses are about the tax cut we have delivered for small businesses whether they are incorporated or not, and our two-year $20,000 instant asset write-off. By allowing small businesses to keep more of the money they work so hard to earn, we are providing a real incentive that will make a real difference to small business. It is a message I have heard as I have travelled right across the Riverina in recent weeks. It is why it is important that we continue to invest for growth by unlocking trade opportunities, supporting job seekers into employment and building the infrastructure Australia needs.

Our small business package will make a real difference to the ability of small businesses to realise the benefits of the preferential trade agreements we have struck with South Korea, Japan and China. These deals open up market access to important export markets, the benefits of which will continue to be felt for decades to come. On the horizon is a deal with India that I know the Minister for Trade and Investment is working tirelessly to secure. These agreements are going to be transformational for Australian growers of food and fibre, particularly those in regional Australia. China is already Australia's second largest market for dairy exports and that will continue to grow, with tariffs on dairy products being eliminated over time—in some cases in as little as four years. Japan is Australia's second largest trading partner and, under the agreement struck last year, tariffs on canned tomatoes, peaches and pears, and fruit and vegetable juices will disappear entirely. Other agricultural tariffs, some as high as 219 per cent, will be substantially reduced. Our agreement with South Korea will see tariffs on wine eliminated, which gives Australian producers such as those around Griffith in the Riverina—who produce, did you know, one in four glasses of all Australian wine—an advantage over French, Spanish, Italian and Chilean competitors.
This budget is also good for farmers and their communities looking to take advantage of these opportunities by providing immediate deductions for new fences and new water infrastructure, and a three-year write-off for new hay sheds and silos—all from 1 July 2015. This is so important to regional Australia and particularly to Riverina farmers, who produce so much of the nation’s food and fibre, as well as exporting to the world. They can now invest in on-farm infrastructure with confidence, and in many cases they can do it right from budget night—right from when the member for North Sydney stood and delivered that fine speech.

As the member for Calare rightly remarked in his contribution:

… in regional Australia … they actually do things; they dig them up, they make things and they grow things.

We have just heard from the Deputy Prime Minister, Leader of The Nationals, Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, and member for Wide Bay. He has lots of titles. I tell you what, he is a busy boy and he has been very busy in regional Australia lately. He has been busy delivering the $300 million Bridges Renewal Program over four years. This includes 29 bridges across New South Wales—I know that will please the member for Grayndler—including Carrathool Bridge, and Gobarralong Bridge near Gundagai. This program is very, very important. Unfortunately, as the Deputy Prime Minister pointed out, the Melbourne East West Link is not being supported by the Victorian Labor government. There is a doubling of Roads to Recovery funding, which is so important to local government areas right throughout Australia. Members, as I say, right across this wide brown land, at least those on the government side, have highlighted the real results that this budget delivers for their communities.

As my neighbour the member for Hume pointed out, this is a budget about solving real problems. It delivers better roads through our Roads to Recovery program, mentioned by the Deputy Prime Minister. It fixes dangerous road black spots. It delivers a better National Broadband Network sooner. It delivers the community infrastructure which really makes a difference to the lives of local people through our $1 billion National Stronger Regions Fund and our new stronger communities program.

The other area where I know this budget does a lot of good is in getting people, particularly young people, into work or on a pathway to work. We are investing in a new $6.8 billion jobactive employment services model to better meet the needs of job seekers and employers. We are revitalising Work for the Dole to give people who are unemployed a better sense of connection to their community and skills which may provide a pathway to work. As the member for Parkes noted in his fine contribution to this debate, if you are serious about breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty you need to allow people to have the dignity of work—and he would know. That is why we are giving eligible job seekers the opportunity to undertake work experience in businesses for up to 25 hours per week for four weeks—and that is important. Participants will continue to receive their income support payment and a supplement to assist with the costs of participation. Employers who go on to offer a young person paid employment can receive a wage subsidy of up to $6,500 over 12 months. It is just one way we are getting Australia back to work.

This budget takes the necessary steps towards continuing to repair the budget, with sensible savings and a responsible approach to spending. We were elected to restore the nation’s finances, and this year’s budget shows the headway we have made in doing just that. Deficits
over the forward estimates are reducing each and every year, from $35.1 billion in 2015-16 to $6.9 billion in 2018-19, and this is despite the fact that we have lost $90 billion in expected tax revenue.

Rather than squibbing the hard decisions and throwing up our hands in despair, we are taking a responsible, measured and fair approach to getting the nation's finances back on track, back where people expect them to be. We are back doing the job that we were elected to do in September 2013. Labor have been running the line since the budget was handed down that we have indulged in a piece of budget trickery, claiming our plan to return to surplus is based wholly and solely on including the Future Fund earnings in the underlying cash balance. The member for Fraser made much of this in his contribution to this debate. I know that his Senate colleagues have been doing their best in estimates committee hearings to accuse us of cooking the books. But I can assure the chamber that there is no trickery at play here. There is no grand conspiracy. What the budget papers reflect is that from 2020-21 the earnings of the Future Fund will be available to offset the cost of paying Australian government civilian and military superannuation benefits, which was the stated intention of the parliament when it legislated to establish the Future Fund back in 2006. In fact, it was always intended that Future Fund earnings would be shown in budget projections from 2020-21 onwards. Labor themselves made this very point in their 2012-13 budget. I will say this for the member for Fraser: he may be an economist but he is no historian in that regard. Even if you cannot remember quite that far back, the Intergenerational report released in March of this year made it clear that, once draw-downs from the fund commenced, the earnings of the fund would be included in the underlying cash balance. This is not something that we have tried to hide. Far from being a piece of budget trickery, this is clear evidence of the legacy of the last coalition government at work.

I would like to remind the House of the more specific features of the bills before us. Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2014-2015 seeks approval for additional appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of just under $377 million for 2014-15. Under this bill, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection would receive just under $248 million in 2014-15 to fund resettlement activities and costs associated with delays in processing illegal maritime arrivals. Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2014-2015 seeks further approval for appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of just under $423 million for 2014-15. The majority of proposed funding in the bill relates to the Department of Defence, which would receive just under $412 million, reflecting funding for supplementation for foreign exchange movements and the net effect of the reallocation of funds between running costs and capital.

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016, Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015-2016 and the Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016 form the principal bills underpinning the government's budget. Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016 seeks authority for meeting the expenses of the ordinary annual services of the government for 2015-16. The bill seeks approval for appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of just under $81 billion. Just under $29 billion is proposed to be appropriated for the Department of Defence to keep our nation safe and to pursue our national interests. In the social services portfolio, the Department of Social Services would receive just under $5.8 billion, including funding to
support families with flexible, accessible and affordable child care so they can move into work, stay in work, train, study or undertake other recognised activities.

The Department of Health would receive just over $6.2 billion, including $2.4 billion for primary healthcare, including primary and mental healthcare services, and healthcare services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people in rural and remote areas. Just over $4.9 billion would be provided to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for the advancement of Australia's international strategic, security and economic interests, the protection and welfare of Australians abroad, consular support and an effective Australian government presence overseas.

Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015-2016 seeks approval for appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of just over $15 billion for 2015-2016. Under this bill, the Department of Communications would receive just under $7.4 billion to continue its investment in the National Broadband Network in 2015-16, and the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development would receive just under $3 billion. This includes a provision for a Commonwealth concessional loan of up to $2 billion to accelerate the delivery of stage 2 of the WestConnex project in Sydney. Further, the Department of Defence would receive just under $2.9 billion in capital funding.

The purpose of the Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016 is to provide funding of just over $233 million for the operations of the parliamentary departments. Just over $28 million would be provided to enhance cybersecurity.

Details of the proposed expenditure are set out in the schedule for which money has been appropriated to the bills and in the portfolio supplementary additional estimates statements tabled in the parliament. I commend these bills to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (11:53): I move:

That consideration in detail of the bill be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (11:53): I move:

That consideration of government business orders of the day Nos 2 to 5 be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

CONDOLENCES

Johnson, Hon. Leslie Royston, AM

Debate resumed on the motion:
That the House record its deep regret at the death, on 26 May 2015 of the Honourable Leslie Royston Johnson AM, a former Minister, Deputy Speaker and Member for the Division of Hughes from 1955 to 1966 and 1969 to 1983, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (11:54): I rise to pay tribute to the late Les Johnson, who passed away last week. Les Johnson was a minister in the Whitlam Labor government. I knew Les and his family, and I last saw him at Tom Uren's funeral earlier this year. Like many in the broader Labor family, there was a connection between my family and Les's family. Les's daughter Jenny worked for my wife, Carmel Tebbutt, when she was a minister in the New South Wales Labor government. Carmel will be at the state funeral service that is being held today.

The grand old Labor giants of the former Whitlam government era are leaving us. Gough, Tom, Kep Enderby, Arthur Gietzelt and others have departed in recent times. They were men—and they were all men—who were committed to public service. Like many in the Labor Party of that era, Les Johnson was an anti-Vietnam War campaigner, joining his friends like Tom Uren and Arthur Gietzelt in that campaign.

Les was the member for Hughes from 1955 right through to 1983, with a short break in between when he was defeated for one term by Don Dobie, who went on to be, at a later time, the member for Cook. Les Johnson, indeed, is one of the people who made the Sutherland Shire such an attractive place to live. Les—along with the likes of Arthur Gietzelt as the shire president and Maurie Keane as his local state member—was a great advocate for the local community. They took the beauty that is there in the Sutherland Shire—with those magnificent beaches, the magnificent bays and, of course, located on the edge of the Royal National Park—and ensured that, for families growing up in the shire, such as my wife's, it was a fantastic place to raise a family.

Les Johnson deserves enormous respect and credit for standing up as a local member first and foremost. Les was much more than that. Les had a vision for the nation. On many issues, Les was way ahead of the general public opinion. One of those issues was the area of Aboriginal affairs. Les Johnson not only went on to become the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and was minister when Gough Whitlam returned the land of the Gurindji people in 1975 by pouring that red dirt into Vincent Lingiari's hands; he also did things very much on the local level as well. Les would hold fundraising events in his own home to raise funds to set up the Kirinari Hostel for Aboriginal high school boys. He was someone who would do things at that grassroots level without any fuss, without seeking any credit, just to make a real difference to people's lives. Les Johnson understood the importance of education as that generation did, providing that opportunity for people, no matter how disadvantaged their background, to do the best that they could in life.

Les Johnson was the Minister for Housing in 1972 when the Whitlam government came into office and then the Minister for Works. These ministries were combined when he became the Minister for Housing and Construction. Together, the work that Les Johnson did, along with Tom Uren, with Gough Whitlam's leadership, transformed the role of the national government in cities. Les Johnson understood that a national government that was not engaged in our cities was not one that truly represented the nation that is Australia. In terms of the work he did, that is a lasting legacy of which his family continues to be proud. When
Labor lost government in 1975, he went on to be the opposition whip. Les was a character. You need to be a bit of a character to be in that job of corralling the disparate forces in our political parties. Les Johnson performed that role admirably.

After leaving parliament in 1984, he was made the High Commissioner to New Zealand—an appointment that received the overwhelming support of the parliament. Whatever their ideological persuasion, people who came into contact with Les knew him as a good bloke and a great Australian. In 1990 he was made a member of the Order of Australia for his public service, particularly for his service to the Aboriginal community.

When Les retired in 1983, I went down and worked on the campaign for his replacement in the seat of Hughes, Robert Tickner. One of the things that struck me about that campaign was very much that Robert Tickner promised to work with the same dedication and commitment as Les Johnson. People knew exactly what that meant. Of course, Robert Tickner himself went on to have a distinguished career in the parliament as well.

In his personal life, Les was married to Gladys, known as 'Peg'. They had three children—Grant, Sally and Jenny, who is well known to me. Unfortunately, their second child, Sally, died from breast cancer in 1988. Peg passed away in 2002, and Les later married Marion Sharkey. So I pass on my condolences to Marion and to Les's surviving children, Grant and Jenny. May he rest in peace.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (12:01): I, too, rise to pay tribute to the strong contribution made to our country by the former member for Hughes—in fact, the first member for Hughes—Leslie Royston Johnson, better known as Les. I associate myself with the fine comments of the member for Grayndler.

Les was first elected to the seat of Hughes after its creation in 1955 at just 30 years of age. He would go on to hold that seat for 30 years, interrupted only by a single term from 1966 to 1969 when he was defeated by Don Dobie who would then go on to become the member for Cook following the redistribution. Both men served for more than three decades and were the only federal members of parliament that my generation knew for more than a generation. Each of them towered over the southern Sydney region. Indeed, so it remains in my electorate office in Hughes today.

Besides myself, Hughes has only ever returned four members of parliament—Les Johnson, Don Dobie, Robert Tickner and Danna Vale. Each has made a significant contribution to our federal parliament and, indeed, to our country. I always felt that I joined most esteemed company in becoming the fifth member for Hughes with their portraits retaining pride of place on the reception wall at the entrance.

I was never fortunate enough to have met Les, but, along with the recently retired Barry Collier, he remains a shire identity. Labor candidates often mention his name when they speak of someone they hope to emulate should they be fortunate enough to be elected. That is probably why Les was never challenged for preselection in his 30-odd years in parliament. He was respected across the whole shire, amongst both Labor and Liberal supporters.

We are all the product of our environment and our life experiences. Les's father served as a stretcher-bearer in World War I and would pass away when Les was just six years old. That,
combined with growing up through the Depression years, certainly would go on to shape him and his desire to do all he could to improve his community. When World War II came, Les would be left as the only man in his house as a breadwinner helping to feed his family with his older brothers going off to war service.

Les would go on to serve in critical areas in the Whitlam government's reform agenda, particularly in housing and Indigenous affairs. As a minister in the Whitlam government, Les was instrumental in Sydney's suburban expansion. The National Sewerage Program laid the foundation for urban growth in Sydney's western and southern suburbs, including parts of the Shire. I can well remember, as a young child, when the sewer came through Peakhurst, the suburb where I was living at the time. This was one of Les's works in the Whitlam government. I remember, when the sewer came through to our next-door neighbour's place, having great fun flushing things through the sewer and seeing it work. It was quite a unique experience for a kid, and it is something I will long remember.

Les married Gladys, or Peg as she was better known, and raised three children with her, before remarrying Marion after Peg's passing. He lived out his remaining years far from his spiritual home in the Sutherland Shire, in Shoal Bay, near Port Stephens. I pass on my respects to his relatives. Les deserves respect and credit for the wonderful contribution that he made to our nation. May he rest in peace.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): I understand it is the wish of honourable members to signify at this stage their respect and sympathy by rising in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the Federation Chamber.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (12:06): by leave—I move:

That further proceedings be conducted in the House.

Question agreed to.

Kirner, Ms Joan Elizabeth, AC

Debate resumed.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (12:06): I rise to pay tribute to my friend Joan Kirner, a passionate advocate for social justice. Joan was born Joan Elizabeth Hood in 1938. Her father was a fitter and turner, and her mother was a music teacher. Joan took her principles of social justice from her parents. She went on to have opportunities in life, graduating from the University of Melbourne and working as a teacher in state schools. She married Ron Kirner and had three children: Michael, David and Kate. Dave Kirner was a good mate of mine when we were in student politics together. The first time I met Joan was not a great experience, because we had a debate over whether I was leading David astray or he was leading me astray. I think it was probably a bit of both. She was always good fun and great company. She had no malice towards anyone on either side of politics or in society. She uplifted any meeting, group or gathering where she was present. She was an absolute delight to be around.

She came up through the community. She was the President of the Victorian Federation of State School Parents' Clubs—P&C, basically. When she went into the Victorian parliament in 1982, she was still a pioneer. It was still very much a male dominated sphere. She first entered the Legislative Council, and she went on to move into the lower house. She became the
Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands and was instrumental in forming the first Landcare groups. Landcare is now accepted throughout the nation as an organisation that has done magnificent work to conserve the extraordinary natural environment that we enjoy here in this great land of Australia.

It was as Minister for Education that she then made an even larger mark. Because of her passion as a parent, she brought, I think, a perspective different from some of the technocratic ways in which education had been dealt with. She was passionate about involving the local community in the way schools were run and was very successful in achieving that. That is why she was promoted to Deputy Premier in John Cain's government and then became, historically, the first woman Premier of Victoria, a position she held from 1990 through to 1992.

She had to cop a fair bit of criticism as the first woman Premier. I went down from New South Wales to work on the 1992 election campaign, assisting the Victorian ALP in what was a difficult campaign after a long-term Labor government. The focus on what Joan wore is something I have never seen, before or since, with any male leader of any political persuasion, but it was very much there. She took it in good humour. In that campaign I remember T-shirts and tea towels being produced—with a bit of irony—that said, 'Spot on Joan'. I remember going to the show in Melbourne and handing out bags with insignia saying 'Spot on Joan' as well. She kept her sense of humour in what were very difficult times and took Labor through to the election knowing that it was highly likely that Labor would not be re-elected.

Even though she left parliament in 1994, she certainly understood that politics was about more than parliament. She continued to engage in the community and the Australian Labor Party. She was absolutely committed to the promotion and mentoring of young women coming through the Australian Labor Party and more broadly. As one of the driving forces behind EMILY's List, I know she was particularly proud of the rise of her friend Julia Gillard to become the first female Prime Minister of Australia. But Joan, regardless of where people lined up factionally in the Labor Party or where they stood on particular issues, supported women across the spectrum with consistency and with absolute commitment.

During my leadership campaign, when I was running against Bill Shorten after the 2013 election, I attended an EMILY's List function organised in Melbourne. Joan Kirner was there sitting at the front—despite the fact that she had serious health issues at the time. She wanted to play her role and she was very supportive of democratisation and giving rank and file members more say in the Australian Labor Party. I continued to have contact with Joan. She would send me messages—indeed I received my last messages from her only last week. She was still emailing me, from hospital, as late as last Friday. She was still putting forward ideas and suggestions in a constructive way. We will miss her. We as a party will miss her, but I think she is also a great loss to the community.

In 2012, when she received the Companion of the Order of Australia, her citation said:

…for eminent service to the Parliament of Victoria and to the community through conservation initiatives, contributions to gender equality, the development of education and training programs and the pursuit of civil rights and social inclusion.

That is an appropriate tribute to the public contribution of Joan Kirner. But today I particularly want to pay tribute to her private contribution as a thoroughly decent, committed human being as well. She will be missed. May she rest in peace.
Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (12:15): It is a great honour but a sadness to speak on the passing of Joan Kirner, the former Premier of Victoria. I speak in my own right, but I especially want to speak on behalf of my father, Alan Hunt, who has passed. Dad knew Joan across the chamber as somebody with whom there was a political contest, but he also knew her as a friend both during their respective parliamentary careers and beyond each of their parliamentary careers.

I had the good fortune of meeting with Joan Kirner along the way. Of course there were political differences, but that is not the point. It is that, despite the fact that there were those political differences with me and with my father, she was utterly and always immensely decent. I think that it is very important to acknowledge people for those profound and abiding human qualities, and she possessed profound and abiding human qualities. She and my father, I am sorry to say, probably shared one or two drinks together at a time when the parliament was not as abstemious as it is today—certainly at federal level! She was capable of laughing and capable of friendship. That utter decency and that joy of life characterised what she did.

Of course, that was accompanied by a vision and a determination, a purpose. She was a leader of Victoria, and she was a leader of women in particular. She was a trailblazer, and we must acknowledge her role as the first female Premier of Victoria. That is some extraordinary achievement. For anybody to be a Premier of any state at any time is a lifetime’s achievement, but to have become the first female Premier of Victoria is really a massive step forward. It is my sorrow that the Liberal Party did not achieve that, but it is my recognition that Joan Kirner and the ALP did.

Having said that, what I particularly want to acknowledge is that she was one of the progenitors of the national Landcare movement. With my current role in the environment, I see the extraordinary contribution that landcarers make around the country in every state and territory, whether it is the Bass Coast Landcare Network in my own area, or you could be up in the Northern Territory or out in the backblocks of WA. You meet with Landcare groups that are doing practical things on the ground. They are proud of what they do. They do it willingly, and they do it as part of a national Landcare movement. For all of those who helped to create and establish it, they should be immensely proud, and we should acknowledge that Joan’s role was critical. She had many career achievements. From an environmental perspective, this is an abiding achievement which I believe will still be a feature of the Australian community landscape 100 years from now.

That brings me, lastly, to her family. She is survived by Ron, her husband of 55 years. That is another major achievement, and I think it speaks volumes of both of them that the most important relationship in their lives was with each other. Their three children are Michael, David and Kate, and their grandchildren are Ned and Sam, Xanthe and Joachim. That is some family, some life, some Premier. She served Victoria well. On behalf of both myself and, in particular, my father, Alan, who has now left, I want to say congratulations on a wonderful life to her family. You have been an adornment to our state and our nation. In particular, Joan was somebody not only whom you loved but of whom everybody should be immensely proud.

Mr GILES (Scullin) (12:19): This is a difficult speech to give, but it is an honour to be able to give it. In making this contribution by way of tribute to an extraordinary Victorian, an
extraordinary Australian, in Joan Kirner, I do not presume to tell the Joan Kirner story but rather to make some personal reflections in respect of the extraordinary life, the extraordinary contribution, of someone who I am very proud to have called a friend.

Just over a week ago I was supposed to visit Joan. I was very much looking forward to it and I know that she was looking forward to it, because she was looking forward to meeting my colleague the member for Griffith. Joan took an extraordinary interest in politics—federal as well as state—notwithstanding having retired from formal politics quite some time ago. I was struck by her keen interest in everything political but particularly in the new generation of Labor women. She would always be cross-examining me relentlessly on the member for Hotham, the member for Newcastle, the member for Lalor and all of my colleagues—people for whom she, in a very real sense, had blazed the trail. She would always be offering encouragement. I think the member for Grayndler talked about making suggestions. In my experience Joan did not make suggestions; she gave directions, and woe betide anyone who did not follow those directions.

I joined the Australian Labor Party in 1992, when Joan Kirner was Premier. I was very proud to support her premiership and I was very proud, and I remain proud, that the first vote I cast was in support of the government that she led under difficult circumstances. Earlier today I spoke with Caroline Hogg, who was a minister alongside Joan and a long-time friend. What Caroline impressed upon me, and what I would like to impress upon anyone who considers these remarks, was Joan's extraordinary courage. In recent years she demonstrated her courage in her continuing activism and energy despite very difficult health issues, but she also showed extraordinary courage during the time that she was Premier of Victoria. As the member for Grayndler touched on, her premiership was a difficult one in many senses, but it was conducted under the most extraordinary—I would say appalling—coverage. Joan Kirner, when she was Premier of Victoria, was subject to the most extraordinary treatment in the media, particularly the tabloid media, in reflecting on her dress and many other gendered aspects of her role. She was never deterred by that, and she demonstrated no rancour as she went about her business on behalf of the people of Victoria.

Indeed, through this appalling treatment she continued to concentrate as Premier on raising standards of trust in politics. She led by example, and she lived her life that way. I think of the injunction she issued in respect of politics. She said:

"There is no such thing as being non-political. Just by making a decision to stay out of politics, you are making a decision to allow others to shape politics and exert power over you. And if you are alienated from the current political system, then just by staying out of it you do nothing to change it, you simply entrench it."

This is a powerful injunction, and I note that the entirety of Joan's adult life was lived that way: her activism as a parent; her activism in the community; and her role before, during and after her involvement in parliamentary life. She set a very high standard and she encouraged all those around her, particularly the women she encountered in the community and in the Labor movement, to live by that injunction. In doing so she made an extraordinary difference. She also did so by way of example. Firsts are always important; they set the standard for those that follow. And what a standard Joan Kirner set as Victoria's first female Premier. In the way she went about her role as our state leader, she made possible a different sense of politics—a different sense of politics that we are yet to fully realise, unfortunately.
Earlier today I also spoke with Peter Batchelor, another former colleague of Joan's and at one stage, as she would jokingly put it, her boss. Peter has been engaged in the preparations for what will be an extraordinary show of support and love for Joan on Friday at her state funeral. He reminded me of Joan's wicked sense of humour but also of his sense of her as the essence of community or, perhaps, community being the essence of her.

This was a theme across her entire adult life, continuing with her role under the Bracks and Brumby governments as Victoria's community ambassador—a role that continued when the government changed. In this role, she added a keen interest in advancing social inclusion to her lifelong passion for social justice.

Also after she left formal politics she continued to engage in reshaping how we do politics, most famously through her commitment to achieving the organisational change in affirmative action that has transformed Labor's parliamentary ranks. She created the organisational space, building on the example of her personal leadership, to see Labor's parliamentary ranks much more closely resemble the communities we represent. So many women have entered parliament, particularly in Victoria—and I am very pleased to have my colleague and friend the member for Bendigo here, who no doubt will have some personal reflections on these issues—because of this organisational change. She did not rest with achieving organisational change, because she was always offering her personal support, encouragement and, as I may have touched on earlier, often direction to women to fulfil their potential, never sit on the sidelines and always take their place in the centre of the Labor movement and the centre of our public life.

She was not only a mentor to women; she was a great mentor to me. I will always remember her extraordinary kindness to me. I have thought in recent days of the extraordinary faith she had in me. To date, that has proved somewhat unwarranted but she presents me—and, I think, all of us—with a great challenge to do something to repay that faith and follow the example she set.

What an example that was. As a Victorian, when I think of the Bracks and Brumby governments and now the Andrews government, I see governments mirrored in the image of her example. For so many people, particularly the nine women who presently serve in the Andrews cabinet, a path was blazed by Joan Kirner. I think of her great friend Julia Gillard, Australia's first woman Prime Minister. I think of my parliamentary colleagues here, people such as the member for Jagajaga and the member for Ballarat, who have achieved enormous things in no small measure due to Joan's influence and support.

I think, of course, of Joan and her family. I hope and I am sure that Joan will rest in peace, although I am sure she will watch over all of us in this place and those in Spring Street as well. My thoughts today are with Ron and the rest of Joan's immediate family and also with some of those who could speak far better to Joan than I can but do not have the opportunity today. I think in particular of our mutual friend Hutch Hussein, whose baby born yesterday will bear a lifelong tribute to Joan and Joan's influence. I think of Kay Setches, Gavin Jennings and Jill Hennessy. I am sure they will be tremendously sad but will continue to be inspired.

I hope that as Ron and the family, in their sadness and through their reflections, think of Joan, they will take some consolation from the fact that the Labor family will always treasure Joan's memory. We will pay tribute to that memory by continuing her work.
Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (12:28): This is quite possibly one of the hardest contributions that I will make in this House. It is hard to come up with the words to describe and reflect on Joan Kirner and the legacy that she has left behind, particularly in my home state of Victoria. I first met Joan when I was very new to the ALP’s women’s policy committee. Being young and active, I was very keen and determined to push forward Labor Party policy in the area of women’s affairs. Joan came and spoke to our committee. She had this twinkle in her eye. She pulled us younger members aside at the end and said, ‘Never lose the spark. Never lose the energy. Make sure you keep fighting.’ This was after Joan had had her career in politics. This was after she had been one of the cofounders of EMILY’s List. She still had the energy, the passion and the encouragement, and she would infect all of us with that energy every time she spoke, whether it be at a fundraiser, whether it be at a conference. She had a cheekiness about her and a determination and always words of encouragement, particularly for younger women.

I think at this time of my state colleagues. We in Central Victoria have progressive Labor women, EMILY’s List women, representing us. At the federal level, I was the first woman to be elected to represent the seat of Bendigo. Jacinta Allan is the state member for Bendigo East. She was the youngest woman ever to be elected to state parliament, and she is the first woman to be elected to represent Bendigo East. Marie Edwards is the state member for Bendigo West. She was the first woman to be elected to the state seat of Bendigo West. We also now have Mary-Anne Thomas, elected in the lower part of the Bendigo electorate to represent the seat of Macedon, Maryanne being the second woman to be elected to the seat of Macedon. Prior to her, Joanne Duncan, another progressive woman, held the seat. All of us come together and work closely together and all of us know that we would not have these opportunities if it were not for the previous generation of sisters, people like Joan Kirner, who really took up the fight to say: ‘We can too. We can represent our communities just as good as the men, and we deserve a place in this parliament too.’

Joan was a sister and a great supporter for so many. Yesterday Jacinta Allan, a good friend of mine, was reflecting on Joan’s uncanny ability and knack to know when to reach out and give people a call. She was engaged in politics until the very end. Whether she be watching question time or reading a newspaper report, she just knew if people had had a bad day and would give them a call. Shortly after I was preselected, a big fundraiser was held very close to her home town. Joan said, ‘If you are going to do a fundraiser, let’s make some money.’ She wanted to make sure that women candidates contesting elections had the dough. She was a big subscriber to the idea that early money is like yeast: it makes the dough rise. She would really only participate in fundraisers if they could make money to help out women candidates. I am one of the newer MPs, and the last election was my first election, but even when Joan's health was not good, she would still be there. She would still be encouraging women and trying to support progressive women to get preselected. Like many others, my Facebook and social media have been awash with tributes to Joan Kirner and the great role that she played—the mentoring role, the supportive role—to encourage a generation of women to step up and get involved in politics. But it was not just in politics and encouraging women to get involved where Joan was a great sister. She was also a great supporter and sister for working women.

I remember, when I was an organiser at United Voice, it was Joan who came to launch a report that we had done into the crisis going on in Melbourne’s luxury hotels. It was a report
that spoke about the working conditions of housekeepers, predominantly migrant women. This is long after she had finished in parliament. She came and met with these members, these hard workers, and learnt their stories. It was not a fly-in visit—pop in, do the media conference, launch the report. Joan would take the time to hear their stories, to share their stories. She had a great ability to listen, to reflect and also to encourage and motivate. On this particular day, the housekeepers were quite nervous—not because they were about to talk to the media and share their stories, but because they had the opportunity to meet Joan Kirner, the first woman premier of our state. How shy they were, these wonderful union members and very strong committed workplace delegates. That was the impact that Joan had on so many women—not just women in parliament, but women in our community. Her leadership, her passion and her convictions encouraged so many women to step up; and her legacy will not just be a legacy that people like myself and other women in parliament will seek to see expanded and to build on, but is also about the encouragement she had for so many other women in our community.

Joan was a fierce political advocate and it should be noted that establishing EMILY's List was about preselecting and supporting progressive women. You had to subscribe to a certain set of values to be an EMILY's List candidate. It is something that Joan never wavered from. She would also encourage, seek out and support progressive men—men who, in this place, would support policies that saw gender equality; who would support policies that advanced the status of women. She was not anti-men; she just said that men need to be supportive of women, and that is another part of Joan's legacy that we need to note at this sad time: the role she played in advancing the status of women in terms of public policy.

There will be a number of public areas that we acknowledge over the next couple of days, towards Friday. Some of those will be the role she played in helping to advance the status of women both in parliament and in public policy; the role she played in education, being such a strong public advocate for public education; the role she played in the environment in helping to bring together farmers and conservationists to help form Landcare, which is still very active and strong today; and the role she played in the state of Victoria in helping a government and a state get through some very troublesome times. She—as the previous speaker, my good friend from Scullin, said—also took a sledgehammer to the glass ceiling. She said that women can be leaders. She challenged a media that would pick on her for her clothing and that would make some pretty appalling comments, from the dog-whistling that would happen in the parliament to outside. She stared them down and said, 'You must not only respect me as a person but respect the office.'

It is because of women like Joan that it is possible for young women like myself to put my hand up and come into a Caucus, into a party and into a parliament that is inclusive. I do not face the same barriers that Joan faced when she first entered parliament because she helped break down those barriers. I will forever be grateful for what she has done for the state of Victoria, for women in parliament and for women in politics. I just hope that my generation of young politicians, of women, can step up to the bar—which she set very high—to make sure that more and more women have the same opportunities that Joan so strongly wanted all of us to have.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (12:38): I too rise with great sadness to speak here today to honour the life of a Labor giant, Joan Kirner. I want to commend the member for Bendigo and the
member for Scullin, who I know knew Joan very well. This is an emotional time for many Victorians to whom Joan was more than just a political figure; she was actually our friend.

This has been an all-too-familiar ritual in recent months as we in the Labor movement have seen what is largely the end of an era. There are so many people we are losing who we respect and honour in our movement. For the Labor women, and especially those of us from Victoria, Joan's death has not just taken from the history pages an admired figure, but has also deprived us of a confidant, a supporter and a friend—because for so many Labor women, and for many of the progressive men within our party, Joan was the one who led the way. She supported us when we ran for preselection and then stood by us as we made our way here to the House of the people.

In 2001, when I was first elected, Joan sent me a lovely card and a portrait of another great woman who had lit that torch—Eleanor Roosevelt. I am proud to say that that portrait still sits above my desk in my electorate office to this day. Her message to me at that time was 'Have the courage of your convictions.' I am also very proud that Victoria's first female Premier has a close connection with the area I represent, Ballarat. Before turning to life in politics and all its opportunities to make change in society, Joan was on another path, where she also saw the power to transform lives—that is, in education. After graduating from Melbourne University, Joan became a teacher at the Ballarat Technical College—an area that was the stomping ground of her then successor in parliament, Steve Bracks, and they formed a friendship there.

However, under the rules of the time, just two years later, when she married Ron, she, like so many intelligent, brilliant women, automatically forfeited the right to a career. Married women could not work in government employment. It seems extraordinary today that this was the case, but it was. Knowing Joan, it was no wonder she saw this as an act of great injustice. It no doubt inspired her to move from a career improving individual lives through the power of education to a vocation where one could make great changes to society through the power of politics.

As we look around this parliament now, and indeed all parliaments across this nation, a woman in the House is no longer a rare object to be remarked upon in tones of wonder. But not so many years ago this was not the case, and one of the reasons for this is, of course, Joan Kirner. In her book that she authored with Moira Rayner—The Women's Power Handbook—and I strongly recommend that every young woman read it—Joan relates a fabulous anecdote of how, whenever she and a small band of her women colleagues in the Victorian parliament would meet for a chat in a corridor, as we do, men would constantly walk past and, in patronising tones, say: 'Hello, hello, hello. What are you all talking about?' Finally, Joan developed a response, and her response was: 'We're plotting your downfall.' And it stopped. That, of course, was not quite what she was up to—although she may well have been! It was a signal from Joan that the women were coming and they were demanding a bigger role in the running of Victoria, and indeed in every other parliament.

Joan was not the first woman to lead an Australian government—Rosemary Follett here in the ACT deserves that honour, and Carmen Lawrence of course became our first female Premier. But Joan's elevation so soon after that of Carmen's was, I think, important for signalling to the country that this was not a one-off, and that women were now moving from the backbench to take an equal role in the running of the government. Joan, like Carmen, was only given the chance to lead when her party was at its lowest ebb. Both had little real
prospect of any long term in power. But, as the first woman Premier in Victoria, she was a mentor and an inspiration for so many women, including me and our first woman Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. As Julia said when news broke of Joan's passing, Joan was 'the truest of friends'.

Through her leadership of EMILY's List, Joan helped change our party's rules and was always the fiercest warrior in the corner of any woman standing for Labor pre-selection and then for election. Not satisfied with 60-40, Joan led the campaign for equal representation and took a transsexual marching bands with her to the ALP's special conference debating these rule changes.

Some who did not know her well may have been surprised at the generosity of the tribute paid to her by the man who ousted her as Premier—Jeff Kennett. But those who were around at the time remember the great affection and respect the two political opponents had for each other. Jeff has even gone so far as to suggest a statue of Joan be erected in Melbourne.

But, like all great women, politics was not the entire story of her life. As all those who have seen her belting out I Love Rock N' Roll know, Joan was a woman with a great sense of humour and a raucous laugh that more than once got her into trouble. She was also devoted to the Essendon Football Club, and she was particularly devoted to getting more women involved in the AFL. But most of all she was also devoted to her lifelong partner, Ron, her children Michael, David and Kate and her gorgeous grandchildren Ned, Sam, Xanthe and Joachim.

As I stated at the outset, we in the Labor movement have had to make too many of these speeches in recent times to mark the passing of the great of our movement: Gough Whitlam, Neville Wran, Wayne Goss and Tom Uren, to name just a few. But Joan Kirner rightly deserves a place right alongside every one of them. I stand here today as a proud Labor woman to say thank you, Joan. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your leadership and most of all for your support, for your friendship, for showing the way for so many of us. We love you dearly, and we are so sad that you are no longer with us, but your legacy lives on in every single one of us.

Ms Ryan (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (12:45): I am pleased to follow the member for Ballarat this morning—so very pleased. In the last conversation I had with the Hon. Joan Kirner AC, she told me that I reminded her of one Catherine King. I cannot think of a higher honour, and what a lovely moment it is to have to remember.

The Hon. Joan Kirner was honoured as a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2012 for eminent service to the parliament of Victoria and to the community through conservation initiatives, contributions to gender equality, the development of education and training programs, and the pursuit of civil rights and social inclusion. Joan's contribution to Victoria began much earlier than her political career. She was a community builder and a community advocate long before she entered parliament. As a teacher, she contributed. As a community activist, she contributed. As a parliamentarian, she made significant contributions in education and the environment. As a Premier, she broke a ceiling that was yet to be named.

And beyond politics her contribution continued. Of course, many have spoken about EMILY's List and Joan's role as a founding member and key driver and her role in introducing affirmative action into the Labor Party. Many have spoken on these. I want to
speak more about her local influence, her contributions to the west of Melbourne, her insistence that social housing have a place in large developments like the Rifle Range estate, her leading the campaign to save the Williamstown rail line, her fighting to ensure the Yarraville Community Centre remained open and her being a founding patron of the Williamstown Literary Festival. She found a way to embed her values of social justice and equality and equity into the community through her influence over so, so many years.

There are so many women in the west that were supported by Joan. Much has been said about the support and friendship between my predecessor, our much loved and heralded former PM, the Hon. Julia Gillard, and the Hon. Joan Kirner. Theirs was a special relationship, a very special relationship. However, the reach of Joan Kirner went much wider, to Lynne Kosky, to Terry Bracks, to Jill Hennessy, to Nicola Roxon—all great women who have served and are serving the west—and to some of the men: Steve Bracks, Wade Noonan, Tim Watts and the member for Scullin, here today, Andrew Giles, who has spoken so fondly of the influence of Joan on his life. There are Hobsons Bay city councillors: Linelle Gibson, Angela Altair, Luba Grigorovitch and the current Mayor of Hobsons Bay, Colleen Gates. There are the staff of members of parliament, who make important contributions to Victoria and to the country—these women from the west: Rondah Rietveld, Michelle Fitzgerald, Lori Faraone, Hutch Hussein, Catherine Van Vliet and Kerry Lewis. All are mourning the loss of a great and dear friend. Her contribution was at every level. She was influential in the lives of those active on school councils—people like Cathy Danaher—the leaders in the community centres and the schoolteachers, the small business owners, the artistic and the disabled. Joan found ways to provide support.

And what did this mean? What were her actions that so influenced so many women? The most important thing that Joan Kirner did was hold a mirror up to women, and by her actions and her words she said to us: 'You already do this work. You work every day building community and making a contribution. You can lead.' She challenged us to take the next steps, to not demur but to become the president, the spokesperson, the change agent. And she did not just put out the challenge. She followed up with support and infrastructure. The obvious example is EMILY’s List, but there are so many others—her work with Victorian communities, driving grassroots community development and support. Her beloved iPad in recent years provided a window to the world. So many speak of receiving links to interesting articles, encouraging emails when times were tough, supportive text messages with a witty word at just the right moment.

Joan had another passion, referred to by the member for Ballarat, and one that I share: the Essendon Football Club. Yesterday they acknowledged her contribution in their tweet: She was about change ahead of change. She was about challenging the status quo. Obviously, she was a great servant of the Essendon Football Club, and highly valued.

I was in a meeting when the news came that Joan Kirner had passed away. I was struck with overwhelming sadness that a bright mind, the brightest mind, had been quieted. But there was also relief that the pain she had endured so stoically was gone. That was typical of Joan. She had shown such resilience across her life, such determination, that her stoicism was not a surprise. But that fight was over. Joan Kirner, you worked to make lives better and fairer until the last.
I heard the member for Grayndler mention receiving an email from Joan so recently. There is another story of someone ringing Joan in hospital, trying to organise a visit to come and see her. On the other end of the phone, Joan said—and this is just days before her passing—'I have to check the work diary.' And that is typical of Joan Kirner.

Joan Kirner, you dragged us, pushed us, led us and danced with us. You bonded us to action, to appreciation, to understanding, to argument. You inspired us. You acted on our behalf and in our best interests. You took the job. You raised our aspirations. You lifted us up. Your commitment to fairness, to equity, to lifting us all up has been boundless. You taught us that we still had to fight.

I would like to conclude by thanking Ron and his family and to offer them my condolences and my deep thanks for sharing your wife, mother and grandmother with the rest of us for such a long time.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (12:52): I move:

That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 12:53.