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SITTING DAYS—2016

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FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

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

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

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

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard Joyce MP
Deputy Leader—Senator the Hon Fiona Nash
Chief Whip—Mr George Robert Christenson MP
Deputy Whip—Ms Michelle Leanne Landry MP

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

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Timothy Robert</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
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<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
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<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
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<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
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### PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefani
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter-Terrorism</td>
<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security</td>
<td>Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>Senator the Hon James McGrath</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation</td>
<td>Hon Angus Taylor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</td>
<td>Hon Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
<td>Hon Steve Ciobo MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
<td>Hon Keith Pitt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Revenue and Financial Services</td>
<td>Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Small Business</td>
<td>Hon Kelly O'Dwyer MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Development</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Local Government and Territories</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</td>
<td>Hon Darren Chester MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td>Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Industry</td>
<td>Hon Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
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<td>Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
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<td>Hon Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Hon Alex Hawke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science</td>
<td>Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Matt Canavan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Hon Craig Laundy MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Health and Aged Care</td>
<td>Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Sport</td>
<td>Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Rural Health</td>
<td>Hon Dr David Gillespie MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Communications</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<td>Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Jane Prentice MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Zed Seselja</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</td>
<td>Senator Patrick Dodson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Preventing Family Violence</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader (Tasmania)</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Education</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Schools</td>
<td>Andrew Giles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Universities</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Equality</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Sport</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition and Productivity</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Charities and Not-for-Profits</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Digital Economy</td>
<td>Ed Husic MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs</td>
<td>Tim Hammond MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Treasury</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Environment and Water</td>
<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Australia</td>
<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services</td>
<td>Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Doug Cameron</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Hon Linda Burney MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Carol Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney-General</td>
<td>Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
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<td>Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Cyber Security and Defence</td>
<td>Gai Brodman MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Mike Kelly AM MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Development (1)</td>
<td>Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting for Resources</td>
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<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Mental Health (3)</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>Senator Deborah O’Neill</td>
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

COMMITTEES

Petitions Committee

Report

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (10:01): I present the second report of the Petitions Committee for the 45th Parliament.

PETITIONS

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

Asylum Seekers

This petition of concerned citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the immensely detrimental impact the uncertainty of indefinite detention has on the mental and physical health of people seeking asylum and refugees on the Republic of Nauru (Nauru) and Manus Island PNG (Manus). International observers from the UN, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International found that prolonged indefinite detention causes serious deterioration of mental health. The findings of The Australian Human Rights Commission "Forgotten Children report", the Government's own Moss Review, the Senate inquiry into allegations and conditions on Nauru, UNHCR monitoring visits, testimonies and the 2,000 Nauru Files of incident reports provide evidence of children, women and men being exposed to high degree of violence and sexual and physical assault. That significant health problems and prevalent, the conditions are inhumane, medical facilities inadequate and education is limited, supportive and unsafe. Further, mandatory detention is in breach of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We therefore ask the House to immediately transfer all people being held in the Nauru and Manus Regional Processing Centres to Australia to have their claims determined. Immediately provide all refugees on Nauru and Manus with permanent resettlement options in Australia. To complete the actions requested before 21 December 2016.

from 13,407 citizens

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme: Keytruda

The petition of the Asbestos Disease Support Society draws to the attention of the House: The drug Keytruda is currently listed in the pharmaceutical benefits scheme for people diagnosed with Melanoma, evidence indicates that this drug is leading to positive outcomes for people with Mesothelioma. However the cost of the treatment is between $8,000 and $10,000 each treatment, with the number of treatments required unknown at this time.

We therefore ask the House to take the appropriate actions for the immunotherapy drug called Keytruda (Pembrollzumab or MK-3745) to be placed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for people diagnosed with Mesothelioma. Furthermore should the government believe that trials of this drug need to occur in order to do this then the government should assist with funding for these trials.

from 5,166 citizens
Falun Gong

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament This petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that Falun Gong is a peaceful meditation practice based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. Falun Gong practitioners in China have been subjected to the most brutal and relentless persecution by the Chinese Communist regime since July 1999, causing thousands to lose their lives from illegal detention and systematic torture. Such conduct stands in blatant violation of all international human rights charters that the Chinese government has itself ratified. According to investigative reports published by human rights lawyer David Matas and former Canadian Secretary of State for the Asia Pacific; David Kilgour, tens of thousands of imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners have been subjected to forced organ harvesting for China's transplant market and lost their lives (www.organharvestinvestigation.net).

We therefore ask the House to request the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister to openly and forthrightly call for an immediate end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

from 7,415 citizens

Tamborine Mountain's Escarpment Protection Precinct Development

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives this petition of the undersigned citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House the substantial detrimental impacts on matters of national environmental significance that would arise from a proposed 500-acre sports and entertainment development in Tamborine Mountain's Escarpment Protection Precinct. The site (98-196 Guanaba Road, Tamborine Mountain, QLD, 4272) features the critically endangered lowland rainforest ecological community and numerous endangered and vulnerable flora and fauna species protected under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (ref. EPBC 2015_7588). The site borders the Guanaba section of Tamborine National Park and the Guanaba Indigenous Protected area and contains several watercourses. It is a crucial wildlife corridor, connecting these otherwise dispersed areas of habitat. The Tamborine Mountain Escarpment was formalised as a protected area in 1997, following extensive environmental studies funded in substantial part by the Howard Government. These studies involved professional and academic experts, the Natural Heritage Trust, QPWS, Landcare, the Beaudesert and Gold Coast Councils, local businesses and the community. The sport and entertainment development 'Guanaba Experience' proposes an extensive network of high-use mountain bike tracks and 4WD shuttle bus trails, campsites, ziplines, bridges and a cluster of buildings that together substantially fragment the site. The development would introduce unacceptable direct and indirect impacts on EPBC-recognised species and ecological communities as well as the broader ecology that supports them.

We ask the House to direct the Minister for the Environment to reject the development 'Guanaba Experience' to protect ecological communities and species of national significance.

from 922 citizens

Health Insurance Premiums

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives. This petition of Australian Citizens draws to the attention of the House that a previous petition dated 20-12-2015, and presented to the house on 8-2-2016, has not been properly addressed by the Health Minister in her response of 20-4-2016, Ref No: MC16-002565. The central issue has been sidestepped in that Health Insurance Premiums are increasing annually at greater rates than those awarded by the Minister and her department, and they do not recognise this issue. Example Nine years ago, when we took out Health Insurance again, our monthly premium through MBF/BUPA was $243.86. A recent quote from them for similar cover was $524.60. This is a compound increase of 9.0% PA. Of those I have spoken to that signed the previous 20-12-2015 petition, none had an increase this year below the industry average of
5.59%. All experienced higher increases. Our own Health Insurance increase on 1-4-2016 was 10.1%. It helps little to shop around for a cheaper policy and change Health Funds, as we have done three times over nine years. It may be cheaper for one year, but a double digit increase the next.

I therefore ask the House to do all in its power to request the Health Minister to: 1) Properly address the previous Petition points, 1) to 3). 2) Address the issue that Heath Insurance Premiums are increasingly annually at far greater rates than the quoted industry averages, especially for the elderly.

from 2 citizens

Andrology Australia Funding

This petition of Supporters of Andrology Australia draws to the attention of the House the devastating effect on the health and wellbeing of Australian men from the withdrawal of ongoing funding for Andrology Australia by the Department of Health from July 1 2016. After 16 years as the only national body providing evidence-based information and best practice support and education in male reproductive health and associated conditions, Andrology Australia will close its doors in the coming months if this decision is not overturned. The importance of Andrology Australia as a source of health information to health professionals and the public is evidenced by: *free hard-copy and online information to cater for men from all demographic strata of Australia * 185,000 hard-copy resources distributed annually including 60,000 themed Men's Health Week brochures * more than 16,000 readers of the quarterly newsletter *1.2 million hits to the website annually * 950,000 health topic hits annually *the only online accredited education for health professionals in male reproductive health *partnerships with major health agencies in Australia. The withdrawal of government funding means that the broad range of evidence-based resources, the policy advice, the pro intellectual input from respected medical experts, and out extensive outreach networks, all built over 16 years will be lost. This can only be to the detriment of Australian men, including those groups with the poorest health of all Australians.

We therefore ask the House to support men's health by reinstating federal funding for Andrology Australia through the Commonwealth Department of Health.

from 7,198 citizens

Petitions received.

PETITIONS

Responses

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (10:01): Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented to the House have been received as follows:

Fern Bay and Fullerton Cove: Mobile Phone Reception

Dear Committee Chair,

Thank you for your letter of 11 February 2016 to the Minister for Communications regarding a petition (Petition 1136/1643) submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions by residents and visitors of Fern Bay and Fullerton Cove in New South Wales, regarding a lack of mobile coverage in the region. This matter falls within my responsibilities as the Minister of Regional Communications, and has been referred to me for response.

Mobile Black Spot Program

I understand the concern of residents and visitors of Fern Bay and Fullerton Cove regarding mobile phone coverage. While mobile carriers claim to provide coverage to 99 per cent of Australia’s population, there are still many parts of Australia where there is no coverage, particularly in regional and remote locations. Expanding mobile coverage has clear economic and social benefits, as well as public safety benefits for people living, working and travelling in regional and remote areas of Australia.

CHAMBER
The Australian Government committed $220 million through the Mobile Black Spot Program to invest in telecommunications infrastructure to address mobile black spots along major regional transport routes, in small communities and in locations prone to experiencing natural disasters.

Under round 1 of the program, $100 million has been committed to deploy 499 new or upgraded mobile base stations across regional and remote Australia — 429 Telstra and 70 Vodafone base stations.

Regrettably, the predictive coverage maps indicate that Fern Bay and Fullerton Cove will not receive any significant improvement to mobile coverage from a base station funded under round 1.

Round 1 of the program was specifically targeted at regional and remote areas of Australia, those areas classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as 'Major Urban' (i.e. with a population of 100,000 or more) were ineligible for a base station. While Fullerton Cove is not located within a Major Urban Area, the majority of Fern Bay is within the Major Urban Area of Newcastle and was therefore ineligible under round 1.

Following correspondence from residents and visitors of Fern Bay and Fullerton Cove, my Department investigated Fern Bay's eligibility for inclusion on the database of reported mobile black spot locations. I am pleased to advise that the eligible area of Fern Bay has been added to the database of reported mobile black spot locations used for round 2 of the program.

The Government has committed $60 million towards round 2 of the program, with funding to be made available over two years from July 2016. The Government will again seek to leverage additional funding from the mobile network operators and other levels of government, with a view to maximising the number of new or upgraded base stations which can be delivered.

The application period for round 2 closed on 14 July 2016. The locations of the base stations funded under round 2 are expected to be announced in the second half of 2016.

The Government has recently committed a further $60 million for a third round of program funding. I am pleased to advise that should Fern Bay and Fullerton Cove not be successful under round 2 of the program, the area has been prioritised for funding under round 3.

Further information about the Mobile Black Spot Program is available on the Department’s website at www.communications.gov.au/mobilecoverage

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories, and Regional Communications and Deputy Leader of The Nationals, Ms Fiona Nash

Kevington: Mobile Phone Reception

Dear Committee Chair,

Thank you for your letter of 17 March 2016 to the Minister for Communications regarding two petitions (Petitions 1145/1653 and 1146/1653) submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions by residents and visitors of Kevington Victoria, regarding the need for mobile phone coverage in the area. This matter falls within my responsibilities as the Minister of Regional Communications, and has been referred to me for response.

Mobile Black Spot Program

I understand the concerns of the residents and visitors of Kevington regarding mobile phone coverage. While mobile carriers claim to provide coverage to 99 per cent of Australia’s population, there are still many parts of Australia where there is no coverage, particularly in regional and remote locations. Expanding mobile coverage has clear economic and social benefits, as well as public safety benefits for people living, working and travelling in regional and remote areas of Australia.
The Australian Government committed $220 million through the Mobile Black Spot Program to invest in telecommunications infrastructure to address mobile black spots along major regional transport routes, in small communities and in locations prone to experiencing natural disasters.

Under round 1 of the program, $100 million has been committed to deploy 499 new or upgraded mobile base stations across regional and remote Australia — 429 Telstra and 70 Vodafone base stations.2

Kevington is one of the many locations around Australia that will receive some benefit from a base station funded under round 1 of the program. Telstra expects the base station to be located at Enochs Point to commence delivering services in 2017. The base station is expected to provide some mobile coverage to Kevington, however given the distance from the proposed site, the predictive coverage maps indicate that it will provide external antenna coverage only.

The Government has committed $60 million towards round 2 of the program, with funding to be made available over two years from July 2016. The Government will again seek to leverage additional funding from the mobile network operators and other levels of government, with a view to maximising the number of new or upgraded base stations which can be delivered.

Round 2 will continue to utilise the database of mobile black spot locations as reported by members of the public. The database will be used by the mobile network operators to select the locations where they propose to deliver improved mobile coverage. I can confirm that Kevington has previously been reported as a regional mobile black spot and has been added to the database.

The application period for round 2 closed on 14 July 2016. The locations of the base stations funded under round 2 are expected to be announced in the second half of 2016.

The Government has also recently committed a further $60 million for a third round of program funding.

Further information about the Mobile Black Spot Program is available on the Department's website at www.communications.gov.au/mobile coverage

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories, and Regional Communications and Deputy Leader of The Nationals, Ms Fiona Nash

Thowgla Valley and Nariel Valley: Mobile Phone Reception

Dear Committee Chair

Thank you for your letter of 5 May 2016 to the Minister for Communications regarding two petitions (Petitions 1148/1655 and 1159/1667) submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions by residents, landowners and visitors of the Thowgla Valley and Nariel Valley in Victoria regarding a lack of mobile coverage in the region. This matter falls within my responsibilities as the Minister of Regional Communications, and has been referred to me for response.

Mobile Black Spot Program

I understand the concerns of the petitioners regarding mobile phone coverage. While mobile carriers claim to provide coverage to 99 per cent of Australia’s population, there are still many parts of Australia where there is no coverage, particularly in regional and remote locations. Expanding mobile coverage has clear economic and social benefits, as well as public safety benefits for people living, working and travelling in regional and remote areas of Australia.

The Australian Government committed $220 million through the Mobile Black Spot Program to invest in telecommunications infrastructure to address mobile black spots along major regional transport routes, in small communities and in locations prone to experiencing natural disasters.
Under round 1 of the program, $100 million has been committed to deploy 499 new or upgraded mobile base stations across regional and remote Australia — 429 Telstra and 70 Vodafone base stations.

Regrettably, the predictive coverage maps indicate that Thowgla Valley and Nariel Valley will not receive improved mobile coverage from a base station funded under round 1 of the program.

The Government has committed $60 million towards round 2 of the program, with funding to be made available over two years from July 2016. The Government will again seek to leverage additional funding from the mobile network operators and other levels of government, with a view to maximising the number of new or upgraded base stations which can be delivered.

Round 2 will continue to utilise the database of mobile black spot locations as reported by members of the public. The database will be used by the mobile network operators to select the locations where they propose to deliver improved mobile coverage. I can confirm that the Thowgla Valley and Nariel Valley have previously been reported as regional mobile black spots and have been added to the database.

The application period for round 2 closed on 14 July 2016. The locations of the base stations funded under round 2 are expected to be announced in the second half of 2016. The Government also recently committed a further $60 million for a third round of program funding.

Further information about the Mobile Black Spot Program is available on the Department’s website at www.communications.gov.au/mobile coverage

Communications in an emergency

I note in particular the petitioners’ concern that residents won’t have access to mobile communications in the event there is a bushfire in the region. As part of effective emergency preparation and planning, it is strongly recommended that people do not rely on a single form of communication or source of information during an emergency. Even in areas where mobile coverage is available, despite best planning and preparation, any communication system can be temporarily affected by adverse conditions.

During an emergency situation, people should use a range of information sources to stay aware of local conditions. These information sources include local radio, television and state and territory emergency service websites. For example, during emergency situations people can listen to ABC Local Radio to receive up-to-date warnings. A portable transistor radio with a spare set of batteries can provide a valuable backup in the event there is a loss of mains power.

The Victorian Country Fire Authority (CFA) advises that people should not rely on an official warning to leave in an emergency. The CFA ‘Fire Ready Kit’ contains advice about where to find information and check for warnings during fire season. The kit can be downloaded from CFA’s website at www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories, and Regional Communications and Deputy Leader of The Nationals, Ms Fiona Nash

PETITIONS

Statements

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (10:01): I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the electronic petition system, recently introduced by the House. Electronic petitioning has been under consideration by the House for some time, with the Standing Committee on Procedure considering electronic petitioning in its 2007 report Petitioning the House of Representatives.
This report also recommended the establishment of the Petitions Committee that I am the chair of today.

Following the Procedure Committee report, the Standing Committee on Petitions, in its 2009 report *Electronic Petitioning to the House of Representatives*, recommended the introduction of an electronic petitioning system for the House. In 2015, the government responded, agreeing with the introduction of such a system, and subsequently the system was commissioned.

In September 2016, following changes to the standing orders, the House was now able to accept e-petitions as well as continuing to accept paper petitions. Members of the public are able to go to the petitions website for the House of Representatives and are guided through the process of entering an electronic petition. The system has been designed to assist petitioners in making their petition compliant with the standing orders by pre-filling text, providing examples of terms and suggesting suitable wording. Petitioners then provide their personal details, which are used by the system to authenticate and contact via email, which provides a quicker turnaround than physical letters.

Once a petition is entered, the petitioner is sent an email to verify their email address and, once done, the e-petition is then in the system. The e-petition is then considered by the Petitions Committee, which examines all electronic and paper petitions to ensure that they comply with the standing orders, before they are presented in the House. The committee scrutinises the terms and decides whether the e-petition is in order or out of order. In-order e-petitions are placed on the House's petition website and can be signed by the public. If an e-petition is out of order, the petitioner is informed and provided with suggestions to make the terms more compliant with the standing orders.

E-petitions are available for signing for four weeks. To sign a petition, a unique email address is required and the person wishing to sign has to verify their email address. This is an important authentication step which was an important feature of recommendations from both the procedure and the petitions committees. The number of signatures on the website is kept up to date and shows which petitions have received more signatures. The principal petitioner can promote their petition as widely as they choose for the four-week period.

Once the signature period has closed, the e-petition will be presented in the House at the next available opportunity by either the chair or a member if the petitioner has organised this. The e-petition will remain on the website and will be referred to the relevant member. Any response from the minister will be also posted on the website as well as being sent to the petitioner.

The implementation of e-petitions is an exciting development and one that the Petitions Committee is very pleased to see. We anticipate a change in work of the committee with the introduction of e-petitions, requiring quick decisions around the certification and presentation of e-petitions and a likely increase in the number of total petitions that need to be considered by the committee.

**Mr Katter:** Oh, come on, you know you're eliminating petitions from the parliament!

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Kennedy!
Mr VASTA: I thank the honourable member for Kennedy. I intend to use these statements as an opportunity to keep the House informed of the progress of e-petitions and the work of the committee.

BILLs

Criminal Code Amendment (Private Sexual Material) Bill 2016

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Watts.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (10:07): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The bill before the House amends the Commonwealth Criminal Code to introduce three new telecommunications offences.

These offences will criminalise the non-consensual sharing of private sexual images and films—a practice that is colloquially known as revenge porn.

I first introduced this bill more than 12 months ago on 12 October 2015.

I felt at the time that the case for this bill was so overwhelming I expected that, even if the government would not support a bill as introduced by the opposition, it would at worst fairly quickly introduce its own legislation to deal with this issue.

That has not been the case.

Twelve months have passed, and we are yet to see Commonwealth legislation on this issue.

The introduction of this bill has, however, prompted much other activity.

Shortly after the introduction of this bill, the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee established an inquiry into this issue and published a detailed report in February of 2016 calling for Commonwealth legislation of the kind currently before the House.

During public hearings as part of this inquiry, the Australian Federal Police advised the committee that unified and uniform legislation across Australia would be ‘most helpful for police’ and should substantially address jurisdictional issues within Australia that currently hinder both victims and police in pursuing allegations of non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

The Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions expressed concerns during the Senate inquiry that there are limitations on existing Commonwealth laws to adequately deal with revenge porn conduct.

Again, the government refused to act in response to this Senate inquiry and this evidence

Instead, the issue was punted to COAG.

COAG released a report in April of this year stating:

Existing laws that govern such offences do not adequately capture the scope or nature of these offences. To clarify the serious and criminal nature of the distribution of intimate material without consent, legislation should be developed that includes strong penalties for adults who do so.
The government has this morning again announced that technologically facilitated abuse will be high on the agenda of the COAG summit on reducing violence against women and their children.

All of this is good. In parallel, some—although not all—states have begun to criminalise this conduct at the state level. But even at the conclusion of this COAG process, there will still be no overarching Commonwealth law that can provide consistency—a baseline of protection—across the nation.

The approach by state governments is still piecemeal.

Only Victoria and South Australia currently make distributing intimate and sexually explicit images without consent a criminal offence.

Western Australia, Queensland and the ACT have indicated they will introduce state offences.

In Victoria, the offence carries a penalty of up to two years in prison, while in South Australia the maximum penalty is $10,000, or two years in jail.

New South Wales has made progress by seeking to criminalise revenge porn.

But this slow and convoluted process could have been avoided with some leadership and initiative from the Commonwealth government in response to the introduction of Labor's private member's bill on this issue.

The non-consensual sharing of private sexual material is an extremely serious matter.

Images of this nature are often accompanied by identifying information such as the full name, email or home address of the individuals concerned, or a place of business to further encourage harassment of the victims by strangers.

Victims understandably can experience significant emotional distress and are left vulnerable to cyber stalking, discrimination at work or even physical attacks.

The effects are far reaching, resulting in trauma and social, psychological, emotional and financial issues.

Victims often self-harm, suffer severe depression and life-long psychological issues.

Some big technology companies have begun to voluntarily remove revenge porn from their services. But the reality is that once an image is online it is likely to live on in a digital form in one corner of the internet or another forever.

The dissemination of revenge porn has an enduring impact on its victims in this way. The fear that this material may resurface lives on with victims well after actions have been taken.

There is little Australian data in this area, but British studies have overwhelming found that these acts disproportionately affect women.

It is frequently used as tool of power and control by men against their partners and former partners. One of the most disturbing aspects of this issue is the use, or the threatened use, of revenge porn as a way to keep women in abusive relationships.

Most concerning is the fact that this practice is increasingly common in the context of family violence.
When we released the exposure draft of this bill we received a lot of submissions that gave evidence that revenge porn is a factor present in a very large number of family violence cases today.

The Women's Services Network, in conjunction with the Women's Legal Service in New South Wales, conducted a national survey on technologically facilitated abuse. The survey found that 98 per cent of the 546 domestic violence workers surveyed reported that they had clients who had experienced technologically facilitated stalking and abuse of this kind.

Drs Powell and Henry, in the first Australian survey of online abuse and harassment, found that one in 10 Australians had a nude or semi-nude image of them distributed online, or sent to others, without their permission.

Drs Powell and Henry found a range of sources for these images, including:
… images obtained (consensually or otherwise) in an intimate relationship; photographs or videos of sexual assault/s; images obtained from the use of hidden devices to record another person; stolen images from the Cloud or a person's computer or other device; and pornographic or sexually explicit images that have been photo-shopped, showing the victim's face.

Methods of distribution are varied, including: texting private images to friends, colleagues or family members; publishing images on social media sites; uploading images to pornographic websites. And there are many other avenues. The key common factor is that this is done without the consent of the person appearing in the images.

It is clear that, while this practice is commonly referred to as 'revenge porn', the sharing of, or threats to share, these images without consent occur in a much wider range of scenarios than simple revenge. As the Sexual Assault Support Service recognises:

Revenge is not the only motive to consider. Perpetrators of the behaviour may seek notoriety or financial gain, or believe that they are providing entertainment for others. Some perpetrators may intend to cause emotional harm to their targets and humiliate them, while others will give little or no thought to potential impacts.

The problem of revenge porn is complex and not only limited to the publishing of sexually explicit material intending to intimidate or humiliate the subject of a break-up or breakdown in a relationship.

Any non-consensual sharing of sexual images will be covered by the bill before the House.

Other jurisdictions have passed laws prohibiting these non-consensual acts:

- the United Kingdom
- Germany
- Israel
- more than half of the states in the United States.

We need a national approach to this issue in Australia.

These offences are serious and we believe a national approach is the best way forward.

The best way to protect women, regardless of where they live.

With respect to the specifics of this bill—it contains three new offences that will prescribe appropriate penalties for persons involved in revenge porn.
The bill creates an offence for a person to share sexual images and films of a person without their consent where it will cause them distress or harm.

The bill defines the images and films that are covered by these offences broadly.

The offences are inclusive of a range of cultural understandings, sexualities and gender identities.

The bill will ensure that different cultural contexts are taken into account when determining whether an offence has been committed.

For example, in some contexts a photo of a Muslim woman without a hijab might be considered an intimate image.

The bill also creates an offence for a person to make a threat to another person to share private sexual images or films that they are depicted in, or that another person that they care about is depicted in.

The penalty for these offences will be up to three years imprisonment.

We believe that this reflects the seriousness and the very serious impacts that this crime has on the victims.

The bill also creates an offence for a person to engage in those offences for the purpose of obtaining a benefit.

The penalty for this offence will be five years imprisonment.

The trading in revenge porn for commercial benefit increases demand for this kind of material and can consequentially be expected to increase its prevalence.

It should be regarded as an aggravated offence and attract a higher penalty.

It is unacceptable that victims are not currently protected under the law.

Without strong laws and punitive consequences, revenge porn will continue to be under-reported or unreported.

We must treat this seriously.

By challenging the blame that is often directed at victims we can move towards cultural change.

Move away from a culture that tells women to police their own behaviour.

Move away from comments about a woman was wearing when she was raped.

It is never a victim's fault for being the subject of a sexual attack or sexual abuse of this kind. A woman who has had her private sexual images distributed without her consent has done nothing wrong. The perpetrator here is the person who is acting without consent.

Passing this bill would send a clear message that the behaviour will not be tolerated by this parliament or in this country.

If we change the law we can change community perceptions of this conduct.

The law can shape social norms and affect community attitudes, but it is up to parliaments like this to send the message that this behaviour is not accepted in the community. Commonwealth legislation on this matter will send a clear signal to young men and women in Australia that this behaviour is not on.

I commend the bill to the House.
The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?
Ms Brodtmann: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.
The SPEAKER: The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Australian Postal Corporation (Unsolicited Political Communications) Bill 2016

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (10:18): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill aims to address an unusual problem, but nonetheless a problem that is an annoyance to a lot of people. You see, politicians—including myself—regularly use Australia Post’s unaddressed mail service to deliver material to their electorates because it is a simple and cost-effective way of getting information out, whether it be to the entire electorate or just particular suburbs. And certainly the vast majority of feedback that I get suggests that most people are happy to receive the material that I send out, whether it be my newsletters; the fridge-magnet calendars that I send out every year; or the postcards that I deliver, inviting people to get in touch with me to tell me what they think.

But, quite reasonably, some people do not want to receive political material in their letterboxes. And here is the problem. Currently, Australia Post specifically require unaddressed political mail to be delivered to every single letterbox because they regard it as a ‘community notice’. So this means that posties are explicitly told to ignore the signs on people’s letterboxes, regardless of what they say. In other words, under the current law, if you do not want political mail in your letterbox, there is literally no way to opt out of getting it. There is simply no combination of words that you can put on your letterbox, whether it is 'no junk mail', 'no unaddressed mail' or 'no political material', that will stop you from receiving material you do not want.

In the six years I have been a member of parliament, a number of constituents have raised this problem with me. So I have tried, time and time again, to fix it and indeed I have communicated with Australia Post management on a number of occasions, and in particular made phone calls and even written letters to the CEO of Australia Post. But each and every time I have been told that the exemption is set in stone and there is simply nothing that can be done about it.

For the past several years I have even produced stickers that say ‘no junk mail including political material’. But this has been an imperfect solution because the stickers can, at best, only ever appeal to the discretion of individual posties to stop delivering political mail. But, of course, posties are professionals and feel compelled to deliver what Australia Post tells them to deliver. So they are put in the uncomfortable situation of having to put a piece of political mail in someone's letterbox even when there is a sign there explicitly requesting that they do not do that.
So here I am taking my next step and trying to change the law with this bill that would amend the Australian Postal Corporation Act to prohibit Australia Post from delivering unaddressed political material to letterboxes where there is a sign saying 'addressed mail only' or 'no unaddressed mail' or 'no political material'.

The bill defines 'political material' as being anything from or about a political party, a candidate in a federal election, or a federal member of parliament or senator. That means that material about a politician but not necessarily from that politician—for example, a letter endorsing a federal candidate that comes from a union, a business or the state branch of a party—is also covered by the bill.

If this bill becomes law—and I sincerely hope that it does—the effect would be that Australia Post would be forced to amend its unaddressed mail terms and conditions and remove the current exemption for political material. The bill explicitly states the three forms of words that a resident would have to have on their letterbox to be exempt from receiving political material, and so it would not require individual posties to make a subjective judgement about whether or not to deliver something. The bill only applies to bulk unaddressed mail services, so there is no effect on things like personally addressed letters from a member or senator to their constituents.

Frankly, all this bill would do is ensure that people who do not want political mail in their letterbox do not get it—no more and no less. How remarkable then that I actually have to stand up in the federal parliament and move a private member's bill to get that to happen. But regrettably I do.

At the same time, I do hold out hope that the government and the opposition will support what I am trying to achieve, because surely they would agree that it is the height of arrogance for politicians and political parties to force their written material on people who do not want it. Do we think that we are just so important or that what we have to say to people is so pressing that they must have it in their letterbox even if they do not want it? If we were doorknocking or making phone calls and someone said that they did not want to talk to us, would we just ignore that and carry on anyway? I do not think so. So why is it any different with mail?

I make the point again that I send out unaddressed mail myself and I find it a very useful way of communicating with my constituents. I especially try and make sure that the material I send out is at least useful and contains information that people might want to read, rather than politicking or electioneering. And the vast majority of people seem to be happy to get it or at least to not mind either way, but there are some people who do not want it and often for very good reasons. For instance people are concerned about environmental waste and would prefer to access political content online. Some people want to ensure that there is room in their letterbox for important mail. Indeed, one constituent told me that during an election campaign, they were not able to receive some important bills, because their letterbox was so full of political material. Some people are worried that when they go on holidays a build-up of mail in their letterbox will signal to potential thieves that their house is empty. Some people are worried about their privacy and just want to live undisturbed by politicians. And, quite frankly, I do not blame them.

At the end of the day it is our job as politicians to listen to our constituents. And that is something that unfortunately so many in this parliament fail at time and time again. Let me
give you a few examples. Just last week I joined the member for Indi to move a motion in this place calling on the government to overhaul the parliamentary entitlements system, because this is an issue on which we know that the public want to see change. But here we are, a year after the Bronwyn Bishop episode and eight months after the panel led by John Conde and David Tune gave its recommendations to the government, and virtually nothing has happened. We still do not have things that the public want: like real-time reporting of expenses or a requirement for politicians who make travel claims to list the substantive reason for the trip. And then here is the issue of donations reform. Again just last week I stood here and introduced another private member’s bill, which would ban foreign donations. Now that is something that we know that the public overwhelmingly want, but what action have we seen from the major parties? Nothing. There is no appetite to lower the disclosure threshold, to place caps on donations or to ban foreign donations.

Political mail, political entitlements, political donations—there is a theme here. Time and time again there is a complete reluctance from politicians and parties to do anything that puts the public interest over their political self-interest. No wonder there has been an unprecedented level of support in recent years for independents and minor and micro parties.

These are not the only issues where politicians are failing to listen to the public. There are a whole range of policy areas where both parties are out of step with what the community want—for example, the fact that we still have not seen meaningful gambling reform, even though the majority of the public, at least, are sick and tired of poker machines in pubs and clubs and wall-to-wall sports betting ads. There is also the lack of meaningful action on climate change or the fact that we are still debating marriage equality in this place even though 72 per cent of Australians have said that they want it. And what about the dreadful fact that the government allows the live export trade to continue, even though we know that it lacks popular support?

As federal politicians, we are privileged to be well-resourced to communicate with our constituency. But with that privilege comes a responsibility to listen to what the community has to say and to represent their concerns in the parliament. That is our job.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge one particular constituent, Mr David Webb from Claremont, for his assistance in bringing into sharp focus the need for this bill. Thank you, David. I commend the bill to the House.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?
Ms McGowan: I am very happy to second that motion, and I reserve my right to speak.

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (10:28): Pursuant to standing order 113, I fix the next sitting Monday as the day for presenting the Dairy Produce Amendment (Milk Marketing Board) Bill 2016. I apologise to the House that we still have not completed the drafting.

MOTIONS

Death Penalty

Mr ZIMMERMAN (North Sydney) (10:28): I move:
That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) the strong multi-party commitment in Australia to see an end to the death penalty worldwide;

(b) that 10 October was World Day Against the Death Penalty, an important moment to mark our resolve to end capital punishment around the world;

(c) that the evidence overwhelmingly shows that the death penalty is not an effective deterrent to crime;

(d) that the death penalty is the ultimate cruel and inhumane punishment and Australia opposes its use in all cases;

(e) that the international trend shows the world is moving away from the death penalty—in 1977 only 16 countries had abolished the death penalty, now 140 nations have abolished capital punishment in law or practice;

(f) that despite this overwhelming trend, 2015 saw more people executed than in any year in the past quarter century, with executions carried out by several of Australia’s neighbours and allies; and

(g) that Australia has the opportunity to influence progress towards the worldwide abolition of the death penalty in its relationships with key regional and global partners;

(2) welcomes the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into Australia’s Advocacy for the Abolition of the Death Penalty: A world without the death penalty (May 2016), and looks forward to the Government’s response to its recommendations; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

(a) continue to strengthen its efforts to advocate for an end to the death penalty wherever it still occurs;

(b) support civil society efforts to advocate for an end to the death penalty, particularly in retentionist countries; and

(c) encourage other United Nations member states to support a global moratorium on the death penalty at upcoming United Nations General Assembly negotiations on a moratorium resolution.

'There is no place for the death penalty in the modern world. State execution is a barbaric act that demeans the state that carries it out. An eye for an eye leaves the world blind.' These were the opening words used by the former member for Berowra Philip Ruddock in his foreword to the parliamentary committee report into Australia's advocacy for the abolition of the death penalty, tabled in the last days of the 44th Parliament. It is appropriate that this new parliament commences with a recognition that Australia remains steadfast in its opposition to the death penalty for all crimes, in all nations, and that that cause enjoys bipartisan support.

Last week, many of us joined together to mark World Day Against the Death Penalty. I acknowledge the work of Amnesty International in bringing us together to reflect on the world's progress but also the challenges that lie ahead. International efforts to end the use of the death penalty have overall been incredibly successful. As this resolution notes, 40 years ago only 16 countries had abolished the death penalty. Today, capital punishment has been abolished in law or practice in 140 nations. Last year, four more nations joined the list of those abolishing the death penalty for all crimes.

Yet, like many things, progress has been marked by two steps forward and one step back. On the other side of the ledger, 2015 was a year in which over 1,600 people were executed in 25 countries. This represents a 50 per cent increase over the number of executions undertaken in 2014. These figures do not include the many hundreds, if not thousands, of executions that
are believed to have been conducted in China but gone unreported. Nor do the figures include extrajudicial killings such as those that appear to be occurring with state sanction in the Philippines today. And around the world over 20,000 people remain on death row, many of them destined to die by lethal injection, beheading, flogging or firing squad.

My opposition to the death penalty is fundamentally born from the liberal values that have shaped my involvement in politics. It is axiomatic that any person who believes in the innate value of every individual should hold dear, at the apex of human rights, the value of life itself. In opposing the death penalty we recognise that to strip the dignity of one person by the hands of the law is to strip every person of that dignity. This alone is enough for me to oppose the death penalty.

It has been almost 50 years since Ronald Ryan became the last man to be executed in Australia. In abolishing capital punishment, our nation understood that violence does not remedy violence. Yet there are more temporal reasons to judge capital punishment unworthy of any nation's legal system. By its nature, it excludes the possibility of redemption and rehabilitation. It has often taken the lives of those who were subsequently found to be innocent. It often involves incredible cruelty and has no proven value as a deterrent.

In many countries people are killed following judicial processes that are clearly wanting. Often these deaths are the result of crimes that by any measure do not warrant the forfeiture of life itself. In some cases minors—just teenagers—and those with mental illness are executed. In 2004, Cameron Todd Willingham was executed in the United States for setting a fire that led to the death of his three young daughters. Further evidence showed he was innocent. In 2006, Angel Nieves Diaz was sentenced to lethal injection. It took 34 minutes and two doses to kill the man. In Iran, hangings are often public, with children and the general public as onlookers, with some aged as young as 15 sitting on death row.

The right to life is founded on universal values not insulated to our shores. We have an obligation as parliamentarians to support an end to the death penalty wherever it is used. In a time of international cooperation and global policing arrangements, Australia must be steadfast in its principles and act as a leader to end the death penalty worldwide. I am pleased that this is an issue that has been a priority for Australian governments of all persuasions for many years. We were a co-sponsor of the UN General Assembly's moratorium on the death penalty, which was successfully adopted in 2014.

In the months and days before two Australians were executed by an Indonesian firing squad in April 2015, our community was united in pleading and praying for mercy for Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran. We stood as a country, knowing that violence does not end violence; knowing that the value of life trumps all; knowing that our civilisation values rehabilitation and justice, not retribution. We understand that the strength of our society comes not from our capacity to harm but from our courage to recognise the value of human life, even for those who have undertaken evil crimes. I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): Is the motion seconded?

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (10:34): I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (10:34): I thank the member for North Sydney for giving the parliament the opportunity to consider this very important matter.
Last week we commemorated World Day Against the Death Penalty, with representatives of Amnesty International and many parliamentarians attending in the parliamentary courtyard. We lit candles in demonstration of our united front against the death penalty and pledged to continue our advocacy against those who continue this cruel, inhumane and degrading form of punishment.

As co-chair of Australian Parliamentarians Against the Death Penalty, firstly with the former member for Berowra, Phillip Ruddock, and now with Senator Dean Smith, I am committed to strengthening our public advocacy for the right to life, arguing that capital punishment has no place in modern society.

Most credible research indicates that capital punishment does not deter crime. The death penalty offers no observable change to criminal activity and only serves to satisfy the urge for vengeance. A 2009 survey conducted by the American Society of Criminology found that 88 per cent of criminologists did not believe the death penalty had any deterrent effect on crime.

One hundred and forty countries have now abolished the death penalty, compared with only 16 in 1977. However, according to the latest statistics published by Amnesty International, there has been a 54 per cent increase in executions across the globe since 2014. Although the majority of nations have now abolished the death penalty, five countries, including China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the United States, account for the majority of executions. While China keeps its numbers secret, according to Amnesty International it is suggested the Chinese figure is in excess of 2,000 people per annum.

Last year two Australians, Myuran Sukumaran and Andrew Chan, were executed in Indonesia. For many of our citizens, this was probably the first time they had thought seriously about, or been confronted by, the death penalty abroad. The reality is that there are still 17 Australians on death row in foreign countries as we speak.

In May the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade presented a report to the Australian parliament entitled A world without the death penalty: Australia's advocacy for the abolition of the death penalty. I gave evidence to that committee regarding the importance of active participation in this debate and being prepared to assert our values when engaging with foreign governments. The report makes several important recommendations which I fully support, including that Australia should allocate additional resources in support of worldwide abolition of the death penalty. I agree with Amnesty International's view that Australia, and particularly those of us privileged enough to hold public office, should continue to build upon efforts to end the death penalty, particularly in our region.

I am happy to support the government's quest for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council, for amongst other things it would serve as a platform to pursue the worldwide abolition of the death penalty and assist in strengthening the yes vote for the 2016 United Nations General Assembly's death penalty moratorium resolution. I am proud of the bipartisan commitment by members of this parliament to abolishing capital punishment, and I look forward to a world free of the death penalty.

I would like to conclude with the words of former Chief Justice of the South African Constitutional Court, Ismail Mahomed, who said this:

The death penalty sanctions the deliberate annihilation of life …
It is the ultimate and the most incomparably extreme form of punishment … It is the last, the most devastating and the most irreversible recourse of the criminal law, involving as it necessarily does, the planned and calculated termination of life itself; the destruction of the greatest and most precious gift which is bestowed on all humankind.

The death penalty has no place in the modern world and we need to work together to ensure that no more lives are lost through this cruel, barbaric and inhumane practice.

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (10:39): I am pleased to speak on the motion moved by the member for North Sydney in recognition of World Day Against the Death Penalty. As one of the co-convenors of the Amnesty International Parliamentary Group, I know that this issue is one that has strong support from across the parliament, including from my fellow co-convenors the member for North Sydney, the member for Scullin and Senator Rice.

The death penalty is patently abhorrent, a shocking abuse of the power of the state and deeply unethical. It simply has no place in the justice system of any civilised country, not least because it deprives people of one of the most basic human rights, the right to life. Indeed, it is entirely fruitless as a deterrent to crime given that there is no evidence to prove that it deters people any more than imprisonment. The death penalty is also entirely at odds with international law. For instance, it is contrary to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights. The fact that other countries think it is okay is nothing short of appalling.

Thank God, then, that the world has made great progress on moving away from the death penalty. Indeed, 140 nations have now abolished it, compared to only 16 countries just under 40 years ago. But, despite this good news, in 2015 more people were executed than in any year in the past 25 years—a total of 1,600 people, at an average rate of over four people a day. And this was not only in horrid places like North Korea, because some of the biggest economies in the world and some of Australia’s closest allies still practise capital punishment, including Indonesia, China, India, Japan and the United States. Many countries still implement the death penalty for drug offences, including the United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. In fact, in some countries like Iran, Malaysia and Singapore it is the only sentence for drug offences.

Moreover, in Japan there are 13 prisoners on death row for their role in the sarin gas attacks in the Tokyo subway system in 1995. Of course none of us excuse this despicable crime, but it is never okay for the state to take a life as a form of punishment. In Pakistan, Imdad Ali is on death row for the murder of a religious teacher in 2001 despite being diagnosed with a mental disability and the fact that international law clearly prohibits the use of the death penalty against people with mental or intellectual disabilities. Of course, the recent execution in Indonesia of drug traffickers Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran put the death penalty back on the agenda in Australia.

Australia obviously has the opportunity to influence these recalcitrant countries and we can do that through our diplomatic relations with the rest of the world, especially with some of our closest neighbours and trading partners in the Asia-Pacific region. That is why, like my colleagues who have supported this motion, I call on the government to encourage other countries to support a resolution for a global moratorium on the death penalty during the upcoming United Nations General Assembly negotiations.
But we need to do more, like telling specific countries both publicly and privately that capital punishment is never acceptable. The fact that some countries like China are important to Australia's economy does not mean they should get off lightly. Indeed, the reality is quite the opposite. The significant bilateral economic relationship we have keeps us noticed and more influential than we would otherwise be.

I applaud Amnesty International for their hard work and advocacy on this issue, and I again thank my fellow co-convenors of the Amnesty International Parliamentary Group and members from across the parliament for supporting this motion. I was also pleased to join Amnesty and parliamentary colleagues last week on World Day Against the Death Penalty for a candlelight vigil here in the parliament.

Australia has the opportunity to be a global leader in the campaign against the death penalty. We know that the death penalty lacks popular support and so it is the job of all of us to keep up the pressure. Just as most if not all grave injustices are righted eventually, I hope, as I am sure many others in this place hope, that one day we will see a world where the death penalty is abolished for good.

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (10:43): Can I begin by thanking the member for North Sydney for putting forward this motion. I would also like to acknowledge the work of the Human Rights Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade on their report *A world without the death penalty*. The cross-party support for abolishing the death penalty speaks to the strength of Australia's commitment to this cause. It transcends governments and political orientations because the death penalty is so abhorrent to our common understanding of justice and humanity.

The arguments against the continued use of the death penalty are compelling and they are numerous. First and foremost, state-sanctioned killing as a part of the justice system is abhorrent to the values of a peaceful democratic nation. The right to life is enshrined in international law. It is an international norm that we have an obligation to promote.

There is no evidence that the death penalty operates as a unique deterrent, and the cost of an incorrect sentence is so very high. The justice system is fallible, no matter how robust the processes. The death penalty is an irreversible punishment that cannot be amended and cannot be removed. This inevitably results in the state-sanctioned execution of innocents.

Australia has long supported the abolition of the death penalty, and we have a strong history of advocacy that we can be very proud of. Over the decades there has been a significant movement away from the use of the death penalty, with some 124 nations abolishing capital punishment in law or practice between 1977 and 2015.

However, we cannot become complacent or reduce the vigour with which pursue this issue. There remain 56 countries that actively retain the death penalty; sadly, many of these nations execute hundreds of people per year. What is more, 2015 saw the highest number of recorded executions worldwide since 1989. Last year, the continued use of the death penalty in other nations really hit home in Australia with the barbaric executions of Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran. As we acknowledge World Day Against the Death Penalty, we also mark our resolve as a parliament—and, indeed, as a nation—to bring an end to the death penalty in our region and across the world. I join my colleagues in calling on the government to continue strengthening our efforts to bring an end to the use of the death penalty where it still occurs.
Australia is in a strong position to make a real difference in this debate by supporting civil society in retentionist nations and through multinational platforms like the United Nations. In particular, Australia's bid for the United Nations Human Rights Council offers us a unique platform to take a leadership role on this issue.

I believe we have a particular obligation to pursue this issue with our friends—our friends and allies in the Indo-Pacific and the United States. While it is said that true friendship means being able to disagree, I believe it also means telling your friends when they are wrong. We have an obligation to make the case to bring an end to the use of the death penalty. Australia can and should do more.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next day of sitting.

National Week of Deaf People

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (10:47): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that 15 to 23 October is National Week of Deaf People which provides an opportunity for:

(a) deaf people to celebrate their communities and achievements;
(b) promote awareness of local, state and national communities;
(c) acknowledge of Federal Parliament’s current pilot of captioning in the House and Senate;

(2) notes the rights of deaf people to:

(a) access Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN) as their first language; and

(3) acknowledges that:

(a) deaf people are a minority both culturally and linguistically;
(b) acceptance of the need for bilingual education of AUSLAN and English to promote equality and lifelong learning.

Yesterday marked the beginning of a week-long celebration for deaf people, their families and the deaf Australian community. It is a celebration for the community as a whole and highlights their unique language, culture and place in our everyday lives. We will see, in communities around the country, festival days, workshops, forums, quiz nights, theatre, debates and films. In Parramatta, we will celebrate once again on Saturday with the Deaf Festival on the banks of the Parramatta River. The theme for this year’s festival is an adaptation of the theme of the World Federation of the Deaf International Week of Deaf People, 'With sign language, I am equal’—in Australia, of course, it is, ‘With Auslan, I am equal’, because Auslan is a uniquely Australian language.

It astonishes me that, in 2016—in a country like Australia, which is so good, relative to the rest of the world, in raising children with disabilities—we need to say, 'With Auslan, I am equal.’ Yet our deaf community feels the need to say that, and this week I hope we hear them loudly and clearly: with Auslan, they are equal.

This week is about recognising deaf individuals as primarily visual beings belonging to a linguistic minority and calling for Auslan to be recognised and available for deaf persons at all stages of their lives, including from birth. I spoke last year of this: that, when a child is
born deaf with hearing parents, the need for that child to learn language from birth is essential, and they cannot do that without a visual language such as Auslan. So it is incredibly important that our children are given, from birth, the ability to learn a language that is available to them, and, for many deaf children, that is Auslan.

This year's deaf week will focus on things that we should all take for granted—birth rights: the right of deaf children to access and acquire Auslan as their first language; deaf identity: deaf people are a cultural and linguistic minority who use Auslan as their primary language; accessibility: deaf people need access to public information and services through Auslan. And if we, as a nation, think we provide that, we should have a look at some of the official government websites and see how little Auslan there actually is on them. In fact, when I tried to get an interpreter this week in Canberra to do some Auslan messages on film, it became apparent that, even in Canberra, the seat of government, there is a serious shortage of Auslan interpreters who are able to work in the public domain. We have a long way to go before our deaf community can access the information that they need and can participate in government processes in the way that they should. We should all take for granted equal language: recognising Auslan as an equal language to other spoken/written languages; equal employment opportunities: removing the barriers where hearing is a requirement and promoting greater inclusion and opportunities for deaf people to realise their dreams; bilingual education: accepting the need for bilingual education for deaf children—that is, in Auslan and English—and for teachers and interpreters to be fully accessible; equal participation: deaf people being able to fully participate in the personal, public and political areas along with everyone else; and lifelong learning: deaf people having access to education, training and ongoing professional development throughout their lives.

Auslan is not English. It is an incredibly interesting language that developed over time. At present there are 62 handshapes listed in the Signs of Australia dictionary of Auslan—the Johnston 1998 edition. Of these 62, 37 are core, and some are used much more than others. In fact, four of the handshapes are used for over 50 per cent of all of the signs, and the most frequent handshapes account for 80 per cent of the signs, the next 22 handshapes for about 20 per cent, and six handshapes are only in one per cent. So it is a language with a small number of handshapes but incredible variety, because it relies on facial expression and body language as well. In fact, when I go to the deaf community—and I know my deaf community will not mind me saying this—I love it; it is the loudest silence you will ever hear. And I wish my deaf community all the best for this week.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): Is the motion seconded?

Mr EVANS (Brisbane) (10:52): I second the motion and rise to speak in favour of it and in support of the National Week of Deaf People. I understand hearing loss is the most common disability in newborns, affecting approximately two in every 1,000 babies every year. So it is vital that we have groups and organisations to care for and prepare young deaf people to live without barriers despite their predicament. Just this month I was fortunate enough to receive a tour of the local Hear and Say headquarters in Ashgrove, in my electorate of Brisbane, with CEO Chris McCarthy. I was very privileged to meet the many caring and highly skilled staff working for this not-for-profit organisation, which has now been doing such tremendous work for 24 years. I was very interested to see how the exciting facility is
utilising cutting-edge technology to work with parents and families as well as children who are deaf.

Between the Ashgrove centre and its other five centres around Queensland, Hear and Say provides services and programs to over 2,000 children, young adults and families including audiology, auditory-verbal therapy, occupational therapy and school hearing screening. They also provide services online, reaching out to rural and remote areas. I was also lucky to tour this centre with Councillor Steven Toomey, who represents the area of Ashgrove on the Brisbane City Council. Councillor Toomey's family has firsthand experience utilising the services of Hear and Say.

The visit to the Hear and Say centre was important for two reasons: firstly, to see how those in the Brisbane community with hearing impairment, especially children, are in safe hands at Hear and Say; and, secondly, to be shown how Chris and his team are ushering in what they call a new era of children who are deaf. I will explain what they mean by that. We have all seen videos of that special moment when the hearing aid or cochlear implant is switched on for the first time and a beam of light shines on the face of the toddler or infant. It really is inspiring and emotional to witness. But what Hear and Say and other similar organisations around Australia are doing is getting past the 'YouTube moment' and making sure that, if you are born with no hearing, you will have fewer limitations in adult life.

Over 90 per cent of children with permanent hearing loss are born to hearing— and thus listening and speaking— parents. New research and advances in hearing technology are now changing our realistic expectations for spoken language outcomes for children who are deaf. To put this into context: those born deaf more than, say, 15 or 20 years ago may have what is known as a deaf accent into their teens and adult years. That is often due to the limitations of the technology and techniques available at that time.

Due to technological and other advances, our expectations are becoming much greater. Children participating in a listening and spoken language (auditory-verbal) early intervention program perform better for spoken language and listening than a matched group of children in an auditory-oral (listening and lip reading) program or a bilingual-bicultural (Auslan and written English) program by three years of cochlear implant use. Technology has changed significantly and the use of cochlear implants, digital hearing and our understanding of auditory brain development and therapeutic techniques now means that, in 2016, there is a new generation of children who are deaf but can listen and speak and will not be limited by their hearing impairments. It is organisations like Hear and Say that are making that expectation a reality.

That brings me to the latter half of this motion. I note the assistance provided for deaf children under the Commonwealth government's Better Start program. The level of support required for a child who can listen and speak is significantly less than for one who will need ongoing one-on-one Auslan interpreter support. That is why Hear and Say is advocating for more funding to support children with all levels of hearing loss through classroom design, clever technology and teacher training rather than just Auslan support. This will make children who are deaf less of a minority, with educational and lifestyle outcomes equivalent to those of all other Australian children. I commend the great work of Hear and Say to the House and sincerely thank Chris McCarthy and the whole team at Hear and Say for this tremendous work on behalf of the community.
Finally, a reminder to all that this Friday, 21 October 2016, is Loud Shirt Day. It is an excuse to wear your brightest clothes and raise money to help give the gift of sound and speech to deaf children. I encourage everyone to get involved and join me by wearing fancy stripes, florals, polka dots or paisley across Australian workplaces on Friday. It is a very worthy cause. There is still a lot of work to do and I look forward to continuing to work hard on behalf of Brisbane's deaf community of all ages including the clients, family and great staff at the Hear and Say centre in Ashgrove.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (10:57): I rise to speak on the motion by the member for Parramatta. I am very happy to speak about the National Week of Deaf People. Most Australians take their ability to hear for granted. It is the old story: you do not value something until you no longer have it. Approximately 30,000 Australians have total hearing loss. Currently, about one in six Australians are affected by some hearing loss; and, by 2050, that is likely to be one in four. It is not only the ability to hear that we take for granted; along with that ability comes a whole raft of inclusions in the community that we often do not realise excludes others.

In this National Week of Deaf People, we acknowledge and celebrate the deaf community, their contribution to society and their many achievements. There have been some famous Australians with hearing issues. Henry Lawson, one of my favourite short-story writers, became ill at nine and had progressive hearing loss, leading to major hearing loss by the time he was 14. Former Prime Minister John Howard suffered hearing loss from an early age but did not let that interfere with his time in politics—and I know that is the case for other MPs in this chamber. Could I also mention Jamie-Lee Lewis, daughter of Wally Lewis, who was born profoundly deaf and had a cochlear implant at aged four. Jamie-Lee has played touch football down here with her dad—who also played a bit of footy!—and is a very successful water polo player and a member of the Brisbane Barracudas in the national league. I have mentioned just a few of the many great Australians who have succeeded despite the difficulties they have faced due to hearing impairment.

But there is no doubt that Australians who are deaf or hard of hearing still face many barriers—in their working lives, accessing services and generally participating in community activities. Organisations such as Deaf Services Queensland, headquartered in Moorooka, just down the road from where I live in Moreton, help the deaf and the hard of hearing break down barriers to be more included in the community. They have been operating since 1903. They are a not-for-profit organisation that work with the community to enhance the services and programs that benefit deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Australia. Notwithstanding the great work that Deaf Services Queensland and other support and advocacy services do, sadly there are still some barriers that are insurmountable.

The High Court recently considered a Queensland law that prevents people who are deaf from participating in jury service. A Queensland woman, Gaye Lyons, who is deaf, received a request to perform jury duty. She was happy to participate. However, she was then notified by the deputy registrar of the court that she would not be able to participate and she was excused from jury duty. Ms Lyons, who wanted to serve her community, took her complaint to Queensland's Anti-Discrimination Commissioner. When this case eventually found its way to the High Court they concluded that Queensland law does not permit an Auslan interpreter to
assist a juror while performing jury duty and it is, therefore, impossible for a juror who is deaf to perform the functions of a juror.

The history of the current Jury Act in Queensland shows that the state's lawmakers have tried to not generally exempt people who are deaf. The predecessor to the current act expressly exempted from jury service anyone who was deaf, but when the current act was legislated it did not have this express exemption. So, while the Queensland legislators may have attempted to be less discriminatory when the new act was made, the reality for prospective jurors who are deaf is very different. This decision of the High Court highlights the difficulties Australians who are deaf or hearing impaired face when it comes to participating fully in our society.

This motion notes that deaf Australians are a minority both culturally and linguistically. In my view, as a nation, we are generally doing a much better job of being inclusive of minority sectors in the community. But there is still more to be done. Communication is the greatest barrier preventing the deaf and hard of hearing from fully participating in the community. While Auslan is now recognised as a language in its own right, it is still uncommon for hearing Australians to be proficient in Auslan—and, as the member for Parramatta noted, it is hard to find translators, even in Canberra, the seat of government.

In this National Week of Deaf People we should all take the time to make sure we are doing our bit to help ease the barriers facing the deaf and hard of hearing. Perhaps learning some simple Auslan signing would be a good place to start. I commend the motion put forward by the member for Parramatta to the House.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne—Assistant Minister for Rural Health) (11:02): I am very proud to be showing my support for hearing impaired and deaf individuals during this National Week of Deaf People. It is a week of events, including forums, workshops and information, being coordinated by Deaf Australia. I encourage all my colleagues to celebrate the community, language, culture and history of people who are hearing impaired. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise the incredible achievements and contribution that many of these people make to our communities. I will be supporting all the events being held this week, because it is such a good cause.

On Friday this week, 21 October 2016, Loud Shirt Day will be rolling in to the parliament and in and around Australian communities. It is a positive fundraising campaign, and I encourage all members of the House to take part. I encourage you all to wear your support by showing off your best loud shirt outfits. Let everyone know how easy and fun it is to be involved. This initiative is being driven by the work of the Shepherd Centre, the Cora Barclay Centre, Hear and Say and Taralye—organisations that have given deaf children a voice in our community. The initiative will raise funds that are needed to continue critical early intervention programs for deaf and hearing-impaired children across Australia.

Many people do not realise the consequences and the cost of delivering that early intervention. It costs more than $18,000 per year per child to provide these critical early intervention services. Providing access to these services means children are able to enter mainstream schools with language and speech skills on a par with their hearing peers and allows them to reach their true potential. It is something that every child deserves, regardless of their disability.
We would love it if every one of you could share a message of support via your online social media channels using the official hashtag #LoudShirtDay and encourage others to get involved in the day. Donations will give deaf children in your state access to sound, speech and language. Your support will open doors for the deaf and hearing impaired to better education and employment choices, social integration with the hearing world and the chance to contribute to the community. It is only through gifts like these that hundreds of deaf and hearing impaired children are now able to tell their mothers and fathers that they love them.

The many causes of hearing loss in young children are numerous. Many of them are no fault of anyone; they are just due to congenital infections that people are unaware of that they can pick up in childhood, developmental abnormalities, untreated glue ear from chronic suppurative otitis media through to the degenerative industrial causes of deafness that happen later on. But the many outcomes of deafness are really quite important for everyone to be aware of.

Not only is it socially isolating and a point of sadness if someone does not have their deafness picked up early; but if it is untreated or uncorrected it leads to poor educational outcomes as well as poor social outcomes, social isolation and poor employment outcomes. Behaviour changes as a result, leading through the spectrum to misbehaviour and even criminal behaviour if people go through life hearing-impaired.

I encourage all members to support Loud Shirt Day, help a really good cause and start looking now for your loud shirt. Somewhere in your cupboard there has to be one somewhere.

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (11:07): I rise today to support the motion put forward by the member for Parramatta in recognition of National Week of Deaf People. This provides an opportunity for those people with hearing impairment or deafness to celebrate their communities and their achievements and also the awareness of local, state and national communities to be promoted in this week. And, of course, the parliament's current pilot captioning program in the House and the Senate is also to be acknowledged.

I find it an absolute privilege to be here to speak about deaf week. It is also the 125th anniversary of Deaf Can Do of the Royal South Australian Deaf Society. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them on continuing to provide such essential, vital, services to people who are deaf and hearing impaired in South Australia. I have seen the good work that they do firsthand.

According to the Bureau of Statistics, one in six Australians are affected by hearing loss. There are approximately 30,000 deaf Auslan users, with total hearing loss. Hearing loss, as we all now, can be acquired through illness, accident, exposure to certain drugs and chemicals, or as part of the normal ageing process. I am someone who does have a hearing loss—even though my wife says it is only through choice when I want to have a hearing loss; but that is not quite correct. I lost the hearing in my right ear back in 2007, when I was in this place in the first term, through illness. I had a very bad cold. As a member of parliament, you continue, like we all do, to go to functions—you do not stop. That cold then turned into pneumonia. I had a week off—the only week I have ever had off since being in this place. After the virus had gone, I was still very short of hearing in my right ear. I just could not quite hear. I went to the doctor and they kept on saying it will clear up. After about three to six months when it had not cleared up, I went to a specialist et cetera. I was one of those unfortunate people, one in 1,000, where the bacteria or the virus affects the cochlear. I have
lost nearly 50 per cent of the hearing in my right ear. Even though it is only minor and I can still hear out of my right ear, I see the frustration—let alone how it must be for someone who has no hearing at all—that you go through sometimes when you are in a crowded room, in a restaurant, where it is very loud. That is why this motion is very important.

One in six Australians—30,000—are completely deaf. Between nine and 12 children per 10,000 will be born with a moderate or greater hearing loss in both ears. Around another 23 children per 10,000 through accident, illness or other causes will acquire a hearing impairment that requires hearing aids by the age of 17. Each year, Australian Hearing fits around 2,000 children with hearing aids for the first time. In addition, hearing loss is also part of the natural ageing process, as I said earlier, with over half the population aged between 60 and 70 having a hearing loss. That means all of us in this room at some stage will end up with some hearing loss. This increases to more than 70 per cent of those over the age of 70, and 80 per cent of those over the age of 80.

According to Access Economics, the most significant cause of hearing loss in Australia is exposure to excessive noise. We all know about this with people who have worked in factories. Even taxi drivers whom I have met who have retired have acquired a hearing loss from having their right ear constantly exposed to traffic noise. These are things that you do not think about while you are working. Exposure to noise makes up around 37 per cent of all cases. Loud noise can cause irreversible hearing damage, as it harms the delicate hearing mechanism within the inner ear.

As members of parliament, we are privileged to attend many functions of many organisations, and one particular organisation in my electorate that I have attended is Kilparrin Teaching and Assessment School and Services, which has children with hearing impairment. It is located in Park Holme in my electorate. The school provides onsite preschool programs and state-wide support services for students with disabilities, including those with hearing disabilities. They do wonderful work, and I would like to congratulate them for everything they do for children who are deaf in my electorate.

Mr LAUNDY (Reid—Assistant Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (11:12): I rise to speak in support of the member for Parramatta’s motion and to congratulate her, yet again, for never giving up on taking this most important issue forward. I note that in a bipartisan fashion she and I have spoken on this issue before and lobbied a previous speaker. I just had a chat across the table with the member for Parramatta, and it is with great excitement that I say that we are now five hours or a day— is it, Julie?—away from having closed captioning in parliament—which I think is only fitting.

In my maiden speech—and it has been ironic listening to all the wonderful stories in the maiden speeches that have been given by members on both sides of the House in the past few weeks—I spoke about my three beautiful children. I said it clearly then and I will say it again that I am doubly blessed because they not only look like their mother they take after her too. I spoke at the time a little cryptically. I use the term that my family had been touched with disability and that we were far stronger because of it. At that time, my youngest daughter, Analise, was 10. I had asked her whether she would be comfortable if I phrased it that way, and she said yes. Not long after that, I spoke at a function at the Shepherd Centre, and I asked her whether I could tell her story, and she said, ‘Dad, will it help people?’ And I said, ‘I hope it will.’ She said, ‘Dad, if it helps people, you tell my story.’
Analise is my youngest child and was born when we already had a three-year-old and a four-year-old—so it was a busy time in our house. She was born before there was compulsory testing of hearing. She was such a clever little so-and-so that she taught herself to lip-read without us knowing. By the time she was two, the first thing that twigged with us was that she was not developing speech in the way that her older brother and sister had. We had a very close example of what that should be like. There were funny little things. You look back now and it makes sense, but it did not at the time. We had timber floorboards. She would lie on the timber floorboards with the back of her conductor bone sitting on the floorboards so that she could hear you coming up and down the hallway. We had grommets inserted in her ears.

We did all sorts of things, thinking that there must be something going on. It was at that stage, when she was two, that our GP suggested we get her a hearing test. I will never forget sitting there with her. I could hear the sounds through her earphones and this little doll was sitting there, not moving. She had been taught to press a button when she could hear something. It was very clearly evident that she had severe hearing loss—bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. We sat around the table that night and thought, 'Wow. What do we do now?' It was at that stage that we became part of the community that Julie referred to today, and thank God for them because we had no idea. We did not know where to go or what to do. They took us and held us in the palm of their hand, and they do to this day. Australian Hearing was our first port of call. Amazing audiologists reside there and look after Analise on a very regular basis. The fact is we had a two-year-old girl who could not talk. There is the Catholic Centre for Hearing Impaired Children at Strathfield, which is coincidentally in the main building at Del Monte, where I went to junior school. We gave them our two-year-old with no language and they gave her back to us as the vibrant, bubbly girl that she has become.

We kept her back from school for a couple of years but were determined to mainstream school her, and we are very proud that we did so. She really battles. She comes home after working twice as hard as any of the kids in her class to keep up, but she will die in a ditch trying. As to opportunities, if you are going to be deaf in any country in the world, this is it. A doctor said that to me not long after Analise was diagnosed. We thought our world had gone to hell in a row boat, and the doctor said, 'Craig, if you're going to have a deaf child, this is the country to be,' and I cannot agree more. This is an amazing community. There is the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, which provides itinerant teachers for not only my little girl but all kids throughout Australia; the Shepherd Centre; and Auslan. I so admire the member for Parramatta's passion for Auslan. The member for Moreton co-sponsored and he referred to the fact that in the last few weeks a juror was precluded from exercising their civil right because of a lack of resources. That is not good enough.

To the member for Parramatta, I rise in strong support of your motion. This community is one that we should never forget and should always support. I am thrilled, along with my family, to be a proud and loving part of it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Mr BRODBENT (McMillan) (11:17): What a marvellous address we have just heard. All our love goes to Analise.
I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that cancer is one of the leading causes of death in Australia, causing to 33 per cent of deaths;

(2) further recognises that October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month;

(3) congratulates the Government for being committed to cancer research through funding the National Health and Medical Research Council and Cancer Australia, and establishing the Medical Research Future Fund;

(4) welcomes the Government providing $18.5 million to the McGrath Foundation to deliver 57 trained breast care nurses to assist and care for people diagnosed with breast cancer;

(5) further congratulates the Government for delivering savings to taxpayers while ensuring that the latest cancer-fighting medications are on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), available for patients as soon as possible, without fear or favour;

(6) welcomes the addition of new drugs such as Herceptin and Kadcyla within the Government’s investment in the PBS; and

(7) further welcomes the large number of approvals for cancer-fighting drugs that this Government has approved for the PBS, worth over $1.9 billion.

Nobody’s life remains untouched by cancer. Even if it does not directly affect you, you will undoubtedly know someone who has had their body ravaged by it or their life taken. Annually, more than 123,000 new cases of cancer are diagnosed in Australia. Unlike other foes, it comes upon us silently and with little warning. It is the cause of three in 10 Australian deaths every year. If it were another disease, we would be in hysterics at its terrible impact and its insatiable appetite. Sadly, it has become almost part of us—an accepted consequence of living. Even in this modern world, where we expect the wonders of technology to deliver new miracles each and every year, we have not yet banished this old enemy.

A headline of a few days ago said, ‘Rebecca Wilson: renowned sports journalist dies from breast cancer at 54’. It brought home to all of us that nobody is immune from this horrific disease. The article said:

Wilson’s family says she kept her illness a closely guarded secret to limit the suffering of friends, colleagues and family.

The sports journalist Rebecca Wilson has died after a “secret” battle with breast cancer, her family has revealed.

News that the Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph columnist and broadcaster had died at 54 came as a shock to the media and sports communities on Friday morning because her illness was “a closely guarded secret”.

I am proud to say that this government is playing its part in the fight against this insidious disease. Of course, response has taken many forms, whether it is backing Australian researchers in their pursuit of more effective drugs or even cures, promoting events like October’s Breast Cancer Awareness Month or giving $18.5 million to the McGrath Foundation to deliver 57 trained breast care nurses to assist and care for people diagnosed with breast cancer. And yet the most significant development, I believe, is giving greater access to cheaper essential medicines through their listing on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.
As anyone who has battled cancer will know, the stresses are enormous and all too often made worse by wondering how you will pay the huge healthcare bills that go with the long term battle. It was fitting that Minister for Health and Aged Care, Minister Sussan Ley, marked the start of Breast Cancer Awareness Month by announcing subsidised access on 1 October to a preventive medicine that could reduce women's risk of getting breast cancer by 30 to 40 per cent over their lifetime. The medicine, tamoxifen, is the first preventive, risk-reduction treatment for breast cancer listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. It will have extended availability on the PBS to reduce risk in people at moderate to high risk of developing breast cancer. Minister Ley called the drug a significant listing for patients at risk of developing breast cancer. She also said it demonstrates the government's commitment to preventing illness by funding new and innovative medicines. I wholeheartedly agree.

We must continue to support the fight against cancer, backing research and development that may one day see its end. While we are working toward that wonderful day, we must also continue easing the burden of cancer sufferers through cheaper treatments for everyone.

Ms O’TOOLE (Herbert) (11:22): I rise today in this place to second the motion and recognise Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Cancer is one of the leading causes of death in Australia, causing up to 33 per cent of deaths. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Breast cancer has impacted on my family, as my maternal grandmother lost both of her breasts to breast cancer and in the end it was cancer that took her life. My grandmother was diagnosed with breast cancer in her 70s and that was devastating for my family, as she had to leave her home and go south for treatment.

Cancer Australia has estimated that there will be 16,084 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed in 2016. This will include 150 males and 15,934 females. Breast cancer is estimated to be 12.3 per cent of cancer cases diagnosed in 2016. In 2016 is estimated that 3,073 people will die from breast cancer—that is 27 males and 3,046 females. 6.5 per cent of cancer related deaths in 2016 will be attributed to breast cancer.

The chances of surviving breast cancer for at least five years, from research carried out between 2008 and 2012, is 90 per cent. The survival rate has moved from 72.1 per cent in 1983 to 1987. There were 61,554 people living with breast cancer at the end of 2010, diagnosed in the five-year period 2005 to 2010. Breast cancer was the second most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia in 2012. It is estimated that it will become the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in 2016. Whilst these figures are alarming, we have seen some positive changes. However, these numbers are people. They are grandmothers, mothers, sisters, daughters and, yes—some may be fathers and sons. The impact on families is significant.

Labor has always taken research and treatment of breast cancer very seriously, and during our time in government Labor funded the 57 McGrath Foundation specialist breast cancer nurses to provide critical practical care and emotional support to women diagnosed with breast cancer and their families. The McGrath Foundation is doing magnificent work in raising the profile of breast cancer in Australia and supporting women with breast cancer and their families, so it is extremely unfortunate that so many of these women have not been able to access this support.
In government, Labor committed nearly $4.1 billion to improve the prevention, detection and treatment of cancer. Our cancer care package—World Leading Cancer Care—invested in detection, prevention and cancer care and support. Our Health and Hospitals Fund built 26 regional cancer centres for patients in regional areas. My electorate of Herbert has benefited from one such regional cancer centre.

By any measure, a diagnosis of breast cancer is a scary thing. It is the second leading cause of premature death in women after lung cancer. Throughout the month of October we will remember the thousands of brilliant women we have lost. Throughout October we are reminded that we need to recommit to the fight. We know that participation in breast screening remains stuck at around 54 per cent. That is way too low. As is the case with the rest of their health system and society, there are inequalities. Less than four in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island women are screened. Screening rates also lower for women in very remote areas and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

That is why the work of Breast Cancer Network Australia and its partners is so important. We need to keep up the effort to educate all Australians about the risk of breast cancer and the importance of screening. We need to provide the best possible support and advocacy for women with breast cancer.

During the election campaign, Labor was proud to commit $7 million to Breast Cancer Network Australia. That commitment would have supported BCNA’s work for women with secondary breast cancer in particular. Of course Labor will not get to implement that commitment in this term of parliament, but we will work with the re-elected Turnbull government to improve the prevention, detection, treatment and care of breast cancer. All of us are united in the efforts to save as many women as possible.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (11:27): The true tragedy of breast cancer is its ubiquity. Everyone knows someone who has been diagnosed with breast cancer and many, sadly, know someone who has lost their life to the condition. We carry their memory and this pain every day.

In the last fortnight Australia lost another identity to this condition. I lost a friend and former colleague, Rebecca Wilson. Rebecca was a lover of sport, life, people and a jolly good time. Her love of life was infectious. Just weeks before her passing Rebecca could still be seen on our screens and heard on our radios. The speed with which this disease caught up with her is one of its most frightening elements. In 2016 it is estimated that over 15,000 women and 150 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer. This means, on average, 43 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer every day. Sadly, the number of people diagnosed with breast cancer in Australia is increasing; however, thankfully, the number of deaths from breast cancer is heading in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, breast cancer remains the most common cancer diagnosed in Australia in 2016. Given the ageing population, the number of women diagnosed with breast cancer is expected to increase. It is projected that in 2020 over 17,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. This means that nearly 50 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer every day in just four years time. Happily, Australia has one of the best breast cancer survival rates in the world. The chance of surviving at least five years has increased from 72 per cent in 1987 to 90 per cent today. Increasing survival is due to earlier diagnosis through screening and improved treatments.
The coalition has invested nearly $200 million in supporting day-to-day cancer research through government's National Health and Medical Research Council. Additionally, we have committed to provide $18.5 million to the McGrath Foundation to deliver 57 trained breast-care nurses to assist and care for people diagnosed with breast cancer. These nurses are an incredible resource who help huge numbers to cope with this condition. In many cases they are lifesavers, and they deserve all our support and thanks. The government also helps by listing cancer-fighting drugs through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Currently, those that have been approved are worth over $1.9 billion. My electorate of Bennelong is home to many of the pharmaceutical companies that have developed these lifesaving drugs. They include Perjeta, Kadcyla and Herceptin, which have just recently been added to the PBS. These drugs treat secondary breast cancer, which has a very high mortality rate. Tests conducted in Europe have shown that these drugs can increase survival times by nearly 16 months, the longest survival time for any drug used to treat this condition. The government has provided $191 million in funding, and these drugs would cost $82,000 per patient if not subsidised through the PBS. Another recent addition to the PBS is the first preventive risk-reduction treatment for breast cancer, Tamoxifen. More than 9,000 additional patients who are considered to be at moderate to high risk of developing breast cancer are estimated to have subsidised access to this medicine. This listing will save concessional patients more than $200 a year. Local company Astra Zeneca has developed this drug and worked closely with the government to make it more available for thousands of at-risk women.

While I am listing the excellent groups that are helping relieve the suffering of breast cancer, it would be remiss of me not to thank the Breast Cancer Network Australia. They do amazing work in support of all people with this condition and are fierce advocates of anything to help alleviate the suffering it can cause.

This month is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. It is a time for us to take stock and recommit to beating cancer. The actions and funds committed by this government, along with the incredible innovative medicines designed by our pharmaceutical sector, are making this day closer than ever. But it still cannot come soon enough.

Ms LAMB (Longman) (11:32): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for McMillan. Without doubt, cancer is an insidious disease that affects many, many Australians. In fact, as the member for McMillan notes, it is one of the leading causes of death in Australia. Across the country, approximately 33 per cent of deaths each year are attributable to some form of cancer. Based on these statistics, all of us are likely to experience the trauma of losing a loved one to cancer, a disease for which there is currently no cure. We must focus on better understanding the disease through research.

While many different types of cancers impact Australians, I recognise that October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. I am particularly concerned about this type of cancer because, in my electorate of Longman, we have an ageing demographic. Indeed, research indicates the risk of breast cancer increases for women aged 55. For regions such as Bribie Island, where the median age of females is 58 years, everything must be done to increase research, invest in preventative measures and provide treatment. All women, regardless of their location, must have access to support services. Breast cancer is the most common and second deadliest cancer in Australian women. Despite advances in research and treatments, the number of diagnoses of breast cancer is shocking. Research indicates it is at a rate of 44
per day, 300 per week and more than 15,600 per year. Those figures are more than alarming; they are an imperative to fund ongoing research into the disease, its causes and its prevention.

I am pleased the government understands the importance of cancer research and has funded the National Health and Medical Research Council and Cancer Australia and has established the Medical Research Future Fund. I also welcome the government providing $18½ million to the McGrath Foundation to deliver additional services to assist and care for people diagnosed with breast cancer. While I will always support additional funding for support and research, I am extremely disappointed about how the Medical Research Future Fund is funded. Let me briefly say that research into health should never be funded through cuts to another health service. Labor understands that the delivery of health services must be independent of cancer research funding. This is why I am proud that, at the last election, Labor made a number of election commitments to support breast cancer research. This package included a $7 million investment to enable the Breast Cancer Network Australia to deliver improved support and information for women with both primary and secondary breast cancer.

While I speak today about these shocking statistics, it is equally important to recognise the emotional, physical and financial costs that accompany the diagnoses. A diagnosis may involve months or years of ongoing medical care. It can take a psychological toll and women must be able to access support services. This is an issue for all women but particularly those who do not live in close proximity to hospitals that offer support. Women in my electorate in areas such as Woodford and Toorbul may need to travel an entire day just to access treatment. Labor understands these women in particular need easy access to psychosocial support not involving extensive travel. This is also why I am also proud that, as part of our election commitments, Labor committed $4.4 million to improve psychosocial support and information for women with secondary breast cancer. This would have allowed the BCNA to deliver a telephone counselling service for women and their families staffed by oncology social workers, expanded access to specialist secondary breast cancer nurses and better access to information.

It is essential that we continue funding for cancer research, including breast cancer research, and I support initiatives that help us better understand this disease.

Mr LAUNDY (Reid—Assistant Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (11:36): I rise to speak in support of the motion, brought forward by my good friend the member for McMillan, acknowledging that 33 per cent of the deaths that occur in Australia each year are due to cancer. I know today we are focused on breast cancer, and I note that the member for Bennelong spoke about a very topical issue—the loss of a great journalist, Rebecca Wilson, of late. I also speak with the assistant minister’s cap on as well, because it is not just, as we have heard from both sides, the $18.5 million for the McGrath Foundation, for the 57 extra nurses, and for medicines that are going onto the PBS as promptly as possible for treating these diseases, but it is also the research and innovation that this government is funding on a daily basis. In February we had the launch of the National Innovation and Science Agenda, and a key component of that is what I think will become a cornerstone of finding cures for all sorts of cancer, not just breast cancer, and that is the Biomedical Translation Fund. Concord hospital is in my electorate of Reid, and adjoining Concord hospital is the ANZAC Research Institute. Over the last three years as a backbencher I have spent time in that quality research institute with some of the most wonderful clinicians and doctors that you would meet.
anywhere in the world, and they are coming up with some amazingly innovative discoveries like dendritic cells. These cells can be aimed at particular strains of cancer. We will be interested to see where this goes and what changes in treatments there might be over the next period of clinical trials. That is exactly what this government is trying to foster through that Biomedical Translation Fund.

I note Minister Hunt has made mention in the last few days of our innovation funds more broadly. These are a very practical and innovative way for us as a government to fund innovation. I know that, in travels since being made the minister over the past eight weeks, I have met with many medical translation companies, medical research companies, looking to take science out of tertiary institutions—places like CSIRO—and value add to them with the assistance of government, finding ways to come up with the cures of the future. I hope that in the not too distant future we can stand up in this place and talk about and celebrate and congratulate everyone for the cure of all sorts of cancers, particularly breast cancer. Touch wood I have never had to deal with this first hand but I note that previous speakers have had to deal with this as a family issue. I cannot begin to imagine what that must be like.

To the member for McMillan, again, thank you for raising this most important of topics. I know this is an issue that has bipartisan support. As the member for Bennelong said, cancer is ubiquitous. There is neither rhyme nor reason. It hits and hits hard, and all we can do as a government is work on funding the next generation of scientists and science to cure this and all sorts of medical issues. Earlier in the year we buried one of my good friends, an ex-staffer to Mark Arbib, Bridget Whelan. She died of ovarian cancer. That is another horrible strain of cancer that at this stage does not get the attention and the funding that breast cancer gets, but I hope that, through things like the Medical Translation Fund and innovative approaches like this by governments of both persuasions, in the not too distant future we can stand up here united and celebrate overcoming tragic circumstances that have beset families before but hopefully will never beset them again. Russell, well done.

Mr KHALIL (Wills) (11:40): I rise in support of the member for McMillan's motion in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which is this October. Awareness of such a difficult issue begins with truly understanding the facts of the matter. Today, like every other day, 43 women will receive a diagnosis that they have breast cancer. By the end of this year, an estimated 15,600 women will have received that news. It has been the uptake of regular breast exams that has most improved the survival prospects of Australian women with breast cancer, and 89 out of every 100 Australian women diagnosed with invasive breast cancer now survive five or more years beyond diagnosis

But, while breast cancer survival rates have never been better, and do continue to improve in Australia, some of these people will receive the news that their cancer has metastasised. This is when the disease spreads to other parts of the body, like bones, lungs, the liver or the brain. It is sometimes known as secondary breast cancer. Regrettably, secondary breast cancer is essentially incurable. It will kill an estimated 3,000 Australian mums, daughters, sisters and friends during 2016. That is a heartbreaking statistic. I am sure we all know someone who has been touched by cancer. Many previous speakers have mentioned this. Survivors almost universally describe their experience as the fight of a lifetime. It is a time where every ounce of strength must be rallied and people's limits are tested to the extreme.
It is for this reason that breast cancer awareness should be focused not only on the correlation between research and survival rates but also on how we are able to assist women through the experience of breast cancer diagnosis and treatment. According to Breast Cancer Network Australia, almost a third of women with secondary breast cancer say they do not receive enough emotional support. Another one in five women say they have unmet needs for information. These women suddenly realising that their lifespan is limited presents substantial psychological hurdles. Their needs are unique. Nobody expects to be in this situation. We in this place and in society more broadly owe it to those women to urgently address that lack of support. They should never be alone in their fight. As we have heard from previous speakers, at the last election Labor committed $7 million dollars to increase support of Australian women with secondary breast cancer, as well as women in regional Australia suffering from all forms of breast cancer.

Discussion on this motion, alongside raising awareness, should be a time to applaud the hard work of organisations that do seek to support women undertaking the fight against secondary breast cancer. BCNA is one organisation seeking to support women in such situations. It is the peak consumer organisation for Australians affected by breast cancer and has more than 110,000 members across Australia. As part of Labor’s proposed investment in breast cancer support, $4.4 million was to be invested over four years to improve psychosocial support and information for women with secondary breast cancer. BCNA, in particular, proposed to deliver a telephone counselling service for women and their families staffed by oncology social workers, expanded access to specialist secondary breast cancer nurses, and better access to information through a digital platform. The BCNA currently provides specialised services to women in rural Australia. Labor had pledged to continue support for these services until at least 2020, but currently these programs are set to expire in June 2017. That rapidly approaching expiration date should be cause for alarm. I would like to take this opportunity to call on the government to address that without delay.

This motion should also be used to take the opportunity to remember the thousands of women whom we have lost to breast cancer—beloved family members and brilliant friends, gone before their time. To all the women, and their families, currently battling breast cancer: stay strong. We know you will marshal all the support and love you can, and keep faith in the knowledge that the odds that you can beat this have never been better. This motion—I commend the member for McMillan for raising it—demonstrates that everybody in this place stands alongside all those women suffering breast cancer, and their families, in their fight.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

COMMITTEES

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas) (11:45): I have received advice from the Chief Opposition Whip that members have been nominated to be members of certain committees.

Mr LAUNDY (Reid—Assistant Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (11:45): by leave—I move:
That members be appointed and discharged as members of certain committees in accordance with the list which has been placed on the table.

As the list is a lengthy one, I do not propose to read the list to the House. Details will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

Question agreed to.

**BILLS**

Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016
Treasury Laws Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016
Superannuation (Departing Australia Superannuation Payments Tax) Amendment Bill 2016
Passenger Movement Charge Amendment Bill 2016

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (11:46): The bill before the House, the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016, represents the latest stage in an 18-month fiasco at the hands of this incompetent government and this incompetent Treasurer—an 18-month fiasco which started with the former Treasurer announcing a backpacker tax in the 2015 budget. We have seen uncertainty, we have seen poor policy and we have seen an utter lack of consultation of affected sectors by this government. And now the government expect praise and congratulations for having fixed a mess that they themselves created. Well, this government deserves no congratulations when it comes to the backpacker tax. The Liberal Party is meant to understand business, and the National Party is meant to understand regional Australia. This policy imbroglio just underlines that these parties do not fulfil those core expectations of them.

We know that the original proposal for this was made with absolutely no consultation. When we responded to the 2015 budget, we said at the time, ‘We trust that the government has thought through all the implications and has conducted adequate consultations.’ Now we know that that simply was not the case.

The government are fond of saying, ‘If you want to reduce an activity then you tax it more; if you want to stop something, then tax it.’ They say that about many things. It appears that the government want to stop backpackers coming to Australia by virtue of imposing a tax which was unworkable at 32½ per cent. That was designed to raise $540 million in revenue. But, now the government has been forced into this backdown, there is a $300 million hit to the budget. And the government have not taken that hit to the budget. What they have done instead is increase the passenger movement charge by five dollars per movement, and change the taxation treatment of superannuation payments to working holiday makers in Australia.

Now, it was only a couple of weeks ago that we sat in the chamber at question time while the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment talked about how bad increases in the passenger movement charge are and criticised previous changes to the passenger movement
charge, saying that was not the way that the Liberal-National party do business. This alleged member of the cabinet has been forced to defend things he was condemning just a couple of weeks ago at that dispatch box. So I wonder what consultation by the Treasurer with the minister for trade and tourism occurred when it comes to increasing the passenger movement charge.

Now, $5 might not sound like much if you think of it as part of $1,000 or $2,000 airfares to Europe et cetera. But when you consider how many Australians take the cheaper flights, to New Zealand, Indonesia, Bali, the Pacific Islands—and one of the things we have seen in recent years, of course, are budget airlines and much cheaper flights as a result of airline deregulation—then this is something that is worthy of some scrutiny and some consideration by the parliament.

The approach that the Labor Party are taking to this matter is not to oppose the passage of this legislation through the House; rather, we will ensure in the other place that affected sectors—horticulture, agriculture, tourism and hospitality—are given the chance to be consulted and to have their say in a way that they have not been by this government.

We know that, just as the previous Treasurer did not consult affected parties, this Treasurer has not consulted them either. He rang the airlines to tell them the change in the passenger movement charge was happening on the day he announced it. It was not consultation to ask, 'What do you think?' It was: 'This is what I am announcing today.'

This Treasurer is also someone who, when he sat on this side, condemned increases in the passenger movement charge. When he sat in opposition, he also condemned increases in the passenger movement charge—what used to be called the departure tax in Australia—and said it was bad for tourism, bad for Australia's reputation and bad for Australia's competitiveness. Now that he is Treasurer, he has found himself with this terrible mess on his hands, an imbroglio of this government's own making, and he expects us to say, 'That's okay, then. We won't provide any scrutiny.'

We on this side of the House have shown we are prepared to facilitate, in good time, savings measures that are worked through in a proper fashion. We have shown we are up for budget repair. We have shown we are up for facilitating this bill through both houses of parliament. The Treasurer had the temerity to demand that we pass this legislation last week because of certainty. He said it was important for certainty for the affected sectors that this legislation pass the House last week. After 18 months of uncertainty from that side of the House, they finally get their act together and come up with what they say is a more palatable plan, and then they demand that this parliament—not just the opposition but the crossbenchers and the other place—pass the legislation as a matter of urgency.

What we will be doing is providing the appropriate degree of scrutiny for a government which has got this so wrong at every turn. Why would we expect a government which has got this wrong at every opportunity to have suddenly got it right and pass its legislation without scrutiny? It is right that affected sectors and affected people have the opportunity to make a submission through a Senate inquiry, at which point the opposition will determine its final votes in the other place.

There will be other contributors to this debate. The shadow minister for agriculture, the member for Hunter, will examine the issue of our agricultural competitiveness and the impact
of a tax on working holiday-makers—particularly when we know that the number of working holiday-makers coming to Australia is already on the decline and has been declining for several years. Of course, the member for Grayndler, the shadow minister for tourism, will look at issues around the passenger movement charge and, of course, the hypocrisy of the government and the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment in particular. The shadow minister for employment and the shadow minister for immigration will also be raising issues about the working holiday visa system. They will also take the opportunity to reiterate Labor’s position, as announced during the election campaign, of ensuring that we have the policy settings in place around working holiday visas and other important labour market and non-labour market immigration programs which have an impact on the labour market, to ensure that those policy settings and the balance are right.

In that instance, I note that just last week there was a report released by the Fair Work Ombudsman detailing exploitation of working holiday visa holders, including: underpayment and/or non-payment of wages, workplace health and safety issues, and other exploitation. This comes as little surprise for those on this side of the House, who had a long interest in ensuring that the visa policy settings are correct when it comes to temporary workers in Australia. There is a place for temporary workers in Australia. Everybody acknowledges that. Everybody acknowledges there are good and genuine employers who have had trouble attracting employees—particularly in regional Australia, whether it be in horticulture or whether it be in tourism. So it is right that the parliament provides that scrutiny. This government, as I said, deserves no thanks, no congratulations and no credit for these 18 months of imbroglio. The Treasurer seems to think he should get a pat on the back, just as he claims on other matters, for attempting to fix what has been a shambles of a process.

I will move the second reading amendment that has been circulated in my name. Based on recent form, I can see no reason why it would not have unanimous support of the House, because this government should acknowledge that it has been a shambles. It should acknowledge the uncertainty that has been created for the agricultural and tourism sectors. It should acknowledge that the passenger movement charge increase comes despite the government only weeks ago criticising increases in the passenger movement charge. It should acknowledge that concerns have been expressed about the changes to the arrangements for Working Holiday Makers given the rorting, abuse and exploitation that have occurred in some sectors and by some employers. So I move:

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

“while not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes:

(1)the Government’s handling of the backpacker tax has been a shambles;

(2)the uncertainty that has been caused to the agriculture and tourism sectors;

(3)the Passenger Movement Charge increase comes despite the Government only weeks before criticising an increase to the Passenger Movement Charge; and

(4)concerns have been expressed about the changes to the arrangements for Working Holiday Makers given the rorting, abuse and exploitation that has occurred.”

The Labor Party will not oppose the passage of the legislation through the House. We will reserve our rights for a Senate inquiry to have a proper examination of the issues that get raised.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr S Georganas): Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Conroy: I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable for McMahon has moved, as an amendment, that all words after ‘That’ be omitted with a view to substituting other words. If it suits the House, I will state the question in the form that the amendment be agreed to. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr PITT (Hinkler—Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment) (11:56): Mr Deputy Speaker Georganas, I welcome you to the chair and, of course, to the parliament. I rise today to speak on the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016 and its supplementary bills in the original form.

What is being presented today with this reform package is a workable solution that provides certainty for both agriculture and tourism stakeholders. Concerns around the tax payable by working holiday-makers were comprehensively reviewed by the coalition with consultation and input from multiple stakeholders from both the tourism and agricultural sectors. How do I know that? I was there. I was part of the consultation process. It was certainly extensive. Stakeholders have had ample opportunity to put things forward. The coalition government have listened, we have acted on the concerns and we have come up with a workable solution. So we are delivering on exactly what we said we would.

The Labor Party want to delay the passing of the legislation in the Senate by referring it to the Senate Economics Committee. They failed to commit to any options that were put on the table originally. They failed to come up with a proposal of their own. They failed to effectively engage with industries. In fact, on 23 February 2016 my good friend, the shadow minister for agriculture, Joel Fitzgibbon said:

Labor calls on the Government to take evidence based approach to the redesign of its working holiday maker taxation policy, in close consultation with the tourism and agriculture industries.

We did that. In fact, we have done it a few times. On 16 March Mr Fitzgibbon said:

The Government needs to ensure that the agriculture sector has the supply of labour it needs and the visa system is not open to exploitation.

We are doing that and we are making substantial changes. On 11 October 2016, Mr Fitzgibbon said:

Labor will finalise its position once we’ve heard from effected stakeholders and explore how the Government’s proposed new regime compares globally.

I think there has been adequate time—more than sufficient time. This is a matter of some urgency. Certainly, the people in the industry who I speak to tell me that we need to get on with it. We have a position put forward and the Labor Party are holding it up in the Senate.

Stakeholders in agriculture have made it abundantly clear that the reform package must be passed. Many growers are coming to the peak harvest season, labour force demand is very high and they need certainty. In fact, they need that certainty right now, because people who are in the tourism industry, who are working holiday-makers who are applying visas and who are planning what they will do in the next 12 months, are making decisions on where it is they intend to go, and they are making those decisions now.
The key points of this bill include that employers of 417 and 462 visa holders will need to register with the Australian Taxation Office. This is a change and it is something new. Only if they are registered will they be able to withhold the 19 per cent flat rate. I think this is a good change. As someone who pushed for the establishment of Taskforce Cadena and who has spoken in the press over a long period about the exploitation of foreign workers in this nation, I think this is a substantial change which will allow our enforcement agencies to identify just who is employing 417 and 462 visa holders. If they are not registered, the tax rate will remain as it is at 32½ per cent, which, of course, is the flat rate for non-permanent residents of Australia. A list of registered employers will be available on the ATO website, and people will be able to look them up with ABN Lookup. Most of the people working in this industry who come from overseas and are 417 and 462 visa holders are highly skilled and highly educated. They are here fundamentally for a holiday. They do some work while they are here, they make a few dollars and they tend to spend all of that money in regional Australia in particular. In my view this is an important step to making it easier to identify employers and ensure the integrity of the working holiday visa program. This is an important program; there are over 200,000 people in this country on those visas at any one time.

Tourism Australia will promote Australia to potential working holiday-makers through a $10 million global youth targeted advertising campaign. But, may I say, the best form of advertising, in particular in this market, is social media and word of mouth. These people talk to one another and they certainly advise one another about their experience and how great it has been. We want them to leave Australia with a view of what a fantastic country it is that we live in. We are making other changes to working holiday-maker visas to boost the supply of working holiday-makers and make it more attractive to visit Australia. Separately, we are extending the age of eligibility for working holiday-makers from 30 to 35. This will increase the pool of potential working holiday-makers. We are dropping the price of a visa application by $50 to $390. And we are increasing the rate of the departing Australia superannuation payments tax to 95 per cent for working holiday-makers.

During the election campaign the coalition government announced the migrant workers task force, and we are delivering on that commitment. The task force will be led by Professor Allan Fels, who is very well known to the people in this place, and will provide expert advice on measures that will deliver better protections for overseas workers. We are also increasing funding to the Fair Work Ombudsman to assist with its capabilities and its workforce—an increase of some $20 million—and there will be increased penalties for employers who underpay workers and fail to keep proper employment records. A new higher penalty category of serious contraventions will be introduced. These will apply to any employer that has intentionally ripped off workers, regardless of the employer’s size. As someone who has been involved in this for a long time and who comes from an agricultural background and electorate, I can tell you that the biggest difficulty with this matter is enforcement. We are talking about large groups of people who are transient, who leave the region after perhaps two days, two weeks or two months and who work in a number of different locations with different work hours and start times. It is incredibly difficult to identify just where they are, because the crop shifts. If you are picking zucchinis you might pick twice a day; if you are picking onions you might need 300 people for the morning—it just depends on the crop, its location and what it is that needs to be done.
We will also introduce new offence provisions that will capture franchisors and parent companies who fail to deal with exploitation by their franchisees. We will strengthen the powers of the Fair Work Ombudsman so that it can deal more effectively with employers who intentionally exploit workers by compelling them to produce information and answer questions. There are some very bad habits out there in this area and we need to ensure we address them.

Taskforce Cadena is something that I think is kicking some goals. I was very pleased to see it formed. It was something I had called for. In fact, at the Federal Council in August 2014 the Nationals voted unanimously to seek a multijurisdictional task force to address this issue. The exploitation of foreign workers is something which predominantly impacts regional farming electorates, and atypically they are held by Nationals MPs. We are very well aware of this issue. It is something that needs to be cracked down on and stopped. The allegations and complaints—and we have all received them, on both sides of the House; I am sure my colleagues on the other side of the table will agree—range across underpayment, sexual exploitation of workers, tax evasion, visa breaches, racial discrimination, the intimidation of farmers and overcrowding in private residential dwellings. In fact, I clearly recall a farmer who was bundled into a car and forced onto the road to Brisbane. He managed to escape on the highway when the car pulled up at roadworks. These are the types of issues we are dealing with regularly.

Taskforce Cadena takes real action. This government is getting on with the job of targeting unscrupulous labour hire contracting firms, who should be under no illusion: if you are breaking the law, you will be caught and prosecuted; you will lose everything you have because you are doing the wrong thing and exploiting people who are at their most vulnerable. Taskforce Cadena will make these firms accountable and provide a level playing field for all Australian businesses, targeting those exploiting workers who really have no other option. Cadena was launched in May 2015. It is led by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Fair Work Ombudsman. It works with the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, the Taxation Office and various state and territory agencies to ensure incidents involving exploitation and visa fraud are appropriately investigated.

The reason for Taskforce Cadena is that we need better coordination and intelligence sharing between agencies at the various levels of government to ensure seasonal workers are protected from unscrupulous employers. I should be clear: the overwhelming majority of Australia’s farmers are doing the right thing—they absolutely are—but we have these bad seeds in the industry who are giving Australia and the industry a bad name.

I am very pleased that Cadena will continue to operate nationwide and across a range of industries. Organised criminal networks and people who are seeking to profit by exploiting both illegal and legitimate workers should be under no illusion: Taskforce Cadena is targeting you. Not only do these people, through their actions, disadvantage employers who are doing the right thing; they are thumbing their noses at the hardworking Australian taxpayer. I see from the Fair Work Ombudsman’s report of its review, released over the weekend, that of some 4,000 working holiday-makers who were interviewed, 27 per cent of respondents had been paid in cash.
Taskforce Cadena, within a month of operating, was successful on a number of raids, catching 38 illegal workers. Following investigations by Cadena, the Fair Work Ombudsman was able to pursue one Emmanuel Bani—whom I am very well aware of—who was accused of underpaying 22 workers from Vanuatu to the tune of $77,649 for fruit and vegetable picking jobs in Queensland. I met with a number of these workers and heard firsthand about the appalling way they had been treated. I referred the matter to the Department of Employment and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, who intervened to recover the men’s passports and secure them work with a reliable employer. This gentleman had absconded with their passports and basically left them on the side of the road. It was an outrageous thing to do.

The unskilled Seasonal Worker Program is closely monitored and there are safeguards in place to ensure agents know their obligations and workers know their rights. Agents must be registered. Where the real exploitation occurs is in cases where people have overstayed their visas or are working here illegally and the agents are not properly registered.

Working holiday-makers are not just a travelling workforce; they are a vital component of our tourism industry. In fact, I would say they are an essential part of our tourism industry in regional Australia. In my electorate of Hinkler, growers require a large labour force of unskilled workers for short periods of time and they need them at short notice. Otherwise the crops would sit there and would not be picked. As a former farmer, I know there is nothing worse than seeing a perfectly good crop which you have expended a lot of time, effort and money on that you cannot get off the ground. Until it is sold and the money is in the bank, it is never finished. The whole season’s income could be lost and possible future agreements with buyers could be put in jeopardy if they cannot pick those crops.

This issue has been around for a long time. This is not new. In fact, it was raised some 15 years ago by Philip Ruddock, a former member of this place, in 1999. It has been the subject of numerous inquiries, numerous Senate reports and various other activities within government. I wrote to the then Treasurer, Joe Hockey, after the change to 32½ per cent for the backpacker tax was announced in the 2015 budget. I outlined that it would have a significant impact on stakeholders in my electorate.

We need to ensure that Australia continues to be competitive, because there are other countries that are looking at the same market. The changes that we have put forward will ensure that we continue to be competitive. We also need to remember that backpackers or working holiday visa holders who work in this country are still utilising our infrastructure and services. They use our health systems, they use our roads and they use a number of other things which are provided by the taxpayer. So they do need to contribute to the taxation system.

Many of the issues that were identified in the Fair Work Ombudsman’s report into 417 visa holders are already being worked on. As I said, we have committed $20 million to Fair Work. We have established the Migrant Workers Taskforce. We have established Taskforce Cadena. We are putting forward proposals to ensure that the legislation is sufficient and the penalties are sufficient to crack down on those who are doing the wrong thing. So we will ensure that we provide those additional resources and we will ensure that we continue to provide the enforcement that is necessary.
In closing, I would like to go to a quote by good friend the shadow minister for agriculture, Mr Joel Fitzgibbon, today. He said:

This debacle has now been going on for 16 months …

I would put to the shadow minister right now that Labor needs to get on with it, not push it out to a Senate inquiry, not extend it any further. Clearly the industry has been consulted over a long period of time. It is not that difficult. We are coming into another harvest season. It is important that people have certainty. It is important that they can be sure that they can get their crops off the ground. In my region, where they produce some $1½ billion of produce every single year, they need to have certainty because it is absolutely invaluable to our local economy. Jobs in my electorate rely on our farmers doing well. We rely on agriculture to be a major producer and we need to ensure that that continues. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (12:10): I rise to support the amendment that has been moved by the shadow Treasurer in debate on the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016, which is the next step in the farce that has been the government's handling of this issue. I give the member opposite, the member for Hinkler, a bit of credit for chutzpah—standing in here in October 2016 with legislation arising from the May 2015 budget and saying, 'Why don't we get on with it?'

There has been 18 months of uncertainty under this government's policy, because on budget night 2015 they made the announcement of the new backpacker tax without any consultation, without any economic modelling, without any idea of what the impact would be. Then in the so-called solution, raised just a couple of weeks ago, we had a repeat of the same flawed process, with an increase in the passenger movement charge without any consultation with the tourism sector, without any modelling whatsoever, and they expect us to just wave it through. Well, we will not be doing that. We will be providing proper scrutiny of this legislation through a Senate inquiry and we will be making sure that the government are held to account for their extraordinary incompetence and for the consequences of their own legislation.

It does appear that they have the solution wrong, because the so-called solution, which includes the $5 increase in the passenger movement charge, comes in direct contravention of the commitment that they gave that there would not be any increase in the passenger movement charge. This has been a shambolic mess from a mob who had a plan to get into government but no plan to actually govern. It began with the 2015 budget from Joe Hockey, the then Treasurer. There he announced the government's decision to treat working holiday-makers as non-residents for tax purposes, taxing them at 32.5 per cent from their very first dollar of income.

It does not take a genius to work out the serious flaws in this decision. This impacted particularly on the tourism and agriculture sectors. Backpackers, of course, come to Australia and in the short term assist farmers with the seasonal work, including the picking of fruit and harvesting of crops, that farmers cannot get a regular workforce located in their local communities to do. They also particularly help in the tourism sector, which is very seasonal. Places like Broome, Darwin and Cairns in northern Australia have particular on-seasons. At the same time, when it is their off season, of course, it is the on season in places like Tasmania in southern Australia. These sectors rely upon backpackers to do the work.
Previously, backpackers were able to work tax-free. That was part of the conditions attracting them here compared with other potential destinations like Canada and New Zealand.

As to the impact to the government's bottom line, we know from analysis that backpackers spend far more than they earn. That is, they come here with a portion of money; they supplement the money that they have. But there is something in common between the money they earn and the money they bring here: they spend it in the local communities, particularly in regional Australia, providing a boost to job creation in those local communities—something that those opposite, when they came up with this appalling plan, did not seem to get. It is something that the government, through this legislation, is admitting they got wrong in the 2015 budget, because less income for backpackers means less income for local economies.

Despite those facts, the coalition pushed on. First, they delayed any commencement of the tax for six months. Then they announced they had launched a review, creating even more uncertainty—particularly across the agriculture sector, with some farmers saying they would not plant crops because they were not sure that they would be able to have them picked at the end of the process. The review spanned the recent election campaign, during which the coalition did not provide the electorate with any idea of its position, creating even more uncertainty.

Finally, today, this messy process culminates in legislation which includes, amongst a number of measures, a lower rate of 19 per cent from the first dollar of income up to $37,000. Above this level, marginal tax rates will apply.

But they did something more with this semi-backflip. The Treasurer devised a new plan to raise the passenger movement charge by five dollars—proposed without any consultation whatsoever. When we met with the officials from Treasury and from the Treasurer's office, we asked, 'Have you done any modelling of what the impact of this would be?' And we had declared at the beginning of the meeting that we would disclose the outcomes, so I am not breaching confidences here. The modelling that they did was zero—nothing whatsoever. Indeed, in the backpacker tax changes, they assumed that it would stay the same in terms of the impact on backpackers.

So we are supporting an amendment to the legislation. And we are acknowledging that the Senate inquiry will be an opportunity for the sector to actually get some scrutiny—an opportunity to get some rigour into the policy process that the coalition government seemed to think should be thought about when problems are raised.

The most recent International Visitor Survey showed that Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory have experienced a decline in the number of backpacker visitors. All three of these, in addition to New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and the ACT, have also shown a serious decline in the number of backpacker visitor nights. This should not come as news to the coalition. The World Economic Forum's travel and tourism competitiveness index in 2015 ranked Australia 127th on taxes and charges and 49th for visa requirements.

We know that, over 2014 and 2015, the number of working holiday-maker visa applications had already started to fall. The government need to pay for the compromise that
they have put up—this deal behind closed doors with the courageous people from the National Farmers Federation, who said this was all bad and then completely rolled over. And we will bear that roll-over in mind the next time the National Farmers Federation say, 'We want to have a strong campaign.' You would not want to be in a trench with the NFF, I tell you! They folded their tent, having said that it should go back to the original proposition. But that is a matter for them to justify to their members, frankly, because their members are still complaining about the proposition that was put forward in this legislation.

The government is also increasing the tax on the departing Australia superannuation payment to 95 per cent. They think no-one will notice that this little measure has slipped in.

When you put it all together, the government is actually gaining more revenue than they would have originally. This is just another grab—the so-called washing your face nonsense, that the Treasurer said does not stack up at all. Indeed, the Tourism and Transport Forum CEO Margy Osmond had this to say on 27 September, as to the increase in the passenger movement charge:

At no point was it flagged in any discussions in which we took part …

Indeed, the new minister for tourism—they have finally got one—said, in his first Dorothy Dixer in this House in this parliament, just weeks ago, that previous increases in the passenger movement charge were:

… choking the golden goose that is Australia's tourism industry.

Well, I say that poor old Minister Ciobo made a goose of himself in making that statement. But of course not even he was consulted. He was on a plane to the Middle East. He was in Doha when this went through the cabinet process. He was not even consulted about the increase—he was treated with contempt. And he expects us to take him seriously!

The TTF said this about it:

Prime Minister Turnbull has said during the election campaign 'If you want less of something, tax it more', and that is exactly what the Government's current policy of viewing tourism as a 'cash cow' is going to deliver.

We know that, from August to August, the latest figures showed that there were eight million international visitors, a 10.9 per cent increase year on year. And yet what the government is doing here is trying to chuck more tax on, without any justification. What is the link with the backpacker tax fiasco that the government has presided over? There is none whatsoever. And Scott Morrison has form on this as well. This is what he had to say about increases in the Passenger Movement Charge in this parliament in 2008:

This tax is a pernicious impost on our aviation and tourism sectors, which are already under pressure. Tax increases are designed to discourage consumption, so placing a tax on travel is, I therefore assume, designed to discourage business activity in the travel sector.

That is what he had to say.

We have, with the exception of the UK on business travel, the highest charges in the world. When we talk about $60 on a ticket, it is not just $60 on a first-class ticket to Europe; it is $60 on a ticket to New Zealand, which you can get online for about $120, or a ticket to Bali. This tax can be to 50 per cent of the actual price of a ticket—and they are saying they will increase it. That is why in the election campaign Labor—as well as, it must be said, the coalition—said we would not increase the Passenger Movement Charge. We released a tourism policy in the
election campaign. That is more than the government did; it did not get through; they did not have a tourism policy. But what they did very clearly do was say they would oppose an increase in the Passenger Movement Charge. That is why there is such anger in the tourism sector when it comes to these changes.

Labor set out a comprehensive plan for tourism in the election campaign: protecting our natural assets; building skills and career pathways; using government to attract more major events and exhibitions; and re-engaging the federal government with the tourism sector both domestically and internationally. The tourism sector delivers some $94.5 billion in economic activity every year. It employs, directly and indirectly, one million Australians. Those one million Australians rely on tourism, particularly in rural Australia. That is why Labor will not rush to failure like the coalition seems eager to do. The government needs to satisfy the sector that it has done any modelling whatsoever—or else Minister Ciobo's comments about the golden goose certainly apply to this government. (Time expired)

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (12:26):
I welcome the opportunity to speak on these bills. The government recognises that working holiday makers provide an important source of seasonal labour for both the tourism industry and the agriculture industry. We are also fully aware of the importance of expenditure by backpackers when they come to this country—a very important source of tourism income. This package of measures addresses the significant concerns expressed by regional employers with seasonal labour demands and the concerns of many people in the tourism industry who have made representations to me.

We have heard a lot of bluster from Labor's spokesman on agriculture, but we are dealing with a problem that has come about largely because of changes Labor made to the tax free threshold. Under laws introduced by Labor, nonresident workers in Australia are taxed at 32.5 per cent from the first dollar earned. Recent Administrative Appeals Tribunal decisions have made it clear that, in many cases, working holiday makers are not residents for tax purposes, even though it seems to be standard practice for backpackers to claim residency on their tax forms.

Farmers and tourism operators with seasonal labour needs have expressed concerns that this tax situation will discourage working holiday makers from coming to Australia and will give an advantage to our competitors such as New Zealand and Canada. The government listened to these concerns and before the election gave a commitment to conduct a full review of this issue and the broader issues around seasonal labour supply. We also gave our commitment to the implementation of a resolution to this issue by the start of 2017. We intend to totally comply with these commitments.

I am grateful to the Deputy Prime Minister for asking me to lead the interdepartmental review in this matter. Representatives from several federal government departments were seconded to participate in the review. The public servants from my Department of Agriculture and Water Resources led the review with dedication and skill. I place on record my gratitude for their hard work in this project. The review received submissions from about 1,700 stakeholders, including working holiday makers, employers, representative organisations and state and local governments. Deloitte was contracted to hold face-to-face consultations, which were held in every capital city, with regional stakeholders being offered the opportunity to provide feedback by phone. The consultations were attended by dozens of key industry
stakeholders in the agriculture and tourism sectors. I thank all parties who took the time to engage with the review.

I found it curious that the shadow Treasurer, in his speech earlier, accused us of failing to consult with industry. We did a significant amount of consultation—and then, on the other hand, they accuse us of consulting too much! The review confirmed that most Australians think it is appropriate for working holiday makers to pay some level of tax. It is also clear that the tax rate of 32.5 per cent is not competitive with New Zealand and Canada despite Australia's high wages. Stakeholders also made it clear that a solution is needed soon and that further delays will only create more uncertainty, which really does beg the question: why would members opposite refer this off to a Senate inquiry and delay the process?

The government has responded decisively. The measures contained in these bills address the concerns of the agriculture and tourism sectors. We recognised that the tax rate for working holiday makers is not the only factor affecting the supply of seasonal labour, so we have also made changes that will help improve the availability of seasonal workers in Australia. Importantly, we have fully offset the costs of these measures to ensure that there is no further erosion of the budget position—unlike Labor, who always act irresponsibly when it comes to budget measures.

At the centre of the package is a new tax rate for working holiday makers of 19 per cent per earnings up to $37,000. Ordinary marginal tax rates apply thereafter. This new rate of 19 per cent is internationally competitive. After-tax income for working holiday makers will still be amongst the highest in the world. Importantly, this new tax rate will apply from 1 January 2017, just as we promised during the election campaign.

Employers will be required to register with the ATO if they want to offer the 19 per cent withholding rate to working holiday makers that they employ. There will be a register of employers that will be publicly available, so that working holiday makers will be able to quickly identify which employers are properly registered.

Employers that do not comply with their legal obligations may have their registration cancelled. This possibility will become an obvious disincentive for employers to flout their obligation to pay their staff properly. Working holiday makers employed by an unregistered employer will have tax withheld at the non-resident rate of 32.5 per cent, but they will be able to access the 19 per cent rate when they lodge a tax return.

To address concerns about the exploitation of workers, the package also includes $10 million to support compliance activities by the Fair Work Ombudsman and the ATO. This investment in compliance is timely, given the Fair Work Ombudsman's report into the treatment of 417 visa holders, which was released on Saturday. Unfortunately, there are some employers who refuse to comply with their legal obligations, and these new arrangements will give the authorities another tool to discourage illegal behaviour.

We recognise that the number of working holiday makers visiting Australia has been in decline since 2012, but this is due to a range of factors. Even the shadow Treasurer admitted earlier today that the number of working holiday makers has been declining due to that range of factors. This admission is another demonstration that Labor's scare campaign on this issue should be put in the same category as the old Mediscare campaign. Labor know the facts, but they would prefer to play political games. That is just same old Labor.
Mr Fitzgibbon: You have a riveting speech there.

Mr HARTSUYKER: Mate, I know you love it! I know you love it! The package encourages working holiday makers to visit Australia by reducing the application charge for working holiday maker visas by $50, and $10 million will also be made available for Tourism Australia to market Australia to potential backpackers in key overseas markets. We are also increasing the eligibility age for 417 and 462 visas from 30 to 35.

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

Mr HARTSUYKER: Hang on! There’s more, Joel. This increases the pool of possible working holiday makers and brings us into line with our competitors. We have also responded to industry feedback by introducing more flexible working arrangements.

Working holiday makers are currently permitted to work for one employer for a maximum of six months. Some employers, particularly in the hospitality and meat processing industries, have argued that working holiday makers should be able to work for the same employer in different locations over a longer period of time. The government has listened to those concerns and will allow working holiday makers to work for one employer for up to twelve months, with six months in a single location. This will provide more opportunities for working holiday makers to put newly-learned skills to good use.

I mentioned earlier the issue of lack of budget responsibility by our friends, the Australian Labor Party. These measures will, importantly, be budget neutral. It is important that the costs of the measures that we put in place are balanced with additional revenue to cover them. These measures have a cost to budget of around $350 million over the forward estimates. These costs must be fully offset. Offsets are not easy to find, and they are not always popular, but we are up to the task of repairing the budget. We do not shirk our budgetary responsibility, as those opposite do. Labor spent six years avoiding the hard decisions. We cannot repeat their mistakes.

To offset the costs of these measures, the government will be modestly increasing the passenger movement charge by $5 from 1 July. This is broadly in line with inflation and will be the first increase in that charge since 2012. The government will also increase the departing Australia superannuation payments tax for working holiday makers to 95 per cent. Working holiday makers can withdraw the balance of their superannuation when they depart Australia and their visa expires or is cancelled.

These funds are typically spent offshore and not to the benefit of the Australian economy. Superannuation is intended to support Australian workers in their retirement—not foreigners. So, using the working holiday makers' superannuation to fund their lower tax rate is, I believe, good policy. It puts money in their hands while they are in Australia, so that they can stay longer and see more of this great country. Importantly, this measure does not place any additional burden or red tape on employers. Foreigners also remain equivalent to locals with regard to employment, and the superannuation is preserved for those working holiday makers who may go on to become permanent residents.

The peak tourism season and the main harvest period is just around the corner. The coalition gave a commitment to have a resolution to this matter in place by 1 January. Prolonging the uncertainty about this issue would let farmers down, and that is why Labor’s decision to refer this to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee is utterly reckless.
This is yet another example of Labor playing politics with a serious issue. They have done it with same-sex marriage; they have done it with Medicare; they have done it with renewable energy—and now they are using our farmers as political pawns. If these bills are not passed, the ATO will tax many working holiday makers as non-residents. That is the law as it stands. Continuing with the status quo is not an option.

The National Farmers Federation made the position of the agriculture sector quite clear when they said:

Farmers can’t wait until the end of the year, or even next year, for a resolution of the issue…

After refusing to declare its hand on the backpacker tax all year, Labor decides to intervene at the eleventh hour to block a solution that would see an extra $2000 in every backpacker’s pocket.

This is unacceptable and we call on Labor to respect all the decent hard working Australian farmers who feed and clothe us every day by passing the ‘backpacker tax’ bills in the Parliament.

There is no justification for any further delay.

These bills need to be passed as a matter of priority. The shadow Treasurer confirmed that Labor is trying to walk both sides of the street on this issue. They want to keep the $540 million from the 2015 budget measure in their costings, but they do not want to make the hard decisions to offset the cost of the reform package. Despite talking a big game on budget repair, Labor refuses to make the difficult decisions.

Labor’s recklessness will have real consequences in my electorate. We have a vibrant and growing horticulture industry on the North Coast of New South Wales, with the blueberry industry growing rapidly. Blueberries are a particularly labour-intensive crop, as they must be picked entirely by hand. With the rapid growth of the industry, the demand for seasonal labour has been increasing to a dramatic extent. Of course, our tourism sector is also heavily dependent on seasonal labour and the influx of backpackers during the blueberry harvest. Labor’s plans to delay this package of reforms will just create uncertainty for farmers, processors and tourism operators throughout the Cowper electorate. I call on Labor and the crossbench members and senators to pass these bills for the sake of our farmers, our tourism industry and the national economy.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (12:38): I often feel for the member for Cowper in this place, but particularly today for three reasons. First of all, as the minister responsible, unlike the members for Lyne and Leichhardt, he had no choice but to stand at the dispatch box and support this insidious tax. That is the first point. Unlike the members near him, he had no choice but to speak. Second, he of course drew the short straw by being given the task of going out there and surveying the sector and conducting an inquiry—the third inquiry—to determine how the government might wiggle its way out of this tax proposal. Third, the member for Cowper represents one of those electorates most affected by not only the backpackers tax but the other impositions this bill puts on the tourism sector. So I wish the member for Cowper all the best in his electorate as he goes back to his constituents and constituent businesses, in particular, to explain to them why it is that he is imposing this tax on their businesses, notwithstanding the fact that his own Treasury modelling says that 19 per cent is going to drive backpackers away. Indeed, Treasury modelling shows that the fall off in backpackers will be no less at 19 per cent than it would have been at the original 32.5 per cent.
Talking about people who have not been prepared to come in here and stand up for the Treasury Laws Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016 and related bills, I ask, having had a look at the speakers list: where is the member for Capricornia? She was going to be fighting hard for her people on this backpackers tax before the election? Where is the member for Flynn? He was going to stick up for his growers in Biloela. These members have completely gone missing. They are lions in their electorates and cowards here, when they arrive in Canberra. I do give the member for Mallee credit. I remember standing at this dispatch box giving credit to the member for Mallee, because I followed his first speech in this place and I thought it was a very fine speech. I could tell he was a person—I thought he was a person—who was prepared to stick up for his electorate. He has had some pretty harsh things to say about the backpackers tax, not unexpectedly, in his electorate over recent months. In fact, at one point, he said that he was confident this tax was dead. Yet, he has the courage to at least come into this place today and I assume—I should not pre-empt what he is going to say; he might give us all a pleasant surprise, having been so critical of the tax—defend the tax.

Let's just go through a little bit of history here so that we know what we are talking about. For a number of reasons, the ATO commissioner had concerns about the validity of those ticking the box which declares them residents for tax purposes and therefore providing them with a tax-free threshold. He took it to the AAT and had a ruling and decided that he would deny that significant number of people. The government at the time, the Abbott government, could have said: 'We reject that. We'll fix this. This is going to be too bad for the tourism and agriculture sectors. We will quickly move to legislate to make the tax zero or to somehow reinstate the threshold for these backpackers'—but, no. That was not the plan for the coalition. They saw an opportunity to rake in $540 million over four years out of this decision—and, make no mistake about it, they made their choice. They took the money and ran, without any concern for those in the agriculture sector and the tourism sector that were going to be adversely affected.

So what happened then? They were very brave for a while, very bold, very courageous. They stood their ground until an election came along and—surprise, surprise—the pressure came on. What did they do then? They said they would review the policy, but they kept booking the $540 million all the way to election day. In other words, they walked both sides of the street. They wanted people to think that post election they would review this tax and get rid of this tax—but, no. The sectors affected were sadly and sorely disappointed. That is not what they got at all. They got another survey, which is what the member for Cowper was going on about. I have read the Deloittes report. I have seen the assistant minister's report. It is no more than a survey. We have a divided parliament and a divided community over this issue. Yes, the NFF are saying, 'We're happy with 19 per cent.' And why wouldn't they? It is because every day Barnaby Joyce rings them and says, with a gun to their head, 'You back 19 or you'll get 32.5.' Remember, if we do not legislate, it goes back to 32.5. He has got a gun to the head of the NFF and other groups. This is the disrespect with which he treats farmers in this country. It is disrespect. This is a hopeless situation.

The member for Cowper went on and on about the opposition's position. We have a very clear position. Like on so many matters brought to this place in this era in which budget repair is important, we have said we will work with the government. We have only one condition...
and that is: whatever the government does, it restores the international competitiveness of Australia. We must be able to compete. We were losing backpackers before this tax came into effect, and what did the government do? Did it address the labour market issues? Did it address employer exploitation so that potential backpackers in Europe and elsewhere were not getting the wrong messages about what it is like to be a backpacker in Australia? No. Rather than address the decline in backpacker numbers, it made it worse by putting a tax on it. What sort of genius would decide that you would address the fall-off in backpacker numbers by taxing them? It takes a particular sort of genius to come up with that solution.

Again on Labor’s position, the government is accusing us of delaying this bill. Excuse me? We made a sound commitment to give this bill expeditious passage through the House of Representatives. What was their response? They introduced it last week and parked it. They could have had this debated in this House last week and this bill could be with the Senate committee as we speak. They did not bring it on for debate. It was so urgent that they decided to leave it until this week, and if we had not said something I suspect it would not have been this week either. We have also said that, whatever the outcome here, this bill will pass the parliament by Christmas, making sure that it meets the deadline of 1 January, which the government has now set.

It was not the Labor Party that decided to tie the backpacker tax to an increase in the passenger movement charge—a very substantial increase which has the tourism sector nothing less than ropable—or to tie it to a cash grab, which is the increase in the taxation on the employer superannuation contribution. To be sure people understand that, the employer will now pay nine per cent of salary and the government will immediately take 95 per cent of it back. For backpackers who do not claim the remaining five per cent, that will go into government coffers as well. This is partly, with the passenger movement charge, how they are offsetting the loss between 32.5 per cent and 19 per cent. They are reducing the backpacker tax and slugging other people, including employers—hardworking farmers in this country and tourism operators. That is the scandal of this proposition.

This government has become serial. The dysfunction of this government, the division within this government and the failure of leadership in this government is becoming palpable. There could be no better example than this backpacker tax. We see it with the APVMA, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority. The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources wants to move it to Armidale, in his own electorate. You will recall he was under considerable pressure in the last election campaign for putting his own political interests ahead of the interests of Australia’s farmers. In case people do not understand, the chemicals regulator approves crop sprays and the like and veterinary medicines for our farmers. If farmers cannot get those in a timely manner, productivity falls and the farmers go down with it.

I had a gentleman on the phone this morning who is trying to get approvals for a rodent control, which farmers need so desperately. It usually takes 10 weeks, on average, to get something like that passed by the APVMA so it can be moved on to our farmers. He has been told it will be April next year. Why? Because the staff are already deserting the APVMA. They are running for cover. Of the 170 staff surveyed, 14 said they would be prepared to move to Armidale. Minister Joyce is destroying the APVMA and the impact is already being felt. The rodent protection is the perfect example of the impact that is having. I could go
through the list: the failed white paper disappeared; there is no support for the dairy industry; a failed drought policy. The list goes on and on. He comes in here every day and takes credit for prices when they are high—

Mr Pasin interjecting—

Mr FITZGIBBON: I thank Mr Pasin for the interjection. He comes in every day and takes credit for drought induced beef prices, but we never hear him talking about commodity prices that have gone down. It is magic. He takes credit for everything that goes up and no credit for anything that goes down.

It was not Labor's idea to introduce a backpacker tax. It was not Labor's idea to reduce it to 19 per cent, even though that will make no difference. It was not Labor's idea to tie it to a superannuation tax charge and a hefty increase in the passenger movement charge. This is a problem of the government's making and we stand ready to help fix it. I do not know what the good rate is, if we have to have a backpacker tax. I do not have the Treasury machine to grind through the numbers. We know it is not 19 per cent. I do not know whether it is 10½ per cent. It could be seven per cent, it could be five per cent or it could be two per cent.

Ms Swanson: They do not know either.

Mr FITZGIBBON: I thank the member for Paterson. They do not know either. This is one of the important points we will make in the understandable committee process in the Senate. What bill of this nature does not go to a Senate committee? The mob over the other side know every bill like this goes to a Senate committee. To suggest that we are delaying is just ridiculous. This is one of the questions we will be asking Treasury: is there a sweet spot; is there a point at which Australia can restore its international competitiveness, notwithstanding having a backpacker tax? It will be an interesting exercise. We know that in, for example, New Zealand it is 10.5 per cent. There is the folly: 'The wage rate is higher here, so we can be competitive.' Do not tell us that, because your own modelling says it is not going to leave us competitive. That is the Treasury modelling. What they are doing on the other side is introducing a tax on backpackers, even though they know it is going to damage the agriculture and tourism sectors. Do I have to repeat that? Can you believe that? I have been here 20 years. I do not believe I have ever seen a government impose a tax on a sector knowing that it is going to further damage those sectors. In the case of the tourism sector, it is a double whammy: a tax on backpackers and an increase in the passenger movement charge. Again: what sort of genius does it take to come up with that proposal?

Fifteen minutes is nowhere near long enough. I could go through all the impacts, but I will say this. The National Farmers Federation, in a very good report only a year ago, talked about where we want Australian agriculture to be in 2030. It was a very good publication. It talked about a whole range of things we needed to do, from productivity to market access, et cetera. What that tells me, having looked back at it, is that we are doing nothing to pursue the ideas in that report—the ideas that ensure that we fully capitalise on the opportunities in agriculture for us. But it also said this: by 2030 we can have a horticulture sector more than twice the size, in value, of what we have today. But this is not how you get there. We are as one on one point in this place: that is, that the horticulture sector, in particular, is absolutely dependent on backpackers. In Tasmania, as we speak, people are concerned about fruit rotting on trees. I heard Minister Joyce saying that there are towns in his electorate where the population can be nowhere near what they need for the workforce.

CHAMBER
I will finish with this: who owns this backpacker tax? Who was its greatest supporter? The answer is Minister Joyce. In Senate estimates—and I will table the transcript—officials told us that Barnaby Joyce wanted this money, the backpacker tax revenue, to pay for some of his more interesting white paper initiatives—failed white paper initiatives, I say—let me be in no doubt about that. In addition to that, Barnaby Joyce told Leigh Sales that he found it a bit insidious:

It does seem a little bit incongruous that someone can work four months, five months, six months and get a tax-free threshold because that actually puts them at a strategic advantage on two levels to their other Australian workers.

Wrong! Australian workers get a tax-free threshold. But it shows what was in Barnaby Joyce’s mind at that point. He loves the backpacker tax. It is his backpacker tax, and here is introducing it notwithstanding the fact that it is going to hurt the agricultural sector. (Time expired)

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (12:54): I rise to speak on the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016. I love the passion of the member for Hunter, the shadow minister for agriculture. It is refreshing to see someone on the other side of the chamber who has such a passion for agriculture. I will commend him for that. I think back to the time, as a young farmer walking around my farming 2007, when the Labor Party failed to even introduce a pre-election commitment around agriculture at all. In 2010 the agriculture minister at the time put together an A4, one-sided page—he did not even use both sides of the paper when it came to their agricultural policy. So I commend the shadow minister for agriculture, because I genuinely believe that he cares about the portfolio and has a passion, which is something that we have not seen in the past.

If I look back at the great achievement over the last number of years that has really created wealth in my patch, it has been the free trade agreements with China, Korea and Japan. To give you an example, it was not that long ago that we were getting $18 for box of table grapes. Last season we were up to $46 because the Japanese and Chinese fought with one another over trying to buy our great products. In a week and a half's time I will be in Beijing at the Beijing fruit and veg festival, launching nectarines into China, which has been fantastic, with some really good stuff.

But there are things that need to happen if we are going to capitalise on the free trade agreements. The free trade agreements are simply an opportunity. The decisions we make are whether these opportunities become a reality and become wealth for the country.

Mr Fitzgibbon: Is this about the backpacker tax?

Mr BROAD: I am leading there. He is listening. I have to say that at least the shadow minister for the agriculture is listening. I must say I will give credit to that. He might even learn something.

The free trade agreements are an opportunity. Water is ultimately the lifeblood of my irrigation community that needs to be addressed if we are going to capitalise on the free trade agreements. Unfortunately, the world’s worst water minister, the worst water minister in the history of the Australian Commonwealth, was Penny Wong. In my patch she bought irrigation blocks, took the water off, made them pull off that infrastructure and take that out of production for five years. In contrast, Barnaby Joyce, when he was shadow water minister, made an election commitment that we were going to modernise the irrigation scheme in my
area with $103 million of federal funds. It has now been built and the confidence is back. We are seeing that people are buying and expanding their horticultural products. That is from water infrastructure.

We all know that we need to get our product from where we grow it to the market place. The federal government has committed $220 million to upgrading the railway tracks to get our product to the market. I must say that in the history of the Commonwealth biggest contribution to the Mildura line has been $25 million. We have now put $220 million into it.

But labour is the part that we are going to need, because of course when you pick fruit it does not make its way from the vine to the box by itself. Someone has to do that. The tax ruling that said that a foreign worker, for taxation purposes, needed to be charged 32.5 per cent, with impact on our backpackers, simply was not fair. There is no way you can say to someone they are going to work in 42 degrees heat or hotter in Mildura and you are going to take a third of their proceeds. 32.5 per cent was not fair, so I launched strong advocacy with my coalition partners to see how this could be looked at and in a more fair way. I have to pay tribute not just to members of the National Party but to backbench members of the Liberal Party, who took a very strong position on this and assisted as we looked for a solution. That is in contrast to the shadow minister for agriculture, who offered no solution. He was happy to say nothing, and here we have just listened to 15 minutes of his diatribe, in which we still did not hear any solution—no answers.

I had a four-point solution. That is, a foreign worker should pay tax. It is very hard to argue that a backpacker should not pay any tax. A foreign worker should pay tax. They do draw on our services by driving on our roads and using our health system while they are here. It is appropriate that 417 or a 462 workers should pay a level of tax; 32¼ per cent was clearly not fair and we made that point. An Australian worker must pay tax; therefore a foreign worker should pay at least as much tax. The burden and the onus on the employer must be simple to administer and it must ensure that the workforce continues to come. As I said, there are three things that are important if we are going to capitalise on the free trade agreement. They are water, infrastructure and labour—it is very important that the workforce continues to come. I believe where we have landed on this pretty much hits every one of those three points.

An Australian worker would normally pay about 13 per cent on a casual rate—pretty easy to administer. So of course we could have the discussion: why do we not land on 13 per cent? Thirteen per cent would be pretty simple. It would mean that because an Australian pays 13 per cent then a backpacker would pay 13 per cent. However, there are some snags as we work this through.

We, in the well-meaning intention of our foreign aid policy, have said to the Pacific Islanders that we will as part of our aid package allow them to bring their workers into Australia, particularly to work in horticulture, and we will charge them a 15 per cent tax rate. It does not work for every horticultural field but it has been very successful, and we hope to expand and grow that.

I have examples in my electorate of farmers who bring in Pacific Islanders and then also co-match additional funds so when that Pacific Islander returns to their village, they put that into infrastructure projects. So it actually not only supports our aid program but also allows well-meaning Australians and our horticulture sector to partner with Pacific Island towns and villages to contribute, to put in electricity and plumbing.
However, it is very difficult to then argue that a backpacker from a country like Germany, for example, also deserves the same taxation rate as a Pacific Island nation—under 15 per cent—so the figure landed at was 19 per cent. Nineteen per cent has some merit behind it because we are quite aware that one of the most important parts of the scheme is that the workers would continue to come here. Australia, of course, is a great country. We think it is; otherwise we would not be here. And I am sure that people who come and visit Australia have a positive experience. However, the take-home wages here need to be more than what workers can earn in Canada or what they can earn in New Zealand—our competing countries. And because the wages in Australia are reasonably high, with a 19 per cent tax rate, a backpacker who works in Australia is going to put more money in their pocket than if they went to New Zealand or if they went to Canada. Even though the tax rates might be lower there, the take-home pay, the standard of living and the opportunities that come from working as a holiday maker in Australia are going to be substantially better. So that certainly ticks that competitive box.

The other thing is we realise that some of our backpackers are working now in quite highly skilled jobs on our farms. I know a lot of our grain growers would be quite excited about the forthcoming harvest. There is a harvest coming and if it will stop raining, we will be able to get it. We are hoping that it will not rain too much more. There would not be many times that I would say that in the Australian parliament but, with 15 millimetres at my farm overnight, I am hoping the paddock will dry out. However, sitting on those harvesters does require a great deal of skill; you are not going to just put anyone on a $450,000 harvester. If it is a John Deere harvester, it is probably a $600,000 harvester, which is why I could never afford a John Deere. Increasing the age range to 35 brings more people into that labour catchment so that people can come in and contribute to our horticultural industry.

The Working Holiday Maker Reform Package is important. A harvest is getting close. I will concede that it has taken us too long, in my personal opinion, to find a landing on this bit of policy. However, I am pleased to hear that the shadow minister for agriculture has at least pointed out that this will be sorted out through the parliament and done and dusted with a satisfactory outcome before Christmas. But I would like to say to the shadow minister for agriculture: if you could, please ask your senators not to hold this up any longer than it needs to be because it is important that not only is it done and dusted by Christmas but that it is well communicated so that those backpackers continue to come.

I will add something else that I think is worthy of discussion and needs to be added to the Hansard around this issue. Backpackers are only a part of the labour force. With the great confidence and opportunity that have come through the free trade agreements, we are seeing additional plantings going on right across my patch. Just think, if everyone expands by an additional 10 per cent then that is going to put pressure on the labour market. We have older Australians, we have unemployed Australians living in my patch. I think one of the things that inhibits them from becoming involved in very short seasonal work is the impact it might have on the benefits that they are receiving. If they work in a full-time capacity for eight weeks, which might only be the time that the season runs for, they would lose their unemployment benefits or lose their pension benefits. I think there would be value in allowing, for that eight weeks of intense seasonal work, the money they earn to be averaged over a 12-month period so that it does not impact upon their benefits.
The long-term argument for this would be that it would get them involved in the workforce, even if it is short-term. They would get all the benefits, the health benefits as well as the stimulation and personal satisfaction, from being in work and it would assist them to essentially move into the workforce full-time. I think we need to be quite open to the idea of seasonal work for people who are receiving benefits as another means to complement the workforce within our horticultural industry.

The backpacker tax, I hope, at 32 per cent is dead and buried. I think the Working Holiday Reform Package that we have got here is a satisfactory outcome. This really is about securing three things—water, infrastructure and labour force—so that we can capitalise on the great achievements of this government, which are the free trade agreements with China, Japan and Korea. Ultimately, in doing that, we will grow wealth and create more opportunities for every Australian.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (13:07): I find it interesting that coalition members cannot bring themselves to change their perspective and position in relation to the marriage equality plebiscite but are quite happy to change their position on this package of bills, the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016 and cognate bills, to that which they campaigned on in the last federal election. The coalition are very flexible and malleable when it comes to their positions. Their position on this has been a complete farce and shemozzle ever since it was announced in the May 2015 budget. And yet they have the chutzpah and gall to demand that we roll over and pass this legislation without a Senate inquiry.

That mob opposite could not get themselves together for 16 to 18 months to work out what their position was. We had a situation where, I think it was in the adjournment speech last Thursday, the new member for Murray demanded that we pass the new legislation straight away, before we even had a debate on the second reading in the chamber today. This legislation is particularly important because there are 272,400 young Australians unemployed. There is a youth unemployment rate of 12.8 per cent. Labor supports the integrity of the 417 visa, 462 visa and 457 visa schemes. It is indisputable that backpackers make an important contribution, including in my electorate, in the rural parts of Ipswich and also in the Somerset region. They are particularly important.

I am going to concentrate on issues that are germane to this debate, particularly on those that relate to my shadow portfolio of immigration and border protection. The legislation covered by this cognate debate deals with issues relating to backpackers and the 417 visa scheme. We have seen in the media reports of hardship, exploitation and sexual harassment happening, sadly, in relation to people working on these visas. The overwhelming evidence of exploitation of these vulnerable workers dictates that any changes to the working holiday visa scheme must offer better protection. The government has spent a long time talking about these issues in this chamber and within the Liberal and National parties, but very little of that time has been spent talking about the need to protect workers—particularly in the horticulture and cattle industries and the like, and in regional and rural areas—who are being exploited and taken advantage of. We saw evidence of that in A national disgrace: the exploitation of temporary work visa holders, the report of the inquiry by the Senate Education and Employment References Committee in March 2016.
We are of course going to send this to a Senate inquiry because it is particularly important for this legislation. Among other things, the bills require the Commissioner of Taxation to give the Treasurer for presentation to parliament a report on working holiday visas, including statistics and information derived from a register that is being established; increase to 95 per cent the rate of Australian superannuation payments for working holiday makers; and also reduce the visa application charge by $50. It is important that we get this legislation right. It is important that the Senate look at this legislation.

Through registration, businesses can be listed on the Australian Business Register as an employer of working holiday makers. If the business fails to register for listing then working holidaymakers will be taxed at the higher rate of 32.5 per cent, effectively cutting their day-to-day pay packet until the end of the financial year when the working holiday maker can lodge a tax return and access the 19 per cent tax rate.

Many working holiday makers travel around the country. They invest their hard earned money in our small rural towns and in big tourism hubs. We think that is particularly important, because it is a driver of economic growth. I know it is important in my own electorate. The Migration Institute in their submission to the Education and Employment References Committee inquiry made the point that ‘student and working holiday visa holders are often very reliant on any income they can get for basic living costs.’ I am concerned that working holiday makers, in order to determine the level of tax they will pay, will be expected to log-in to the Australian Business Number web site to check whether their employer is registered.

The bills give the Commissioner of Taxation the power to share information with the Fair Work Ombudsman for the purpose of ensuring that an entity is compliant with the Fair Work Act. Why is that important? It is important because we have seen some egregious breaches of industrial relations legislation enterprise agreements. We support the sharing of information between agencies, because it is important to protect vulnerable working holiday makers. The commissioner will report annually to the minister about the employment of working holiday makers, including statistics, information about the regions and sectors working holiday makers are employed in and other information derived from the employment register.

The Fair Work Ombudsman is empowered to investigate cases that are taken to it, but working holiday makers need to have the knowledge and confidence that their issues will be taken seriously and investigated and that the Australian government will act in their best interest. I will be very interested to hear, as part of the Senate inquiry process, what the unions and other stakeholders have to say about exploitation in these industries.

We saw the Four Corners program ‘Slaving away: the dirty secrets behind Australia’s fresh food’ and a subsequent media report by Smart Company, who said:

The Four Corners … report put a spotlight on a number of labour hire companies that have been found to be taking advantage of young foreign workers with limited English skills. Some of the workers, many of which are on 417 working visas, worked on farms and factories for as little as $3.95 an hour and worked 22 hours a day, while others alleged they had been sexually assaulted and harassed.

Even News.com published a story, ‘Dark industry of backpacker exploitation’, that detailed the very confronting experiences of three working holiday visa holders. They also are very confronting. One of them said that her employer would not allow them to drink water and put a drunken old man in a 12-bed female dorm. Another said that he was exposed to poisonous
materials and he observed women being sexually harassed. He said that he had seen a meal thrown at a young girl. There were sexual remarks and unwanted advances, and they had asbestos lying around and wanted the girls to chuck it in the bin. It was simply not good enough.

The exploitation of workers is not only limited to unsafe work practices; working holiday makers have also experienced financial hardship as a result of misleading employers who take advantage of young desperate workers seeking a second-year visa. One person, a young woman of 22 years of age, said:

Wanting a second-year visa should not strip you of basic rights in the workplace.

Sham contractors target desperate overseas workers and then take advantage of 417 visa workers who want a second-year visa.

The Senate Education and Employment References Committee inquiry heard about the vulnerabilities and exploitative conditions faced by these types of visa holders. They reported:

We have heard stories from members about contractors saying you have to work for free for X amount of time in order to get a second visa, or you have to provide sexual favours in order to receive a second visa.

One horticulture worker from Taiwan, Sherry Huang, who is now an NUW organiser explained during the Senate inquiry how labour-hire companies target workers. She said:

Typically, the owner of a labour hire company in Australia would set up a labour hire company in Taiwan and then source all the workers from Taiwan. The labour hire agency would charge 417 visa holders a fee of several thousand dollars to arrange flights, accommodation, transport, and a job.

An organiser from the meat industry and the AMIEU, the meat workers union, described one housing situation as follows:

… the showers did not work and there were up to four 417 visa workers in small rooms … They were not allowed to use the heating in winter, the bedding was on the floor, there was no kitchen table, and they had to set up a rice cooker on boxes.

Labour-hire companies who require 417 workers to pay rent on their accommodation stand to make enormous profits. The Fair Work Ombudsman did the sums on one Beresfield property and found:

Based on 20 people paying $100 per week, the potential rental income for the property is over $100,000 per year.

This is simply not good enough. The government should spend more time concentrating on this particular issue than talking to themselves.

The Fair Work Ombudsman’s annual report for 2014-15 is particularly important. The Fair Work Ombudsman monitors compliance and investigates acts and practices which are contrary to workplace laws, awards and agreements. The Fair Work Ombudsman’s report looked at a number of issues. We saw, for example, across two years that: the issuing of compliance notices increased from 16 to 37; more than 100 extra infringement notices were issued, increasing from 23 to 124; an extra 17 enforceable undertakings were issued; and 21 litigations commenced, up from 12 in the previous year. Tragically, 28 per cent of cases came from my own state of Queensland. In 2014-15, the Fair Work Ombudsman received 930 dispute forms from subclass 417 working holiday visa holders. During this time, a total of
$1.6 million was recovered for vulnerable overseas workers. The abuses and exploitations in this industry are outrageous.

Last Friday, the Fair Work Ombudsman released their report inquiring into the wages and conditions of people working under the 417 working holiday visa program, the subject of this cognate debate. The inquiry was established in response to increasing numbers of requests for assistance from temporary visa holders. The inquiry commissioned a survey of 417 visa holders. The report said that over 4,000 people were surveyed. About a quarter of them got the second-year visa. The Fair Work Ombudsman spoke with industry experts, unions and employers.

During the inquiry, information received about the exploitation of 417 visa holders included instances of: underpayment and/or nonpayment of wages; visa holders offering, or being induced to offer, payment to employers and third parties for assistance to gain a second-year work rights visa; an increased dependency on the employer by the visa holder seeking employment during the 88-day specified work requirement of the program in order to secure the second year; sexual harassment and workplace health and safety issues; employers recruiting workers with the offer of unpaid work to meet the second-year visa eligibility requirements; and visa holders working for free in exchange for non-certified accommodation programs. The survey found that 59 percent of the respondents—that is, 2,596 people—stated they were unlikely to complain about their working conditions in case their work was not signed off by their employer. And 66 per cent—that is, 2,904 people—felt employers take advantage of 417 visa holders due to the requirement to undertake regional work.

For the last nearly 18 months, the government has been talking to itself about this issue and been completely missing in action on these egregious examples of exploitation of workers in these areas, particularly in regional areas. The National Party and Liberal Party people sitting in their seats on the other side have done nothing. They have been completely silent about this outrageous expectation in these industries. I represent a regional and rural seat, and I know how important these particular 417, 462 and 457 visas are. But on the exploitation that we have seen in report after report those opposite have been completely silent. They have been talking to themselves. They cannot even work this stuff out themselves. Then they have the gall to ask that we just roll over and let them do this without any proper examination of the legislation and its impact on visas. These people should spend more time protecting workers who are vulnerable.

These industries are important. Agriculture is important. Tourism is important. Horticulture is important. It is important to protect workers in retail and hospitality. But those opposite will not. They will not do anything about it. They just want us to roll over. This is their compromise. I tell you what, you would not want to have the NFF in your corner in a street fight in an alley. You would not want them. They rolled over. Their members must be outraged. They must be outraged at these blokes on the other side and at the leaders of the NFF, because they have rolled over. At the first shot of political warfare, they have rolled over. They have completely rolled over to the government. The NFF had the gall to criticise the Labor Party in relation to this issue, when the NFF had been missing in action.

The mob over there, who sit on the Treasury benches, should do more to protect workers and do less talking about themselves. They should be a bit more malleable and flexible about their views on industrial relations. They should be protecting workers; that is what they...
should do. They should do more work on 417, 462 and 457 exploitation. That is what they should be doing. (Time expired)

Ms PRICE (Durack) (13:22): I am very pleased to speak on this bill today. Together with my other regional Liberal colleagues—the member for O’Connor, who is here with me today; the member for Barker; and also the member for Forrest, another colleague of mine from Western Australia—we worked very hard to ensure that we have a balanced bill, which we are debating today. I am very pleased that we finally have the opportunity to discuss it.

The proposed backpacker tax changes, as they are now known, would have serious consequences for all Australians; but perhaps nowhere would the impact of the backpacker tax, as it currently stands, be felt more than in my electorate of Durack. The electorate of Durack is responsible for so much of the wealth of this nation, through such a wide variety of different industries. Clearly, the miners are a big contributor to my electorate and to the nation, but so are the farmers, the horticulturalists, the pastoralists and also a significant amount of tourism and hospitality operators. I know that this new package before the House is a vital part of our commitment to simulating growth in the regions and providing the flow-on jobs that service the working holiday communities.

Taxing working holiday-makers the 19 per cent from the first dollar makes us internationally competitive against comparable countries like the UK, Canada and New Zealand. We are also extending the age criteria for eligibility of working holiday-makers from 30 to 35. This will allow those seeking perhaps a professional hiatus or maybe a sabbatical—an ever more common phenomenon these days—to come to Australia and work regionally for an extended holiday, working at the same time should they choose to do so. There will be in-built integrity safeguards to protect working holiday-makers from exploitation, with measures taken to ensure working holiday-makers are paid the same rates for their work as their Australian colleagues.

Another welcome change will allow a working holiday visa holder to work in two different locations for six months at each time for the same employer. This is particularly important for the hospitality industry, who often have multiple worksites in their businesses. You know as well as I do, Deputy Speaker Goodenough, businesses will spend a considerable amount of time training up these new employees; it is therefore important that this effort is not wasted. This will allow the employer and employee to enjoy the benefit for the 12-month period. I believe that all these changes will be welcomed by working holiday-makers, who will have more money in their back pockets. The regions where they work can only benefit from more dollar spent locally. A $5 passenger movement charge increase, the first increase since 2012—and in-line with the CPI—also makes good financial sense in offsetting some of the losses that these changes bring to our budget bottom line.

Let me just say that the Labor Party should respect the hard work of the people who feed us, clothe us and provide us with the industries that drive this nation. The members opposite have again displayed a distinct lack of understanding of regional Australia and a distinct lack of understanding of the make-up of its workforce. If they did understand it, they would support this bill without hesitation.

This measure is part of the broad, informed plan of the Turnbull government to reform the economy and promote jobs and growth in regional areas. The Turnbull government has a strong plan to relieve the tax burden on average Australians and promote growth in the
regions through a range of infrastructure programs and programs for small business. This bill will put more money into the back pockets of working holiday-makers, which they will in turn spend in the regions. Any program that puts funds into the hands of small businesses in the regions simply has to be encouraged because these are the best ways, and the most sustainable ways, to promote regional growth and secure jobs for the future.

We are moving into a very important part of the year. With the spring picking season upon us, small businesses in the agricultural, hospitality and tourism sectors and working holiday-makers are currently in a state of limbo. The members opposite are playing politics with their lives and livelihoods. The uncertainty is having a profound impact on regional Australians, and it is now urgent that we resolve it once and for all. By making these changes, we are making Australia more competitive in regards to comparative countries that rely on working holiday-makers as a source of labour in their region. Even at 19 per cent, we will still be a higher rate of tax than New Zealand, our biggest competitor for working holiday-makers, who have a lower base rate of pay than most Australian agricultural and horticultural businesses. This policy will put an estimated $2,000 extra in the hands of every working holiday backpacker in Australia, money that is very likely to be spent in the regions supporting local businesses.

In the short time left I have, I want to make the point that I think all of us, in this House and in Australia, want Australians to have Australian jobs. But sad reality is that this is not always possible. I firmly believe that until we change the rules and regulations around welfare payments, this will continue to be the case. As a consequence, working holiday-makers become a critical part of the labour force in regional Australia and that is why I commend this bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough) (13:28): It being approximately 1.30 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Kamban Tamil Literary Festival

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (13:29): This Saturday I will have the pleasure of attending the 10th anniversary celebration of the Kamban Literary Festival. The festival which is being held at the Cumberland Council Hall in Wentworthville is run by Kambana Kadharnam Australia, an organisation named after the legendary Tamil poet Kamban, known for his epic Kamban Ramaya. Founder and Chairman, Jeiram Jegathesan, along with President, Mrs Maitherejee Sivasubramaniam, and Vice President, Mr Sugalan Sabesan are dedicated to the development of the three components of Tamil—literature in prose and verse, music and drama. In Tamil this is known as Iyal Isai Naadakam.

Over 1,000 people have attended the two-day event for each of the past three years to celebrate one of the oldest spoken languages in the world. I hope to be 1,001. The choice of Wentworthville as the suburb hosting the event recognises the large Tamil community residing in the Parramatta area and their desire to engage the broader community through the arts. I am really looking forward to attending. I will not understand the Tamil language—so I am going to miss out severely on some extraordinary literature, poetry and drama from one of
the oldest languages—but I will appreciate and understand my Tamil community's love for their language and culture, and I look forward to it.

Manly Warringah Women's Resource Centre

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (13:30): This Friday, 21 October, the Manly Warringah Women's Resource Centre will celebrate their 40th anniversary at the Long Reef Golf Club in Collaroy. Providing crisis accommodation, counselling, court advocacy, family support and short-term housing, the Women's Resource Centre's mission is simple: to engender women, children and families to be safe, secure and connected and have the opportunity and environment to thrive and achieve their aspirations.

Last year, the number of reported domestic violence related assaults in Pittwater and Warringah was 271, not including unreported instances and sexual offences. One is too many; 271 is far too many women and children affected by domestic violence, let alone sexual assault. Founded in 1976, the Women's Resource Centre has been fighting to help these women and children rebuild their lives.

The people of Mackellar do not wait around for others to fix their problems; they pull up their bootstraps and they roll up their sleeves to create solutions. I am honoured to be representing the many passionate and dedicated individuals who continue to provide a safe haven for women and children in need in the Northern Beaches. Congratulations on your 40th anniversary and congratulations on opening the new Barbara Kilpatrick Wing. As your representative in federal parliament, I thank you for all the essential services you provide and the hard work you have been doing in helping others.

Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:31): It gives me great pleasure today to acknowledge and honour the work that is being carried out by the Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service and to thank David Noonan, the CEO, and his team, the board and chair, Craig Taylor, for the excellent work that they do. This service is largely funded from the Commonwealth Department of Health; employs 50 staff, of whom 25 are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and looks after between 3,500 and 4,000 clients each year. One-third of them come from my electorate in north-east Victoria. It provides a range of services: two full-time doctors and three registrars; dental services; nursing services, including a male nurse; social and emotional wellbeing; administration; and, really importantly, transport. When I visited the service on Friday, one of my favourite places was the Koori Men's Shed and the work that they are doing but also restoring pushbikes.

To the people who are responsible for maintaining the service, I say congratulations. It is a beautiful place to visit. It is superbly designed. The gardens are really restful, and you receive a warm welcome and experience that sense of open inclusive space. I acknowledge and thank the workers for their professional, creative and innovative way they care for the people in my electorate and all through southern New South Wales. Thank you for what you do.

Netball

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (13:33): Last week the Australian federal parliamentary netball team attempted to bring the Diggeress Cup to Canberra. Despite valiant efforts by my co-captains, the member for Lalor—here in the chamber—and Senator McKenzie, and
teammates, the member for Newcastle, Senators McAllister and Hanson-Young and myself, we lost to New Zealand's Parly Ferns, although we did beat the New South Wales parliamentary team. Thankfully our loss was not repeated by the Australian Diamonds, who played after our match and overcame the New Zealand Silver Ferns in spectacular fashion—68 goals to 56. They lost the second test but rebounded on Saturday to beat the Silver Ferns 62 to 50 and now lead the Constellation Cup two games to one.

Our parliamentary netball game did have a serious purpose; supporting and promoting Netball Australia's Confident Girls campaign. Confident Girls has supported over 10,000 young netballers who would otherwise be held back by disadvantage, lack of self-confidence or cultural differences. Much in the same spirit is the Australian government's Girls Make Your Move initiative led by our health minister. Sixty percent of Australian girls aged 15 to 17 undertake little to no exercise, in part because of the reasons I mentioned above. This is nearly double the rate for boys of the same age.

As I wrote in an opinion piece in February, netball deserves better support and recognition. My parliamentary colleagues and I will continue to do our part to lead by example, encourage better promotion and inspire girls to get involved in our national women's sport of netball.

Cub Scouts Centenary

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (13:35): I was very pleased on Saturday to attend the Chinderah 1st Scout Hall, where I had the great honour of cutting the cake celebrating 100 years of the Cub Scout movement. The Chinderah Cub Scouts celebrated with a weekend full of fun activities and camping at Chinderah Scouts grounds. More than 100 people attended, including Cub Scouts from across the North Coast region, Scout leaders and parents. It was also wonderful to catch up with my good friends and local Scout leaders, Owen and Bridget Kirk. I acknowledge their and their family's commitment to scouts over many years.

The Cub Scouts programs emphasise exciting and challenging activities for all those involved. Of course, 2016 marks the start of the 100th year of Cub Scouting. Since it was originally founded in 1916, generations of young people have embarked on an adventure filled with laughter, excitement and friendship. The Cub Scouts was established in response to the growing demand from youngsters who were not old enough to join Scouts but wanted to be involved. Cub Scouts is for those aged between eight and 11 years.

There are over 13 million Cub Scouts throughout the world, and they are all preparing to celebrate the centenary of Cub Scouts, such as those at Chinderah did on Saturday. A 100 Cub Scots centenary logo comprising a stylised wolf's paw print, including the World Scout Emblem, has been created to mark this very significant milestone. Congratulations to the Cubs for 100 years. I hope they all enjoy the celebrations both here and throughout the world.

Charles Sturt University: New Colombo Plan

Mr GEE (Calare) (13:36): I wish to draw the attention of the House to the fact that I recently attended the Bathurst campus of Charles Sturt University's new engineering faculty to hear about how CSU is benefitting from the Australian government's New Colombo Plan through the Engineers Without Borders program. The event highlighted CSU's successful and active participation in the New Colombo Plan, which is helping our country and regional students gain invaluable experience working across the Indo-Pacific region. I am delighted that Charles Sturt University has gained funding for approximately 135 students under the
2017 round, with up to 10 engineering students travelling to Cambodia to work in local communities and learn about community development, appropriate technologies and human-centred design.

I also really enjoyed checking out CSU’s new engineering headquarters and hearing about the Engineers Without Borders Challenge. As part of their first-year design-based course, all engineering students developed design solutions for the challenge. This year, the Engineers Without Borders Challenge partnered with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Zambia and a refugee settlement in western Zambia to develop ideas that provide cleaner drinking water and more effective sanitation for the community.

I must make special mention of Emerie Anonical, Georgia Sonter, Aldrex Condino and Andrew Day, who designed a reinforced pit latrine for the refugee camp, complete with handmade mini sandbags, which took many hours of work. It was a very impressive effort from very impressive students. (Time expired)

Nepean Hospital

Ms HUSAR (Lindsay) (13:38): I want to take this opportunity to read onto the record some of the stories I have been told regarding Nepean Hospital. My community's hospital has the longest emergency department waiting times in the state and the longest elective surgery waiting times, and both are getting worse. Too often I think these facts and figures are lost on policy and decision makers. The reality is that every failure of the health system has real and lasting effects on real people. These taxpayers deserve a properly funded health system but instead, in the case of the Western Sydney community that I represent, they are provided with a hospital that has too few beds, too few doctors and too few nurses to serve the 350,000-plus people that it is there to serve. That growing population is being left behind. It is not acceptable, and I call on the Prime Minister to reverse the cuts to health and hospitals and commit to the Nepean upgrade without delay.

I was recently told about a young woman who had the wherewithal to take herself to the emergency department during a mental health episode. She waited 18 hours in the emergency department, without food, before she saw a doctor. She remained in hospital for a considerable period of time afterwards, such was the severity of her mental health condition. There is a lady in her 70s who is forced to travel to Randwick or Royal North Shore Hospital every month for her disabled husband to take tests on his spine. If there was a bed available in Nepean, he could attend there. They are still doing the two-hour trip every day from Nepean to the North Shore. This is frustrating and I call on the government to change it immediately. (Time expired)

Padbury Catholic Primary School

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (13:39): Padbury Catholic Primary School in my electorate recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. I was pleased to attend a whole school mass with students and current parents, celebrated by clergy from the Whitford parish of Our Lady of the Mission, led by Father Joseph Tran. After the service, former principals spoke of how the first lessons were conducted off site, as the school buildings had not been completed on time for the school's opening in 1986. The once sandy site has since been transformed into a campus of school buildings, some of which have been funded by federal government grants.
In the evening, past students, staff, school community members and special guests gathered in the school hall to celebrate the special occasion with a sundowner. I had the pleasure of meeting several former students who have gone on to achieve excellence in their chosen careers. I take this opportunity to formally acknowledge in parliament the dedicated team of educators and support staff currently led by Principal Pina Hutcheson. The Padbury Catholic Primary School community is close knit and there is a strong element of pastoral care to support students as they develop their academic, sporting and social potential. I thank all of the staff for their contribution in educating and mentoring our young people.

Catherine McAuley Centre

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:41): I rise today to update the House on the great work being done by the Catherine McAuley subacute centre at the Mercy Hospital in Werribee. I stood in this chamber in June 2014 because cuts to the national partnerships funding delivered by this government put the operation of this centre under threat. The Gillard government built this centre. They committed $30 million in 2011 and the centre opened in February 2014.

I have been there on tours before but in this past week I had a personal reason to attend. My mother was admitted to the Catherine McAuley Centre. She asked me today to tell the House what a wonderful job this centre is doing, how wonderful the staff have been and the great care she is receiving. When we as family and community members interact personally with the services provided by government it gives us an acute insight into the importance of government services and the importance of us being in this place and, on this side of the chamber, standing up to ensure that those services receive the funding they need so our communities get the services that they need. The important work here limits the number of readmissions after discharge. They do excellent work. (Time expired)

Citizenship

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (13:42): I rise to reinforce the importance of the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) Bill 2015 brought into effect by the Turnbull government in December last year. This is sound policy from the Turnbull government and it is worth reminding the House why the amendment bill was passed in the first place. Since the rise of Islamic State in 2014, 110 Australians have left this country to join their ranks and participate in acts of barbarity against the Syrian and Iraqi people. This government responded to this disturbing trend by passing the foreign fighters bill in 2014, which strengthened Australia’s counterterror legislative framework. The bill amended 22 acts to adapt our legislation to this growing threat. The definition of ‘terrorism offence’ was amended to include treason—the act of betraying one’s country—in the Crimes Act 1914.

We have dual-national Australians who have pledged their allegiance to Islamic State and are levying war against our Commonwealth. That is high treason. If trampling human rights, if brutal executions, if persecuting religious minorities and if using women as sex slaves are not enough, these people have also betrayed Australia. That is why I support this legislation and its power to strip dual-national foreign fighters of their Australian citizenship. It is good policy but it is also the right thing to do.
Australian Red Cross

Mr KEOGH (Burt) (13:44): To keep up with demand for blood in Australia, the Red Cross estimates it needs a donation every 24 seconds—all day, every day, year round. I rise today to pay tribute to one of my constituents, who has taken it upon himself to fill as much of that shortfall in blood as one person possibly can. At the age of 34, Terry Healy, a City of Gosnells councillor and WA Labor’s candidate for the seat of Southern River for the 2017 state election, became the youngest Australian ever to join the ‘300 Club’—that is, the youngest person on record to have donated 300 litres of blood to the Australian Red Cross. To put that into context, the average human has around five litres of blood in their body. So Terry has given the equivalent of his entire body’s supply of blood 60 times over. Terry first donated as a 17-year-old and, to have reached 300 litres, would have donated more than 600 times during his life. But most important is the hundreds of lives that Terry will have saved through his generosity.

Provision of blood is essential to the work of our hospital system. One in three Australians will need blood in their lifetime, but only one in 30 donates. Put bluntly, we never have enough. So I call on everyone in this place and across Australia to be like Terry—donate whenever you can. You will be saving lives and, if you are young enough, you may even get to knock off Terry’s record.

Grey Electorate: National Stronger Regions Fund

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (13:45): I cannot tell you how pleased I was a couple of weeks ago to be able to inform the Peterborough community that they were the recipients of a National Stronger Regions Fund contribution of $8.6 million to install a new wastewater and recycling system within the town. It helps a little to understand the history of Peterborough. It was established in the 1880s as a service centre on the narrow-gauge railway line. In time, it became the junction of three different rail lines and a major service centre for steam trains. The population of the town peaked at close to 4,000 at one stage and, since the standardisation of the lines and the demise of the steam railways, it has shrunk to around 1,600 now.

Consequently, as with many inland centres—and, indeed, many centres—that face large population losses, a lot of cheap housing has come online, and that has meant, in effect, that a lot of the residents of Peterborough are just not able to upgrade the standard septic tank and soakage systems that service the town at the moment. I consider this to be a major health risk in the making, and so I have campaigned for some years for contribution to these works, which will also assist greatly the town’s—in fact, the world’s—biggest camel exporter, Samex, which is perched on the edge of the town.

Canberra Electorate: Tuggeranong Netball Association

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:47): Every Saturday during the season, 1,000 girls and young women and an increasing number of boys and young men, as well as countless volunteers, gather to play netball at the Tuggeranong Netball Association courts in Calwell. As the proud patron of the TNA, I rise today to note TNA’s success this year, which was made possible by the hard work of many both on and off the court. I acknowledge TNA’s executive, including President Jonathan Toze, whom I am pleased to say is in the gallery here today. Thanks, Jonathan, for being here, and thank you, Cathy, for joining him. I say thank you to
vice-presidents David Tronerud, Nicky Leatherby and Natalie Fraser, to Ashlee Tronerud, who is the secretary, to Maggie Tattersall, to Anna Antonakos, to Marty Simon and to the umpire delicate to Netball ACT, Natalie Simon. I say thank you to its life members, who have served for so long and have helped build TNA over more than 30 years: Sue Smith, Erica Lauchland, Peter Lauchland, Kate Durham, Helen Whitby, Rose Harker, Cheryl Gustowski, Vivian Pollock, Joanne Sparkes, Sean Roche, Lyn MacLay, Marg Argue, Debbie Dunster and Josie Conlon. Last month, I was honoured to present the inaugural patron award to Holly Hancox. Congratulations and thank you to TNA and the executive for everything you have done for our community. (Time expired)

**Capricornia Electorate: Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Deputy Nationals Whip) (13:48): I rise to pay tribute to the role that our local ABC plays in the lives of the Central Queensland community. ABC Capricornia recently celebrated its 85th birthday. In remote country Australia, the ABC is a vital link with the outside world and, importantly, the local region. I congratulate ABC Capricornia on its milestone and I wish the dedicated team of broadcasters, producers and reporters and their audience all the best. Some of the longest-serving members of the ABC team based in Rockhampton include Paul Robinson in the newsroom, presenter Jacquie Mackay and Editor-in-Chief Chrissy Arthur. One of the longest-running programs on local ABC radio is Tom Wyatt's gardening talkback, which is broadcast from Rockhampton across much of regional Queensland. The radio station, news reporters and online and TV news crews are based in the former Mount Morgan gold mine office in Rockhampton's historic Quay Street precinct.

In paying tribute to the organisation on its 85th birthday, I also acknowledge some of the sad times for the radio station. In 1983, four local ABC staff were killed in a light plane crash while on duty about 40 kilometres from Clermont. So I say: keep up the good work, ABC Capricornia.

**Scullin Electorate: Roads**

Mr GILES (Scullin) (13:50): Just like the Abbott government, the Turnbull government is shamefully failing the communities of Melbourne's north when it comes to providing decent infrastructure to enable people to lead decent lives.

Mr Rob Mitchell: Exactly right.

Mr GILES: I am so pleased that the Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation is in the chamber, because have we got a city deal for him, a city deal that is actually based on evidence— isn't that right, Member for McEwen?—based on an established business case and based on real need, not petty electoral considerations, as has been the case in the past. Over the two elections I have contested as the candidate, and now the member, for Scullin, the biggest issue has been the provision of infrastructure, including public transport and also critical roads infrastructure. I was so pleased to stand with the member for McEwen and the member for Grayndler, when he announced in the Scullin electorate Labor's Melbourne roads package, a package that would connect people in Melbourne's northern suburbs to jobs and opportunities.

Mr Taylor: Is the East West Link in there?
Mr GILES: I take the interjection. The East West Link did not have a lot to do with the northern suburbs, and it was rejected by the people of Victoria and will be rejected again. What the assistant minister at the table should do is encourage his colleagues Minister Fletcher and Minister Chester to come to Scullin and McEwen to look at the O’Herns Road site, look at the needs of the Melbourne market and look at the needs of growing communities around Epping, Epping North and Wollert. Support the business case, support local government, support state government and support a city deal with merit. Support a city deal that will transform people's lives and give them access to jobs and opportunities. (Time expired)

Petrie Electorate: School Chaplains

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (13:51): School chaplains play an important role in schools in my electorate and right across Australia. More fondly known as 'chappies', they help students find a way to deal with issues, and these can range from family breakdowns and loneliness to depression and drug abuse.

Two thousand two hundred Australian schools are supported by chaplains. Every week, these chaplains have more than 18,000 formal conversations with students, teachers and parents. Through the social, spiritual and emotional support that chappies provide, they help students improve their overall wellbeing and, ultimately, their educational outcomes.

I want to mention Bounty Boulevard State School in North Lakes and its chaplain, Christina Wolter. Christina, thank you for what you do. The school held a 'chappy fundraiser' last Friday. I was unable to attend but I hear it was very successful. I want to thank all the chappies in my electorate and, of course, the school communities that are working hard to help these chaplains and their important work.

I also want to thank SU Queensland and all of its past and present staff for the decades of contribution that they have made to students and schools throughout Queensland. In particular, I want to say to people in my electorate: get out and support them financially if they have fundraiser. Whilst there is some government fundraising that has been in place since well before 2007 under both governments, it is important to make sure it continues.

New South Wales: Hospitals

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (13:53): Australians have known for some time that they cannot trust the federal coalition government when it comes to Medicare and the healthcare system. But in New South Wales this month they are discovering that the New South Wales coalition are just as bad. On the eve of a state by-election, we have the New South Wales government rolling out plans to privatise hospitals in Shellharbour, Bowral, Maitland, Wyong and Goulburn. This is a revisitation of the failed plan to privatise the Port Macquarie Base Hospital—a plan which was such a disaster that the New South Wales government had to take it back over.

Before the last election, Minister Skinner promised that a re-elected Baird government would give the green light to major regional redevelopments of Shellharbour Hospital with 'S251 million in investment'. The parliamentary secretary for the Illawarra said that it was a dream comes true and that he could not be prouder. At no stage did they mention that their real plan was the privatisation of hospitals in regional Australia. I have to say that the
residents in the Illawarra are very sceptical about this plan, believing it will lead to increased waiting lists and reduced staffing.

Normally, when have a tough policy to deliver you stand there and defend it; but not the Baird government. They do not even have the courage to stand a candidate in the Wollongong by-election. Well, Paul Scully will fight for the Wollongong hospitals and he will fight for the Illawarra.

**Swan Electorate: Retirement Village**

Mr IRONS (Swan) (13:55): Today I want to update the House on a recent example of the community and relevant authorities and stakeholders working together for a positive outcome in my electorate of Swan.

The City of Belmont is in the process of negotiating the sale of land in Ascot to aged-care provider Craigcare for a retirement village. With about 10 per cent of the City of Belmont population over the age of 70, the retirement village is needed. And Ascot, right near the banks of the Swan River, provides the perfect location. As part of this negotiation, Craigcare submitted the plans for a 15-storey retirement village. However, the community held concerns about this height. After a special electors’ meeting attended by about 150 residents, the City of Belmont took all the community concerns into consideration.

As a result, at the City of Belmont council meeting earlier this month, the City of Belmont agreed to halt the sale of the piece of land in Ascot until the height was reduced to five storeys. The stakeholder from Craigcare has decided to reduce that to five storeys. It will shortly go to JDAP for approval.

I want to thank the very hard working City of Belmont MLA Glenys Godfrey and the City of Belmont for working with her alongside the community, and for ensuring this development goes ahead with the support of the local community.

**McEwen Electorate: Tennis Club Funding**

Mr ROB MITCHELL (McEwen) (13:56): I rise today to talk about the curious case of an election commitment that never was. The Bulla tennis club in the City of Hume has recently been contacted by the minister for regional development to confirm the government will meet its election commitment of $120,000 to upgrade its courts.

Don’t get me wrong: we always appreciate getting money from this government because the opportunities are few and far between. But there is a problem there: it was never an election commitment. They never made it; there is no record of it; there is no visit from a minister to announce it; there is no press release; there is no media story. No-one actually asked for the money in the first place. So what does this curious case say about this government’s fiscal management that they are meeting election commitments they never made! What other known cash splashes are happening out there in the community!

I have a suggestion for the government. The Riddells Creek Tennis Club has been lobbying for months—indeed, well before the election for an upgrade of its busy courts. That will cost $245,000. The minister for regional development should retrospectively commit funding to that, as well. I am sure the community of Riddells Creek would be happy to receive it after being ignored for the last 12 months by this Turnbull government.
Moorebank Logistics Park

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:57): I have long argued in this place that, with the Moorebank intermodal, and the idea of shuttling containers from Port Botany out to Moorebank on rail and distributing them from there is destined to become a white elephant. It is a classic case of a planning fallacy.

Finally, we see the market is starting to agree with me. Back in August, Aurizon, which owned one-third of that project, decided it was time to pull up stumps and abandon it. Last month, we had the private US equity firm Carlyle Group sell their $350 million worth of shares in Qube. Only a few weeks ago, we had the announcement that the Asia Australia Consortium, which has about 250,000 containers annually, has abandoned Qube. This project will not work. An Australian Financial Review analyst has said:
None of the potential customers I have talked to have indicated they are going to be moving quickly to Moorebank.
The writing is on the wall. This reminds me of the case of the emperor's new clothes—everyone says it is fantastic, but the reality is starting to hit. It is time for both the government and the private sector to— *(Time expired)*

Northern Territory: Veterans

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (13:59): I do not have much time, so I just want to make a quick point. Yesterday, I attended a veterans barbecue in Darwin out in the rural area. It was great to speak with a number of veterans from the Vietnam war through to more recent conflicts.

One thing that they all stressed to me was that they were very keen to see the situation where the Northern Territory is not represented by a deputy commissioner rectified by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs at the first possible opportunity. Why should a veteran living in the Northern Territory, someone who has served this country, not have the same representation as someone in Melbourne, Sydney or Brisbane? Our veterans deserve to be represented here in Canberra, and I hope that that can be rectified by the minister at the earliest possible opportunity.

The SPEAKER: It being 2 pm, the time for members' statements has concluded.

CONDOLENCES

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:00): I move:

That the House record its deep regret at the death on 13th October of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand and offer its profound sympathy to the entire royal family and the people of Thailand.

For the people of Thailand, and indeed the thousands of Australians of Thai heritage, this is a time of intense sadness. It is a day they knew must come but in their hearts they hoped never would. To our Thai friends: we understand your deep sorrow, and I acknowledge the presence here with us today of Thailand's Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Chirachai Pankrasin.

His Majesty Rama IX, the ninth monarch of the Chakri dynasty, was crowned on 5 May 1950. Honourable members may reflect on the extraordinary changes in our world across
those seven decades, perhaps most spectacularly the economic transformation of Asia. Through it all, His Majesty was instrumental in ensuring Thailand became the successful and prosperous country it is today, providing a calm and steadying leadership despite the challenges and difficulties of political upheaval and momentous social and economic change. Through it all, His Majesty maintained with his people that strong sense of national pride and identity.

His Majesty continued the work of his illustrious forefathers to introduce modern ideals to Thailand. He was passionate about science and what it could do to boost the living standards of his people and to grow the Thai economy. He was rewarded by the United Nations Development Program with the first ever Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award.

His Majesty was also a friend of Australia, and we sincerely value the deep relationship between our countries, which His Majesty helped foster. In 1962, King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit visited Australia for 18 days. The Canberra Times reported that 5,000 people went to the airport to welcome their majesties, and 7,000 more lined the route from the airport to Government House. There were already, of course, many Thai students in Canberra under the Colombo Plan. At the welcome ceremony, the RAAF band played works composed by the King himself—a keen musician and jazz aficionado. After the visit, His Majesty wrote to the government, saying that he and the Queen found heartwarming the goodwill and friendship of the Australian people.

That goodwill continues to this day. The royal visit inspired the formation of the first Australia-Thailand associations in Sydney and Melbourne. Our trade, historical, academic and people-to-people links are extensive. Of course, Thailand continues to be a beautiful and welcoming destination for Australian travellers. But we must not forget how we shared with the people of Thailand the tragic impact of the 2004 tsunami. Twenty-three Australians in Thailand lost their lives in that disaster; so too did a member of the Thai royal family, and of course many other citizens of Thailand and other countries. Together we grieved that shattering loss of family and friends.

Another of the most powerful spiritual connections between our countries is the memory of Hellfire Pass and the more than 2,700 Australians who died as prisoners of war in the construction of the Thai-Burma Railway. One of the greatest of our war heroes, Edward 'Weary' Dunlop, returned to Thailand regularly, and, after his death in 1993, some of his remains were consecrated in a Buddhist ceremony on the River Kwai. His Majesty marked his great respect for Weary Dunlop only weeks before his death, when bestowing on him the Knight Grand Cross (1st Class) of the Most Noble Order of the Royal Crown of Thailand, Thailand's most exalted order.

At this time of national mourning, I extend to the Thai royal family and the people of Thailand the condolences of the Australian government and the profound sympathy of the Australian people.

**Mr SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): Labor joins the government in offering Australia's condolences to the people of Thailand on the death of their beloved king—for so many, the only monarch that their lives have known. For 70 years, the King of Thailand bore on his shoulders the hopes of his people, their affections and 800 years of tradition. He was a unifying force in moments of division, a calming influence in times of tension, a voice of compassion in an era of change.
At the age of 23, when the young king was returning from his studies in Switzerland to take the throne, a military coup stripped the monarchy of its constitutional powers—an inauspicious start but, as some have speculated, a blessing in disguise. Moving the crown above politics, it set the pattern for the next seven decades: different groups of citizens swearing different loyalties to a rapidly shifting political order, but the King commanding, enduring, with universal respect.

Yet there was more to this man than the stern visage in the portraits which hang in almost every shop in Thailand. Denis Gray from Associated Press, one of the few journalists to ever interview the King, penned an obituary which spoke to the qualities and the paradoxes of the man:

There was the king’s rigid adherence to tradition and his modern informality, the severe demeanor and ready humor, his simple lifestyle and his reported status as the world’s richest royal …

In Bangkok, surrounded by marble and silk, in golden robes or a uniform bedecked with medals, the King embodied the ritualised, impassive formalities of his ancient court. But he could also play jazz on the radio and lend his sponsorship to charity. In the hills up-country, in army boots and open-necked shirt, he would enthuse with locals about dams and irrigation, soil quality, crops and fertilisers. In Bangkok, courtiers would, as is custom, come seeking an audience on their hands and knees, but in the villages the King would sit in the dirt with the locals, poring over maps. This Thailand—a place of farmers and forests, of simple huts and small villages, people tending their crops and caring for one another—was the country that the King idealised. Yet in his reign so much of this gave way to industrialisation, to urbanisation, to a new generation of entrepreneurs capitalising on surging tourism. But, for all this change, the respect, the affection and the regard in which the King was held by his people never dimmed.

This is a solemn time for the people of Thailand as they mourn a loss they have long feared. I would urge Australians who are in Thailand or headed there soon to be mindful of the national mood and to pay all due respect to the dignity and the solemnity of the occasion. We salute the King of Thailand’s long life. We offer our sympathies to his family and to his people. May he rest in peace.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The Speaker (14:07): I welcome to the distinguished visitors gallery the Thai Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Chirachai Punkrasin. Welcome to the floor of the House.

CONDOLENCES

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House record its deep regret at the death on 13th October of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and offer its profound sympathies to the Thai Royal Family and the people of Thailand.

Question agreed to, honourable members standing in their places.
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Medicare

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is to the Prime Minister. On the day before the election, the Prime Minister was asked by Sam Armytage on *Sunrise*:

You have however committed to a freeze on the GP rebate. Can you guarantee our viewers will pay - will not pay more to see the doctor due to this freeze?

The Prime Minister responded:

Sam absolutely …

Does the Prime Minister stand by his absolute guarantee that Australians will not pay more to see the doctor as a result of his freeze?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:09): I thank the honourable member for his question and the opportunity to remind honourable members that we are delivering increases in Medicare funding every year and we are seeing record levels of GP bulk-billing, meaning most Australians are not paying to see the GP or for the tests they need. We are driving the costs of medicines down through our price disclosure policy in the *Sixth community pharmacy agreement*. In our first three years, we listed nearly 1,000 new medicines—three times as many as those opposite in their last three years in government.

Earlier today I was fortunate to speak to Kathy Gardiner. Kathy Gardiner started battling melanoma at the age of 25. She lives in Brisbane. Three days before her 33rd birthday she was given the devastating news that her melanoma had progressed to a terminal stage of advanced metastatic melanoma, a disease which claims 1,500 Australian lives every year. In 2014, there was a groundbreaking immunotherapy treatment for advanced melanoma, now known as Keytruda, to which she was granted early compassionate access. She was a strong advocate for the listing of the drug on the PBS so that all people with advanced melanoma could access it, which at the time was costing $150,000 per treatment. Keytruda was listed by our government on the PBS in September 2015, and—thanks to our prudent management of the public finances of this country and our prudent management of our health spending—it can be accessed at a cost of $6.20 for concessional patients or $38.30 for general patients.

Kathy told me that from October 2015 and right now she has a 'no evidence of disease' result. Nearly a year has elapsed since then, so she is filled with hope. She continues to fight the prognosis and she takes every day as it comes. But she said to me that this drug provided her with a quality of life with minimal side effects—something that many drugs are unable to provide a patient, particularly for advanced stage cancer.

Now when we are chastised by the opposition for our management of the health budget, I would ask them to think of Kathy Gardiner and her quality of life and her recovery, because it was our management of health that made it possible. *(Time expired)*

Mr Shorten: I seek to table the absolute guarantee the Prime Minister gave before the election, which he will not do now.

Leave not granted.
Workplace Relations

Ms BANKS (Chisholm) (14:13): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister advise the House of action being taken by the government to make union officials more accountable to their rank and file members and to clean up Australia's building and construction industry? How will this improve the productivity of worksites across Australia?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:13): I thank the honourable member for this very important question. This parliament will soon be asked to pass once again legislation to improve the accountability and transparency of unions and employer organisations and to re-establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission. These are vital economic reforms. They are an important, critical part of our economic plan. They will improve transparency and boost the productivity of construction sites across Australia. They will improve the availability of affordable housing. They will ensure that the roads and the hospitals and the bridges we build are built at less cost to the taxpayer, rather than having the cost inflated by 30 per cent or more because of the outrageous and unlawful industrial malpractices of the CFMEU.

We have seen example after example of the bullying and standover tactics, of the thuggery and lawlessness, of militant unions. Their contempt for the law, their lack of concern for the workers they claim to represent, has impacted thousands of construction workers right across the country. Right now there are 113 officials—from one union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, before the courts for more than 1,100 suspected, alleged, contraventions of law. As numerous judges have observed, the CFMEU and its fellow militant unions treat these penalties like parking tickets. They treat them as a cost of doing business. It is a cost of their breaking the law; it is a cost they ignore because their level of intimidation over the construction sector is imposing a lawless tax on every Australian.

One million Australians, 300,000 small businesses, work in our building and construction sector. They deserve to work in a sector governed by the rule of law. Right now they do not. Master Builders Australia have estimated, as you know, Mr Speaker, that costs are 30 per cent higher due to the working days lost in industrial action. This is a mess the Leader of the Opposition himself created in 2012 when he abolished the ABCC, and he did so because he had to do the CFMEU's bidding. He is as controlled by the CFMEU as the Victorian Premier is controlled by the firefighters union. (Time expired)

Medicare

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (14:17): My question is to the Prime Minister. On the day before the election, the Prime Minister gave an absolute guarantee that nobody would pay more to see the doctor because of his six-year Medicare rebate freeze. So why has Brighton Doctors Surgery in my electorate told patients it must increase its fees for seeing a doctor? Given the former Prime Minister had a GP tax, isn't this just more evidence that the Prime Minister is carrying around the member for Warringah's policy baggage?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Sport and Minister for Health and Aged Care) (14:17): I am trying to understand the rather confused end to the member for Lyons' question but I think what he is trying to say is that Labor can manage the health system—

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin!
Ms LEY: better than the coalition can manage the health system.

Dr Chalmers: Get to the point you don't understand!

Ms LEY: That is absolute nonsense, because you know the dirty little secret—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin is warned!

Ms LEY: behind the Leader of the Opposition's dirty lie on 'Mediscare' is this: Labor has no health policy; otherwise we would not have seen the Leader of the Opposition hiding behind the robocalls of his union mates, ringing people late at night. That was because there was nothing positive to say. There was no agenda.

Actually, there might have been something! There was another great new health bureaucracy that the member for Ballarat announced. The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection had to get rid of three huge Labor health bureaucracies when he took on the portfolio. Another one surfaced, but do you know what the purpose of this new health bureaucracy was? It was to tell the Labor Party what to do, because there was no policy; there is no policy. There is no understanding that one part of the health system carefully intersects with another part and overall the total management produces the outcomes that the Prime Minister spoke of: new medicines, new listings, and the ability of a government to put patients at the centre of health care in Australia—something the Labor Party could not do.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

Ms LEY: In fact, the member for Sydney interjects, reflecting on her magnificent stewardship of the Australian health system. Do you know what she said? She said: 'Everything I did I paid for. And you know how I paid for it? I targeted private health insurance.' Wonderful, isn't it: 'Everything I did I paid for by targeting private health insurance!' It illustrates a fundamental misunderstanding by Labor that if you do not have a strong private system you do not have a strong public system. It indicates a complete misunderstanding by Labor—a previous health minister who could not pay for the medicines that the Prime Minister talked about and made no apology.

In the absence of their health policy during the election, we have had to go back and look at Labor's record in government. We have no policy, so let's judge them by what they did. What they did was cut $6 billion from Medicare and medicines. What they did was cut $1.4 billion from pathology and diagnostic imaging. What they did was break an imaginary $57 billion promise on hospitals. What they did was wage war on future cures for diseases by trying to take $400 million out of medical research. Judge them by what they did and what they say. Their 'Mediscare' lies have been revealed.

Building and Construction Industry

Mr EVANS (Brisbane) (14:20): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer advise the House on the importance of an efficient construction sector to Australia's transitioning economy? How is the government supporting the construction sector, especially the small and medium-sized businesses struggling against the corruption and lawlessness on Australia's building sites?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:20): I thank the member for Brisbane for his question on this incredibly important topic about productivity in the building and construction industry. The CFMEU's grip on the building and construction industry in this country is
crushing productivity and increasing the cost to the Australian taxpayer of important building works and infrastructure works all around the country.

As the Prime Minister just reminded House, there are over 100 CFMEU officials before the courts, and one of those who are before the courts at the moment is Mr Mick Myles. Mr Mick Myles is in court on a matter the member for Brisbane would know about, because it relates to an issue and an occurrence in his own electorate. Mr Myles attended the RNA K1 Commercial Tower project on 21 January 2015 and met with the site management. During the meeting Mr Myles said the head contractor had engaged a tiling company that did not have an approved EBA. It turns out that the tiling company, as the contractor told the union official, had a current and valid enterprise agreement.

In the response that was brought back from Mr Myles, he made threatening remarks to the effect of 'What will it cost you if the job is shut down?' He also referred to an industrial action some two months before at the Queensland children's hospital site. Not even the Queensland children's hospital is immune from the productivity-crushing activities of the CFMEU. Mr Myles went down there in January of last year and spoke to the employees, and what do you know? They all left the site. When approached by the site manager, Mr Myles told him, 'They've left the site because of the tilers. We're not happy with the tilers.' So they shut the site down, and as a result of this industrial action a concrete pour that had been scheduled to take place that day had to be cancelled.

If you want to improve productivity in the building and construction industry, if you want to ensure the effectiveness of taxpayers' dollars in building important infrastructure, whether it be hospitals, schools, roads, bridges or ports—whatever it may be—you must free the building and construction industry of the vice-like grip of the CFMEU, aided and abetted by those opposite, who refuse to support the reintroduction of the ABCC. This is an important economic reform that will drive productivity, that will support wages growth and that will support increases in the profits of small businesses so they can grow and expand. The only thing those opposite want to grow and expand is the influence of the CFMEU. (Time expired)

Welfare Reform

Ms BURNEY (Barton) (14:24): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, yesterday ACOSS released its poverty report, revealing that around 730,000 Australian children are living in poverty. Prime Minister, how does cutting family payments to struggling families with vulnerable children by up to $3,000 a year help combat child poverty in Australia? Why is the Prime Minister continuing to carry around the former Prime Minister's policy baggage by persisting with these cruel cuts? (Time expired)

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:24): I thank the honourable member for her question. As I have said in this House many times before, the government is focused on ensuring Australia remains a high-wage First World economy with a generous social welfare safety net. Fairness is an absolutely critical element of our national economic plan. Many people speak about inequality. Let me say this: the greatest inequality starts with joblessness. Unemployment is the principal driver of poverty.

We on our side of the House are committed to ensuring that our tax and transfer systems support those most in need. The honourable member has sitting next to her, on her right, the shadow Assistant Treasurer, who published extensively in the days when he did not have to
run off the talking points written in the Leader of the Opposition's office. He talked about how well Australia's benefits system was means tested and how it therefore delivered much less inequality in household income than exists in comparable developed economies such as the United States. So a targeted social welfare system, coupled with strong economic growth, is absolutely critical. So our commitment is we target the taxpayer support to those who need it most. We encourage those who can work to work and use their own means to support themselves where possible.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: I am glad the honourable member for Jagajaga has chosen this moment to interject, because she reminds me that she herself said, memorably, when she was the minister responsible for social services:

The best way to keep people out of poverty is to keep them in jobs.

So what we are doing is driving strong economic growth.

Executive Remuneration

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (14:27): A question to the Treasurer: what Australian companies pay their CEOs, most of whom are from overseas, is illustrated by, for example, the Commonwealth Bank's CEO receiving $12.3 million, the Qantas CEO $12.96 million, the Westpac CEO $9.6 million, the Caltex CEO $13.4 million and the Macquarie Bank CEO $16.3 million. Will the Treasurer introduce a CEO salary and average employee wages transparency register, as touted by the British Prime Minister? And will his government consider tax rates in line with those of other countries, particularly European countries, where the issue of the huge and ever-widening disparity in income for the powerful is addressed by a graduated tax rate? (Time expired)

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:28): I thank the member for his question. When we see the figures of these salaries, whether they be of corporate CEOs or others, I am sure many people reflect on their own circumstances and they are very anxious about it. I think they ask many questions about it. Particularly in recent times people would be anxious about it because of what we have seen with real wages growth being very modest. What is important is that we do things in this country that ensure that we can grow real wages and we can support companies to increase what they are earning so they can pay their employees more. This government is focused on a national economic plan that is designed to boost investment in our economy to support small businesses in particular but businesses more generally so they can invest back into their businesses and grow the real wages of Australians. That is what we are doing to support the growth of real wages in this country, which is ultimately I think the key point the member is most interested in.

In terms of those in senior corporate positions and what they are paid, they are matters for their boards. Those CEOs are accountable to their boards and those boards are accountable to their shareholders. In particular, in major companies—whether they be banks or large retail companies or whatever company it is—they have an accountability also to their customer base and the social contract they have in the economy in which they exist, and it is important for those companies to get that balance right or, indeed, face the questioning and face the reactions of the Australian public.
But these are matters for those boards to determine. This is a free enterprise country. For over 200 years, this country has prospered through the investment of companies in this country. That has seen jobs created, infrastructure built and profits gained and, as a result, the overall majority of Australians being able to benefit. That disparity is as you say it is. But it is up to those companies to get the balance right, in terms of how they set those arrangements with their shareholders and their overall accountability to the Australian public for the social licence that they have to operate in Australia.

Infrastructure: Water

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Deputy Nationals Whip) (14:30): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources. Will the Deputy Prime Minister advise the House what steps the government has taken to deliver critical water infrastructure across Australia? Is the minister aware of any threats to construction of water infrastructure, particularly in my electorate of Capricornia?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:31): I thank the honourable member for her question. I understand the frustration she must feel with the Labor Party’s inertia, incompetence and excuses in anything to do with water infrastructure. Every day we are working harder to make sure we deliver on water infrastructure.

Just this morning I and the Minister for Water from Western Australia, Minister Mia Davies, signed off a further $6.3 million funding for seven feasibility studies across the state of Western Australia. We talked about projects such as the Myalup-Wellington infrastructure and water-use improvement project which, when constructed, will provide a further 9,000 hectares of irrigation and create 1,500 jobs. We talked about the Southern Forests project, which would involve the construction of a 15 gigalitre dam and create a further 225 jobs. We discussed also the expansion of the Ord River, which would double the capacity of water, taking irrigation and jobs all the way from Western Australia back into the Northern Territory.

What we have also done is to make sure that we continue to work and strive for the further development of Queensland. However, we are getting no support from Queensland. Even though we put $19.8 million on the table for 14 feasibility studies, not one of these have been started. And even though we put $130 million on the table for Rookwood Weir, we have had neither sight nor sound of the Queensland Government wishing to start this. Just to show you the inertia we are up against, the former Premier of Queensland, Premier Peter Beattie, announced in 2006 that Rookwood Weir would be completed by 2011. He even announced the funding to accelerate its construction. In 2006, Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk was also elected, and so she was elected on the promise to build a dam which she still has not even started. Ten years later and the ironically-named body Building Queensland have said they will have to wait for another year before they get the business case done. This is ridiculous inertia—hopeless incompetence! It absolutely epitomises the Labor Party, whether it is their inability to keep the lights on in South Australia or to build a dam in Queensland.

However, there was one dam they built: they built Cotter Dam in the ACT. It started off at a contract price of $120 million. But that is when the CFMEU got involved. By the time they had finished, it cost $409 million. In fact, in 2012, the CFMEU blockaded the site. This is the same CFMEU which donated more than $2.3 million over five years—$2.14 million to the
Labor Party. And everybody asks, 'Where did the rest of the money go?' Well, to their
coalition colleagues, the Greens! And what did we get for that? What we got for that was 112
CFMEU representatives before the courts, and 1,129 breaches of the law, and an absolute
train-wreck— (Time expired)

Disability Support Pension

Mr HILL (Bruce) (14:34): My question is to the Prime Minister. Andrew Johnson from
my electorate has profound autism, bipolar disorder, attention deficit disorder and epilepsy.
He cannot speak and needs a stomach tube to help him eat. Yet Andrew's mother was asked
by Centrelink to prove Andrew's eligibility for the Disability Support Pension, despite him
being eligible for many years. Why is the Prime Minister continuing the cruelty of the Abbott
government, instead of ensuring that people with disability, like Andrew, who have no
capacity to work, will continue to receive the Disability Support Pension?

Ms Burney interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Barton will cease interjecting. The Prime Minister has
the call.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:34): Paring out the political rhetoric
from the honourable member's question, his constituent faces, clearly, a large number of very
serious conditions, and his mother clearly has an enormous challenge in caring for him, and
we care for her. We care for her. That is why we are rolling out the NDIS across the country.

The matter that he raises is an important one, because I can say that, just as fairness is an
absolutely critical, essential element in our economic plan, so too is compassionate love a key
part—the key part—of everything we do in terms of caring for those people who are ill or are
disabled. I will ask the minister who has the carriage of this portfolio to expand on this answer
to your question.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (14:35): I thank the member for his
question. I am certainly very happy to get any particular individual details with respect to the
person who is the subject matter of your question.

Ms Husar interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lindsay will cease interjecting.

Mr PORTER: It is absolutely the case—indeed, it was a process that was started when
you were in government—that the assessibility matrix of levels of disability around the
Disability Support Pension changed, and, further, under our side of government, there have
been more stringent application processes, including consideration of new applications by a
Commonwealth appointed government doctor, and looking at all those people in the system
under 35 to ensure that those people in the Disability Support Pension system who have a
capacity to work—although that might be a modest or limited capacity—are properly assessed
for that.

You make the point, based on the information that you have provided here, that this
person—

Ms Husar interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lindsay is warned.
Mr PORTER: seems to not fit inside those changes, and of course I will have a very good look at that. But I might just add, for the benefit of the House, that the reason that these changes were undertaken—and indeed it was a process, with the nature of the assessments and the disability tables, that was started by members opposite, under your own government—was that on 30 June 2014 the DSP population, which had been growing very steadily at around 7.6 per cent each year, had reached 830,000 individuals. When you take out children and other non-working-age people in the Australian population, that represents a rate of one in 20 working-age Australians being on the disability support pension. That is why more stringent processes were put in place. But I would be very pleased to look at this particular individual case to see where that fits into these processes.

Building and Construction Industry

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (14:37): My question is to the Minister For Defence Industry, representing the Minister for Employment. Will the minister outline to the House the government's commitment to ensuring that employer and employee organisations always act in the best interests of their members? What hurdles exist to improved productivity in the building and construction industry?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (14:38): I thank the member for McMillan for his question. I would point out to the member for Macmillan that, the last time the Australian Building and Construction Commission existed in Australia, building and construction productivity increased by 16.8 per cent and consumers were saved $7½ million in needless expenses that would have occurred without the ABCC being in place. A tough cop on the industrial beat creates jobs, boosts growth, improves productivity, saves the economy needless expense and protects workers and employees alike. So it is passing strange that the Leader of the Opposition is so opposed to the Australian Building and Construction Commission and the Registered Organisations Commission being reintroduced by this government.

Much attention has revolved around the $2.3 million worth of donations the CFMEU has provided the Labor Party in the last five years. And remember that that does not even include the last federal election period—it is until the end of the financial year last year, not this year—so goodness knows how much more that has increased in that period. But the CFMEU of course is not the only union that has a controlling stake in the Australian Labor Party. The Australian Workers Union has been a big donor to the Labor Party. In the 2007 election the AWU donated $63,000 to the Leader of the Opposition's own campaign in Maribyrnong. It does not seem as vast as $2.3 million but everyone in the House knows that a donation of $63,000 to your campaign is a big donation. It is not something you would simply forget: it is not $630; it is not $63 in raffle tickets; it is $63,000 in the Maribyrnong Labor Party campaign. This is a safe Labor seat. It is not as though the Victorian Liberal Party would have been pouring resources into Maribyrnong to try and win that seat. The truth is it is a safe Labor seat. And yet the AWU gave the Leader of the Opposition $63,000. Worse than that, he forgot about it. He hid that amount of money not just for the next financial year—it was not an inadvertent error—but for eight years. And the only time it became public knowledge was when he had to appear in the royal commission—he declared it two days before. If he votes for the ABCC and the ROC he can expunge this failure. Otherwise, he is just a union cat's paw. (Time expired)
**Donations to Political Parties**

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:41): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to reports that the Prime Minister donated $2 million to the Liberal Party during the election. Given that the deadline for lodging AEC returns has now passed, what donations has the Prime Minister disclosed to the AEC?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:41): The honourable member is very familiar with the rules and regulations relating to electoral donations, and all will become clear when donations are revealed in accordance with the act.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has concluded his answer. The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.

Mr Burke: Mr Speaker, under Practice, ministers are expected to answer questions on the day that they are asked—not to take a question like that, which he knows the answer to and refuses to tell the parliament.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. He has no point of order and he knows it.

**Building and Construction Industry**

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:42): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister please update the House on action the government is taking to make our community safer, particularly in relation to members of criminal gangs? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:42): They are still interjecting. Why don't you ask the Prime Minister about the millions he has donated to medical research and charitable organisations? Is it not palatable for all the union hacks over there to hear a little bit of home truth? I am going to deliver you a little bit now.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr DUTTON: They can protest all they want. The CFMEU own and operate this Labor opposition, there is no question about that. One of the great achievements of this government has been to cancel the visas of criminals in this country—people who have perpetrated crimes on Australian citizens. We have cancelled the visas of over 100 outlaw motorcycle gang members, many of them with links to—guess which organisation? The CFMEU. People have written to me and said 'Minister, thank you for cancelling the visa of that bikie who broke the arm of my employee' or 'Thank you for cancelling the visa of that bikie who perpetrated this crime against my family'. Most people are pretty happy with the fact that we are deporting criminals. But there is one person in this parliament who is not happy with bikies with CFMEU links been deported—and that is this fellow here, the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition leads a party that has received millions and millions and millions of dollars from CFMEU officials. This Leader of the Opposition stands up for union bosses at every opportunity. He is not worried about workers. He is here and he has not let the union bosses down one day. Every day he comes to work, he dedicates and re-dedicates himself to the cause of standing up for union bosses.

We have taken a decision—
Ms Husar interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lindsay has been warned.

Mr DUTTON: to make the Australian society a safer place. We have taken a decision, through the ABCC legislation, to clean up building sites, because we know that if the CFMEU stop concrete pours and put their own preferred subcontractors—I was going to say 'criminal' subcontractors. Some of them are, because they are charging an inflated price—that results in a higher price when people, in particular, first home buyers, come to buy those units from the developers, because they transfer that money to the preferred workers on that site.

Now, why is this a problem that continues? It continues because there is a protection racket being operated by those opposite. Bikies are on worksites, on building sites around the country now, and they could be pulled off if this Leader of the Opposition had any leadership capacity whatsoever. But day after day after day this Leader of the Opposition demonstrates that he is here for the union— (Time expired)

Mr Rob Mitchell interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McEwen is now warned.

Donations to Political Parties

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:45): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's answer just now and ask again: can the Prime Minister advise the House whether he donated $2 million or more than two $2 million to the Liberal Party during the election? The Prime Minister knows the answer. Why won't he tell us?

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left! The Leader of the House on a point of order.

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, this question is a complete red herring. The truth is: it does not relate to the Prime Minister's responsibilities as Prime Minister. It does not come within his responsibilities, and therefore he cannot be asked about it.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr Brendan O'Connor interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler and the member for Gorton will cease interjecting. I can barely hear the Leader of the House. The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order?

Mr Burke: Thank you, Mr Speaker, to the point of order: this question refers to a previous answer given within this parliament by the Prime Minister. It then asks, within that answer, why the Prime Minister is unwilling to provide the information to the parliament. That is a completely legitimate question to ask.

Mr Pyne interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will cease interjecting.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—
Mr Pyne interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will seek interjecting, as will the Leader of the House. I presume the Leader of the House wants me to rule on the point of order. The Leader of the House makes a reasonable point. I considered ruling out the first question on this matter. I did because it does not go directly to the Prime Minister’s responsibilities and it was very lineball. I did allow it, and the Prime Minister answered the question. This question, however, refers to that previous answer. It covers much of the same territory, and, for that reason, I will allow it.

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:47): Mr Speaker, I have been scrupulous in disclosures of donations, receipts of donations under the Electoral Act, and the—

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga is warned.

Mr TURNBULL: I do not wish to make a big point of it, but the honourable member opposite, of course, overlooked a donation for eight years. What the honourable member is asking me to do is make a disclosure in advance of it being disclosed under the act. Any disclosures that I make are made in accordance with the law and to the Electoral Commission and are then disclosed by the AEC at the normal time. I comply scrupulously with the law, and the honourable member would be well-advised to look to his own party to ensure that they do so too.

Joint Police Taskforce into Industrial Criminality and Corruption

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (14:49): My question is to the Minister for Justice and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism. Will the minister update the House on the efforts of the Joint Police Taskforce into Industrial Criminality and Corruption. How is the task force tackling corrupt practices in the union movement?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter-Terrorism) (14:49): I thank the member for that question and the interest that he takes in these issues. Late last year the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption found that criminality is rife amongst union officials and the trade union movement. Commissioner Heydon stated:

… a lot of the criminal conduct for which unions and union officials are responsible arises … out of a culture of defiance of all laws—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith is warned.

Mr KEENAN: Allegations heard by the royal commission included bribery, extortion, kickbacks, blackmail, intimidation and collusion with organised criminals in the construction industry. This behaviour has either been ignored or allowed to flourish in a culture of fear, intimidation and coercion.

We on this side of the House are not going to tolerate lawlessness in any section of the Australian economy. That is why we established specialised joint police task forces—Federal Police working alongside their state police counterparts—to investigate and expose potential illegal activity uncovered during the royal commission. This has so far led to 93 referrals
against nine unions. This has led to a significant number of investigations, arrests and charges. As an election commitment in the lead up to the last election, we have allocated another $21 million to uncover union malfeasance.

Now, we need look no further than the extraordinary criminal record of one of the country's most powerful and disgraced unionists—John Setka, Victoria's state secretary of the CFMEU. He has either been charged or convicted in relation to 40 separate charges, and the latest on this long rap sheet includes blackmail. Yet, of course, the Labor Party are completely silent on the wrongdoing of the CFMEU—the bikies of the union movement. They are completely silent because they are in receipt of over $2.1 million of political donations, specifically from the CFMEU.

Just late last month police charged Kathy Jackson, the former head of the Health Services Union, with 70 counts of theft and deception in relation to offences. These offences totalled over half a million dollars. This is a great example of the work that the police have been doing.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left!

Mr KEENAN: Interestingly, Kathy Jackson, the former Secretary of the Health Services Union is from the same union as Labor's new senator-in-waiting, Kimberley Kitching; she is also from the HSU. She has not come in with Kathy Jackson, but the fact is that the royal commission referred her on four charges—(Time expired)

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:52): My question is to the Prime Minister. In newspaper reports today the member for Warringah says that the existing protections against racist hate speech under section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act are, I quote, 'getting completely out of hand'. Does the Prime Minister agree with the views of his predecessor? Do these views reflect government policy?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:53): The honourable member for Warringah is, like all honourable members, free to express his views on the issues of the day. But as we recall when the honourable member was the Prime Minister, my distinguished predecessor, the decision was taken by the government not to proceed with changes to section 18C. That decision has not been reviewed or altered.

Financial Services

Mr PASIN (Barker) (14:53): My question is to the Minister for Revenue and Financial Services. Will the minister update the House on how the government is raising professional standards for financial advisers? How will this action benefit Australian consumers?

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley is warned! The minister has the call.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins—Minister for Revenue and Financial Services) (14:54): I thank the member for Barker for his question. He is somebody who has advocated very passionately to lift professional standards for financial advisers because he knows that Australians rely on expert financial advice to secure their financial future.
Today I announce that the Turnbull government will introduce legislation into the parliament to mandate professional standards for financial advisers. We know that it has taken the accountants hundreds of years to have high professional standards; we know that the same has occurred with lawyers; but we need to turbo charge high professional standards for financial advisers. Our reforms will include high compulsory education requirements for both new and existing financial advisers, supervision for new advisers, a code of ethics for the industry, an exam that will represent a common benchmark right across the industry to weed out those people who are not professionally competent and an ongoing professional development component that will mean that people need to continue to upgrade their skills.

The government will also establish an independent standards body to govern the professional standing of the financial advice industry. It will be responsible for developing and for setting the exam for developing the code of ethics and for determining the education requirements for both new and existing advisers. Our independent standard setting body will raise the minimum standards for financial advisers in the sector and it will ensure that the public can have confidence in financial advisers. Just to give one example, the current educational requirements for financial advisers is AQF5. That means that they need to have a diploma-equivalent skill. It is possible to do this in less than four days. We are saying it is important for financial advisers to have a degree or a degree-equivalent qualification.

But raising financial standards for financial advisers is only one aspect of what the government is actually doing to ensure that consumers can have confidence in the financial system. As those here know, it was important when we came into government that we conducted a root and branch review of the financial system through the Financial System Inquiry. Those opposite said it was not necessary and they did not support it. In fact, that was the case, despite the fact that they oversaw while they were in government scandal after financial scandal, many of which occurred while the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation and the shadow Treasurer was Assistant Treasurer or Treasurer. They did nothing. They talked about it. We took action. (Time expired)

National Security

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:57): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to reports the government is preparing to strip a dual national of Australian citizenship for the first time and that it expects the legislation to be challenged in the High Court. Is this the same legislation where a letter the Attorney-General provided to the Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security incorrectly represented advice from the Solicitor-General?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:57): All of us understand that the shadow Attorney-General likes to engage in a sort of Guthrie Featherstone QC MP versus Rumpole debate with the Attorney-General. I think we know that those two gentlemen do not entirely see eye to eye and there is from time to time what can be best described as a disturbance in the bar common room. The less erudite members of the parliament—that is to say, all the rest of us—are happy to let these great advocates get on with it. We are happy to let them do it. But what the shadow Attorney-General is now doing is taking his feud with the Attorney-General into an area where he is putting our national security at risk. He knows that the PJCIS—
Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left will cease interjecting. I call the Manager of Opposition Business, and I want to hear his point of order.

Mr Burke: Mr Speaker, on direct relevance, you have previously with preambles been critical and said it opens the gate in terms of what will be allowed under direct relevance. This question asked very simply whether it was the same piece of legislation, and the relevance rule, accordingly, given your previous rulings, should be much tighter than where the current Prime Minister is going.

The SPEAKER: I appreciate the point of the Manager of Opposition Business. I listened to the question very carefully; it had a lot of content. The Manager of Opposition Business will also be aware it covered a couple of subject matters. He will also be aware of my previous statements to this House that where tough questions are asked I allow them, and I allow tough answers as well. The Prime Minister is in order.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lingiari is warned!

Mr TURNBULL: There is nothing more important than we maintain a bipartisan solidarity in defence of the security of this country. There is nothing more important than the shadow Attorney-General gets over his spat with the Attorney-General and focuses on the real issue—which is not the dispute in the bar—which is ensuring that our laws keep us safe and give our police and our intelligence services and our ministers the powers to keep us safe, and we have seen him today stirring up an issue about the powers to revoke citizenship from terrorists. This is a very important power. He sat on the parliamentary joint committee. He brought his legal eminence to that committee. If he has a concern, he should be raising it within that committee or, if he can bear to speak to him, raising it with the Attorney-General or the minister. Of course, it does not stop there. This man went on last night to release a letter to me, which the Attorney-General has replied to at my request, again raising questions about other security legislation and the disagreement with the Solicitor-General. Once again, a responsible would-be Attorney-General would be raising those issues in the committee with a common bipartisan effort to get the laws right. I just say to the Leader of the Opposition: we can well understand these great men of the bar do not see eye to eye, but they should put our safety first.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (15:01): I inform the House we have present in the gallery this afternoon the Honourable Mia Davies, a minister and Deputy Leader of the National Party in Western Australia, and the Honourable Colin Holt, parliamentary secretary and member for South West Region in Western Australia. On behalf of the House, I extend a very warm welcome to you both.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Medicines

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (15:02): My question is to the Minister for Health and Aged Care. Will the minister update the House on what the government is doing to improve
affordable medicines and access to Medicare medicines for all Australians? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Sport and Minister for Health and Aged Care) (15:02): I thank the member for Goldstein for his question. It is always a pleasure to emphasise this government’s commitment to available affordable medicines and Medicare in general: our $4 billion increase in spending over the next four years, our $95 billion investment in public hospitals in the current five years, our determination to constantly make medicines affordable to all Australians. As I often say, the Labor Party’s dirty secret behind the dirty ‘Mediscare’ lie is that there actually was no Labor health policy at all. In the absence of a Labor health policy—you would think that Labor would have a health policy on an important area such as medicines—I have had to go back to a previous minister for health in a previous Labor government. I quote:

The Health Minister, Nicola Roxon ... makes no apology for deferring the listing of a number of critical drugs on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme ...

Health minister Nicola Roxon said:

Ultimately I think the important point is that we can’t in every instance guarantee that a drug will be listed immediately because there are financial consequences for doing that ...

That is exactly the approach of Labor: we cannot guarantee that we can list breakthrough medicines and breakthrough cures.

By contrast, this government has never shied away from that task. The commitment that we made when we came to government we have never stepped away from. I want to demonstrate that with an important listing: the biggest ever listing on the PBS was $1 billion for four medicines to cure hepatitis C in Australia—Harvoni, Sovaldi, Daklinza and Ibavyr. The four medicines between them comprise 12 weeks of taking the tablets, the treatment, and it actually is a cure. We are the first and probably the only jurisdiction in the world to make available this cure to every single Australian, without fear or favour. As Bob Geldof said, ‘Stigma, shame and fear can suffocate awareness’ in hepatitis C. So our approach was for every individual, wherever they are. We know that there are ordinary people like us who have contracted hep C, but there are many people on the margins who have hep C. It is overrepresented in the homeless, in injecting drug users, in remote communities, in the Indigenous population, in prisons. So I wrote to every single state health minister to say, ‘I want you to make these cures available to every single person—to the homeless, to those in prisons, to those who are disadvantaged, to those in drug and alcohol cliques. That is part of the government’s $1 billion spend on medicines for hep C. That is unprecedented in this country.

The point I make is that, in the absence of a medicines policy from the opposition—and I invite them to actually provide their medicines policy any time—we know that only a government that carefully manages the national accounts can manage this investment.

National Security

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (15:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. I again refer to reports the government is preparing to strip a dual national of Australian citizenship for the first time and that it expects the legislation to be challenged in the High Court. Given this is the same legislation where a letter the Attorney-
General provided to the intelligence committee incorrectly represented advice from the Solicitor-General, what are the risks to national security in the event of a successful legal challenge? What is the reason for the government misrepresenting the advice of the Solicitor-General?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (15:06): The shadow Attorney-General is a member of the committee. The shadow Attorney-General was party to a unanimous, bipartisan, set of recommended amendments to the legislation to which he presumably gave his very best attention. He makes assertions about legal advice not being given. The government, as he knows, does not comment on its legal advice, but the allegations that he has made have been rejected, as he knows, elsewhere by the Attorney.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is warned!

Mr TURNBULL: I simply make this point to the honourable member. We are dealing with very serious security issues. The risk and threat of terrorism that we face is greater than ever. Daesh is being defeated in the field. We are at risk of foreign fighters and people closely associated with them returning, and it is vital that my ministers and my government have the legislative tools to ensure that they can keep us safe.

We have the shadow Attorney-General raising constitutional questions, apparently, about this legislation, which he recently signed off on. If he has those concerns, I would suggest he holds his nose and does the unspeakable thing of talking to the Attorney. I would suggest that he puts his animosity aside and speaks to the Attorney-General. If he has real concerns, he has to get over these petty personal animosities and get on our team, get on Australia's team, to ensure that we have the right legislation.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: You can mock, but his job, I would say, Leader of the Opposition, is to work to keep these laws secure. He now raises the issue, overnight, about the post-sentence detention legislation, which has been agreed to by all the states and is of vital importance to ensure that we can keep our citizens safe. If he believes, in his legal eminence, that there are flaws or constitutional problems, he should raise them in the committee. We have to work together on this legislation. The member opposite believes he has a great legal brain—let him bring it to the committee and ensure that we get the right legislation; not these questions that are designed simply to derive political advantage for Labor. (Time expired)

Mr Dreyfus: I seek leave to table the letter of the Attorney-General dated 27 August 2015, in which he misrepresented the advice of the Solicitor-General.

The SPEAKER: I believe the letter is already a parliamentary paper.

Western Sydney Airport

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (15:09): My question is to the Minister for Urban Infrastructure. Will the minister update the House on the progress of Western Sydney Airport? How will this nation-building project deliver on the government's economic plan?

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Urban Infrastructure) (15:09): I thank the member for Banks for his question on this very important issue, which is the progress in relation to Western Sydney Airport and the work that the government is doing towards
Western Sydney Airport being ready to open in the mid-2020s. We have now finalised the environmental impact statement in relation to the Western Sydney Airport, and that has been provided to my colleague, the Minister for the Environment and Energy, in mid-September. The final environmental impact statement draws on some 700 field investigations and 19 technical studies. It is very comprehensive in the matters it addresses—such matters as noise impact modelling, assessment of air and water quality, health risk assessments and all of the matters that should be considered in an environmental impact statement for a project of this scale.

Ms Husar interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lindsay will remove herself under 94(a). She has been warned twice.

The member for Lindsay then left the chamber.

Mr FLETCHER: Of course, it follows the draft environmental impact statement which was issued last year. There are some very important changes which the government has made in response to community consultation on the draft environmental impact statement. We have made a commitment that there will be no single merge point over the town of Blaxland. We have made a commitment that there will be no single merge point over any residential community. We have expressed the position that our preferred option is for head-to-head operations to the south-west of the airport—the more lightly populated area—between 11 pm and 6 am where safe to do so. What that will mean is that during this time flights will both take off and land to the south-west, where it is safe to do so. It is very important that we do the detailed work to determine exactly when it will be safe to have head-to-head operations directed towards the south-west, but the early indications are that in over 80 per cent of the time head-to-head operations to the south-west will be safe.

Western Sydney Airport, when it opens, will be closer than Kingsford Smith Airport and will be a more convenient option for some 2 million people. The 2012 joint study on aviation capacity in the Sydney region pointed out that by 2027 there will be no more slots available at Kingston Smith Airport, and by around 2035 there will be practically no scope for further growth of revenue passenger services at Kingsford Smith Airport. So Western Sydney Airport is very important to meet the capacity needs of Sydney and Australia, and of course it will deliver a major economic boost to Western Sydney—some 11,000 jobs during the construction phase, and by the early 2030s some 9,000 jobs directly at the airport as well as the economic activity that will be attracted.

The Turnbull government is getting on with the job. The environmental impact statement is a key step towards— (Time expired)

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

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga was interjecting that I recognise the Prime Minister. I want to be really clear on this, because I did chastise the Leader of the Opposition on this very subject. This is the last time I want make this point. I am happy to circulate the page from the *House of Representatives Practice*. The Prime Minister can end question time at any time. It states that very clearly. It can even be during an answer or during a question. I am saying that to the member for Jagajaga, because if there is a repeat of this I will have to
take action. To the member for Isaacs: while I admire his athletic endeavours at the end of question time each day, there is no point to them.

**DOCUMENTS**

*Presentation*

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (15:14): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members earlier today. Details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS**

*Report No. 21 of 2016-2017*

The SPEAKER (15:14): I present the Auditor-General’s performance audit report No. 21 of 2016-2017 entitled *Reforming the disposal of specialist military equipment: Department of Defence*.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS**

*Disability Support Pension*

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Minister for Social Services) (15:14): Mr Speaker, I seek the indulgence of the chair to add briefly to an answer.

The SPEAKER: The minister may proceed.

Mr PORTER: The question was from the member for Bruce and originally to the Prime Minister, with respect to Andrew, a young DSP recipient. I can confirm that Andrew was sent a letter pursuant to the present reviews. The reason for his receipt of that letter was that his original grant of DSP occurred in 2002 and the full extent of his medical conditions was not clear on Centrelink records. Upon receiving the letter, information was received from Andrew’s mother and, as soon as the full extent of his medical conditions became known, it was clear that he did meet what is known under the assessment criteria as manifest eligibility, and the matter came to an end and he has been in continuous receipt of the DSP.

**QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER**

*Parliament House: Live Captioning*

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (15:15): Mr Speaker, I have a question to you. Given that this week is National Week of Deaf People, would you be able to update the House on progress in ensuring that parliament is accessible to the deaf and hearing impaired?

The SPEAKER (15:15): I thank the member for Parramatta for her question. As the member for Parramatta has just outlined to the House in her question and, indeed, in her private member’s motion earlier this day, this is the National Week of Deaf People in Australia. It is fitting that I can inform the House that live captioning of proceedings of the parliament has been introduced to improve the accessibility of televised coverage of the Parliament of Australia. The service is available initially for five hours each sitting day from 12 noon until 5 pm in the House and on Monday from 1.30 to 6.30 and on Tuesday to Thursday from 2 pm until 7 pm in the Senate. These hours reflect the times in each chamber when maximum public interest is expected. Of course, the service will be progressively
expanded to cover all chambers and parliamentary committees over the course of 2017, eventually providing approximately 3,000 hours of live captions per year. The closed captions are also available in Parliament House on ParlTV. It is planned that captioning will also become available on the parliament’s video archive service. A working group with representatives from both house departments has been established to seek feedback from relevant stakeholders through the implementation phase of this new service. I thank the member for Parramatta.

BILLS

Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016  
Treasury Laws Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016  
Superannuation (Departing Australia Superannuation Payments Tax) Amendment Bill 2016  
Passenger Movement Charge Amendment Bill 2016  

Second Reading  
Cognate debate.  
Consideration resumed of the motion:  
That this bill be now read a second time.  
to which the following amendment was moved:  
That all the words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:  
"while not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes:  
(1) the Government’s handling of the backpacker tax has been a shambles;  
(2) the uncertainty that has been caused to the agriculture and tourism sectors;  
(3) the Passenger Movement Charge increase comes despite the Government only weeks before criticising an increase to the Passenger Movement Charge; and  
(4) concerns have been expressed about the changes to the arrangements for Working Holiday Makers given the rorting, abuse and exploitation that has occurred.”  

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (15:17): I rise to speak on the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016. This bill places a new tax on the wages of foreign backpackers when they are in Australia on a working holiday. This was a measure announced by the government in the 2015 budget. In that announcement, the Abbott government proposed a 32½ per cent tax on backpackers. Not surprisingly, in what is becoming a familiar chaotic style, the Liberal-National party government is back-peddling from the original 32½ per cent tax and is now proposing a 19 per cent tax on backpackers. Sadly, the number of backpackers coming to Australia to work was decreasing before the government announced this measure in 2015, but, in so announcing that tax on the wages of backpackers, it has made the situation worse.

The impact of fewer backpackers working in Australia has dire consequences for our horticulture growers. I know this because the Brisbane markets is in my electorate and I have had feedback from several growers about some of the concerns they have. Growers face the prospect of seeing their fruit rot on their trees because they do not have anyone to pick it. Even at 19 per cent, Treasury modelling shows that the backpacker tax will have a detrimental
effect on the number of backpackers willing to travel to Australia on a working holiday. Obviously, that in turn will have a flow-on consequence for our farmers. The uncertainty that the Turnbull government has created around this proposed tax has caused unnecessary stress for farmers, whose very livelihoods are at stake—in Tasmania, the north-west of Western Australia, Queensland and everywhere in between.

This is obviously a tax grab by the government. The original proposal was going to rake in $540 million from foreign backpackers. Sadly, the Turnbull government, particularly the Deputy Prime Minister, have handled this issue very badly. They did not consult with stakeholders or do any modelling when they put forward this proposal to tax backpackers. Despite the coalition deal between the Liberal and National parties being very strong about many things, particularly about delaying marriage equality, we saw that the Nationals, the once great party of the bush, completely ignored their constituents, the growers. The premise of the proposal completely ignores the fact that backpackers who come to Australia to work then spend the money they earn here in Australia. It is Australian businesses that benefit from their holidays. Of course, all the goods and services—the holiday products sold to them, the alcohol, the food et cetera—attract GST and are good for our economy. In the LNP's shambolic prosecution of their case for a tax on backpackers, the Liberal government and the very muted National Party coalition partners are now proposing a lower, 19 per cent, tax. Sadly, they have decided to couple this with two other new initiatives. One of these is the passenger movement charge. When this is coupled with the backpacker tax, it makes the bill before the chamber even more problematic. We now not only have the farmers and horticulture growers in a rage in places like Longman; we also have the tourism sector upset, a sector that has been doing it tough since the global financial crisis.

For this reason, Labor supports this bill going to a Senate committee for further scrutiny. The Senate inquiry process will protect our farmers and hear from them. It will protect our horticultural growers and consult with them. Our tourism operators will have a chance to have a say, to ensure that there will not be any unexpected adverse effects on these industries. To avert any more unnecessary uncertainty, Labor will ensure this matter is dealt with before the parliament rises for Christmas.

Obviously, we are in the fourth year of a Liberal-National party government, but hopefully they have woken up to the fact that we need to get the settings on these regulations on working backpackers right. Surprisingly, when you look at the Australian workforce, seven per cent of the working population are temporary visa holders with work rights. In 2015-16 there were 214,583 working holidaymaker visas granted. That is a reduction of 5.4 per cent from the previous year. The working holidaymaker visa program is designed to foster closer ties and cultural exchanges between Australia and our partner countries, particularly with the young adults from these countries who will later be community leaders and business leaders. I do note that, in the program, rather than getting a one-year visa you can also get a second-year extension if you spend working time in the agricultural sector. But I will make more mention of that later in my speech.

To apply for a working holidaymaker visa you must have a valid passport from a country involved in the working holiday program. Not every country that we have diplomatic relations with is able to access the scheme. I have a large Taiwanese diaspora in my electorate of Moreton. Taiwan is one of the top five sources of first working holiday visas, with 14,803
first visas being granted last year. Taiwan is the second largest source for the second year of working holiday visa grants, with 7,354 issued last year. Ninety three per cent of second working holiday visa applicants indicated that they engaged in agricultural work.

Last year, because of the number of Taiwanese taking up this scheme, I travelled to Bundaberg with Ken Lai, the Director General of Brisbane's Taiwanese Economic and Cultural Office. We went up to Bundaberg. We went out to some farms—tomato farms in particular—and met some of the young backpackers. We went out for dinner with them. We chatted to them about the hourly rates and the piecemeal rates that they were being paid. I will touch on that now.

The Horticultural Award 2010 provides for a minimum hourly wage of $14.31—not a lot of money, obviously, but a minimum of $14.31. However, there is also the capacity in section 15 of the Horticultural Award 2010 in Queensland to get the piecework rate. Clause 15.2 of this award says:

The piecework rate fixed by agreement between the employer and the employee must enable the average competent employee—to earn at least 15% more per hour than the minimum hourly rate prescribed in this award …

So that would be, effectively, an extra $2.15, which would bring you to $16.46. That would be the minimum rate at the moment under the Horticultural Award.

The piecework rate agreed is to be paid for all work performed in accordance with the piecework agreement.

Obviously, you would also get the casual loading, if that was the workplace relationship. Clause 15.6 of this award says that you must agree to the piecework agreement 'without coercion or duress'. And clause 15.7 says:

The piecework agreement between the employer and the individual employee must be in writing and signed by the employer and the employee.

That means it must be understood by the employee. Also, the employer needs to keep a copy of the piecework agreement and keep it as a time and wages record.

I stress that because, in our travels around Bundaberg and in meeting some of the working holiday backpackers, we found that certainly many of them expressed concerns about the idea of the average competent employee. And, certainly, they had expressed the fact that they could not earn enough money—anywhere near that $14.31, which is the minimum hourly wage, before the penalty rates kick in.

Sadly, Ken Lai and I—and others in the Taiwanese community—have realised that there are unscrupulous operators who will take advantage of these optimistic, fun-loving backpackers. Sadly, sometimes they are the middlemen or the middlewomen, not the farmers or the horticulturalists who just want to get their crops. Basically, the person comes from the plane to the farm with no interaction with any opportunity to pick up the information about what they should be paid and what is normal.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has just released a report into the wages and conditions of people working under the working holiday visa program. The ombudsman received 1,820 requests for assistance from visa holders last year and recovered over $3 million owed to these visa holders. When the visa program was expanded a decade ago, it introduced an
option for young visa holders to extend their stay in Australia for a second year. The condition of being granted the extension was that they had to undertake 88 days of specified work in regional Australia during the first year of their visa.

The Fair Work Ombudsman inquiry found that the vulnerability of young visa holders was increased if they chose to undertake the 88-day placement in order to be granted the second-year visa. According to the report: young visa holders are being exploited by underpayment and or non-payment of wages; visa holders are making payments to employers or third parties for assistance to gain a second-year visa; there are sexual harassment and workplace health and safety breaches and issues; employers are recruiting visa holders to undertake unpaid work to meet the second-year visa requirement—because they seem to have them over a barrel; visa holders are working for free in exchange for non-certified accommodation programs—which would be not what the Horticultural Award is about at all.

The inquiry found that: unreasonable and unlawful requirements are being imposed on visa holders by unscrupulous businesses; exploitative workforce cultures and behaviours are occurring in isolated and remote workplaces, especially; employers are making unlawful deductions from visa holders' wages, or unlawfully requiring employees to spend part or all of their wages in an unreasonable manner.

In particular, the inquiry found that visa holders from Asian countries were more likely: to have lower awareness of their workplace rights in Australia; to have money deducted from their pay without a verbal or written agreement—against the award; to be paid to complete the requirements to obtain a second-year visa—completely against what the program was set up for; to have paid an agent to secure regional work to meet the eligibility requirements of the second-year visa. This was similar to the experience we discovered when meeting the backpackers around Bundaberg.

The inquiry uncovered many instances of unscrupulous behaviour by employees all over Australia.

In the Northern Territory, where a labour-hire intermediary engaged young visa-holders to perform pruning, weeding and fruit-picking duties on mango orchards in Darwin, the workers were paid amounts equivalent to hourly rates of between $2.74 and $4.79, well below that piece rate of $16.46; and some workers were not even paid at all. The amount alleged to have been underpaid across the workers was more than $35,000. There were examples in Victoria of people picking, washing and packing six hours a day for six days a week in return for accommodation. In northern New South Wales, a business that grows and supplies cucumbers to Coles and Woolworths via an agent, and sells to local stores, was withholding all wages from those visa holders in exchange for providing food and accommodation.

In north Queensland—even in Queensland, Member for Longman; can you imagine it?—a business advertised for backpackers for an unpaid position, saying it would then sign off on their second-year visas, and food and accommodation was provided. There is a mushroom farm near Brisbane, not far from my electorate of Moreton, where workers were employed on piece rates, but they were not able to earn a sufficient wage under the agreed rates, with almost $650,000 in underpayments.

Sadly, it is hard to get information about workplace rights into the hands of working holiday backpackers. As I said, often they go straight from the airport to the farm, and
obviously, sadly, these are non-unionised workforces, so it is hard to get the information to them. Early in November I will be going to Gatton, perhaps with the member for Wright but certainly with Ken Lai from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office again to try and talk to some more backpackers. We will also visit the site where a 19-year-old girl from Taiwan, Chung Jia-Ying, was hit by a truck on 9 August and, sadly, killed. We will pay our respects, for her family, but also try to catch up with some other backpackers in the area.

It is important that any changes to regulatory frameworks around working holiday visas take into account the current exploitation that is occurring. We cannot just govern and hope for the best. We need to have tighter scrutiny. I think, from memory, there were about 17 Fair Work inspectors for, as I said, nearly a million workers, so it is hard to get those inspectors out, especially to remote areas. I found it hard even in Bundaberg, an area I know very well, to actually get onto the farm and into the workplace to talk to people—and sometimes people are not that keen to talk.

It is important that stakeholders, including farmers and horticultural producers and the tourism sector, are fully consulted about any proposed changes. There should be thorough consideration of this bill so that all perspectives can be considered, as well is the full implications of any changes. So Labor call for this bill to be scrutinised by the Senate Economics Legislation Committee before any changes are made to the conditions for young foreign backpackers working in Australia. They mean too much to our agricultural sector and too much to our good name abroad. If these foreign workers have this experience and then go back home and talk about being exploited or sexually harassed, or unsafe work practices, they will not be the ambassadors that we are trying to create.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (15:33): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016, and to thank the government for implementing the changes we needed to ensure that this vital labour source will still be available to the cultural, hospitality and tourism industries that so need it, especially those in my electorate of Forrest, in the south-west of Western Australia.

The Turnbull government recognises that working holiday makers are an important part of Australia’s $43.4 billion tourism industry. They are also a key source of labour—a key source of labour—in the agricultural, horticultural and hospitality sector. Industries in the south-west of Western Australia simply could not survive without the labour input from working holiday makers, the so-called backpacker community.

Look at businesses that I have visited recently, such as Capel Farms, who grow amazing broccolini. It is a very labour intensive industry, and that is why the backpackers are so vital. I look at Neil Delroy; as an avocado grower he is in the same position. I went down to Augusta and talked to the Augusta Hotel; they rely on backpackers to work in the hotel, in hospitality. There are vegetable growers and fruit growers around Donnybrook and Myalup. Of course, without backpackers often what we see is the fruit rotting on the trees and on the ground. The vineyards of Margaret River and the hospitality sector rely so frequently on backpackers. They are needed by the olive farms around Yallingup. Dairy farm hands are required, as are workers for abattoirs.

The program has grown significantly since its inception in 1975. There have been over 200,000 working holiday makers coming to Australia each year since 2011. In the early days of the program, the south-west attracted most of its working holiday workers from Britain and
Ireland. Then, in the eighties and nineties, we saw an increase in European visitors, especially from France, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy. In recent times, working holiday visa holders have arrived predominantly from Asia, especially Korea, China and Japan. All of these groups have added to the cultural experience and growth of the south-west. There were 2,114,583 working holiday maker visas granted in 2015-16.

It is obviously essential—absolutely essential—that the workers keep coming, so it is vital that the decision on this bill takes place now. If you are a grower of any sort and you are planting and picking, you need to have confidence that you will have the labour to not only plant but also harvest the crop. That is why Labor's amendment is so fraught for the industry. If this reform package is not passed, the ATO will tax many working holiday makers as nonresidents at the 32.5 per cent tax rate. This means that many of them will simply not come to Australia, choosing instead to travel to lower-taxing destinations. The Administrative Appeals Tribunal has ruled that backpackers can be taxed as nonresidents under the current law, which was implemented by Labor when last in government. Labor's plan to refer the working holiday-maker reform package to the Senate Economics Committee will cause great uncertainty and confusion for our farmers and the seasonal workers as we enter the peak harvest season. I am not sure what about this those on the Labor side do not understand, but clearly not enough of them live in, work in and represent rural and regional electorates and the farming, growing, hospitality and tourism sectors.

Farmers across Australia have made it crystal clear that it is a vital to have these bills passed as soon as possible, but Labor is not bothered by that at all. Labor's plan to refer the bill to the Senate committee is absolutely reckless and destructive. The National Farmers' Federation has made the position of the agricultural sector very, very clear, but Labor is ignoring this. The National Farmers' Federation said:

Farmers can't wait until the end of the year, or even next year, for a resolution of the issue.

They went on:

After refusing to declare its hand on the backpacker tax all year, Labor decides to intervene at the eleventh hour to block a solution that would see an extra $2000 in every backpacker’s pocket.

This is unacceptable and we call on Labor to respect all the decent hard working Australian farmers who feed and clothe us every day by passing the ‘backpacker tax’ bills in the Parliament.

There is no justification for any further delay.

I repeat that there is no justification for any further delay. But, of course, that is not going to stop Labor from delaying this.

We, as a government, also recognise—as do the stakeholders we have repeatedly consulted—that while working holiday-makers should pay fair tax on their earnings, this should not provide a massive disincentive for them to come to Australia. From 1 January 2017, the government intend under this bill to set the tax rate applying to working holiday-makers at 19 per cent on earnings up to $37,000, rather than the 32.5 per cent announced previously. The government will also reduce the application charge for working holiday-maker visas by $50 to $390. These changes will lower the cost of coming to Australia for working holiday-makers and leave them with more money in their pockets to spend while here, which stimulates regional economies and supports regional businesses.
When I had a meeting with a group of businesses it was interesting that one of them ran a local gymnasium and exercise area and so many of the backpackers who were in the local area were his clients and his customers. So they involve themselves in many parts of the community, and their dollars often circulate within the community that they are living and working within.

We will also seek to boost the arrivals of working holiday-makers, which have been in decline since 2012-13 as a consequence of factors including exchange rate variations and changed economic conditions in source countries. We will introduce more flexible arrangements that will benefit working holiday-makers and industry. This will involve allowing an employer with premises in different regions to employ a working holiday-maker for 12 months, with the working holiday-maker working up to six months in each region. We will also task Tourism Australia to promote Australia to potential working holiday-makers through a $10 million global youth targeted advertising campaign. It is a great initiative.

The government is also keenly aware of concerns about exploitation of working holiday-makers. To generate more accurate data and boost integrity of the scheme, employers will be required to undertake a once-off registration with the Australian Taxation Office—a good check and balance. This simple and easy registration process will help provide valuable data on the employment of working holiday-makers. Employers who do not register will be required to withhold tax at the 32.5 per cent rate. Working holiday-makers will be made aware of registered employers via the publication of a list on the ABN Lookup. I am sure that this will appear on a range of online sites that promote backpacker opportunities in Australia.

The Turnbull government’s package of reforms to working holiday-maker arrangements will therefore not only ensure working holiday-makers pay fair tax on their earnings but also increase Australia’s attractiveness as a top destination for backpackers. The government’s strict budgeting rules have applied to ensure the budget impact of these measures and changes is fully offset. We will increase the tax on working holiday-makers’ superannuation payments when they leave Australia to 95 per cent, which is consistent with the objective of superannuation, which is to support Australians in their retirement not to provide additional funds for working holiday-makers when they leave Australia. There will also be a one-off increase of $5 to the passenger movement charge from 1 July 2017.

The decision to reduce the proposed tax rate from 32.5 per cent to 19 per cent maintains Australia’s status as one of the most competitive destinations for working holiday-makers, whilst also ensuring that they pay a fair level of tax—something equally important on this side of the House. This year, the coalition committed to review a wide range of issues affecting the supply of seasonal labour in the agricultural and tourism sectors. The review was duly completed, and this reform package is the result of a very significant consultation process. The government has listened, acted, and delivered on this important issue.

For the sake of the coming year’s harvest and the impending tourism season, Labor must support the swift passage of the entire reform package through the parliament. Agriculture and tourism make a fundamental contribution to the local economy of the South-West and to so many other rural and regional communities right around Australia—something that Labor obviously does not value. This bill is a win for South-West farmers, who will be able to get their fruit off the tree, off the vine and off to market. It is one more way that we are working to ensure the South-West remains a vibrant hub of industry and employment into the future.
Many regional members of parliament, like me, have been fearless champions on behalf of their electorates, their agricultural stakeholders and common sense on this issue. The bill before us today is a direct result of our hard work and persistence. It means that local businesses can continue to rely on strong seasonal labour support. The peak tourism and harvest season will be with us soon, with thinning of fruit and vines giving way to harvest in the New Year. There is a great sense of urgency that we need to get this sorted now. Backpackers planning to travel to Australia from a range of countries are already making decisions about where they will go, and they need certainty about the tax treatment in Australia now, not at some time in the future, as Labor says. If that certainty is delayed for weeks and months, those vitally needed backpackers will likely start choosing to go elsewhere. They will go to New Zealand or Canada instead of coming here, and that will be disastrous for our industries. We need to act now.

I thank all those regional members of parliament who advocated so passionately for their constituents and their business communities. Although he is no longer in the parliament, I include former Senator Richard Colbeck in those thanks. Richard was a passionate advocate for rural and regional industries and communities, and his position on this issue was a great demonstration of his capacity and leadership.

This was a significant issue for many regional coalition MPs during the recent election and still is significant. By holding the line and acting as a team we have achieved the outcome that was desperately needed. It is now time for regional Labor MPs to step up to the plate and get this through the parliament and into practice. Our regional economies are relying on it.

Dr MIKE KELLY (Eden-Monaro) (15:46): It gives me great pleasure to rise in support of the shadow Treasurer's amendment to the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016 and related bills, in particular because my region is one of the epicentres of this problem. I have a large number of fruit growers on the South West Slopes, I have wine growers in the Yass Valley, and there are many other enterprises that are affected in the tourism sector in my region. Yes, I am a regional Labor member and, yes, I am stepping up to the plate right now, because there is no bill that this parliament has seen that better bell the cat on this government for its dissembling and denial or better gives the lie to its claim to be the best representative for the bush. As you know only too well, Mr Deputy Speaker Coulton, as the member for Parkes in New South Wales, people in the bush are abandoning the Liberal Party in droves because of what they are inflicting upon people in regional Australia.

This tax was created by the government. I heard the member for Cowper claim: 'This problem of backpackers and the guest worker situation was a developing one before the tax was introduced.' Yes, it was, so why did they multiply that problem by 32.5? It is like saying, 'We've got a bushfire here, so let's bring in the fire tenders,' only to see the fire tenders turn up loaded with kerosene instead of water. The growers are already in a situation where backpackers have deserted us in droves; they are having that problem now. The tax has made the problem much worse.

Of course, those opposite talk about the need to speed this through. Where was this bill last week? Why has it been introduced only now? Where was the urgency last week? It is amazing to me that those opposite can come in here bald-faced and say, 'Don't you make this a problem, Labor!' They created the problem! It is like saying: 'Look, we've taken four wheels
off this car and we’re prepared to put one back on. Now you guys have to come along and help us push-start it.’ The bald-faced, brazen approach that this government is adopting in relation to this legislation is unbelievable.

I note that we wound the situation back to 19 per cent from 32.5 per cent and that the National Farmers Federation have come on board with this proposal. Of course, it would be really nice if the National Farmers Federation actually fought the good fight to make sure that all of these impacts do not apply to farmers, instead of being just a stepping stone for people who want to enter parliament for the National Party. I understand they have had a gun held to their heads about this issue, but it is not true to say that farmers are saying, ‘Let’s just get this done and move on.’ In evidence of that, I would like to read out an email that I received from one of my farmers, a Batlow fruit grower on the South West Slopes. He said:

Mr Kelly

I am writing to you about the recent announcement on backpacker tax. I manage our family apple orchard in Batlow. We are a vertically integrated business. We grow the rootstock, apple trees, pick pack and have a wholesale business in Sydney Markets. We supply all major supermarkets and independent retailers and are currently opening up new export markets.

Our reliance on overseas workers is crucial for the survival of our business especially in Batlow. We have a constant problem wondering if we will have workers available to complete our daily tasks. Due to the location it is especially hard to find people available to meet our work requirements. Transport and accommodation add to the problem. Now to add to this equation an increase in tax from the first dollar earned and what I think is highway robbery, they the government are suggesting to take 95% of superannuation when they leave. Now I don't think I am wrong in calling this another tax grab …

We have gone from a tax rate after the threshold of 15% to now a tax from dollar one of approximately 27%. How is this going to help us attract workers?

That is the voice of a farmer who has written to me. So, let’s not talk about what is in the best interests of the farmers. We know what is in the best interests of the farmers, and that is consulting with them when you take a measure; that is doing the modelling of the effect of a taxation measure. Clearly, the government just raced into this without understanding what that effect would be. On the one hand, of course, they need to offset the $50 billion tax giveaway to big businesses and big banks—who my farmers complain to me about on a daily basis—and on the other they need to try to claw back $540 million in this place, which hurts farmers. The real fallacy of this, of course, is that that $540 million is a complete myth. It is exactly like killing the goose that lays the golden egg. If there are no backpackers coming, you will not earn $540 million. It simply will not be there. It is an approach to doing taxation in this country that shows that the government completely lacks any understanding of creative taxation policy.

We hear those opposite talk about Labor’s history of tax management—they always say we are high taxing, high spending. The truth is that the recent Labor government had a lower tax-to-GDP ratio and was a lower taxation and spend government than both the Howard government and the current government. When this government wants to give away billions of dollars to big banks and big overseas corporations at the expense of farmers, sure, we will fight that—we will fight it all the way. Our approach to budget repair is to create new growth, new economies, and to ensure that jobs are there for Australians and that our farmers are supported. This bill does not do that. The first measure did not do that—it hurt them terribly. We want to make sure this goes off to a quick review that does the modelling, that consults
and that has the input from stakeholders so we can decide whether or not this whole 19 per cent tax measure should be revisited as well, whether we should go back to first principles on a measure like this so that we do not kill off this labour force and this industry.

The government also does not look at the welfare issue of backpackers. If you want a backpackers to come here it is not only an issue of attracting them because of what they can gain when they get here, the experience that they can have; it is a matter of their welfare while they are employed. If the word goes back to young people overseas, who are highly networked on modern social media, that you will be mistreated while you are here as well, then that is also a turn off. Those are issues we need to turn our attention to as well.

We know the numbers are declining; we know this government has slugged this industry. It has hurt our tourism industry and also wants to make it a double whammy by adding this tax to travellers as an offset. The government admits that Treasury modelling shows that backpacker numbers will continue to decline with tax at this 19 per cent rate. That is why we want this measure to be reviewed, why we want to have a closer look at it. While we want it reviewed, Labor will expedite the passage of the bill through the House but we will seek to protect our farmers through the Senate inquiry process. This should have been debated last week, and it should have been with the Senate right now.

This is part of an assault on rural and regional Australians particularly in New South Wales. I know there are many members—people I am happy to call friends—on the other side of this chamber who represent regional areas who understand what is going on in New South Wales at the moment. They will admit that there is a strong sentiment among people all around rural and regional New South Wales that they have been let down. It goes back to Gonski. Gonski was a program that was going to deliver rural and regional loadings, which are so important to schools in my region. I have noticed huge improvements from the early-stage implementation of Gonski, and that needs to be sustained. The removal of those loadings, Indigenous kids loadings and the like, is hurting our rural and regional schools.

I get bombarded by people in the bush who are complaining about the way the NBN process is being managed by the government. This was the great potential means we had in rural and regional Australia to unlock our human potential and to enhance and improve our business operations, including farming, with the modern use of technology that the NBN would provide. They are not happy with how it is being handled. There have been forced council mergers in New South Wales. You will know well, Mr Deputy Speaker Coulton, how that has gone through New South Wales like a brush fire. People have resented the way they have been treated—these bulldozer tactics of Mr Baird and his government. They have failed to consult effectively, and bureaucrats have been sitting in Sydney drawing big red crayon lines across a map without regard for the communities of interest or the geography. People in Tumbarumba, in my electorate, are absolutely red-hot angry at how they have been treated, as are the people of Bombala. The great mayor down there, Bob Stewart, has been a wonderful advocate for his community, and he first found out he had been sacked when he heard it on the radio. He did not even receive a phone call from the state government. He was in tears about how he had been treated. These people in these communities have not forgotten. They have signs all over their areas warning of what is coming from this state Liberal government.

In addition, we have seen the greyhounds decision. I know a lot of my National Party friends in New South Wales fought a good fight on that and finally got Mr Baird to see
reason. This person, who claimed to be the great moral leader of New South Wales, trampled over an industry of rural and regional Australians. He trampled over it unjustly, without due consultation and consideration of how the issues—issues that are certainly there in the industry—could be managed with people in the industry still being employed, still keeping their livelihoods.

We have also seen in New South Wales Mr Baird talking about the privatisation of some of our rural hospitals. I do recognise that they have been put in a difficult position by the fact that the coalition government has cut funding in support of the state health system, but they are seeking to triage their issues in health in New South Wales rural and regional areas. The wonderful South East Regional Hospital in Bega, built through the use of Labor's Health and Hospitals Fund, is a magnificent facility but everyone is deeply concerned that the services that should be getting provided through that facility are not being provided because the state is not providing support for those services. This lack of services, with cuts to funding and privatisation of hospitals such as Goulburn, just north of here, is causing deep concern in our rural and regional communities.

What did electricity privatisation do? Exactly what we said it would do. We said electricity would cost more and that many jobs would be lost in rural and regional Australia. In my region hundreds of jobs have been lost through electricity privatisation. We also said it would lead to security issues, as we have seen with Ausgrid. People are also telling me that the government did not consult with Defence in that process until it was too late and they had to pull the pin on the project at the last minute. In addition to that we have seen services wound back in Centrelink and veteran support. They are asking veterans who live in rural areas to go online to get help, removing the face-to-face support they used to get. Services in Centrelink are grinding to a halt because of the continuing application of unsustainable efficiency dividends and cost cutting.

These all add up to a massive assault on rural and regional New South Wales and Australian rural and regional areas more generally. And I am inundated by communications on a daily basis as to the effects of these cutbacks—the human cost of these cutbacks and the human cost of what the coalition government in New South Wales, suffering from the impacts of federal decisions, is doing and what that means for our community.

We are not going to put up with it. They will pay a price. I remember very vividly the massive wooden sign, that was hand-carved, that was put up in Tumbarumba during the last federal campaign, and it said very clearly: 'If Tumba falls, goodbye Peter Hendy.' They have now replaced that with a similar sign talking about 'goodbye Liberals'. You can go and drive out there and read those signs. I am not making this up. That sentiment is strong. It is palpable. And I believe that, when the time comes, not only will we see that reflected again in the federal sphere but this state government in New South Wales will feel the voters' wrath from treating rural and regional New South Wales as some peripheral area that can be neglected without cost because they are traditionally safe seats.

But people are learning that the good old days, of Bill Sheahan and Terry Sheahan in south-west New South Wales, of Eddie Graham down Wagga way, of Allan Fraser and Jim Snow—these people who were good regional rural Labor people who always looked after them and always cared for them—are coming back again as we see strong country Labor people putting their hands up to be a voice to defend these communities. They are not getting
their voices heard at the moment by current representation in the coalition, and it means they have to look elsewhere. Well, we are there for them. We will defend them. We will continue to defend them. And we will make sure that the effects of this tax are eliminated in terms of the viability of their businesses.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—Chief Nationals Whip) (16:01): With your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker Coulton, I just want to recognise my good friend in the gallery, Nathan Ell, who has come all the way from Dubai to hear me speak. He probably needs to get out more!

I rise to speak on the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016, the Treasury Laws Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016, the Superannuation (Departing Australia Superannuation Payments Tax) Amendment Bill 2016, and the Passenger Movement Charge Amendment Bill 2016. When the so-called backpacker tax was originally announced by the then Treasurer Joe Hockey, most people, I think, thought that that was pretty innocuous. The Treasurer would have thought so at the time as well, given that he was acting on advice from Treasury.

But there is a hard lesson to be learnt there—indeed, several lessons to be learnt. The first is that any advice coming from Treasury needs to be well and truly road-tested before being acted on. But there are more lessons to be learnt from how the impact of this measure came to be underestimated in the first place. This is no criticism of Treasury, or anyone else for that matter, because the underestimation of impacts was based on sound reasoning. But there is a flaw, and I will come to that shortly.

The most important and most debated element of these bills was the imposition of a 32½ per cent tax on the earnings of Working Holiday visa holders from the first dollar they earned. There was a very logical reason why such a change was necessary—and that is because when Labor raised the tax-free threshold, it meant that most backpackers, who worked for only part of the year, would no longer pay tax at all. That situation, I have got to say, was pretty disheartening for Aussie workers who worked all year round and took home less money for their day's work. They could have been working alongside someone from overseas doing the same work in the same conditions but taking home less money on a daily basis.

While the 32½ per cent tax rate from the first dollar was high, it was only applicable to overseas workers, and I must say that, when it first came up, I did not fully understand the implications that such a high tax would have on certain industries, particularly tourism and agriculture. But I spent a lot of time talking with farmers in my electorate about their workforce and how they sourced that workforce. I spoke with tourism businesses who faced similar problems securing workers when they needed them.

Although Bowen, in my electorate, is only a small town on the Queensland coastline, it is home to an extraordinarily large backpacker workforce. Bowen farmer and President of the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association, Carl Walker, wrote to me about the backpacker tax, outlining the importance of the produce from that region. He wrote:

During the peak of our season, up to 95% of Australia's fresh tomatoes and capsicums come from the Bowen and Gumlu locality.
Without this link in the seasonal supply chain, we would see much more produce imported from overseas and fewer local jobs sustained—fewer jobs for backpackers, but also fewer jobs for Australians. Mr Walker went on to say:

With the sheer magnitude of roles that need to be filled each season, to maintain the picking and packing volumes it is near impossible to locally source. As a region of a small permanent workforce population, we prefer to employ locals wherever possible but rely heavily upon backpackers and the seasonal worker programme to fill these very short-term and arduous roles. With the proposed tax increase for backpackers, this leaves a large tax gap between the two employment sources.

And Mr Walker, I have to say, is a very straight shooter and a smart thinker. He put forward suggestions for a compromise. We did not go as far as that, but his compromise was this:

All foreign workers should be on a 15% flat tax rate, with no tax-free threshold and no superannuation payments or tax refunds returned to their pocket.

He further suggested employers should:

... have to pay 9.5% superannuation to every employee, Australian or not. It should be considered that the foreign workers' superannuation could go into a fund which could then be utilised for training and upskilling a younger generation of Australian agricultural employees, helping to relieve pressure on the budget deficit.

Chairman of Tourism Whitsundays, Allen Grundy, also wrote to me, voicing concerns about the drop-off in backpacker visitor numbers. He wrote:

The latest international visitor arrival stats are mixed, showing continued growth to the Whitsundays of 6.2% to Year End June 2016. However, this result is somewhat tempered by the big declines in youth / backpacker arrivals.

Mr Grundy reported that backpacker nights and visitor numbers were down across centres on the east coast. In the Whitsundays, visitor nights, or length of stay, were down 23.5 per cent and visitor numbers were down by 6,000. Mr Grundy wrote to me again—just today, in fact—pointing out that backpackers working overseas was a two-way street. He says:

There is a lot of discussion suggesting that Backpackers take the jobs from young Aussies. It is important to note that the reciprocal arrangements for Working Holiday Visas mean that there are plenty of young Aussies overseas working on a gap year, just like those Backpackers coming to Australia. The community benefits when these young Aussies return home with new skills, they have had to fend for themselves and quickly learn to be responsible for basic life skills, for example, finding accommodation, buying food, paying the bills, budgeting etc. The skills that they learn by being away from home set them up to be more versatile, self-sufficient, confident and very employable.

After many meetings with businesses across my electorate, it became clear that some North Queensland industries would indeed have been smashed by that tax rate of 32½ per cent. There would have been a great deal of damage to the sugar industry around the Burdekin, to horticulture in the Burdekin and Bowen and to tourism in the Whitsundays. When the increased tax rate was first raised, my view was that Australian workers should be filling these positions. Around Bowen especially, where the unemployment rate is around 15 per cent and the youth unemployment rate is much higher, you would expect that there would be plenty of workers available to sustain the horticulture industry—and this is where more lessons need to be learnt from real life in this exercise. We cannot assume that the number of jobs available and the number of unemployed locals will cancel each other out. In reality, this does not happen—not even close.
When I was speaking with farmers they told me reasons why there was a greater reliance on backpacker labour than there otherwise ought to be. We know that the volume of workers needed will always outstrip local labour capability and availability, so at least some workers will always need to be sourced from elsewhere. But local unemployment remains high even during the peak harvesting season in Bowen, simply because many locals do not want to do that work. The farmers tell me that some locals will put in a token effort; they might have been forced to take the job through one of the jobactive providers. They turn up late or hung over. Some will deliberately work slowly. Some even go to the effort of breaking things on farms so they can get fired.

Given a situation where Australians prefer social security and welfare over actually working, we can do one of two things: we can accept that Australians will never ever do that work and just carry on; or we can do something with the welfare system to make sure those people are not turning down available jobs. To take the second option will be a long-term project and a difficult road to negotiate—a tough row to hoe. But the longer that row is left the worse the weeds will become and the harder the job will become.

I remember when the union movement brought their China free trade agreement debate roadshow into my electorate. They thought I would not turn up to debate it. But I did. And all the mouths were agape when I turned up. They said I was a terrible member of parliament because there were thousands of foreign workers in my electorate picking fruit while there were thousands of unemployed youth. If only it were that simple. In the short term, however, the immediate fix to this problem is to make a compromise on the backpacker tax to ensure backpackers continue to meet the labour needs of those industries—and finding a sensible compromise is, I believe, what we have done.

The bills we are debating here today are the kind of outcome I was confident we would achieve when during the election campaign a local reporter asked me what would happen if the backpacker tax remained at 32½ per cent. I assured her it would definitely change, but she remain unconvinced—as did some of the local farmers. I said I was so confident of that change that I would quit the party if it did not happen. I said that not as some kind of threat but as a demonstration of how confident I was that such a change would be made. I said that knowing it would be fixed because the Deputy Prime Minister understood the need for it to be fixed. I must congratulate the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture; the Assistant Minister For Employment, the member for Cowper; and also the Treasurer for listening to the concerns of backbenchers, for listening to the needs of industry and working hard to resolve this issue. I want to acknowledge the work put in by groups such as Tourism Whitsundays, the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association and Canegrowers. These groups got their message across clearly and professionally and, to their credit, always with a view to finding the best solution not just for the industry but for the country as a whole.

I note there are some voices that are calling for a zero tax rate on backpackers. There might be some good rationale behind that, but I want to state my view as to why it should not happen. As I said, the Labor Party essentially delivered a zero tax rate for these backpackers when they brought in the higher tax free threshold—a good thing. They increased the tax free threshold to $18,000. But that move, resulting in foreign workers paying nothing, was really a slap in the face for Australian workers who do pay tax. Representing one of the country's biggest tourism centres, I very much appreciate the need to make visitors to our country feel
welcome. But I think we should draw the line at elevating backpackers to a more privileged status than working Australians. We must remember that these backpackers are coming here and using services—our roads, our public transport and on and on it goes—and it is only fair that they pay some level of tax for the usage of those services.

Another measure contained in these bills is to increase to 95 per cent the tax on working holiday makers' superannuation when they leave Australia. I think that is a fair income. I will explain why. It is consistent with the purpose of the superannuation system and the need for equity in the workforce. It is important to note that all workers must be paid their super entitlements regardless of whether they are Aussie citizens or working visitors. But exempting foreigners from the superannuation guarantee would have made it a disincentive to employ Australians—and I know there were some proposals out there to do that. However, the super system is designed to support Australians in their retirement—it is for workers retirement. Allowing working visitors to cash in their super simply allows them to go and blow it in Bali, Taiwan or someone else on their home. That is not the intention of the superannuation scheme whatsoever.

That is why Carl Walker was saying we should take the super and put it somewhere else. So we have taken the super and put it into savings to enable the repeal of the backpacker tax. So while I am pleased that this labour force issue has been resolved, we expect the affected industries—that is, agriculture and tourism—to return to normal. I am hopeful there is going to be a significant uplift in backpacker numbers, particularly into the Whitsundays. It is almost a perverse outcome. It is a great outcome. Bringing this tax in scared some from coming. But, now that it has gone, a whole heap of them will come to the Whitsundays, and I suspect that there will be a bit of a boom over the next year.

But just as I was concerned about the tax implications of the backpacker tax I have to say I am also concerned about the increase in the Passenger Movement Charge. While I acknowledge that the $5 increase might be small, it worries me that, into the future, the Passenger Movement Charge might be viewed as something like tobacco excise—a cash cow that government can continue to raise and raise and no-one wall complain about. We are doing it. The Labor Party have done it in the past. I think that trying to treat that charge like an ATM to fund spending, because it can just be raised higher and higher, and then trying to justify it by claiming people who travel internationally are rich is beyond the pale. I am going to be keeping an eye on that change to see if it has a detrimental effect on the tourism industry, and I will be taking that issue up with the relevant ministers.

In closing, I note that Labor wanted to refer this reform package to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee. I must stress that that is a reckless act and it will cause a disaster in agriculture. Farmers have made it clear that that will be destructive. Labor’s plan would create a great deal of uncertainty and confusion for farmers. The farmers have made it clear that the changes need to be passed as a matter of urgency. That message was delivered during the review process.

They on the other side might have missed it because they were too busy doing a victory lap after losing the election, but the government committed to reviewing a wide range of issues surrounding seasonal labour supply. The review has now been completed, and this reform package is the result of that consultation process. The National Farmers’ Federation made their view clear with a statement that said:
"Farmers can't wait until the end of the year, or even next year, for a resolution of the issue …

"After refusing to declare its hand on the backpacker tax all year, Labor decides to intervene at the 11th hour to block a solution that would see an extra $2000 in every backpacker’s pocket.

"This is unacceptable and we call on Labor to respect all the decent hard working Australian farmers who feed and clothe us every day by passing the ‘backpacker tax’ bills in the Parliament.

"There is no justification for any further delay. …"

I agree with the sentiments expressed by the National Farmers’ Federation: there is no justification for any further delay. I hope the Labor Party will see that and get on with it.

One of the additional measures in this reform package is that we are now going to regulate who employs foreign workers, and I think that will also be very good in the future for cleaning up some of the nasty stuff we see going on within the backpacker industry. I do commend these bills to the House.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (16:16): The proposal was to impose a 32.5 per cent tax. The current situation is that we will impose a 29½ per cent tax. I think my worthy colleague and neighbour in this place, the member for Dawson, speaks genuinely and sincerely on behalf of his electorate at all times. We thank him and his colleagues for a reduction of three per cent. We do not have any illusions that we are applying a tax of 30 per cent. It was a little bit over 30 per cent before, so there really has not been much change at all.

When it comes to this place, there are two great problems with the National Party. My first problem is its performance in this place; my second problem, which is infinitely worse, is that I have seen how the party representing non-city Australia should perform—and the latter problem is probably more important than the first.

The most wonderful example of that that I can provide was when, after a decade or so of Labor in the federal parliament here, the Menzies government was elected. Within weeks Mr Menzies announced a revaluation upward of the Australian pound. Within two days the titular leader of the National Party, Jack McEwen, announced that there would be a devaluation. Two weeks later Mr Menzies announced a devaluation, not a revaluation. The reasons for that was that the National Party—the then Country Party, as it was called—walked out of the coalition and brought down the Menzies government. It could be argued that they briefly brought down the Lyons government. But on three occasions they voted with the opposition in this place, asserting their muscle power and having the courage of their convictions to represent the people that they were paid to.

The first act by the Country Party after the war was to fight the ‘Battle of the pound’, as it was called on the front of the Sydney Morning Herald. The last act of the Country Party before it disappeared was under Doug Anthony. Prime Minister Billy McMahon announced a revaluation upward of the dollar, and two days later Doug Anthony announced that it would be coming down, not up, and ‘if that dollar was not going to come down, then the government would come down.’ So, of course, within nine days the dollar came down.

So, the first act of the Country Party, when they had power, was to assert themselves over the issue of the value of the dollar, and the last act before the Country Party went out of existence was on the issue of the dollar. Now, I am not aware of a single statement by a single National Party member in this House on the value of the dollar at all. I remember vividly
when Doug Anthony called that coup. I was selling a big mob of cattle that year and I got 25 per cent more for my cattle that year—so I love that man.

Let me turn specifically to the issue before the House. We are going around clapping our hands and saying, 'How wonderful!' It was 32.5 per cent; now it is only 30 per cent. Mr Deputy Speaker Coulton, do you realise how completely stupid and hypocritical one sounds? My chief of staff read that out from the speech of one of the National Party senators, and I burst out laughing. Do you really think it is an achievement? You are going to hit us with 32 per cent—we were on 19½ per cent—but now you are going to hit us with 30 per cent. Oh, what a great victory! She said it to me as a joke, with a sense of humour. I must admit that I burst out laughing when she said that to me.

What is not funny is to be pulled up by people late at night at the Hughenden hotel. The owners of the two hotels in Hughenden work extremely hard. In these little towns they are desperate for labour all the time. They are desperate to get people to work in their hotels. One of the owners really razzed me on this issue. She said, 'We just simply can't get people to come out here and work.' Whatever the reasons may be, that is the reality. My wife's relative has a cattle station and almost all of the workers on that cattle station are backpackers. It is a big station, and it is right out in the middle of nowhere. Backpackers have a lot of the fun there, and they bring a lot of enrichment to the local community. I do not know how she could run her cattle station without these people. I often stay at the Barron Valley Hotel in Atherton. I think some 90 backpackers also stay there. Again, there are something like 60 or 70 employees in that hotel. If the backpackers go, we lose 60 or 70 jobs in a tiny little town like Atherton.

I have great respect for the member for Dawson, but, all the same, I question the fact that people will employ a backpacker before they will employ a local. I think every time you want a local person, who is there all the time, you would as a general rule employ a local over a backpacker. I have to say to the House that, when I was drinking at a hotel in Tully, I said to these blokes, 'What do you do?' They said, 'We're banana workers.' I said, 'Well, it's Tuesday and you're not working.' They both said, 'No, we don't work on Tuesdays.' I said, 'Righto.' They said, 'Yes, some Thursdays we don't work, and on Mondays, too, we don't work.' You get that sort of approach. While people condemn the backpackers, our local backpackers, we have bananas in our supermarkets because of these blokes. Even if they are not the hardest working blokes and they have a bit of fun, I cannot really condemn them.

But there is a very serious issue here, and that is that, if you have a wife and three kids, you would be better off on welfare than working. So, while the member for Dawson quite rightly pointed out that a lot of people do not work, there is a disincentive for them to do so because of the way the welfare system works. If you have a wife and three kids and you are on 50 grand a year, you will pay virtually the same tax as a person who has no wife and no kids. The disparity in the tax rates in Australia is appalling. In the days of the old Labor governments, there was a belief in fairness. If you have a family of five and you are on 50 grand a year, you should not be paying much tax. If you are on 50 grand a year and you have no family then you should be paying more tax than the person who has to look after four other people.

I think there are two great problems in Australia today: the complete lack of respect for motherhood and the spiritual values in the country—and they are reflected in the Tax Act and come out in neon lights in this particular issue. Many times hardworking people in the banana
industry people, whom I represent, come up to me and say, 'Mate, we'd make more money off welfare if we didn't work.' I often ask them: 'Why do you work then?' They say: 'You've got a responsibility to work. You can't just be a bludger.' This is a very good sentiment.

There is another issue here. I am one of the two representatives of the Far North Queensland tourism industry. There is the Gold Coast and Far North Queensland, the greater Cairns region, if you like, and to a lesser extent the Mackay-Airlie Beach area. They are the two great tourist destinations. When I say 'tourist destinations', there are people who come from overseas who like to visit capital cities. Everyone on earth does that, right? But why do they decide to come here? It is because we have magnificent beaches on the Gold Coast and we also have the Great Barrier Reef and the jungles of North Queensland. This is why they come here. The great tourist mecca of Australia, outside the Gold Coast, is Far North Queensland. When I used to go to a hotel in Far North Queensland, I would regularly see people like Lee Marvin and Bo Derek at that hotel. Tourism attracts the most important, prominent people in the world.

You will not have a tourism industry if you take away the backpackers. One quarter of the Far North Queensland tourism industry is in fact the backpackers—and you have taken away their incentive to come here. Their wages, their incomes, have been cut by a third, and you are saying that will have no effect. Of course it will have an effect. My own children are fond of going overseas to work for a year or something of that nature, and they like to work out how much money they will make. The fact is that they are not going to be making much money at all if they are paying a third of it to the government. That is not the case in other countries. In fact, in this countries they were paying virtually no tax at all, although I think it is a government's responsibility to take some tax off them.

We, the people of non-metropolitan Australia, watched the wool industry being completely destroyed. Australia's biggest export earning industry was destroyed by deregulation—by stupid policies in this place. We then proceeded to watch the sugar industry being destroyed by deregulation and a decision not to go to ethanol. We cannot compete against Brazil, the big boys, in the sugar exporting market because they have ethanol; we do not. They cross-subsidise it.

I represent the tobacco industry. Tobacco is naughty, yes. Well, we all know that. A town in Victoria had 3½ thousand people employed in the tobacco industry. The people of Mareeba had 2,000 jobs. That was completely destroyed by deregulation—nothing to do with people not smoking. There is the prawn and fish farming industry. I regret to say that it was the National Party that deregulated the sugar industry in this place. It was the National Party that deregulated the tobacco industry. They held the portfolio. It was not the National Party in the prawn and fish farming industry; it was the Liberal Party that introduced restrictive environmental laws that completely destroyed that industry. It went from $750 million a year at one stage to about $27 million a year. It was the National Party in this place that destroyed the dairy industry through deregulation. And it is not good enough for the National Party to come into this place and skite that they had $140,000 for every farmer. That was one year's income you got for them, and the poor beggars were put to the sword. Seven thousand of them vanished without trace. In my own area, there were 240 and there were 36 the last time I looked. It was one of the most intense areas in Australia. I was speaking to a person in Victoria the other day who had over 320 and now has three. It has completely destroyed an
entire industry. What for? To make Woolworths and Coles rich! We are getting less money and consumers are paying the same. Actually, consumers are paying a bit more. Forget about one single line. Coles have made a welter out of—over our dead bodies, I might add—the dairy industry. Without ethanol, sugar cannot compete. There is a 23 per cent benefit in sugar cane if it goes to an ethanol stream—cross-subsidised across to the sugar stream. In grains it is exactly the same—a 13 per cent benefit. *(Time expired)*

**Mr DRUM** (Murray) (16:32): This is an incredibly important debate for the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016. This issue first raised its head in the Murray electorate during the campaign of the last election. Once it was out there in the public, it certainly raised an awful lot of interest by the horticulturalists of the Goulburn Valley. I was able to meet with a large number of the horticulturalists in the Goulburn Valley and it certainly did not take long for the impact and the consequences of this issue to be put front and centre. So it certainly was with a large degree of relief, and with a fair amount of badgering, that we were able to announce two weeks ago that the coalition had found a solution to the issue—that was going to be fair to everyday Australians who also work in some of these fields—to see people coming from overseas and paying a degree of tax. It was also going to be fair in relation to the amount of tax that we were going to ask these overseas workers to pay when they come here. Obviously, the issue was so important because of the critical nature of this labour force. We certainly did not want to even countenance the idea that we would go too hard with our tax percentage that we would scare the overseas labour force away, because the consequences of that result would have been substantial.

Before I talk about where we have landed, I would like to acknowledge the way in which we went about the review. Firstly, it was the National's leader, Barnaby Joyce, in concert with Treasury, who was able to give the industry a six-month delay on the implementation of the reform and pushed the implementation out to 1 January 2017 with the rider that, by the time that date came around, we would have found a solution for the backpacker tax that we could all live with, and that would be a positive outcome for everybody. We put in place a program and a process that was going to arrive at a sustainable level of tax so that the industry could go forward with some security, and that was with a full-blown review under Luke Hartsuyker. His work in the full-blown review into this issue was initially set to report in mid-October. Once the consultation process was under way it became abundantly clear that one of the great issues about the backpacker tax was the timeliness of it and the urgency of reaching a resolution. The evidence came to the inquiry.

Apart from finding a percentage that the backpackers could live with and the Australian government could live with, with the impost on the roads and the amenities that our foreign workforce friends enjoy, there was the need to find a point they could accept so that they would keep coming back. The inquiry was to report back to the government in mid-October this year. As I said earlier, it was with fantastic relief that we were able to bring that process forward by around three weeks because the evidence was so clear. As I said, one of the most important things with this issue is the time-critical nature of the entire resolution that is needed. In late September, we were able to announce that, with all of the conversations and consultation with the horticulture industry, backpackers, supply agencies and labour agencies, we were able to land on 19c. As many people would know, a large portion of backpackers are
not all that concerned. They are young by nature and they are not all that concerned with their superannuation. Quite a large proportion of them leave that super here in Australia anyway.

I understand that it is a 95 per cent impost on superannuation that is earned, but, again, it lets all of the backpackers know exactly where they stand with this issue into the future. Indications are that, providing we arrive at this resolution early enough, then we were going to put confidence back into this labour force. They are overseas right now making their decisions about which country they are going to visit so that they can enjoy this trip of a lifetime, work for the first six months or so to get that additional time on their visa and then have the experience of a lifetime. All of this workforce that are going to be here in the next few months are overseas right now having conversations with their friends about which country they are going to go to. The $19c was a good reflection on the value of the wages that are available here in Australia and the quality of life that you are going to be able to experience by coming over here with not much money, earning a $10,000 or $15,000 or $20,000 nest egg and then, as most backpackers invariably do, dropping that money somewhere else in Australia. That is the critical nature that we need to understand about how this money is filtered and shared around Australia.

We were able to resolve this in late September and bring it into the parliament in the lower house last week, but now we understand that it is being held up in the Senate because Labor, the Greens and the crossbenchers want to have a review into the backpacker tax arrangements. Mr Fitzgibbon mentioned this morning that he was more or less accepting that he would make sure this work is done by Christmas. A statement as straightforward as 'We’ll have this done by Christmas' shows a clear understanding of the time-critical nature of this issue. Backpackers do not just decide where they are going to go one day and book their flights and turn up two days later. They take months to plan their entire trip. They take months to research the best areas to work and enjoy themselves and where else they are going to travel after they finish their work to look at some of the other great parts of this country. But that planning process takes months. We are already being clearly warned by the horticulturalists in the Goulburn Valley and elsewhere that we do not want to muck around with this issue, that we need to make these decisions quickly.

The coalition has done that. We have upheld our end of the bargain to resolve this issue quickly. What we are now faced with is the consequences of Labor and the Greens and the crossbench wanting to play games and do some chest beating in the Senate. I am all for politicians that want to play games and increase their notoriety and have everybody look at them and see how important they are—I am happy for you to do all that stuff, but do not do it when you are going to impact on all the mums and dads businesses around Australia. In the Goulburn Valley you are going to be impacting in a negative way some of the biggest industries that we have in the entire Goulburn Valley.

It is not just the horticultural industry. They are going to be the first to be hit if these backpackers choose to go elsewhere because of the uncertainty about what the Labor Party and the Greens are doing in the Senate. But there are so many other industries that are hanging right off the back end of the horticultural industry, such as the food processing plants. SPC, one of Australia’s iconic industries, has well over 500 people employed. They will be directly impacted by any downturn in the backpacker labour force turning up. Then, moving past the processors, you then move into the transport industry and the packaging industry, all
of whom are setting up real hubs and gigantic companies and businesses in the Goulburn Valley, which, again, are all riding on the back end of the fruit and horticultural industries. Once you move away from that, you then go into the retail aspects of the fruit industry. It is a matter of understanding that this is critical and if we get it wrong there will be severe consequences. It is not just the fruit—it goes right through the entire community.

The consequences of gamesmanship on this issue are going to be severe. In the Goulburn Valley we have over 10,000 backpackers that are there for anywhere from around three to six months. Some of them stay longer. However, it is a significant workforce that plays a significant role in the fruit industry. They have not been paying zero tax. There has been an agreement in place which has probably been acting as a withholding tax. Historically the fruit pickers that come in from overseas pay 13c and have been paying 13c in the dollar for many, many years. An agreement was reached—I think the shearers were also brought into that agreement and into that accord. So the backpackers in the Goulburn Valley region have already been paying 13c in the dollar, and that has been an accepted amount to be paid by our overseas workforce. It has been understood that an extra six per cent is not going to be substantial enough to have them veer away to another country, simply because of the better wages that are on tap in Australia and also the better quality of life and better amenities that are provided by the relevant tiers of government here in Australia.

So my plea, very, very clearly, is that the government has done its part. What we need to do is put the message out there very clearly to the Senate that this is time critical and there are going to be an awful lot of mum-and-dad Australian businesses that are going to be impacted if these games continue any longer than another week. We are going to need to send a very clear message overseas, and there is a $10 million package for advertising in the tourism sector of the countries that generally provide this workforce. We need to send the message loud and clear that Australia is open to the backpackers, that we are welcoming backpackers and that we have set a 19c in the dollar tax rate. Most backpackers, when they sit down and do their sums with their friends in their planning for their upcoming trip, are going to see Australia a fantastic opportunity and a great destination.

The other aspect of this which was not also taken into account is the impact this is going to have on the tourism sector in two ways. Firstly, there is a large percentage of tourist operators that use backpackers as part of their business in the same way that the horticulture industry, the viticulture industry and even dairy industry do. Secondly, of the money that is earned in agriculture by the backpackers, nearly 100 per cent of that money is turned around and dropped here in Australia at other tourist ventures right around the country. So there is going to be an enormous impact felt not only in horticulture but also in tourism if these backpackers are deterred from coming to Australia because of some games that people want to play in the Senate.

Sometimes I look at this place and say, 'Yes, sure enough, if the Labor Party want to play games, well, good on them. If the Greens want to sit with them and play games, that is fine.' But in the Senate there are enough Independents and crossbenchers apart from the Greens and Labor to all get on board together and make the Labor Party and the Greens irrelevant. It adds further fuel to the bewilderment of the Senate when those minor parties cannot see the common sense with where we have landed on this one and cannot see the time-critical nature of creating a resolution that is going to let everybody go forward.
Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton) (16:47): I rise to support the amendment moved by the member for McMahon because this has been a shambolic process from the outset. When the budget was handed down last year, there was a change to this particular arrangement. There was a proposed tax imposition on working holiday makers and there had been very little consultation with stakeholders. So it was 18 months in the making in which time the government could not resolve this matter. As a result of that 18 months of bungling, division, dysfunction and dithering by the government, stakeholders—in the first case employers who rely upon legitimate demands for labour in regions and in certain sectors of this country—were left with this matter unresolved. There was no proper consultation, no consultation with the employers or with the sector generally and, as a result, there have been 18 months of delay, confusion and uncertainty for those stakeholders. For those reasons I support the first paragraph of the amendment, which says the government's handling of the backpacker tax has been a shambles. It has created uncertainty within the agriculture and tourism sectors and within other sectors which rely upon legitimate demands for labour in this manner.

Having spoken to employers in the agricultural sector most recently, they have emphasised how disappointed they have been and how angry they have been that they have been let down by the government. Quite frankly, even though it would appear that the National Farmers' Federation has supported the compromise position proposed by the government contained within this bill, that is not the view of their members or at least many of its members, who have raised concerns that the uncertainty has already had an effect upon the supply of legitimate labour in sectors such as agriculture. As a result, they will not be able to find labour in areas in which they have had difficulties in the past. Again, this is not a particularly suitable and satisfactory compromise for many after 18 months of delay and confusion.

It is also important to note, and the member for McMahon notes it in his amendment, that the passenger movement charge increase was proposed despite the government, only weeks before, criticising an increase to the passenger movement charge when we on this side were last in office. The now trade minister attacked the change by saying it would be strangling the golden goose to impose a new tax on passenger movement. It will have an adverse impact upon the tourist industry, particularly for those very low-cost flights to countries within the region. Any increase is going to have some deterrence. The fact that the government so hypocritically attacked Labor and then only weeks later proposed an increase to this tax is quite astounding but it really shows how confused the government is. Within almost the same time frame, you have one minister coming out and attacking Labor for an earlier increase and then the Treasurer is now proposing an increase without any regard to the trade minister's comments—a government confused, contradictory and divided.

Finally, the fourth paragraph refers to concerns that have been expressed about the changes to the arrangements for working holiday makers given the rorting, abuse and exploitation that have occurred. I believe there is a legitimate demand for temporary work visa applicants in parts of our labour market. Some sectors of our economy certainly require a supply of labour to do the job and that has been the case for many a year. Equally though, we have seen situations where either there has been some widespread exploitation of work temporary work visa holders and there has been a flood of temporary work visa holders in areas where there is no legitimate demand and that is an important issue too. As a former immigration minister, I
for one do support the legitimate supply and complementary embellishment of our labour force through temporary work visas including the student visa, holiday maker visa and the 457 visa.

However, there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the contention that there is an oversupply in some sectors of our economy, which is leading to the displacement of Australian jobseekers getting work. Young jobseekers in particular are not always afforded the opportunity of employment in their own communities, because of the overabundance of temporary work visas. For that reason, while I think it is not an easy matter to resolve, Labor committed to examining the manner in which both the working holiday maker visa and the student visa apply so that we calibrate the implementation of these visas with a view to making sure that we do supply the legitimate demand that is required for employers and making sure that we do not oversupply in some local labour markets that will only lead to the deprivation of employment opportunities for jobseekers in this country.

We are getting to a point where temporary worker visa holders make up 10 per cent of our labour market. This country is built on immigration. We have a bipartisan position in relation to permanent immigration and have had for some time. About two-thirds of permanent migrants have come here through the skilled stream and one-third for family reunion. Despite the fraught debates we have had sometimes on the topic of immigration, the permanent stream of migration is the one area that we have had agreed about over the last 20 or so years. It has fluctuated somewhat, depending on the growth of the economy and the demand. During the Howard years we saw very big increases in permanent migration because of the mining boom. Labor supported that approach. that is one area where we tend to agree.

One significant distinction between the parties is that we have had concerns about abuse of the 457 visas, which is why in 2013 we changed the law to bring in labour market testing. We do have a concern about the misuse and in some significant instances the overuse of temporary work visas such as the holiday maker visa and student visa where very are only driving wages down because there is exploitation, and because there is an oversupply and local job seekers are not being given an opportunity. We do not like to see any form of exploitation; nor should this parliament. We do not want to see temporary work visa applicants being exploited. We do not want to see local job seekers exploited to the extent that they are not being afforded opportunities to find work because of the misuse and overuse of these types of visas.

With respect to the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016, the amendment that has been moved by the member for McMahon expresses concerns about some of the changes. That is why we would like to see the bill examined. The one way to undermine confidence in either temporary or permanent immigration is to have the system not work. Therefore, if there are problems with the system it is very important that they be fixed. It is very important we get the system right so that we can instil confidence in the migration system and in the use of temporary migration for employment and other purposes.

In keeping with that, the Fair Work Ombudsman only last weekend released its report *Inquiry into the wages and conditions of people working under the 417 working holiday visa program*. This is a damning report that really confirms the scale, nature and extent of exploitation of many temporary work visa holders working in this country.
The first thing to note is that since 2014 ‘a total 410,503 people have been granted the right to work in Australia courtesy of the subclass 417 working holiday visa’. It says that ‘in the 2015-16 financial year, the Fair Work Ombudsman received 1,820 requests for assistance from visa holders and was responsible for just over $3 million being recovered’, and that ‘in total, 44 per cent of visa holders who lodged a request for assistance with the Fair Work Ombudsman were on a 417 visa’. It continues:

In the same period, 76% of litigations—

filed by the FWO involved visa holder workers and more than one third of all of the FWO’s enforcement outcomes involved a visa holder. Significantly, half of these enforcement outcomes (that is, the issuing of compliance notices, the execution of enforceable undertakings and the filing of legal proceedings) involved 417 visa holders.

That is a very damning set of statistics. It says that there is something seriously wrong with the application of this visa class. The 417 visa was expanded over a decade ago. We need now to take stock and consider the way in which the 417 visa is being used.

The Fair Work Ombudsman report says:

The FWO regards 417 visa workers as especially vulnerable due to the difficulties in understanding and exercising their entitlements because of age and language barriers. In particular, their vulnerability is increased if they choose to undertake an 88 day placement, because of the remoteness of their working location and their dependence on employers to obtain eligibility for a second year visa.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has identified issues in relation to this matter:

In addition to examining the requests for assistance, throughout the course of this Inquiry, the FWO received information from visa holders, stakeholders and the public identifying a range of concerns suggesting exploitation of 417 visa holders, including instances of:

• underpayment and/or non-payment of wages
• visa holders offering … payment to employers and third parties for assistance to gain a second year—

that is, effectively, bribing an employer to give them a second year—

• an increased dependency on the employer by the visa holder seeking employment during the 88 day specified work requirement of the 417 visa program …
• sexual harassment and workplace health and safety (WHS) issues
• employers recruiting workers with the offer of unpaid work to meet the second year visa eligibility requirements
• visa holders working for free in exchange for non-certified accommodation programs.

That is a list—and not an exhaustive one—of the complaints that have been raised with the ombudsman which have led to, in many instances, successful litigation. But the scale of these problems is of great concern to Labor. It is why this visa must be examined. It is why the member for McMahon has expressed concerns about those changes to arrangements—so we are clear as to whether in fact they are going to improve things or not.

We do not want to see exploitation and abuse. That will lead, as I say, in the first instance to exploitation of workers, many of whom are vulnerable, as the Fair Work Ombudsman has already said. Secondly, that will place downward pressure on wages so that locals looking for jobs, too, will be exploited either by, in cases where the visa is being overused, being
deprived of employment opportunities or because wages will be lower because employers are not paying the legally required rates of pay. These are serious matters that need to be attended to.

The Fair Work Ombudsman, the government’s own agency, only this week has outlined, chapter and verse, a significant problem with the working holiday visa program that needs to be attended to so we can have confidence in the system. It is something that the Minister for Employment must attend to as a matter of course as soon as possible.

It is not just that issue, of course. As I have said, for 18 months the stakeholders have been concerned about the problems that have arisen as a result of the unilateral proposal to impose tax on temporary work visas without any consultation or proper information provided to affected parties. It has led to this uncertainty.

Labor will examine these matters. We are keeping an open mind. We will examine them and look at the findings and recommendations of the Senate inquiry. But I think we should be very clear here that we need to make sure we get the legitimate demand right so that our employers and industries are able to find sufficient labour. But we also need to ensure that the system does not allow for exploitation and the deprivation of employment opportunities for local jobseekers.

Mr PASIN (Barker) (17:02): It is true to say that for some time now in our nation we have had difficulties around the policy settings relevant to 417 visa holders—or backpackers, as they have become known. They are working holiday-makers. I thought I might distil down for the parliament’s benefit why we are having those difficulties on those settings. There is a very easy, binary opportunity to seek to blame one side or the other. But these issues dive much deeper than an exercise in binary blame shifting.

First of all, I think we should note that the number of visa applications coming to Australia has been in steep decline since 2012. In 2012 those opposite sat on this side, and those on this side sat opposite. We have also seen a practice that has developed whereby working holiday-makers certify that they are Australian citizens for the purpose of income taxation. That is not right and not appropriate, but it is a practice that has built up. Why is that important? It is important because foreigners who work in Australia are obliged to pay tax of 32½ per cent. If you are Australian for the purposes of the Australian taxation system then you do not pay tax at a flat rate of 32½ per cent and you can take advantage of things such as the tax-free threshold. Therefore, there has been a practice that has developed that has meant not only have we seen a drop-off in the number of backpackers coming to Australia but backpackers have not been paying the appropriate level of taxation. Even today, that is 32½ per cent. When the tax-free threshold was lifted from $6,000 and more than tripled to exceed $19,000, this operated as a windfall to 417 visa holders in the country. It meant for very many of them that they could come to Australia on a working holiday visa and pay no tax. That was never the intention.

If we fast-forward to the 2015 budget, there was then a need to correct this anomaly—that is, the anomaly that saw backpackers certifying themselves as Australians for the purposes of the Australian tax law, taking advantage of the tax-free threshold. So instead of paying 32½ per cent in tax, which the law said they were obliged to, they were in fact paying no tax or at least no tax up to the point of the tax-free threshold. In the budget of 2015 was an attempt to legislate the current position with respect to the law.
I have said that this has been a difficult road, because it has. As soon as I and my
county were aware of this issue I began of the work to see it undone. Why might I do
that? My electorate is 64,000 square kilometres in size. It is very much in the top echelon of
electorates in this place in the growing of horticultural products and, indeed, I would argue,
agriculture more broadly. So there is a specific and strong demand for seasonal workers in
periods of peak demand at various times throughout my electorate.

I would like to pause at this point to say: isn’t it great that we are having a discussion in this
place about the need to supply labour in peak periods of demand? It speaks to the strength of
the agriculture and horticulture industries in this country. I am much happier having a debate
in this context than in the context of communities suffering from the effects of a downturn in
commodity prices and a lack of jobs.

I should also note that I see this as a debate of immediacy. It is a debate for today, the short
term and the medium term. I think both of us—that is, those who sit on both sides of this
place—would like to see more and more Australians taking up these jobs. That is the long-
term objective: to take people from welfare and put them into work and put them into
positions where they can take up this temporary work. Whilst in any one particular location
this work can be temporary, collectively it can amount to effectively full-time work around
the country. Indeed, my electorate is littered with stories of people who began their business
as employees in a temporary setting, moved to communities and over time worked up to a
point where they not only are working in that capacity but have acquired businesses and have
developed them.

We got to a situation in 2015 where the government effectively legislated the position of the
day. That was to come into effect in the middle of this year. In the lead-up to the federal
election, we obviously indicated that there was more work to be done on this policy. At this
point, I think it appropriate to thank the current Treasurer, the Hon. Scott Morrison, for his
efforts in relation to this matter. The member for Hinkler is smiling. I can tell the member for
Hinkler, as he well knows, in his absence in the Liberal party room, that one short, fat little
member for Barker got up and said, ‘This just was not going to fly,’ after we had resolved the
superannuation debate.

Myself, the member for Durack and the member for Grey then met with the Prime Minister
later that week and indicated that this matter needed to be resolved. I was part of that
delegation in my role as chair of the backbench committee for agriculture, Ms Price was part
of it on behalf of Northern Australia and the member for Grey was there in his capacity as
chair of the Liberal Party rural and regional caucus. As a result of that meeting, we saw a
number of discussions take place over the intervening two weeks. What we have seen is a
significant change to our position.

At this point, so that the member for Hinkler does not get too upset with me, I will say that
these voices were lending weight to voices from deep within the National Party room. That is
why we are such a strong party. As somebody who came here as something other than the
coalitionist, I am glad to say I am now a coalitionist, because I see what we can achieve. We
all have our strengths and weaknesses, but I think it is fair to say that this is one issue where
the Liberal Party room had a lot to say about what needed to happen.

So then, what have we done? We taken the effective tax rate, which I should say operates
today—this is something that I think is lost on the member for Hunter; the current operating
tax rate is 32½ per cent—and we have taken it to 19 per cent. We have provided $10 million to Tourism Australia to seek to address the fundamental causative concern here, which is that the number of backpacker visa applications has been in steep decline since 2012. That $10 million for Tourism Australia to arrest that decline is, quite frankly, a sensible approach. We have reduced the application fee for working holiday-makers by $50 and we have raised the age of eligibility to 35. That is to say nothing of the one employer rule, which we have tweaked significantly to mean that you could work for a single employer for 12 months, or up to 12 months, provided you undertake that work in two separate locations. These are all measures that go towards providing an additional supply of backpacker labour into the Australian marketplace. Why, you might say, is that important for my electorate? Well, as I said earlier, we are such significant producers of agricultural and horticultural products.

Now, there are those opposite who have attempted to play a little politics with this. They say that it took the Liberal-National Party some time to resolve this issue and, true, it did. But the problem for the member for Hunter is that he has been in this place all that time too and, instead of coming to us and coming to the minister with a proposal, all we see is the member for Hunter whingeing and whining about the performance of the Deputy Prime Minister. It is not helpful, with respect.

The National Farmers' Federation know what is going on. On 27 September, after they saw the release of our position, they said:

Farmers breathe sigh of relief at Backpacker Tax decision.

If it was not clear enough about how the National Farmers' Federation and their members think about those opposite—

Ms Chesters interjecting—

Mr PASIN: The member for Bendigo best be careful, because I might remind the House about the ban of the live export trade. On 11 October 2016, the National Farmers' Federation said:

Labor abandons farm sector on backpacker tax.

Why do they say that Labor has abandoned backpackers? They have abandoned backpackers, and we have made the decision. We do not make the decision—once we had come to a positive policy outcome—to delay it and wait for it to come to this House, play politics and send it off to a committee. We socialised it immediately. We called meetings of the backbench committee for agriculture by telephone conference. There was an extraordinary cabinet meeting to approve it. We understand the need to get this position socialised in plenty of time to ensure that backpackers continue to come to Australia.

Sadly, those opposite do not. Indeed, no-one inside or outside this place has known what the Labor Party position on the backpacker tax has been—no-one. We did not know whether they were supportive of the change; we did not know if they wanted other changes. One thing we did know—and this is what is a bit cute about the position they are adopting now, standing in this place and criticising those opposite whilst at the same time telling us that they will ultimately support this bill—is that the $540 million these changes will create has been banked by those opposite in the lead-up to the July 2016 election. They took those funds and expended them as part of their costings.
The final thing I want to reflect on is that there are two voices that are no longer in this place who were the strongest advocates as we began the campaign to change the backpacker tax in 2015 building through 2016. They were the former member for Braddon and the former for Lyons. Those two gentlemen were fierce advocates for their communities and fierce advocates for Tasmanian growers. What we have had from the new member for Braddon and the new member for Lyons is deafly silence on this issue. Indeed, the new member for Lyons, in a radio interview, indicated that he did not think the Labor Party would support these changes. I expect his position has changed now that someone has told him that from the very get-go the Labor Party was banking these savings and spending this revenue.

These changes are emphatically good news for agriculturalists and horticulturalists in Barker. Whether you are a producer of seed potatoes in the south-east of South Australia, a stone fruit grower in the Riverland, a vigneron in the Coonawarra or you are running a broadacre property through the Murray and Mallee, these changes make it more likely that you will have the necessary backpacker labour at periods of high demand.

This is a government doing the right thing. We went to the election and we were told clearly that we need to effect changes to the proposed policy. We proved that we have something other than a tin ear on this issue. We have proved it on superannuation and we have proved it now on the backpacker tax. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (17:17): ‘Debacle’ is the only word you can use to describe the government’s performance on this issue. Let us just remember that it was their tax that they introduced in the 2015 budget. It was their decision to tax backpackers 32.5 per cent for every dollar that they earned. That was their decision and it was instantly unpopular with their constituency and it was also instantly unpopular—and this might shock the coalition—with our unions. They were not happy that we had decided to adopt that position, because they argued that it was an issue of fairness. So perhaps the government might want to check the submissions from the unions about what they argued in relation to the 32.5 per cent. The government went for a quick tax grab. It went through the parliament and it has been sitting there. Since then, with the war within the coalition, they have not been able to resolve this issue until just recently. Yet they seek to blame everybody but themselves for their unhappy marriage and their inability to resolve this issue.

The bill before us, the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016, drops the tax to 19 per cent. But it is still a tax. Let’s not pretend that it is not. You are still taxing backpackers 19 per cent. Some of the language and the rhetoric in media suggest that it has almost dropped off entirely. That is not true; it is still 19 per cent. That is less than the 32.5 per cent, but it is still 19 per cent. And you have to ask: why 19 per cent? Why is it 19 per cent? That is one of the reasons that this side is referring the bill to a committee. It is such a random figure. There is no other tax rate of 19 per cent. Yes, they have put it out there in terms of economics, but you cannot trust this government when it comes to economics. This needs to be tested.

What we have seen, on cue and as expected, from government members is a lot of alarmism. They are blaming the introduction of their own tax as the reason that the number of backpackers is dropping off. They are saying that their own tax is the reason that fewer backpackers are coming here. That is a really simple proposition that they have put forward, but they are not acknowledging that it is their own fault if that is the sole reason that
backpacker numbers are dropping. The truth is that there are other reasons that the numbers are dropping. Another reason that this bill needs to go to a Senate inquiry is that we need to look at some of those other reasons. We need to really explore why it is that the other parts of this package have been put forward.

I am not surprised that members opposite are not referring to the Fair Work Ombudsman report that was released over the weekend. It was a pretty damning report of the backpacker visa, the 417 visas and the 462 visas. This report found that a third of the backpackers that they surveyed are being underpaid. Perhaps the reason that backpacker numbers are dropping is that they are being exploited—something that the government is choosing to ignore. The government is running away from genuine significant reform on the exploitation of backpackers in our country. I am not surprised but I am disappointed that the government is not acknowledging that this could be a reason that backpacker numbers are dropping off.

Farm work is hard work. There is no denying that farm work is very hard work. It is regional; it is remote; and it is hard to get to. And our farmers are in competition with so many other industries when it comes to backpacker labour. Something that the government are also not acknowledging in this debate is that, whilst we have about 200,000 backpackers in this country at the moment, only about 38,000 of them ever step foot on a farm. So, for all of their ranting—'We need to push through with this right now to get the harvest off the trees'; 'We need to push through with this right now because this is vital labour working on our farms'—what they are not acknowledging is that it is also about the 160,000 backpackers who will never step foot on a farm.

What they are not acknowledging is that, with the backpacker visa, you can work anywhere in our country. It is uncapped. They are directly competing against young jobseekers. I will just give some examples of where some of these backpackers are working. They are working in mining, they are working in construction and they are working in beauty. They are even working as social workers. You would think that having backpackers working as social workers was a bad policy direction. We are talking about social workers who deal with some of our most vulnerable children, foster children. We have backpackers working as social workers!

It is so important in this debate that we acknowledge the original intent of the backpacker visa. In 1975 the working holiday visa was introduced by the Australian government as a cultural exchange program. It was an opportunity to foster closer cultural ties with other countries, so young Australians could go over there and their young people could come here. In 2005, under the Howard government, a new option was introduced allowing 417 visa holders a chance to stay for a second year. This is when we saw the backpacker visa become a labour supply visa. The government back then created some significant problems, and we are seeing the repercussions of that a decade on.

The Fair Work Ombudsman's report that was released on the weekend exposed that the fact that you have to perform those 88 days to get a second visa has created a culture of exploitation. Today the backpacker visa is becoming a cultural exchange of exploitation. That is what came out in the report released on the weekend. A third of backpackers are not being paid their correct entitlements. We are not talking about a handful of backpackers here; we are talking about a third of the backpackers they had surveyed. We are talking about people having to pay for the opportunity to work 88 days to get their visa extended. Let us just
explore and expose the sham that this visa has become. The government does not want to talk about this. It only wants a bandaid solution—'Let's just fix the tax. That will turn backpacker numbers around.'

They are kidding themselves if they think that by lowering the tax rate they will fix our international reputation. Other countries are upset that their young people are being exploited by Australian businesses. It was evident in the Fair Work Ombudsman's report. They spoke to consuls here in Australia. The treatment of their young nationals in our country by Australian employers and Australian industry has been raised time and time again. The report found—and the government has not acknowledged this—not only that a third claimed they were paid less than the minimum rate but also that they were forced to work excessive hours, were being sexually abused and were working and living in unsafe conditions. The report goes into detail how some employers deducted from workers' pay without even asking their permission. It goes into detail about how workers were forced to stay in substandard living arrangements and then have that taken out of their pay.

There is an ugly underbelly when it comes to this visa, yet the government does not want to talk about that in its package of reforms. It is really frustrating that the only thing we really have to debate today is the tax measure. What is not before us that the government should be focusing on is cleaning up this visa. Instead of introducing measures to clean up the seedy underbelly and the exploitation associated with this visa, the government wants to expand the eligibility up to 35. But young Australians cannot go and work in the UK up until they are 35. Young Australians cannot go to Canada and work up until they are 35. The original intent of this was a cultural exchange. What impact will expanding the eligibility up to 35 have on our jobs market? This is the question that needs to be asked.

Then there is working for the same employer in two locations. How will that help our ag industry, which the government cares so much about? What it really means is that employers in hospitality, employers in construction and employers in mining—the bigger firms out there—will simply move backpackers around, making it even harder for the agricultural industry to attract the workers they so desperately need.

The government is simply ignoring the fact that it is not just the tax which is why backpackers are choosing not to come to this country. Conditions in their own countries have improved. The treatment of backpackers in this country has to be a factor. The industry has to embrace reform. If you exploit backpackers and treat them appallingly, they will stop working here and they will stop taking up that cultural exchange, because who wants a cultural exchange of exploitation? I encourage members of the government to read this report and see the failings of their own minister to clean this up. The Minister for Employment and the minister for immigration are doing nothing to clean up the exploitation of vulnerable backpackers in our country.

One of the reasons why it is so hard for farmers to attract people to agriculture—and I reiterate that about 200,000 backpackers are in our country and AUSVEG identified that about 38,000 work on farms—is that they are in competition with a number of other industries, including meatworks. An example in my electorate saw local workers displaced. Don KR is a big employer, with 1,500 people. In the lead-up to Christmas local casuals get extra work to help them through the Christmas period. Castlemaine is a town of 6,000. Don KR used a labour hire firm with Taiwanese backpackers. We now know that they have been
engaged in some of the practices exposed in the Fair Work Ombudsman's report. Basically, Don KR turned around and said that they were cheaper. They said it in the local media: 'They are cheaper than Australian workers, so we are going with the backpackers.' There were 200 jobs lost locally.

I am sure there is a farmer with some fruit who would rather have those 200 backpackers, but this is the competition they are in. The government has failed to do proper labour market testing, labour market analysis, about where backpackers are working. They are here ranting, with this huff and puff, about why we need to drop the tax to get backpackers in to pick fruit, when the majority of backpackers will never walk onto a farm. Backpackers are increasingly being used in construction and in mining.

We must acknowledge during this debate—and not one member across the chamber has—the unsafe workplaces in construction that some of our backpackers are working in. On my Facebook page, I have had the haunting image of the young German backpacker with her smiling face. She was here for a cultural exchange when, last Monday, she tragically lost her life. The 27-year-old backpacker fell down a 35-metre shaft to her death on a Perth construction site. She worked for a company that has underpaid workers and provided substandard working conditions. This happened on the back of two young Irish construction workers who were crushed and killed 12 months ago. One of the most dangerous places to be employed, it appears, is as a backpacker on a construction site or in the farm industry.

The government is not ensuring that the employers of these guest workers in our country have the proper health and safety procedures in place and in check. The intersection between labour hire and how employers are treating backpackers needs to be explored, which is why we have suggested that this bill go off to a Senate inquiry to be reviewed. There is a lot in the package that the minister is responsible for that we will not get the chance to debate, which is why it is necessary for it to go off to a Senate inquiry so that questions can be asked. The proposed tax rate of 19 per cent is an arbitrary figure. It is a bit rich of the government to stand here and say, 'Don't worry, we've balanced the books. It will all work out.' You cannot trust the government when it comes to economic figures. You cannot trust the government when it comes to economics. You also need to call them out on their ranting and raving that, if we do not do this right now, the harvest will not get picked. It is their own fault and of their own making. We need to explore the impact that backpacker labour is having on jobs in our industries. It needs to be called out for what it is. We need to ensure that every worker in this country—whether they are Australian or a backpacker, on a farm, in construction, at Don KR or at any number of places—are paid appropriate wages, are treated with respect and dignity and, quite frankly, can go home at the end of the day.

For the young German backpacker and the two Irish backpackers, and anyone else who has had a horrible experience through our backpacker visa program, the cultural exchange needs to end. This visa needs to get back to what it was originally intended to do: assist closer relations between two countries. It should not be used as a cheap source of labour for Australian industries to undercut the wages and jobs of Australian workers.

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (17:32): It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Bendigo. The tenor of her speeches always has a sort of sour note. She talks a lot about the Chiko Roll, but I reckon she was raised on lemons.
Speaking of fruit, it is a great pleasure to speak today about the working holiday-maker reform package which our government is delivering. I am pleased to speak today on the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016 because it is of great significance for my electorate of Canning and, indeed, the whole of Australia. The working holiday-makers reform package will provide certainty and stability for the horticultural, agricultural and tourism industries. The member for Bendigo cited the tragic death of a German backpacker just recently. I just want to say: we are talking about tax reform here. I am not sure if the results of the inquiry into that tragic incident have been released or even concluded, so let’s not speculate and make erroneous links between government policy which is not yet enacted and that tragic example.

This is commonsense legislation and proof that this coalition government is committed to listening and responding to the concerns of the electorate. Through extensive stakeholder engagement, we have put together this policy, which both is equitable and will balance the range of interests involved. Earlier, the member for Barker spoke about his work alongside other backbench colleagues in the coalition. Alongside the member for Barker, the members for O’Connor, Durack and Forrest and Senator Chris Back all contributed a lot, as far as I am aware, to the development of this policy. I would also like to thank the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources and the Treasurer for listening and being open to the perspective of electorates like mine.

There are several key features to this bill, and foremost is the reduction in income tax to 19 per cent for working holiday-makers under the 417 and 462 visas. On this matter, we have listened to the concerns of producers and peak bodies such as the National Farmers’ Federation. It is, of course, right and fair that visitors to this country should pay tax here like everyone else who works, given their use as well of public resources. But 32.5 per cent was simply too much and so an equitable rate had to be found that did not undercut our other arrangements. For instance, travellers from the Pacific Islands working under the Seasonal Worker Program pay tax at a flat rate of 15 per cent. A rate of 19 per cent does not undercut this arrangement but, nonetheless, remains generous by comparison to the original rate of 32.5 per cent. When our higher wage rates are taken into account, it is clear that this bill will make us competitive on the international stage for prospective holiday workers. We are, of course, competing with New Zealand, Canada, South America and other parts of the world, where young people from Europe particularly want to go and broaden their horizons before undertaking study or pursuing their vocations or careers. So we want to make Australia a place where they come, they have that cultural exchange and it is a positive experience, and they also have the opportunity to contribute to our economy and to our key industries in agriculture and horticulture and also earn a bit of money—which, of course, is spent in the communities where they live. I think of Capogreco Farms in Hamel, in Canning. They have 60 backpackers at any one time working for them. They produce a lot of fruit and have permanent housing facilities for the backpackers who travel. In fact, people in Italy and France know about them—word of mouth travels. It is a positive experience, particularly in Western Australia, for young European workers.

This bill will provide better protections and oversight for workers from overseas. By strengthening the tools available to the Fair Work Ombudsman, this government is working to protect backpackers and other potentially vulnerable working holiday-makers from
exploitation. This government does not distinguish between nationalities. If you are a worker, you deserve the same protections as any other worker, so we are taking steps to protect workers.

Employers of working holiday-makers must register for their workers to receive the 19 per cent taxation rate. This will allow potential employees, young people from across the world who are planning their year ahead, to make informed decisions about where they go. There are a lot of places in Australia where you can work. So the register will help young people decide where they settle for their time in Australia and will also hold employers accountable. If they are on the register, they have to meet standards. They can only tax at the 19 per cent rate if they are on that register.

This legislation will also increase the desirability of Australia as a destination for working tourists. It does so by reducing the visa application charge for 417 and 462 visas from $440 to $490. That is a $50 saving. For most backpackers, being in their late teens or early 20s, $50 means a bit—a couple of beers or food for the week, or what have you. So I welcome that reduction in cost, as well. Expenses in the bill are offset by increasing the passenger movement charge by $5. We are also spending $10 million to promote Australia as a destination for working holiday-makers. These measures highlight the government’s commitment to promoting Australia’s working tourism brand in a way that is economically responsible.

The coalition has listened to the electorate and acted accordingly. We have consulted carefully and are moving as fast as possible to provide certainty and security to Australia’s hardworking growers and their prospective employees or holiday workers. These decisions have been broadly welcomed by industry. The Labor Party, by contrast, seems unable to be happy with anything. I have listened to some of the opposition speeches on this bill—such as the one a few minutes ago from the member for Bendigo—and I have heard their complaints about the government’s handling of this issue. What is their problem exactly? Is it that the issue has not been addressed quickly enough? Or is it that enough scrutiny has not been applied—that we have not consulted for long enough? We have heard all of those complaints.

A few months ago the opposition spokesman for agriculture was complaining that the question of the backpacker tax had not yet been resolved. Now that we have resolved it and have produced the legislation after consulting widely, and after creating a package that is broadly supported by industry, Labor now seek to delay the passage of this bill by punting it off to a Senate economics committee. They are slowing the process down. My fruitgrowers in Canning have said very clearly to me that they are concerned about a secure workforce. They are concerned about it now, not in six months. Because of the nature of the fruitgrowing business, you have to make projections; you have to plan into the future. So they need surety that they will be able to secure a workforce for when it comes time to pick fruit. It has to happen soon. So I implore those opposite to get on with the business and pass this bill.

It is important that we and the rest of the Australian people understand, though, what is going on here. Those opposite like to talk a big game. They talk about standing up for people, for workers, and about backing Australian manufacturers and, of course, the agricultural sector. Yet, all we are getting here is politicking—nothing more, nothing less. It is true to form. We have seen the Labor Party obstruct and mislead in recent weeks and months on the same-sex marriage plebiscite, on Medicare. They have a long history of this on renewable
energy. Now, we are seeing them do the same thing for agriculture, horticulture and tourism. They go on about how the government is in a shambles over the backpackers tax, they get a few grabs in the media and they then sit on their hands. I am calling on you now to pass this bill—get on with it. This is a good reform. It gives security to our industries. Let us put politics aside. This place used to be renowned for the effectiveness of the two-party system. That two-party system made reform possible during the Keating and Hawke era. In the same spirit, this is one of these industry reforms that need to happen, and I call on you to back it.

This government is about delivering. This is about ensuring that Australia remains a competitive destination for the overseas labour market. Again, we are competing with other countries, like Canada and New Zealand, for these workers. It is an economic issue, and there are many factors that come to play. We need to get the balance right. As I have said, we have consulted widely and carefully, and this bill does address those concerns. However, this bill matters most because it affects real people. At stake are the crops and the fruit that need to be picked, which, otherwise, would be left to rot on the ground. At stake are agreements and contracts with buyers which could be lost in the future. At stake are the livelihoods and wellbeing of hardworking, everyday Australians who should not have to live according to the campaign timetable of a Labor Party that cannot accept it lost the election.

I would like to take the opportunity now to highlight how this issue has developed in my electorate and how this government's ministers have responded to the concerns of my people. I applaud the hard work and advocacy of the Hills Orchard Improvement Group, led by the very capable spokesman Brett DelSimone. Brett has persuasively put the case for the holiday-makers reform package. He has very competently represented the fruitgrowers of Roleystone, Karragullen, Pickering Brook and other suburbs in Canning. They are an excellent community group, and it has been a pleasure working with them on this reform.

There were two significant events in the lead-up to this bill. We had a fruitgrowers' forum for which the Cabinet Secretary, Senator Sinodinos, came to Canning in early May. It was hosted by John and Emily Della Franca. They own CORE Cider House in Canning. They are third-generation orchardists. It is a great facility. You can go there for a nice lunch and a bit of cider. You can sit there with a beautiful vista over their orchard. It is a great place. I highly recommend it. So we had a very good meeting with Senator Sinodinos. I remember one thing, though. One of the fruitgrowers said: 'We are competing with the welfare system when it comes to attracting workers and securing workers. We are competing with the welfare system.' So I am very glad that we have the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Human Services working up a substantial reform package which, hopefully, will help fruitgrowers and people in the agricultural sector secure their workforces into the future. We need young Australians working, not on welfare. So I am very proud that the government is taking action in this area.

The second meeting was with the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, who visited fruit growers during the campaign. He talked about the classification of suburbs in Canning that were previously metropolitan but are now regional, which also gives more security to employers who hire backpackers or working holiday makers. So there has been very good engagement from our ministry and very good engagement from my local community groups. This is how good public policy is formed. I want to applaud the people in Canning, and the government for the way they have delivered this package.
In closing, I commend this bill to the House. It is sensible reform designed to incentivise a secure workforce for our fruit growers; promote Australia as a desirable destination for working holiday makers; and, most importantly, ensure our agricultural, horticultural and tourism industries remain strong into the future.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): I call the member for Oxley, and I wish him all the very best in the 45th Parliament.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (17:45): Thanks very much, Mr Deputy Speaker Vasta. I rise to enter the debate tonight on the Income Tax Rates Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016. I am following the member for Canning, who finished his remarks by saying this piece of legislation was the definition of 'good public policy', in the Hawke and Keating tradition. Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker: the member for Canning is certainly no Bob Hawke and certainly no Paul Keating. And, if the member for Dawson threatening to quit, a meltdown inside the coalition party room and a reform taking 18 months to come onto the floor of this parliament is your definition of good public policy, we have a big problem ahead of us with this government, and I am not surprised it is in the mess it is in. But, from listening to the contributions from those opposite, particularly the members of the National Party, it seems that somehow they want to be congratulated for the mess that they have created! Somehow they want a pat on the back for the mess and uncertainty that they have delivered to their regional communities.

I support the second reading amendment moved by the shadow Treasurer and member for McMahon because this backpacker tax has been nothing more than a shambles. And you do not need to take my word for it. It was only this week that a member of the government, Senator Barry O'Sullivan, gave a speech about this very legislation, saying 'massive uncertainty' was created by the tax, which was reworked yet again last month, and the toing and froing over the tax 'had gone on far too long'. He said:

I do not want to seem critical of my own government—

but he was!—

but I think this whole exercise could well have been managed better and more promptly. All the information available to us to resolve the issues that presented to those sectors has been at our disposal for a significant period of time.

So, what happened? Despite the rubbish we have just heard from the member for Canning, who said this reform was the definition of good public policy, there was something called an election that got in the road, so that we had to have a stopgap measure to stop that infighting over that election period. The member for Barker paid tribute to the wonderful advocacy of the members for Braddon and Lyons. Well, they did not do very good job, because the community made sure that they became former members of this House! If they were so good, they would still be here; but they are not. and that is the reality, because quality people have taken their places now, people who will champion issues on behalf of the community, rather than letting politics get in the road.

We also have the uncertainty that has been caused to the agricultural and tourism sectors. The hypocrisy of those opposite knows no bounds.

Mrs Wicks interjecting—
Mr DICK: I can hear the member for Corangamite interjecting, as she does. She is trying to defend the shambles once again, but she knows she cannot because she is on the record as being part of the mess that has resulted in fewer backpackers coming to Australia, with more pressures on the community.

When the announcement, the so-called miracle, came forward on the backpacker tax, a Victorian citrus grower and chairwoman of lobby group Voice of Horticulture said last week:

… industry had wanted superannuation for backpackers to be scrapped.

‘Why are we just not saying that superannuation is not payable for backpackers but this amount has to be paid in increased tax?’ she said.

‘At the end of the day it's no benefit to the grower, it's now no benefit to the worker, so it's just another piece of administrative burden back on to those already overworked growers.

But she said after 18 months of uncertainty, Australia's reputation among as a working holiday destination had been damaged.

‘We have got such bad publicity out there at the moment about this backpacker tax, a lesser rate would have maybe made it more attractive to people who have already booked their flights to New Zealand or to Canada,’ she said.

‘That reputation, I really have no idea how long it's going to take us to rebuild that …

So, instead of giving congratulations and pats on the back for what can only be described as a shambles of a policy, we need to ensure that this is properly reviewed.

It is all very well to say we have had 18 months of dithering and not making decisions. We have now seen, as a result of yet another government policy change, the passenger movement charge increase. Once again, a couple of weeks ago we were hearing from the government, ‘We are not going to touch that, we are not going to increase that, but we have all sorts of problems with the backbench, we have all sorts of problems about the way this legislation has been managed that we are going to jack up the passenger movement charge.’ Despite all the hysterics and lectures that we had about that issue, we are now seeing the government do exactly the same thing that they were condemning this side of the House for.

The amendment also says:

4. concerns have been expressed about the changes to the arrangements for Working Holiday Makers given the roting, abuse and exploitation that has occurred.

We need only listen to the contribution by the member for Bendigo, who elegantly outlined the issues surrounding the Ombudsman’s report which came down last week.

But I want to focus on some of the other contributions we have heard today from those opposite, and the absolutely breathtaking hypocrisy of people like the member for Murray—a big lion in his electorate but a little pussycat when he comes in to this chamber. Before the election, he was saying we should scrap the tax, and the Liberal candidate in Murray said he was going to cross the floor. What has happened since? We have had a minor thing called the election and now he wants to be congratulated for his results. He warned that the tax should go in interviews before the election.

Now we are also seeing the Tasmanian agricultural sector raise serious concerns, and I know the member for Lyons will discuss that in his speech today. The Tasmanian government are against the tax. They know that there is a lot of concern and frustration about the lack of consultation, and I am quoting from media reports from September.
So we know there are around 200,000 working holiday-makers coming to Australia each year and in the 2015-16 year, there were around 214,000 working holiday-maker visas granted. We are talking about a significant amount of people that this tax will impact, but more importantly we are talking about the regional communities and the flow-on effects.

Representing a great state like Queensland, I am advocating on behalf of the tourism industry while I serve in this place. If you look at the amount of time backpackers have spent in Queensland, it has recently fallen by nine per cent. We know backpacker tourism is worth an estimated $3.5 billion to the Australian economy. I know that those opposite talk tough at home but when it comes to coming into this chamber it is a different story. Tourism operators in my home state have also been frustrated by the way the government has been handling this issue. In September of last year, Mary Carroll from the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, a former National Party candidate, said that the uncertainty around the laws was reducing the number of backpackers planning trips to regional areas and that it would have a devastating impact on the industry's future. She said:

We need to remove the uncertainty so it doesn't affect our long-term visitation in a year or so—

Fast forward to today—or further out.

So the warnings to the government have been loud and clear but they have refused to listen to those warnings, and now they are paying the price. We are seeing a decrease in the numbers coming to Australia.

The passenger movement tax is being jacked up but we have no modelling on its impact and no consultation with the tourism sector. All they got was a phone call, apparently, from the Treasurer, not saying, 'What do you think about this?' but saying, 'It's happening,' on the day of the announcement. That is not good public policy, as the member for Canning would like us to have.

We know that this is a critically important issue. We know that this is an important component of regional tourism and regional employment not only for Queensland but for states like Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania. So I simply say to the government this does not fit the definition of good public policy; it is the opposite. It is an example of how not to handle issues. I certainly hope that this is a wake-up call to the government. On behalf of members on this side of the House, we will be doing everything we can to make sure that that inquiry goes as smoothly as possible so that we get the best possible outcome for an important sector of our economy.

Mr RICK WILSON (O'Connor) (17:56): I rise today to add my voice to those urging the opposition to exercise some common sense and commit to supporting regional economies. We have heard countless stories in this chamber of the hardship that would arise from a 32 per cent tax on foreign workers undertaking seasonal labour, and I call on the Labor Party to act in the best interests of our rural towns and communities.

Before discussing the merits of the legislation itself, we must revisit the events that brought us here today, and that chain of events began long before the 2015-16 budget. In fact, it began when Prime Minister Julia Gillard altered the tax-free threshold in 2011. As many in this chamber would recall, Ms Gillard trebled the tax-free threshold from $6,000 to $18,200.

Mr Rob Mitchell: A very good decision!
Mr RICK WILSON: I am not disagreeing with that, but this policy had significant implications for tourists coming here on working holiday visas, as it was standard practice for backpackers to declare themselves Australian residents for taxation purposes to the Australian Taxation Office. To qualify as a resident for tax purposes, a working holiday-maker simply had to meet the tax residency rules of the day, which they typically did if they stayed in the country for six months or longer. The flat rate of taxation for non-residents in 2011 was 29 cents from the first dollar earned. The Labor Party increased this rate to 32.5 cents from the first dollar earned—the rate of taxation which became associated with what is now known as the backpacker tax.

By declaring themselves as Australian residents for taxation purposes, working holiday-makers could avoid paying tax on their earnings for the first $6,000. Naturally, when the tax-free threshold increased so too did the benefits to foreign workers. In simple dollar terms, the increase to the tax-free threshold meant backpackers working in Australia suddenly pocketed an extra $4,000. This change meant working holiday-makers could either pay very little tax or avoid paying tax altogether. If a working holiday-maker were to stay in Australia for the length of a calendar year, they could claim the tax-free threshold over two financial years. A non-Australian resident could earn over $36,000 dollars before paying a cent in tax.

In addition to the tax-free threshold, declaring themselves as a resident for tax purposes meant working holiday-makers could access the low-income tax offset. Once they reached the tax-free threshold, they were also subject to a lower tax rate until their earnings hit $37,000. This made Australia an extremely attractive destination for working holiday-makers, but it also represented a cost to the economy. The government of the day had effectively created a situation where working holiday-makers could enjoy the benefits of Australia’s first-class infrastructure and services, funded by the taxpayer, without contributing any of their income to the provision and maintenance of those services.

This anomaly was recognised by the Australian Taxation Office when it revisited its interpretation of the tax treatment of working holiday-makers. Prior to the 2015-16 budget, the ATO ruled that, under existing law they should always have been treated as non-residents for tax purposes. The ATO was not alone in its interpretation of the law. Three separate Administrative Appeal Tribunals subsequently considered this matter, and the ruling of each was consistent with the revised position of the ATO. The coalition, acting in line with the ATO and the tribunal, moved to correct what had been a longstanding misinterpretation of the law. In the 2015-16 budget, the government announced its intention to amend the legal loophole and treat most people on a working holiday as non-residents.

While this move was consistent with the reasoning of both the ATO and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, it also gave rise to a new and more complex set of problems. Working holiday-makers have become an integral part of regional economies. They provide a secure source of labour in the regions for farmers, horticulturalists, tourism operators and hospitality providers. Short-term contracts that require relocation to a regional town are not always appealing to Australian citizens seeking the stability and security that comes with long-term employment. The sporadic nature of seasonal work makes it difficult for employers to fill these jobs locally. Tourists on a working holiday visa, however, are much more amenable to short-term employment in country areas.
The importance of retaining a steady supply of overseas workers cannot be understated. A major part of the produce that we consume in Australia originates from the regions. Growers in my electorate of O'Connor, for example, produce about one-third of Australia's total avocado supply. In the southern forest regions of O'Connor, Mayfield Park Farm alone produced 75,000 trays of avocados last year, nearly 10 per cent of Australia's total market. George Ipsen, who runs Mayfield, employs up to 400 backpackers during peak production. Producers like Mayfield distribute all over Australia. They are responsible for a significant portion of the produce supplied to the eastern states. The growth of these local businesses also means more of the produce we consume is produced within Australia, limiting our reliance on imports. Mr Ipsen's company, which has grown to become a major industry player, has only been able to do so by employing working holiday-makers. They have been such a key component of his business that Mr Ipsen previously planned to construct a 300-bed facility to house backpackers during harvest months. The prospect of a 32.5 per cent tax rate led him to shelve that proposal until the government's position became clearer.

When the Treasurer made it clear he intended to proceed with the removal of the tax-free threshold for working holiday-makers earlier this year, I took an unwavering stance on the proposal. My regional colleagues and I had a responsibility to support our local economies and outline the adverse impacts of deterring temporary overseas workers. As one of the members of parliament whose electorates relied heavily on backpacker labour, I consulted extensively with affected businesses. I gave a commitment to my constituents that I would do everything in my power to protect local industries from a policy that would reduce the availability of workers. Along with my Liberal colleagues Senator Chris Back and Nola Marino, I attended an industry forum in Manjimup to discuss the backpacker tax. Almost everyone in attendance acknowledged that the current status quo offered working holiday-makers concessions that were far too generous. However, there was an understandable level of concern about going too far in the other direction and making Australia a less attractive destination for working tourists.

Local businesses like Mayfield would be crippled by a reduction in seasonal foreign labour. The Western Australian Farmers Federation estimates backpackers contribute approximately $3.5 billion to the national economy. Brent Finlay, President of the National Farmers Federation, says a 32.5 per cent tax rate for backpackers threatens to drive away more than a quarter of the total agricultural workforce. Just last week, Mr Finlay stressed the importance of a speedy resolution on this issue, saying:

"Every day of delay means fewer working holiday makers in rural Australia and fewer crops in the ground."

My colleagues and I relayed the industry's feedback to the Treasurer, and the government announced its review of working holiday-maker visas.

Immediately after the 2016 election I flew to Canberra to seek assurances from the Deputy Prime Minister that the government would find a way to protect the agriculture, tourism and horticulture industries. While there was a significant amount of scepticism surrounding it, the review produced an outstanding result. I encouraged local businesses in O'Connor to make submissions during the review to ensure their concerns were heard by the government. As we know, the government responded by agreeing to drop the proposed rate of taxation to 19 cents in the dollar. I had long advocated this exact rate, as I believe it will ensure backpackers pay...
an acceptable amount of tax without making Australia uncompetitive as a destination for working tourists. We need to ensure working holiday-makers pay their fair share of tax during their stay in Australia. They access taxpayer funded services, and while they contribute to our economy through the provision of labour in rural areas this should not absolve them of a basic requirement to pay tax on their income. But any rate of taxation needs to be consistent with our international competitors such as New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom.

I would like to commend the Prime Minister and the Treasurer for listening to the concerns of regional industries. I would also like to thank the Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister, Luke Hartsuyker, who led the review into working holiday-maker visas. The review was completed quickly and efficiently, and I believe the proposed changes will strengthen Australia's position as a wonderful destination for backpackers seeking short-term employment. The response from industry has been consistent with my views. The Western Australian Farmers Federation has hailed the government's decision as a 'significant win for industry' and acknowledged the new proposed rate of taxation is 'a fair compromise'. Tourism Accommodation Australia and the Australian Hotels Association both welcomed the government's compromise. In particular, both organisations commended the decision to offset a higher tax rate with a reduction in visa charges and an increase in the age limit to 35.

It should be clear to everybody in this chamber that the government has taken the right approach. We put in place a time line to act on this issue and appease the concerns of regional businesses. We have acted within this time line and introduced the legislation necessary to absolve relevant industries of the burden of a shortage in labour. We have delivered on our commitment to the Australian people. I myself gave a commitment to my electorate that we would alleviate local businesses of the negative impacts of a 32.5 per cent rate of taxation for working holiday-makers. Despite this resolution, one that has been hailed by industries and communities alike, the opposition is failing to act in the best interests of the nation. Since the government announced its plan to tax working holiday-makers from the first dollar earned, the Labor Party has failed to enunciate a clear position on the policy other than to oppose that of the government.

We have now reached the position where the government is ready to make the necessary changes to its original proposal. We reviewed our course of action and we listened to the Australia people. We have formed a policy position that will benefit the nation and we have done it in a timely manner. The review, led by Assistant Minister Hartsuyker, was a quick and efficient process that has paved the way for a resolution before any business has to suffer the adverse impacts of a labour shortage. Yet the opposition appears to feel the need for a further review. The Labor Party has failed to grasp the reality of the situation and its own role in creating the problem. Let us not forget that the actions of the previous Labor government brought us here today. It was the Labor Party, by raising the tax-free threshold, that effectively created a situation where a working backpacker could earn $18,000 in Australia without paying a cent of tax. Make that $36,000 in a calendar year. The coalition has acted on the advice of the ATO and the Administrative Appeal Tribunals and has moved to correct that anomaly. The salient point here is that if the Labor Party refuses to support these changes, the rate of taxation for working holiday makers will default to 32.5c in the dollar. The tax rate they criticised so heavily will come into effect from 1 January if the opposition continues to play politics and drag its heels on the issue.
The suggestion of sending the government's proposal to the Senate Economics Committee is an unnecessary delay in achieving what will ultimately be a positive outcome for the country. The findings would not be reported until next month. Deferring this legislation simply creates more uncertainty for both potential working holiday makers and our regional economies. The government's proposed legislative changes arise from an incredibly comprehensive public consultation process. The opposition is failing to heed the calls of both regional communities and the industries that support them by looking to delay this legislation. The Labor Party has already been condemned for taking this position. The Western Australian Farmers Federation has described the ALP's position as 'an insult'. The organisation's CEO, Stephen Brown, said last week:

This is an unnecessary and distressing delay for the agricultural and tourism sectors, backpackers and employers, and will cost the economy thousands of dollars every day that it is delayed.

Brent Finlay, of the National Farmers Federation, said:

After refusing to declare its hand on the backpacker tax all year, Labor decides to intervene at the 11th hour to block a solution that would see an extra $2000 in every backpacker's pocket.

This is unacceptable and we call on Labor to respect all the decent hard working Australian farmers who feed and clothe us every day by passing the 'backpacker tax' bills in the Parliament.

The Labor Party has access to the submissions made in the government's Working Holiday Maker visa review. The opposition knows the potential impacts of further uncertainty and, in the worst case scenario, the introduction of a 32.5 per cent rate of taxation. Their current position flies in the face of every farmer, horticulturalist and tourism operator who made submissions during the government's review. I call on the Labor Party to cease playing obstructionist politics and support the government's legislation. The opposition must demonstrate its commitment to protecting our regional economies and act in line with the wants and needs of the Australian people. The parliament is beholden to act in the best interests of the nation and the government has a proposal based on extensive consultation conducted right across Australia. I will be encouraging everyone from my electorate, concerned about the proposed 32.5 per cent rate of taxation, to share their concerns with the Australian Labor Party. The opposition must understand the importance of passing this legislation and I implore the Labor Party to reverse its position. I commend the bills to the House.

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (18:10): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for those kind words. It is much appreciated. What an extraordinary alternative universe we must be living in. This government has implemented a 32.5 per cent tax and somehow we have exhortations from the member for O'Connor, the member for Canning and other members on that side that somehow if Labor does not agree to what they want immediately we are to blame for implementing the tax level that they created. These are very strange times indeed.

Mr Dick: Eighteen months ago.

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL: Eighteen months ago. I want workers on farms, picking fruit and getting produce to market. That is my sole motivation. If I had evidence before me that reducing the coalition's backpacker tax from 32.5 per cent to 19 per cent would get workers on farms I would be the loudest voice on this side of the parliament to bulldoze this through.
But where is the evidence this will work? Where is the research proving the change will have real effect? Where are the surveys of the backpackers demonstrating the positive impact on their travel plans? Who has asked them whether reducing the rate to 19 per cent will bring them here? I suspect the evidence does not exist and unfortunately, with this mob, 'just trust us' does not cut it. Those opposite show time and again they should not be trusted with a butter knife, let alone the affairs of state.

This is the Treasurer's mess, but right up there as a willing supporter of this mad scheme is the Deputy Prime Minister, the member for New England—Baldrick to the Treasurer's Blackadder. What a great friend of the farmer the Deputy Prime Minister is—backing a tax that hurts fruitgrowers and sucks revenue out of regional communities. He and his Nationals colleagues make up one-fifth of the cabinet but between them they could not muster up the guts to oppose the Treasurer's tax on regions. The Deputy Prime Minister was in the House last week praising the tax. It is the most vocal he has been on this issue for more than a year. He was certainly mute when it counted most. Regional communities suffering from this new tax could not find him hiding under his big hat. Many might count it as a good thing that the member for New England remains silent whenever possible, but it would have been nice to hear him stick up for farmers and our regional communities. But of course he did not speak up when it counted, only when it became politically convenient to him. I listened to what the Deputy Prime Minister had to say last week and I even went to the trouble of reading his media statement on this matter. Life is short and I will not get those moments back, but his words did serve to remind me of what I can buy for two bucks a bag at farm gates throughout my electorate—and I do need to spread it soon.

The sad fact is this reduction in the coalition's backpackers tax from 32.5 to 19 per cent is more about a political fix than fixing the problem. It is about getting this disastrous blunder out of the headlines, not getting workers onto farms. The Treasurer created this mess by introducing the coalition's backpackers tax in his 2015 budget. It was then, and it remains, an ill-considered tax—a mad, crazy tax is how I have described it previously, and I hold to that description. My preference has always been for its abolition. I want it gone, full stop. I make no bones about that. I do not buy arguments that we cannot afford its abolition. This government wants to waste $200 million on an opinion poll and give $50 billion in corporate tax cuts. It has even found $160,000 to give my predecessor, Eric Hutchinson, a job attending functions on behalf of the President of the other place. Revenue and expenditure is a matter of priorities and I will support farmers and regional communities over bankers and former politicians any day of the week.

The coalition's backpackers tax as it stands right now will suck $500 million from regional economies and send that income straight to the ATO in Canberra. And that is the best-case scenario—$500 million less to be spent in shops and on services in regional communities across Australia. At worst, this tax will drive backpackers away, creating a severe labour shortage on farms, and will earn little for the ATO because of the simple fact that backpackers who do not come here do not pay tax. So farmers miss out on labour, communities miss out on workers' spending power, and the Treasurer—who has joined the chamber—misses out on the tax he was expecting to collect. It is a trifecta of failure and incompetence.

Sadly, it seems that the worst-case scenario is the one that is coming to seem the more likely outcome. Labour firms are reporting massive falls in the level of interest from
backpackers. Backpackers are complaining that the tax rate is too high, and they are changing their working holiday plans for competing destinations like New Zealand.

All this should have been sorted out before the Treasurer announced his 32.5 per cent tax grab. But, through incompetence or arrogance or both, he failed to do his job and his due diligence. He went for the easy score. Now, after more than a year of damaging headlines and plummeting prospects for fruit growers and farmers, and after being dragged to the negotiation table by farmers and Labor, the coalition is proposing a compromise: a tax of 19 per cent instead of 32.5 per cent. But, with its trademark arrogance, the coalition is demanding that the 19 per cent be waved through the parliament immediately, while tagging on a brand new 95 per cent tax on superannuation earnings and an increase in the departure tax that has our tourism sector up in arms. 'Don't take a close look at the detail; don't examine whether the proposed measures will actually work; just pass it all right now, or the sky will fall in!' That is what they demand.

Well, on this side of the House we are more diligent than that. We are more calm, and we are more considered. This government has dithered with this legislation for more than a year and done nothing in the three months since the election. It might be panicking, but we are not. Labor will do its job properly.

As lawmakers, we need some measure of certainty, based on evidence, that the laws we pass will have the impacts that are intended. That is why Labor will send this bill to the Senate economics committee. The committee's work will not delay passage, but it will seek answers.

From my perspective as the member for Lyons, there is nothing good in this tax for the people I represent, at 32.5 or 19 or any other percentage. I know there is someone in the other place proposing a 10 per cent tax. I have made my own preferences clear. But I do not think we should rule anything out before we have all the facts at our disposal.

It is important to remember what this issue is really about. It is really not about backpackers; it is about practical labour solutions for Australian farms, and that is my focus. Many of the farms in my electorate do try to source their labour locally before employing backpackers, but the work is isolated and seasonal, so there are difficulties.

Everyone knows that Tasmanian cherries are the best in the world, but they are fiddly to pick. It is hard, hot work, and cherry growers rely absolutely on backpackers.

Mr McCormack: Misleading the House! New South Wales—that's where the best cherries are grown!

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL: You've not tried a Tasmanian cherry, clearly! Somercotes in Ross, Stonecrest in Sorell and Edgewater in Ouse are spread throughout my electorate, but they all share a need for backpacker labour. All three made submissions about the danger this tax poses to them, in terms of discouraging backpackers from coming to Australia to work on farms.

These growers, and growers all across the country, deserve legislation that gets it right—that solves the problem. They deserve better than a quick political fix.

I must stress again, to counter the untruths being bandied about this place, that Labor's decision to send this bill to a Senate economics committee will not delay passage of this bill. Liberal MPs and senators who claim we are delaying this legislation and therefore risking this
season should be ashamed of themselves. They are spreading fear that has no basis in fact—not to mention the bitter irony of being members of a government that created this tax and this mess and the long delay in addressing it.

Our farms do face a longer-term structural labour problem. Fewer backpackers want to come to Australia, and those who do are less likely to work on farms than to work in city bars. Locals are reluctant to work on farms because it is isolated and seasonal and, frankly, dealing with Centrelink in terms of reporting changes to income is a nightmare every sane person wants to avoid.

We do need to consider structural changes in our employment system, for both locals and those on visas, in order to ensure our food continues to be picked, not just this year but in the years to come. But that is a question for another time.

In closing, I will just note that last week the Deputy Prime Minister likened me to Dale Kerrigan—

An opposition member interjecting—

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL: Dale, not Darryl—the hole-digger! Perhaps he was intending it as an insult. Well, I will take it as a compliment: the Kerrigans from The Castle are a quintessential knockabout Aussie family sticking up for their rights against big business. And they win in the end.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (18:20): In the electorate of Mayo—from the base of the Barossa in Eden Valley, through the Adelaide Hills and across to the Lower Lakes, down the Fleurieu Peninsula to Kangaroo Island—we are fortunate to have the best pears, cherries, apples, strawberries, grapes, beef cattle, lamb, dairy and honey. We grow it all. And farmers across the electorate of Mayo rely heavily on backpackers to help get our amazing fresh produce to domestic and export markets.

In 2015, the federal government announced it was going to increase the tax on all money earned by backpackers to 32.5 per cent, as this House well knows. One can only wonder what the Nationals were doing when this decision was made. And I had always thought that the National Party’s core constituency were farmers and the rural landscape. So I was incredibly disappointed, as a person who represents a very large and diverse rural community, that this was on the table.

This backpacker tax is not only very bad for farmers; it is also very bad for the Australian economy and for the coffers of the Australian Taxation Office. Backpackers spend almost all of the money that they earn in a region within that region. They help not only the farmers but also the broader community and economy when they spend their tourist dollar in shops, hotels and caravan parks across the country. And when the backpacker tax in Australia gets too high, the backpackers simply go elsewhere—and we have seen that this season.

The government has since backtracked on the backpacker tax, and their current plan is to reduce it from 32.5 per cent to 19 per cent. However, this is still significantly higher than the 11.95 per cent in New Zealand for earnings up to $14,000. I feel that, for this season, it is too little too late.

Thousands of backpackers have already changed their summer holiday plans and are now going to places such as Canada and New Zealand. The lack of policy vision and consistency is going to play absolute havoc with the fruit and vegetable harvests this year in my
community. Farmers in my electorate and beyond are going to struggle to find enough hands to pick the fruit. All of this is because of this tax.

We have high youth unemployment in Australia. In some parts of South Australia, including within some parts of my electorate, it is as high 17 per cent. Youth employment never properly recovered after the global financial crisis. So many traditional jobs, like manufacturing in urban and regional centres, simply do not exist in significant numbers anymore.

High quality agricultural products are one of Australia's major international advantages. Population growth is projected to be almost 10 billion by 2050. As the middle classes of our nearest neighbours in Asia become more affluent and their demand for high-quality produce even greater, we have the potential to be the high-quality food bowl of the world. This a huge opportunity for Australia and our country's prosperity—if only we invest in agriculture to grow the sector and adopt the most creative and innovative techniques and technology.

Yet agriculture in Australia is being held back, and this tax is just one example. Increasingly, farmers are struggling to get the temporary or permanent employees to work the farms and bring in the harvest. And the farming workforce is getting older and older. In 2011 the median age of farmers was 53 years, compared with 40 for other occupations. I have all the respect in the world for our farmers. Just yesterday I was milking by hand at the Meadows Country Fair—in the rain, on a Sunday afternoon. It was a competition but it was incredibly hard work.

Mr Bowen: How'd you go?

Mr Fitzgibbon: Gold?

Ms SHARKIE: No, I didn't win. But I did okay. I have room for improvement! This sector must be supported, and labour is one of the most critical issues. The increasing scarcity of farm labour may well threaten the long-term viability of the family farm, the farming way of life and the whole industry. However, within every threat is an opportunity. And it is with this in mind that Senator Xenophon and I have renewed our call to allow job seekers to work up to eight weeks on seasonal farm work and earn up to $5,000 without any penalty. Currently, Newstart allowance recipients can be hit with a reduction of 50 cents in the dollar for any money they earn over $104 a fortnight. If you earn enough to lose your payments altogether, it is particularly hard to get them back. When the work is often temporary, this barrier is too high, particularly for those who have never tried working in this industry before. So we feel that we should also include the jobactive providers in a seasonal employment strategy so that providers can find the best local Australian farm workers to work on their land. There is always the potential for temporary work to turn into a continuing job. And we may help renew the farming sector so that, when baby-boomer farmers do eventually retire, a life on the land continues to be a viable proposition for many Australians.

We know that many farmers and young job seekers are keen to give this idea a go. This very summer, there will be a massive labour shortage because too many backpackers have been scared away. Who knows how much long-term damage has been done to the Australian agriculture sector as a result. If we do not get creative about using the job seekers we have right here in Australia, there may be thousands of tonnes of fruit left rotting on the ground this summer. So I will do all I can to ensure that creative ideas to address labour shortages in this
harvest and the harvests of the future are put out to the parliament and the public. I do support this legislation, although I have great reservations about its process, the outcomes and how it will affect my community of Mayo. But I cannot disagree with this motion, knowing farmers would have an even more difficult time getting the right labour for their farms.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (18:27): I move:

That the question be now put.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be put, as moved by the Treasurer.

The House divided. [18:31]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 74
Noes ........................ 69
Majority ................. 5

AYES

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

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CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (18:37): The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for McMahon has moved an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The immediate question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided. [18:39]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ..................66
Noes ...................76
Majority ...............10

CHAMBER
AYES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodmann, G
Burney, LJ
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Feeney, D
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hammond, TJ
Hayes, CP
Husar, E
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khailil, P
Lamb, S
Macklin, JL
McBride, EM
Mitchell, EM
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Pilcher, TJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Wilson, JH

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gosling, LJ
Hart, RA
Hill, JC
Husie, EN
Keay, JT
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Neumann, SK
O'Toole, C
Perrett, GD (teller)
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM
Templeman, SR
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

NOES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Banks, J
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR (teller)
Coleman, DB
Crewther, CJ
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hartseyker, L
Hawke, AG
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M
Drum, DK
Entsch, W
Falinski, J
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Henderson, SM
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Question negatived.

The SPEAKER: The question now is that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (18:45): We have a farcical situation. We have circumstances whereby the member for Solomon has been denied the right to speak and make a contribution to this debate, as have the members for Braddon, Throsby, Paterson, Griffith, Shortland, Brand—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will resume his seat. The Leader of the House on a point of order.

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, I would seek your clarification because, watching the monitor earlier today, I swear I saw the member for Grayndler holding up the ALP’s policy on tourism, which means he has already spoken on this bill.

The SPEAKER: No, we are not in detail. The Leader of the House will resume his seat. I will repeat the question. The question now is that the bill be read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (18:47): This government is treating our farmers and our tourism operators in this country—

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

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (18:47): I move:

That the question be now put.
The House divided. [18:52]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 78
Noes ...................... 65
Majority ................. 13

**AYES**

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**NOES**

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<tr>
<td>Butler, TM</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (18:55): The question is now that the bill be agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (18:55): I ask leave of the House to move the third reading immediately.

Leave not granted.

Mr MORRISON: I move:

That so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the motion for the third reading being moved without delay.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (18:55): Speaking to the motion, Mr Speaker, we are gagging debate when the Senate is not going to meet for three weeks. The bill has to make it 300 metres—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (18:55): I move:

That the question be now put.
The House divided. [18:57]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 78
Noes ...................... 65
Majority ............... 13

### AYES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Party</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbott, AJ</td>
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<td>Labor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyatt, KG</td>
<td>Labor</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### NOES

<table>
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<th>Member</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Labor</td>
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<td>Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, TM</td>
<td>Labor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**CHAMBER**
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion moved by the Treasurer be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (19:00): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

MOTIONS

Working Holiday Maker Program

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (19:00): I seek leave of the House to move the following motion:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Watson from moving the following motion forthwith—

That the House:

(1) condemns the Treasurer for the lack of consultation on the Backpacker Tax and the Passenger Movement Charge increase; and
(2) further condemn the Treasurer and the Leader of the House for gagging debate in the House of Representatives given the Senate is not sitting for three weeks and the only outcome is to deny Members the chance to speak up for their constituents in the agriculture and tourism sectors.

Leave not granted.

Mr BURKE: I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Watson from moving the following motion forthwith—

That the House:

(1) condemns the Treasurer for the lack of consultation on the Backpacker Tax and the Passenger Movement Charge increase; and

(2) further condemn the Treasurer and the Leader of the House for gagging debate in the House of Representatives given the Senate is not sitting for three weeks and the only outcome is to deny Members the chance to speak up for their constituents in the agriculture and tourism sectors.

We have a series of members of parliament representing the tourism sector, representing agriculture—

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (19:02): I move:

That the member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the member be no longer heard.

The House divided. [19:06]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................74
Noes .................68
Majority.............6

AYES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Banks, J
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR (teller)
Coleman, DB
Crewther, CJ
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hartley, L
Hawke, AG
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
McCormack, MF

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M
Drum, DK
Entsch, WG
Falinski, J
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Henderson, SM
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
McVeigh, JJ
AYES
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG

Morton, B
O’Brien, T
O’Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robert, SR
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Zimmerman, T

NOES
Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burney, LJ
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Feeney, D
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hammond, TJ
Hayes, CP
Husar, E
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
Lamb, S
Macklin, JL
McBride, EM
Mitchell, BK
Neumann, SK
O’Toole, C
Perrett, GD (teller)
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Wilson, JH

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Clare, ID
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gosling, LJ
Hart, RA
Hill, JC
Husic, EN
Keay, JT
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
McGowan, C
Mitchell, RG
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Pibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM
Templeman, SR
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (19:10): Is the motion moved by the member for Watson seconded?

Mr Albanese: Mr Speaker, the Senate is not sitting. It cannot possibly deal with this issue for three weeks.

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler needs to indicate whether he is seconding the motion.

Mr Albanese: At some stage in my contribution I will, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: No, no. The member for Grayndler needs to second the motion or resume his seat.

Mr Albanese: I will at some stage, Mr Speaker, as part of this contribution.

The SPEAKER: No, you will not. You will second the motion or resume your seat.

Mr Albanese: I, obviously, am seconding the motion, Mr Speaker. The fact is—

The SPEAKER: No. The member for Grayndler will say he is seconding the motion.

Mr Albanese: I am seconding the motion. But the fact is they cannot deal with this for three weeks.

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will resume his seat. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (19:11): I move:

That the Member no longer be heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the member for Grayndler be no further heard.

The House divided. [19:12]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ....................74
Noes ....................68

Majority ...............6

AYES

Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Banks, J
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR (teller)
Coleman, DB
Crewther, CJ
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hartseyker, L
Hawke, AG
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M
Drum, DK
Entsch, WG
Falinski, J
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Henderson, SM
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Keenan, M

CHAMBER
AYES

Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sukkar, A
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG

Laming, A
Laundy, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
McVeigh, IJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
O’Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robert, SR
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Zimmerman, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burney, LJ
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Feeney, D
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hammond, TJ
Hayes, CP
Husar, E
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
Lamb, S
Macklin, JL
McBride, EM
Mitchell, BK
Neumann, SK
O’Toole, C
Perrett, GD (teller)
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gosling, LJ
Hart, RA
Hill, JC
Husic, EN
Keay, JT
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
McGowan, C
Mitchell, RG
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM
Question agreed to.

**The SPEAKER** (19:14): The question now is that the motion be agreed to.

Mr Fitzgibbon: Mr Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister needs to stand up for his—

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

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (19:14): I move:

That the motion be put.

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

The House divided. [19:15]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

<table>
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<th>Ayes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Majority</td>
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**AYES**

Abbott, AJ  
Andrews, KJ  
Banks, J  
Broad, AJ  
Buchholz, S  
Christensen, GR (teller)  
Coleman, DB  
Crewther, CJ  
Dutton, PC  
Evans, TM  
Fletcher, PW  
Frydenberg, JA  
Gillespie, DA  
Hartsuyker, L  
Hawke, AG  
Hogan, KJ  
Hunt, GA  
Joyce, BT  
Kelly, C  
Landry, ML  
Leeser, J  
Littleproud, D  
McCormack, MF  
McVeigh, JJ  
Morton, B  
O’Brien, T  
O’Dwyer, KM  
Pitt, KJ  
Prentice, J  
Pyne, CM  

**NOES**

Swanson, MJ  
Thistlethwaite, MJ  
Wilson, JH  
Templeman, SR  
Wilkie, AD  
Zappia, A
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (19:17): The question now is that the motion moved by the Manager of Opposition Business be agreed to.

The House divided. [19:18]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .....................65
Noes .....................77
Majority .................12

AYES

Albanese, AN..............Aly, A
Bird, SL ..................Bowen, CE
Brodtmann, G ..........Burke, AS
Burney, LJ ...............Butler, MC
Butler, TM ................Byrne, AM
Chalmers, JE ............Champion, ND
Chesters, LM .............Clare, JD
Claydon, SC ..............Collins, JM
Conroy, PM ..............Danby, M
Dick, MD ..................Dreyfus, MA
Elliot, MJ ................Ellis, KM
Feeney, D .................Fitzgibbon, JA
Freelander, MR ..........Georganas, S
Giles, AJ ................Gosling, LJ
Hammond, TJ ............Hart, RA
Hayes, CP .................Hill, JC
Husar, E ..................Husie, EN
Jones, SP .................Keay, JT
Kelly, MJ ..................Keogh, MJ
Khalil, P .................King, MMH
Lamb, S ..................Leigh, AK
Macklin, JL ..............Marles, RD
McBride, EM .............Mitchell, BK
Mitchell, RG .............Neumann, SK
O’Connor, BPJ ..........O’Ttoole, C
Owens, JA ...............Perrett, GD (teller)
Plibersek, TJ ...........Rishworth, AL
Rowland, MA ............Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR ..........Snowdon, WE
Stanley, AM .............Swan, WM
Swanson, MJ .............Templeman, SR
Thistlethwaite, MJ ......Wilson, JH
Zappia, A .................

NOES

Abbott, AJ ................Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ ..............Andrews, KL
Banks, J .....................Bishop, JI
Broad, AJ ................Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S .............Chester, D
Christensen, GR (teller) ....Cioobo, SM
Coleman, DB ..............Coulton, M
Crewther, CJ ............Drum, DK
Dutton, PC ..............Entsch, WG
Evans, TM ...............Falinski, J
Fletcher, PW .............Flint, NJ
Frydenberg, JA .............Gee, AR

CHAMBER
Question negatived.

BILLS

Treasury Laws Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (19:25): I seek leave of the House to move the third reading immediately

Leave not granted.

Mr MORRISON: I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the motion for the third reading being moved without delay.

A division having been called and the bells being rung—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler on a point of order?
Mr Albanese: Mr Speaker, the Treasurer, in moving this motion, has just sought to suspend standing orders. He was not sought to invoke the contingency motions that are available to him on the Notice Paper.

The SPEAKER: He did not seek to suspend standing orders. He was referring to the contingency—

Mr Albanese: That is what he said.

The SPEAKER: I did not hear him say that.

Mr Albanese: I think you will find that he did.

The SPEAKER: Yes, but it is on the Notice Paper. We are proceeding. The question is that the motion moved by the Treasurer be agreed to.

The House divided. [20;29]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 77
Noes ...................... 65
Majority .................. 12

AYES
Abbott, AJ
Andrews, KJ
Banks, J
Broad, AJ
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR (teller)
Coleman, DB
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evan, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hartseyuker, L
Hawke, AG
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
O’Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robert, SR
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Bishop, JI
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Ciobo, SM
Coulton, M
Drum, DK
Entsch, WG
Falinski, J
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Henderson, SM
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Keenan, M
Laming, A
Laundy, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
McGowan, C
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE

CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (19:36): I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (19:37): I rise to speak to the motion. Those opposite are engaging in a ridiculous use of the parliament. Those opposite are shutting down a debate that can be had this week. The Senate will not sit for three weeks.

Debate interrupted.
**ADJOURNMENT**

The SPEAKER (19:37): It being just after 7.30 pm, I propose the question:
That the House do now adjourn.

Mr Pyne: Mr Speaker, I require that the question be put immediately without debate.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the House do now adjourn.

Question negatived.

**BILLS**

Treasury Laws Amendment (Working Holiday Maker Reform) Bill 2016

Third Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a third time.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (19:38): Mr Speaker—

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (19:38): I move:

That the question be put.

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

The House divided. [19:42]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 77
Noes ...................... 65
Majority ................ 12

AYES

Abbott, AJ ........................................ Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ ....................................... Andrews, KL
Banks, J ............................................ Bishop, JJ
Broad, AJ .......................................... Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S ........................................ Chester, D
Christensen, GR (teller) ....................... Ciobo, SM
Coleman, DB ....................................... Coulton, M
Crewther, CJ ....................................... Drum, DK
Dutton, PC ......................................... Entsche, WG
Evans, TM ......................................... Falinski, J
Fletcher, PW ........................................ Flint, NJ
Frydenberg, JA .................................... Gee, AR
Gillespie, DA ....................................... Goodenough, IR
Hartseyker, L ...................................... Hastie, AW
Hawke, AG .......................................... Henderson, SM
Hogan, KJ .......................................... Howarth, LR
Hunt, GA ............................................ Irons, SJ
Joyce, BT ............................................ Keenan, M
Kelly, C ............................................. Laming, A
Landry, ML ......................................... Laundy, C
Leeser, J ............................................. Ley, SP
Littleproud, D ..................................... Marino, NB
McCormack, MF .................................. McGowan, C
McVeigh, JJ ........................................ Morrison, SJ
AYES

Morton, B
O’Brien, T
O’Dwyer, KM
Pitt, KJ
Prentice, J
Pyne, CM
Robert, SR
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Turnbull, MB
Vasta, RX
Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Zimmerman, T

O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pasin, A
Porter, CC
Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Taylor, AJ
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wilkie, AD
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burney, LJ
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Feeney, D
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hammond, TJ
Hayes, CP
Husar, E
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
King, CF
Lamb, S
Macklin, JL
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Philippines, TJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Zappia, A

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gosling, LJ
Hart, RA
Hill, JC
Husic, EN
Keay, JT
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Leigh, AK
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Neumann, SK
O’Toole, C
Perrett, GD (teller)
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Snowdon, WE
Swan, WM
Templeman, SR
Wilson, JH
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (19:45): The question now is that the bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**Superannuation (Departing Australia Superannuation Payments Tax) Amendment Bill 2016**

*Second Reading*

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

*Third Reading*

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (19:46): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**Passenger Movement Charge Amendment Bill 2016**

*Second Reading*

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

*Third Reading*

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (19:47): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Defence Industry) (19:49): I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

Question agreed to.

House adjourned at 19:49

**NOTICES**

The following notices were given:

Mr Pyne to move:
That, in respect of proceedings specifically on the Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Bill 2013 and the Building and Construction Industry (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2013, so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the following from occurring:

(1) resumption of debate on the second readings of the bills being called on together and the bills debated cognately, and the first Opposition Member immediately called to speak;

(2) at the conclusion of the speech of the first Opposition Member on the second readings of the bills, the Prime Minister being called immediately to conclude the second reading debate and one question then being put immediately on the second readings of both bills, a Governor-General’s message being reported and one question being put immediately on the third readings of both bills; and

(3) any variation to this arrangement to be made only by a motion moved by a Minister.

Ms Rishworth to move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) 11 November is Remembrance Day;
   (b) on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month Australians observe one minute’s silence in memory of those who died or suffered in all wars and armed conflicts;
   (c) 2016 marks the 98th anniversary of the Armistice which ended World War I;
   (d) on Remembrance Day we pay our respects and honour the memory of those who have served in our country’s defence forces;

(2) encourages all Australians to attend a commemoration ceremony in their local community, and to pause for a minute of silence to remember those who have served in the Australian Defence Force and made the ultimate sacrifice;

(3) remembers:
   (a) those who lost their lives serving their country; and
   (b) all who came home, wounded, or bearing the hidden scars of war; and

(4) recognises that the return to life in Australia, the journey from battlefield to towns and suburbs, can be a difficult one for those who serve and for the people who love and care for them.

Mr Zappia to move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) widespread flooding has devastated large food growing areas in the Adelaide plains;
   (b) the Adelaide plains are a major economic driver for South Australia, producing hundreds of millions of dollars of fruit and vegetables each year;
   (c) the collective losses sustained by growers have run into tens of millions of dollars;
   (d) many of the producers affected by the floods are family enterprises with limited financial capacity to withstand the losses and damage; and

(2) calls on the Government to report back to the House on what assistance measures will be provided to growers seriously affected by the floods.

Mr Wood to move:

That this House:

(3) notes:
(a) that palm oil, because of its low cost, is a common ingredient in many packaged foods, often supplementing vegetable oil; and
(b) the misleading labelling of palm oil in Australian products, often labelled as vegetable oil, with 50 per cent of products sold in supermarkets containing palm oil;
(4) further notes that palm oil has high levels of saturated fat with over 50 per cent of its composition being saturated fat, which is very dangerous to consumers with heart or other conditions;
(5) recognises the damage to the environment and endangered animals as a result of mass deforestation in Malaysia and Indonesia which has led to the exponential threat of extinction to animals such as orangutans, tigers, elephants and rhinoceroses, all of which are already critically endangered; and
(6) calls on the Government to change the labelling laws on products sold in Australia to require products to clearly state when they contain palm oil.
Monday, 17 October 2016

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr van Manen) took the chair at 10:29.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Defence Personnel

Ms O'TOOLE (Herbert) (10:30): Last week we celebrated Mental Health Week and this week we celebrate Carers Week. However, mental health must be addressed every day of every week of every year to ensure global mental health education awareness and advocacy. The World Federation for Mental Health, a global mental health organisation with members and contacts in more than 150 countries, is focused on the task of mental health awareness, education and stigma reduction. Today I am talking about a group of men and women who deserve timely, accessible and appropriate mental health support services. I am speaking of our veterans, ex-service men and women, their families and our serving defence personnel. These men and women continue to give and have given selflessly of their lives to secure our country's freedom.

Townsville is home to the largest population of defence personnel in Australia and Townsville is also home to a large number of veterans, ex-service men and women, and their families. It is therefore important for me as the member for Herbert to listen to our defence community and to hear their needs in order to ensure they have a strong voice here in Canberra. I am proud to say that I am hosting the Townsville Defence Community Reference Group, which is made up of approximately 25 people from a range of defence and community organisations. These organisations are represented by their leaders, who are experts in their fields and have been doing excellent work in our community. The Townsville Defence Community Reference Group has been formed to discuss and address relevant policy to ensure that the Townsville defence community needs are heard loudly and clearly here in Canberra.

The Townsville Defence Community Reference Group includes organisations such as Mates4Mates, Legacy, Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia, Townsville RSL, Australian Defence Force Organisation, Women's Veteran Network, TPI, Australian Peacekeeper, local mental health organisations and representatives from Lavarack Barracks and the RAAF. The group meets monthly, but we may meet more frequently in the lead-up to the National Mental Health Commission's review into suicide prevention for veterans and their families. We had our second meetings on Thursday, 6 October 2016 and we have already identified a number of concerns relating to the review, including the fact that there does not seem to be family representation on the review panel and the very short time frame for this critical suicide prevention review.

On 9 September 2016, I wrote to the Prime Minister to advise him of the Townsville Defence Community Reference Group and to request a meeting to discuss our concerns and to plan how we can work collaboratively to ensure the Townsville defence community's voice is included in the review process, especially as our city has been named in the trial.

Draper, Mr Laurence, AO, QPM

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (10:33): Today I recognise the life of Mr Laurie Draper, AO, QPM, who passed away last week on 10 October surrounded by his five daughters. My thoughts and
prayers are with his family this morning for his funeral service and are particularly with his
daughter Jill and son-in-law David Shannon, who was a great support to me as a candidate.

Mr Draper was a resident of Boothby and a member of the Liberal Party. He was also a
remarkable South Australian. Mr Draper was born in Rose Park on 14 March 1923 and
attended Woodfield District High School. He began as a junior constable with the South
Australia Police on 26 August 1940 and concluded his career as the Commissioner of Police
on 5 March 1982, having served the people of South Australia with great distinction for 41
years and seven months. He was awarded the Queen's Police Medal in 1969 and an Order of
Australia in 1981. I have with me here a copy of Mr Draper's autobiography, More than Just a
Job: My Life and Career from Junior Constable to Commissioner of Police, which he gave to
me during my preselection.

Mr Draper was generous with his time, and I learnt a lot about his family and his service to
my state in the hour and a half we spent talking. Some of what we discussed is recorded in his
book, which I commend to anyone interested in the history of the South Australian police
force and interested in the social history of our state at the time. For example, some of Mr
Draper's first earnings were spent on purchasing a horse, which he stabled in the backyard of
his family home in suburban Adelaide. Because houses were expensive and permits difficult
to secure, between 1948 and 1951 Mr Draper made his own bricks and built his own home
over the course of 18 months on his days off or during part-time shiftwork. He did this while
he and his wife and two young children lived in the shed near the house that he had built for
practice.

Mr Draper's mention of the Anti-Larrikin Squad, formed to deal with the bodgies and
widgies in the mid- to late 1950s, is another snapshot of a moment in time. Most importantly,
Mr Draper records the years he spent researching and planning how the South Australia
Police could be more efficient and responsive, which led to his introduction of work
measurement. He strongly believed in evidence based decision-making. Mr Draper's
appointment as the Commissioner of Police occurred in difficult circumstances for the force
and for the state. The Advertiser's editorial marking Mr Draper's retirement puts it best:

He was promoted to the post of Commissioner … in circumstances that could hardly have been less
happy or auspicious … He has in four years, done considerably more than simply hold fort … He has
acted with tact and skill and has remained ever mindful of the importance of preserving public
confidence in the police.

Perth Electorate: Infrastructure

Mr HAMMOND (Perth) (10:36): I rise to discuss a number of key infrastructure projects
committed to by the federal Australian Labor Party in the course of the 2016 federal election
campaign. During the campaign, the Labor Party committed to three key infrastructure
projects in my local community, being the federal electorate of Perth. One is a $1 billion
investment into a revolutionary, once-in-a-lifetime public transport infrastructure investment,
called METRONET. The second is one I have already addressed in this place—the sinking of
the Bayswater train station. The third is the one that I rise to discuss today, which would
directly affect my local community of Mount Hawthorn, being the upgrade to the intersection
of Green Street, Scarborough Beach Road, Brady Street and Main Street.

The investment into the upgrade of the intersection would create a world of difference to
members of my local community. Having traversed that intersection myself at least a couple
of times a week, if not more, I can speak from real-life experience in a way that echoes the views of my community in relation to the hazards associated with the particular intersection in question. We have Main Street from the north, Green Street from the north-east and Scarborough Beach Road from the east, all converging into a spaghetti-like mess of road intersections which then feed through into the CBD. It is a junction of three extremely busy roads—and how it is not officially on our blackspot radar is beyond me. Many people who have had to traverse that intersection will tell you from experience that they simply choose to avoid it altogether, having regard to just how terrifying the experience normally is. Luckily, and thankfully at this stage, the traffic users who use that intersection appear to adopt an approach similar to that which we see in many Asian countries, in that everyone converges on it together, crosses their fingers, holds their breath and somehow managed to muddle through. It is the epitome of an accident waiting to happen and urgently needs addressing. That is something the federal Labor Party committed to doing in the last election. Contrast that with the approach of my opponents, the Liberal Party, who, in the recent campaign committed to exactly no infrastructure investments at all within the federal seat of Perth. It does not take long to count them—they add up to a sum total of zero.

Our commitment—a $3 million spend for an approximately $5 million infrastructure upgrade—is crucial, and we call upon the coalition government to honour it for the sake of improving traffic flow, for the sake of easing congestion and for the sake of safety of road users and others alike.

National Carers Week

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (10:39): I rise today to speak in support of National Carers Week, to recognise and celebrate the vital contribution all carers make to our country.

Many of us know carers through our families and friends. They play a vital role in Australian society and give of their time, energy and resources in the selfless service of those in need of regular care. They perform a role that the federal government can never replicate; a role that is intensely personal, often motivated by love and affection and tailored specifically to the person in need. They deserve the praise, thanks and support of this parliament. There are approximately 2.7 million unpaid carers in Australia, providing 36 million hours of care and support every week to families and friends with disabilities, illnesses and chronic health conditions.

In my electorate of Canning there are over 5,000 carer allowance and carer payment recipients. My constituent, Wilhelmina Buckland, has been caring for her son Darren for 43 years. Darren was born with Down syndrome but, despite this handicap, he leads a relatively normal life. Darren has been working for as long as Wilhelmina remembers—initially with Activ, Western Australia’s largest disability service provider, and now with Intework in Mandurah. Wilhelmina says she treats Darren just like she treats her other sons—advice she would give to all carers. She encourages him to be as social and active as possible, from doing pottery on Mondays to visiting and performing songs at nursing homes.

Many carers lead demanding lives—simultaneously working, looking after children and often with elderly relatives either living in the same house or living separately. It is not surprising that carers need a break, and that they rely upon respite care. Respite care plays an important role in supporting the carers in our communities. For Wilhelmina, it may be having coffee on a Saturday with six other parents who are also carers or going away over the
weekend with her husband. The relinquishing of that role as a carer, even temporarily, is important to the carer’s longevity. It is thanks to organisations like Midway Community Care and Community First in Mandurah that carers can have the well-deserved break that they need.

In closing, I commend Wilhelmina and her husband for their dedication as carers, and I acknowledge the work and the important role that carers play in Western Australia and in Australia more broadly. I salute them today.

**Bass Electorate: Junction Arts Festival**

**Mr HART** (Bass) (10:41): I rise today to express the heartfelt pleasure that I had last month in taking part in the launch of what has become an annual event in my electorate of Bass—the Junction Arts Festival. Junction, as it is warmly referred to locally, began as part of a Regional Arts Australia national conference in 2010, brought to Tasmania by the then state minister for the arts, Michelle O’Byrne, who is also a former federal member for Bass. Junction was primarily funded by the state government until 2012, at which point it became an independent, non-profit arts organisation supported extensively by the local community.

Situated in and around Launceston in public and private spaces throughout the community, this annual five-day event is a mix of performance and visual art. The festival revenue is generated through sponsorship and government funding, with a particular focus on free audience experiences. Junction's focus on free audience experiences and events, with only a smattering of shows that are ticketed whilst being kept as cheap as possible, is designed to maximise youth participation. Accessibility to the arts has been identified as a key driver for social cohesion in communities like Bass, facilitating retention of young people in our community.

At all stages Junction encourages people to be as involved as possible. The social impacts of participation in the arts include positive self-esteem, community pride, social cohesion, educational attainment, job readiness and active citizenship. Of critical importance to me is that I have been told that events like Junction can, in many regional communities, provide the spark which engages a young person in the arts or creative industries. Now it is in its sixth year, festival creative director Greg Clarke has again placed the emphasis on involving everyone in the action, with free and ticketed events happening throughout the festival. A festival of participation is one of the important themes of Junction, and much of the artwork is immersive, exploratory and interactive. The team works hard to get local people in to take ownership through discovery and participation.

Events like this do not just happen. The vast majority of non-profit arts organisations in Bass rely on government funding for survival. Junction demonstrates how important it is to continue to invest in the arts, and how important it can be to regional communities such as Launceston and the surrounding areas that have considerable disadvantage and many barriers to participation. The contrast could not be starker between the investment that was made by the former Labor government and the current government. Now we have a government dictating to the arts community as to what arts courses can be taken on the basis that some artistic endeavours are too esoteric to lead to employment. The arts and creative communities need to be concerned and vigilant about this government which seeks to impose upon the creative arts at the higher education stage some sort of restriction based on the worth of the course. *(Time expired)*
Relations with Singapore

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (10:45): Australia's relationship with Singapore has further strengthened following the visit by Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong last week, with the signing of a number of bilateral agreements. Our nations have agreed to work more closely on regional security and tackling terrorism by signing a defence agreement which will permit Singapore to invest $2 billion in the development of military training facilities in Central and Northern Queensland, where up to 14,000 troops will train for 18 weeks each year.

The Singapore-Australia Free Trade Agreement, which our respective nations entered into in 2003, has been comprehensively updated with a greater focus on services and improved exchanges in the areas of innovation, science, education and the arts. Under the upgraded arrangements, Australian industries, including education, law, and financial and professional services, will gain improved access to Singaporean markets. There will be moves to have Australian qualifications recognised by Singapore, giving lawyers, engineers, accountants and medical professionals greater certainty to practise in Singapore.

Singapore will also recognise Australian tertiary qualifications, including juris doctor degrees as well as those in allied health such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy, from a number of Australian universities. Finance firms will also be able to provide a range of services on cross-border transactions with Singapore. The updated agreement will also guarantee the free flow of data across borders for service suppliers and investors conducting business. Businesses will not be forced into using local computing facilities or building data storage centres. Further, customs duties will not be imposed on electronically transmitted content. Tourists using Singapore's phone network could also benefit, with reasonable rates for international mobile roaming services being pursued.

Singapore is currently Australia's fifth-largest trading partner. In terms of tourism, 400,000 Singaporeans visited Australia last year and about one million Australians visited Singapore. The 2018 ASEAN summit will be held in Australia with Singapore as the chair. Australian businesses, including firms in my electorate, will benefit from greater access to Singaporean markets through increased trade and investment.

Lindsay Electorate: Nepean Hospital

Ms HUSAR (Lindsay) (10:48): I rise to draw attention to the alarming situation at Nepean Hospital in my electorate of Lindsay. The hospital already services more than 350,000 residents, and the population is growing. Recently, the independent Bureau of Health Information released a report that proved that Nepean Hospital is the most under-pressure hospital in New South Wales. It has the longest emergency department wait times and it has the longest elective surgery wait times, and the situation is getting worse. On a practical level, it means that, if you are in need of emergency care, there is a 50 per cent chance that you will be waiting more than four hours to be seen after you arrive. This is significantly outside the clinical benchmarks. It means that one in five elective surgery patients are being forced to wait longer than clinically recommended for the surgery they need. A child waits 298 days for ear, nose and throat surgery; someone waiting for a hip or knee replacement will be waiting more than 327 days; and, if you are in need of orthopaedic surgery, you will be waiting 323 days. This is simply unacceptable. It would not be allowed to happen in the eastern suburbs of Sydney. It is a tragedy that families in my electorate are being forced to endure this kind of
second-class treatment. Five of the six worst hospitals in New South Wales, when it comes to wait times, are in Sydney's west. The people of Western Sydney should not have to put up with this kind of indifference. My community deserves better. This is why I am desperately calling on the Prime Minister and the Minister for Health and Aged Care to take this issue seriously.

Nepean Hospital is struggling, and our patients and health workers are bearing the brunt of this strain. Mr Turnbull and his government have made it clear that they would rather spend $200 million in February on a plebiscite. Where do this man's priorities lie? The current situation at Nepean is untenable, and it is dangerous. Clinical Associate Professor Dr Ronald Chin, who is a head and neck surgeon at Nepean, put it as succinctly as this health minister could possibly ask for when he told Channel 7: 'Our emergency department is too small for the size of population. You cannot see patients if you do not have the room to see them in.'

The government must act to ensure Nepean Hospital is properly funded. The doctors and health workers deserve the resources that allow them to treat patients within clinically recommended time frames, not what suits the government. Instead, under the state and federal Liberal governments, our community waits longer than anyone else in New South Wales and our doctors and nurses are under more pressure and more stress than any other. It cannot continue, and I again ask Malcolm Turnbull to reverse his cuts to hospitals which have contributed to the situation and direct funding to Nepean hospital immediately. I call on Mike Baird and Jillian Skinner to act now to upgrade Nepean Hospital because, so far, all they have done in five years is to commission a study—not to mention the local Liberal member for Penrith who should stop spending time in hospital wards making videos and start delivering more hospital wards. My community needs the urgent hospital upgrade, and I promise now that I will not stop fighting until this is delivered.

**Forde Electorate: Young People**

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (10:51): I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the outstanding achievements of one of our community is great hardworking young people, Jessica Quelch. Jessica recently completed the intense 97-kilometre Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea as part of the PCYC's emerging leaders program. She is one of 12 young people in Queensland chosen to participate, and she underwent four months of training before taking on the tropical terrain, humid climate and sometimes torrential rainfall to walk the famous track. She learnt more about World War II, met the locals and now, as she said in her own words, has 'a new appreciation for the gruelling experiences that our Australian soldiers faced during World War II.

The trip was logged as the 'adventurous journey' component of the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award, an award she hopes to complete in the next 12 months. A member of PCYC since 2008, Jessica joined the youth group at age 11 and has since completed Bridge Awards and has undertaken Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver Awards.

Since being selected for the state youth leadership program, she has attended various camps, volunteered as events, fund raised and attended many other community events. Among all her leadership commitments and school, Jessica has also found the time to volunteer for St John's. She is a truly outstanding example of what young people can achieve when they put their minds to it. Too often we hear negative stories about young people in the media, but there are so many positive stories of young people doing great things in our
community. I would like to congratulate Jessica on what she has achieved, both with the assistance of the PCYC and through St John's. She is just one of the many great examples of amazing young people in my electorate of Forde, and I have no doubt we will hear a lot more about Jessica in the future.

This is just one example of many young people, whether it is Jessica or the under 18s at Loganholme FC that I saw last week at the football awards. The terrific work they are doing within the club and in the local community will ensure our community has future generations of leaders with tremendous community spirit. It is one of the joys of this job that we get to see this on a daily basis and to acknowledge the terrific work they contribute to our community at such a young age.

**Disability Support Pension**

Mr HILL (Bruce) (10:54): I rise to raise serious concerns regarding the government's approach to disability support pension reviews. It is causing unnecessary harm and distress and is a waste of public money. Mrs Deb Johnson of Wheelers Hill sought my help given a surprise review of her son Andrew's DSP under the name of the government's welfare crackdown. I have the family's permission to talk about this as they are determined to force change so other families do not have to go through this nonsense.

Andrew, 30 years of age, has lived in state residential care since 1999. Andrew has a severe intellectual disability, severe epilepsy and other diagnoses including autism spectrum disorder, bipolar disorder, Tourette syndrome and ADHD. Andrew is non-verbal and non-communicative and has had a PEG tube inserted for feeding since 1993. These conditions are lifelong. Despite this, government policy has forced a formal review of Andrew's DSP to assess his capacity to work. Under government direction, Centrelink requested current information from doctors on each condition, insisted on an updated IQ test despite the likelihood Andrew would physically assault the tester, and flagged a job capacity assessment and a disability medical assessment. Centrelink advised Mrs Johnson that such audits are random and there are no particular criteria for targeting. Centrelink advised me that the review has been triggered by the government's welfare crackdown and that it could not stop it. I wrote to the minister, but, given the need to provide new evidence, Mrs Johnson wasted over $600 on Medicare and medical costs to gather letters to prove the bleedingly obvious.

The neurologist noted in his letter, 'Requesting this type of correspondence regarding patients like Andrew is a complete waste of time. I have no idea what managers in Centrelink were thinking. He is not in a position to work and will need to stay on DSP until the day he dies.' Managers in Centrelink did not initiate it though; this government did.

Then, on Thursday afternoon, in response to media pressure we had the extraordinary spectacle of the minister calling *The Age* journalist directly to try and shut down the issue, saying the review was completed. Mrs Johnson had not even provided the requested information when the minister intervened. On what basis was this decision made? Should everyone in Australia run to the media to get sense out of the minister?

It has become clear over the weekend from the emails, Facebook messages and comments that this is a systemic problem. Does the minister seriously believe that Down syndrome gets cured, that amputated limbs grow back, or that profound intellectual disabilities magically
disappear? This government's welfare crackdown is wasting public money by targeting the wrong people and running up Medicare costs to write stupid, pointless letters.

I have a report of a Liberal MP publicly denying that this is even happening. Well, the cat is out of the bag now. I encourage everyone in Australia with similar stories to speak up. An inquiry is needed to get to the bottom of this and find a more sensible approach.

**Great Ocean Road**

**Ms HENDERSON** (Corangamite) (10:57): On a day when the Great Ocean Road is again closed between Wye River and Separation Creek because of the threat of landslide, I once again call on the Victorian government to match our $25 million contribution to the Great Ocean Road. It is absolutely astounding that the Victorian government led by Daniel Andrews has turned its back on what is a very significant tourist asset not just for Victoria but for Australia. In the budget and also in April of this year we announced another $25 million on top of the $25 million that was announced in 2013 and matched by the previous state Liberal government, and yet from Daniel Andrews we have seen zero contribution to this upgrade, which is so vital for tourism, for road safety and for the wonderful Great Ocean Road communities which I represent in this incredible part of the world.

The Great Ocean Road is Victoria's most valuable asset. It generates almost $800 million in incremental tourist spending. The Australian Grand Prix is $42 million and the Australian Open is only $240 million. And yet we see again, with the road under incredible pressure not just because of the floods and the landslides—in excess of 150—but also, of course, in the wake of the Christmas Day bushfire in Wye River and Separation Creek. This has put these communities under incredible economic strain, under incredible pressure, and I have worked very closely with the Wye River and Separation Creek communities. We are very proud, of course, that we have made a contribution of $3.89 million under the National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, but the fact of the matter is that the Victorian government needs to pull its weight.

I think we have seen that, with the Tourism Demand-Driven Infrastructure Program, over four years the Turnbull government is providing $43.1 million to state and territory governments for tourism infrastructure. $7.2 million has gone to Victoria, and yet we see the Victorian government turning its back on the most basic tourism infrastructure that is required along the Great Ocean Road.

At Eastern View, where there is the official archway for the beginning of the Great Ocean Road, there are not even basic toilet facilities. In places like Beijing and Shanghai, there are magnificent posters calling the people of China to come to our wonderful part of the world—and some 500,000 do just that, taking a day trip, part of the five million tourists who visit the Great Ocean Road every year—and yet at Eastern View there are not even the most basic facilities. So I think the time is ripe for our government to take over this funding. The Victorian government is failing us on tourism, and we need to take charge of this very important fund.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Buchholz):** In accordance with standing order 193, the time for constituency statements has concluded.
Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (11:00): I move:

That this House notes that:

(1) on Saturday 15 October 2016 significant monuments and landmarks will be lit red across Australia as part of Light it Red for Dyslexia; and

(2) Light it Red for Dyslexia:

(a) is an initiative to increase dyslexia awareness;

(b) coincides with international World Dyslexia Day; and

(c) is a prelaunch of Dyslexia Empowerment Week in Australia, running from 16 to 22 October 2016.

I would think that this motion has bipartisan appeal and bipartisan support, and I look forward to the House considering it. Australian Dyslexia Empowerment Week, which is now in its fourth year, is a national event created to increase awareness around dyslexia and support the approximately 10 to 20 per cent of people in our community who have dyslexia. It is a profoundly serious condition in many ways. I know for myself that reading and writing are one of the great joys I have, and I am sure they are a great joy for many in this parliament. But, if you have dyslexia, that joy initially is denied to you, unless there is a lot of support and a lot of help.

The launch of Light it Red for Dyslexia on 15 October is a way of creating dyslexia awareness in the community by lighting significant monuments and landmarks across Australia in red. In my home state of South Australia, we were very pleased to see the following places lit red: the Adelaide Town Hall balcony; City of Playford signs and monuments; City of Salisbury signs and monuments; the Gawler Town Hall and Institute building; the ‘Gustav and his dog’ monument in Eudunda— and I have not been to Eudunda in some years; I did play the coldest game of footy out there once, but it is worth going to see Gustav and his dog— Jetty Road and King Street Bridge in Glenelg; Parliament House; the Tonsley campus of Flinders University, at Clovelly Park; and the War Memorial at Mallala, which is a big landmark in Mallala. So we had a number of monuments lit red, and we want to see more in future years.

As I said before, dyslexia is a profoundly debilitating condition in the first instance, but you can conquer it with the right degree of support and awareness. In my electorate, Dr Sandra Marshall, who is a Town of Gawler organiser, is a very passionate person in this area. She is doing a lot to educate not just the community but the education department as well about dyslexia and how we can better help people, including students and young people, with dyslexia. I have also got to thank Ms Sandra Tidswell, Ms Jeni Ferris, Ms Leanne James, Ms Belinda Pringle, Ms Kay Bosworth, Dr Bartek Rajkowski, Mr Bill Hansberry, who I went to high school with, who is now an educator of some renown in South Australia, and Mr Robert Klose, who works in my office and who is very passionate about this condition.

The important thing about the Light it Red for Dyslexia initiative is that it has been brought about to coincide with the international World Dyslexia Day and be a prelude to Dyslexia Empowerment Week in Australia, which runs from 16 to 22 October. I have spoken in this chamber before about the nature of the condition and how it is often hidden, often passed
over. Many of the sufferers endure it and work and live very productive lives in the community, but they often have trouble admitting they have this condition and they often do not get the support that they need in the community.

One of the things I would really like to see, as we launch ourselves into a new world where education becomes increasingly important and many of the entry-level jobs that allowed people with this condition to be productive members of the community in decades gone, is raising awareness, increasing acceptance and improving the avenues of help for those who suffer. I would like for all of us, I think, to be more supportive and aware of the nature of this condition and to better support those in the community who have this condition.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Buchholz): I thank the member for Wakefield for his most valuable contribution to the House. Is the motion seconded?

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Government Whip) (11:05): I second the motion and I am happy to support the member for Wakefield. I thank the member for Wakefield for bringing this motion to the House. As we were discussing before, it is certainly an issue that is well supported across the chamber on both sides.

I think it is important to reflect that dyslexia in Australia affects roughly 10 per cent of the population and that holds globally as well. So 10 per cent of the people out there in the community whether, as the member for Wakefield said, they recognise it or not, have some form of dyslexia. As we get to know more about dyslexia and understand it better, we can start to treat it and put support services around it.

Dyslexia over the years has not been well identified or managed. It has been, according to the Australian Dyslexia Association, resistant to traditional teaching and regular learning methods, so it is important to ensure that we find new ways of teaching and supporting people who have been identified as having dyslexia.

That is the importance of the Light it Red for Dyslexia initiative. In Brisbane we had the Story Bridge lit up on Saturday in recognition of dyslexia as well as the Q1 SkyPoint Observation Deck on the Gold Coast. The Light it Red for Dyslexia campaign, importantly, is a volunteer initiative to increase dyslexia awareness and, as the member for Wakefield, said, it is a prelaunch to Dyslexia Empowerment Week.

Of that 10 per cent of the population with dyslexia, about half—or five per cent—of those students are known to have a developmental learning disability. Of these students with a learning disability, four out of five have a reading disorder as well as a maths disorder. So it is not just reading; it can also be maths.

The importance of Dyslexia Empowerment Week is that children are encouraged to write a red letter about dyslexia to a politician, a school principal, a teacher, the media or a person they feel has influence in creating change for people with dyslexia. I am looking forward to getting some of those letters—I have not received any yet and I am not sure if anyone else here has. Hopefully, over the next week or so, we will start to see some of those letters come into our offices. It will be interesting to see what those people have to say about their experiences with dyslexia and how we can possibly work with them and help them by passing their thoughts and concerns onto our senior colleagues.

As a government, we recognise that we need to place a high priority on education and providing educational opportunities for students, including those with dyslexia. In that vein,
the government is funding some $342,000 in 2016 to enable AUSPELD, the Australian Federation of Specific Learning Difficulties, to produce a resource entitled *Understanding learning difficulties: a practical guide* that will be made freely available online to all teachers across the country.

We need to recognise the importance of teachers being properly trained in teaching students with dyslexia. As I have said before, traditional teaching methods do not necessarily work. I was reading a statistic earlier that, in the three years of a Bachelor of Education—training for a teacher—only about five per cent of that time is actually spent on how to teach students with dyslexia, so it is important that we build the skills and training capacity of our teachers to be able to work with those students. That is, in part, what AUSPELD, as a national body, is providing—those additional services for people with dyslexia and other learning difficulties through, importantly, evidence based interventions.

The AUSPELD guide has been designed by experts to provide principals and teachers with a greater awareness and understanding of the significant impact that learning difficulties such as dyslexia can have on children. I think it is a great piece of work, and the government is committed to continuing to support students with those difficulties. I am pleased that the member has brought the motion to the House.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (11:10): It is a real honour to speak in this debate, and I particularly want to commend the member for Wakefield for putting it on the agenda of this place. I also want to acknowledge the excellent contribution by the member for Forde—some very insightful comments there as well.

It is clear to all of us that one of the most important benchmarks for success in our modern economy and society is successful years at school. We have that debate in many ways in that place, so I think it is unsurprising that we should be concerned that there are a group of students who have a condition that is going to be a serious barrier to them doing well at school, which is so heavily reliant on literacy skills—and that is those with dyslexia. As the member for Forde said, given that even so much of our science and maths subjects are based around language skill and capacity, it flows through subject areas.

It has not been well understood or well treated for a long time. I am sure all of us know adults now who struggled as best they could through life and perhaps did not, until quite late in life, get a diagnosis of dyslexia, an understanding of what that meant for them and good quality treatment that assists them. This is a great initiative, and I was really pleased to participate locally, on Saturday evening, with Labor’s candidate for the Wollongong by-election, Paul Scully, who has direct personal experience with adults that he knows who have exactly that problem. He was very keen to support the campaign. We went along to the lighting red of the Wollongong lighthouse. It was the first time that a local group have participated in this campaign. As the member for Wakefield said, it has been going for four years now. There were a local group of mums who have formed a dyslexia support group who were very keen to participate. We had a beautiful Wollongong evening. A pod of whales were playing and frolicking in the water just beside us, waving their tales in support for Light it Red for Dyslexia. The lighthouse was lit up red and looked fabulous, and there were a great group of people there to support the campaign.

Only in September, local mum, Sharlene Poljasevic, contacted me on Facebook and said: ‘We want to do this. We want to participate in this campaign this year.’ There is a bit of a cost
associated—as the member for Forde said, they are all volunteer groups—so she set up a GoFundMe fundraising campaign. I felt very happy to support that and to encourage others to support it. They were successfully able to get the funding they needed to light the lighthouse up red. On Saturday, Sharlene posted on her Facebook page: ‘A big thank you to the Wollongong Dyslexia Support Girls, to all the people who donated to make this happen, to all the people who turned up to see the lighting of the lighthouse, to all our friends and family who have shared our photos, and to our wonderful children, who give us the reason to build this awareness and who make us smile every day.’ I thought that was a beautiful thing which captured the sentiment.

The group have also organised a showing of a film, Outside the Square Film 2 - Targeted Teaching for children with Dyslexia, for the very issues that both the member for Wakefield and the member for Forde talked about in terms of empowering teachers to be able to deal effectively with this. I met with some of the local parents there: Sharlene and her family, John, Brooke and Karla; and Jenny, Simon and Jaryn O’Connor.

It was also great to catch up with Gabby Martinez, who spoke to the Illawarra Mercury in a great article by journalist Lisa Wachsmuth about Gabby and her daughter, Emilia. Gabby made exactly the point that the member for Wakefield made as would I am sure the member for Moreton—being a great reader as well—that even though Gabby is a great lover of books and literature, she had a daughter who was struggling to read. It was really getting the diagnosis and being able to find support services that made such a difference. And that story is repeated across families in each and every one of our electorates. So the campaign, both the week of awareness and the commencement of it by the Light it Red for Dyslexia campaign, is really important. I really want to commend parents, families and supporters all across our communities, like my own dyslexia support group, who participated in this campaign. I continue to commit my support to the efforts that we can deliver through this place in support of that campaign.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (11:15): Thank you for the opportunity to rise on this occasion to speak to the motion of the member for Wakefield. I begin by congratulating the member for Wakefield for moving the motion and also previous speakers because it is with pride that we stand here in a bipartisan fashion to talk about Light it Red for Dyslexia and the importance of the initiative. I would also like to congratulate those organisations that have come together to create this initiative and to support it, particularly Dyslexia Support Australia, the New South Wales dyslexia support group, the Victorian support group, Western Australia and Perth dyslexia support group, Dyslexia SA, the Queensland Gold Coast group, Dyslexia Information for the Canberra Region as well as the New South Wales Clarence and Northern Rivers organisation. All of them have an important role to play in raising the profile, awareness and visibility of the issue and in making sure that people with dyslexia feel that they are supported not just by those people they interact with on a daily basis but also that there is a broader community concern which is achieved by motions such as those moved today.

Being here from the government benches, the government places a very high priority on making sure there is visibility, awareness and education by providing equal opportunities for all Australian students and that goes to people with a disability, particularly those with dyslexia. That is why the government is proud to fund $342,000 this year towards the
Australian federation of specific learning difficulties' resource entitled *Understanding Learning Difficulties—A Practical Guide* that is made freely available to all teachers online across the country to enable them to support those people who need assistance.

The guide has been designed by experts to provide principals and teachers with greater awareness and understanding of the significant impact of a learning disability such as dyslexia can have on students. It also provides advice on a wide range of strategies for use in the classroom to more effectively support and meet the needs of students with learning difficulties. Teachers can access this resource through their education authority's professional development portal and is freely available to everybody, which is one of the key ways that we can not just raise awareness of the issues faced by people with disability but make sure that we support the people who support others. I am proud to be part of the government that is investing a record level of school funding that is growing from $16 billion this year to more than $20 billion in 2020. This means a total funding of $73.6 billion will be provided to government and non-government schools over the period of 2016-17 to 2019-20.

Of course we also need to acknowledge on these important days not just the role of organisations and educational institutions that provide professional support and assistance to people with dyslexia but also to acknowledge the commitment of those people who are carers. They are often family members and parents in particular who give support unconditional love and support to people with dyslexia, who face great challenges in their lives. There are many of these families in the electorate of Goldstein, who, every day, sacrifice to provide support and assistance to people in their lives out of a position of love and compassion because they are acutely aware of the need to make sure that everybody has an equal opportunity in life, particularly school aged children. By doing so, they create an environment in which everybody feels that they have an opportunity in society, and they also hold communities together. One of the things I have always strongly supported is that you build a country from the individual up, coming together to form family, community and, ultimately, country. On days like this, we acknowledge the very important role of carers and families because of the sacrifice they make and because of the contribution they not only have made in the past but will make in the future.

Finally, I acknowledge that there are many locations around this country where there is support of the Light it Red campaign. While there are many such sites across the country, I am particularly happy to say that the Kingston clock face in Moorabbin—which is just outside my electorate—will be lit up red to raise awareness and understanding in my community and to make sure that every Australian feels that there is an awareness and understanding of dyslexia, particularly for the support groups who do so much to support the people in these communities to make sure that everybody can have, and live, a free life.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (11:21): During Dyslexia Empowerment Week in Australia, I am proud to rise to speak on the motion put forward by my good friend the member for Wakefield. It is an opportunity to raise awareness about dyslexia and to dispel some of the myths about this learning disorder that may affect as many as one in 10 Australians—hence the rise of the Light it Red for Dyslexia campaign. I am doing my bit by wearing a red tie. Words and literature have been an important part of my life. I have an honours degree in English literature, and I taught English for 11 years, so I strongly value the ability to learn. As a lawyer and as a politician, I value precise words and the power that they
hold. I can only imagine how difficult it must be when words—the building blocks of our language—are almost unrecognisable, and so meaning is lost. I will endeavour to debunk the three most common misconceptions about dyslexia and then talk about the role teachers and parents can play in helping children with dyslexia.

The first misconception is that people with dyslexia see words back to front. Dyslexia is a reading based learning disability that is neurological in origin. People with dyslexia have difficulty accurately and fluently recognising and decoding words. Imagine for a moment that you are in a classroom in China, but you speak only English. In the classroom, all the writing on the blackboard, on the posters around the room and in the textbooks on the desks is in Mandarin. Imagine how frustrated and confused you would be, and, even more importantly, how little you would be able to learn. That is the experience that children with dyslexia have in some classrooms every day. They cannot decipher the writing on the blackboard, on the whiteboard, on the posters and in the textbooks. They may painstakingly decode a couple of words of a sentence on the blackboard, only to have the teacher rub them out and move to the next topic.

The second misconception is that dyslexia is a vision problem. Many children with dyslexia have, at times, used visual aids to assist their reading, including coloured overlays and even reading glasses, but there is no evidence that dyslexia is caused by visual stress.

The third misconception is that children with dyslexia are not intelligent. In fact, most children who suffer from dyslexia have average to above average intelligence. This can compound the problem for children in a classroom setting. A teacher has described it this way: 'Because these children are very intelligent, they know what they don't know.' Imagine yourself in that Mandarin classroom. The majority of children with dyslexia are very aware that they cannot keep up with the rest of the class. They are aware that they cannot decipher the language like most of their peers. This is often the most dangerous aspect of dyslexia. These children can quickly lose their self-esteem. You do not need your peers to call you dumb if you are going to label yourself that way. If not handled well by teachers and parents in the early years, these children can slip into a downward spiral of low self-esteem and educational failure that may eventually lead to unemployment and, sometimes, even transgressions of the law.

What are the best ways teachers and parents can help children with dyslexia? Children with dyslexia need intensive language education which is long term. Unfortunately, there are no educational shortcuts. It is a long, slow process, but the rewards for the children cannot be overstated. I urge people to be wary of the quick fix educational snake-oil salesman saying, 'Buy this product, and you'll be sorted.' It is a long-term remediation process.

The early identification of children with dyslexia is vital. The Acacia Ridge AEDC Response Group is based in my electorate of Moreton. They formed in 2011 in response to the Australian Early Development Census. On Saturday I had the pleasure of opening their 'Play, Learn, Create for 0 to 8s.' This program showcased a variety of educational services in the Acacia Ridge area to inform parents about the services available to help their children. For dyslexic children, their learning needs require an intensive and long-term approach. Early play-based programs such as the Acacia Ridge program are a solid foundation on which to build successful future learning. Dyslexia is a hurdle but it does not have to be a barrier for children participating in school. We as teachers and parents are much better equipped to
educate our children than we once were, but there is more to do to ensure that no child with dyslexia falls into the spiral of low self-esteem and underachievement.

I finish by especially acknowledging the wonderful teachers and parents in my electorate of Moreton who put in countless hours of patient effort to ensure that children with dyslexia are given every educational opportunity. I commend the member for Wakefield and all those members speaking in support of this motion. I commend it to the House.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (11:26): I thank the member for Wakefield for bringing this motion to the House. I gladly support his motion. At the same time, I congratulate the member for Wright for his elevation to the Speaker's panel: it is good to see you in the chair. I acknowledge the other members who have supported this motion, the member for Moreton and, in particular, the member for Wakefield—who are both very vocal members of the chamber! They are from the class of '07 as well, so it is great to see three members from the class of '07 supporting this motion.

I would like to start by talking about a very important and special group in my electorate. It is the Dyslexia-SPELD Foundation of Western Australia situated in South Perth, which is in the heart of my electorate of Swan. This group has provided vital support to children and adults with learning disabilities in Western Australia for more than 40 years. This group is extremely committed to improving the level of support provided to children and adults with learning disabilities, as well as to educating the community about learning disabilities and, in particular, dyslexia.

This motion today acknowledges the important role of Dyslexia Empowerment Week and the role that organisations like the foundation in my electorate play in our community. It also acknowledges the many monuments around Australia which were lit up in red on 15 October as a pre-launch for Dyslexia Empowerment Week. The week aims to raise awareness of this very important developmental learning disability. Dyslexia affects four out of five students who have a developmental learning disability, and it primarily affects their skills in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. As part of this week, I am supporting the red letter campaign and have asked schoolchildren in Swan to write a red letter about how dyslexia impacts them or their friends or family members, and what they think we as a government can do to help.

The Australian government places our priority on education and on providing equal educational opportunities to all Australian students. This includes students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia. The government is committed to ensuring that all our teachers, who work tirelessly, have the skills and tools, including an understanding of dyslexia, to best help our students. I recognise the member for Cunningham, who is an ex-teacher, and the contribution she made to this particular discussion. The government has funded a new Australian Federation of SPELD Associations resource titled Understanding Learning Difficulties: A practical guide so that it can be made freely available online to all teachers across the country. This guide was designed by experts to provide teachers with a greater awareness and understanding of the significant impact that learning disabilities such as dyslexia can have on students. It provides advice on a wide range of strategies for use in the classroom, to more effectively support and meet the needs of students with learning difficulties. Most importantly, it is easily accessible through the educational authorities'
professional development portals. It is also available for purchase from the Dyslexia-SPELD Foundation of Western Australia in South Perth.

This government is committed to continuing to improve support for students with disability and learning difficulties like dyslexia. There are an extensive range of government initiatives and activities that support students with disability and learning difficulties. For example, the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* were put in place to ensure that students with disability could access education on the same basis as other students. The standards explain the obligations of the education providers towards students with a disability. The government has funded the development of an exemplars of practice resource, with individual case studies based on the experiences of students, educators and parents. These provide examples of how students with disability have been supported to achieve positive outcomes, helping to demonstrate how the standards can be put into practice in a range of education settings. Another example is the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability. This is a joint initiative of all Australian governments and all state and territory government and non-government education authorities. National data is collected annually to identify the number of school students with disability and the level of reasonable education adjustment provided for them. This will help ensure we have the data available so that we can best help students with learning disabilities. As such, this government has delivered on its commitment to provide funding, informed by the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability from 2016.

In the 2016-17 budget, the government announced additional funding of $118.2 million in 2016-17 for schools to support students with a disability. This funding is on top of the increases in funding that the government is providing to all sectors across all states and territories through the existing loading. More than $5 billion has been notionally attributed to the loading for students with disability from 2014 to 2017, including over $1.3 billion in 2016 and almost $1.5 billion in 2017.

Again I commend the member for Wakefield for bringing this motion to the House and again I congratulate the local group in my electorate, Dyslexia-SPELD Foundation of WA, which is situated in South Perth and which is doing such a great job.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

**Cybersecurity**

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (11:32): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that 10 to 14 October was Stay Smart Online Week, which saw the Government educate businesses and individuals on the importance of cyber security, including how to protect themselves online;

(2) further recognises that this year's theme of 'Cyber safety from the lounge room to the board room' focuses on the importance of good online security habits at home and at work;

(3) congratulates the Government on launching Stay Smart Online Small Business Guide and Stay Smart Online My Guide for individuals which:

(a) provides:
(i) advice on vital areas of online security including aspects of privacy, passwords, suspicious messages, surfing safely; and
(ii) information on cyber security when accessing online finances and making payments; and
(b) gives advice on security solutions for tablets and mobiles;
(4) welcomes the Government’s free Alert Service, which has online safety information and solutions to help people protect themselves online; and
(5) congratulates the Prime Minister on launching the National Cyber Security Strategy which sets out the Government's vision for meeting the dual challenges of advancing and protecting Australia’s interests in the digital age.

Members would know my longstanding interest in cyber safety and cybersecurity. I have delivered hundreds of cyber safety presentations to schools and to community and business groups. So, in Stay Smart Online Week, I am very pleased to see the government is so committed to improving the nation's cybersecurity awareness. It is relevant to every aspect of our lives, whether it is at home, at work, at school, in business or just when we are out and about. Cybersecurity breaches are estimated to cost Australians over $1 billion a year, but there are a few simple things you can do. Considering that approximately 84 per cent of Australia’s small and medium businesses are online, there are steps that each business needs to take to protect their business. So the government has launched two cybersecurity guides for Stay Smart Online Week—the Stay Smart Online Small Business Guide and the Stay Smart Online My Guide for individuals.

The My Guide contains eight key steps that individuals should choose. In relation to privacy, be wary of what you share. With passwords, make sure you create strong passwords. Do not reuse them. Of particular importance for young people: with suspicious messaging, treat any and every unsolicited message with great caution. In relation to surfing safely, avoid malware and keep to trusted websites. With respect to online finances and payments, make sure you keep your bank details away from prying eyes. Be very careful. Check your bank account details constantly. With tablets and mobiles, stay secure while you are on the move. With security software, make sure it is updated and keep yourself safe, and report anything and everything that you can.

Small business can do a range of things: use pass phrases, which protects the information; back up data; raise cybersecurity awareness in your organisation or business; make sure you maintain good privacy—keep friends close and information even closer; lock down your computers and networks; and keep your security software up-to-date. The Stay Smart Online alert service is free and can help individuals and businesses understand recent threats as well as continuing, changing threats and how they can be avoided.

I have asked small businesses in my community: does the company or business have cybersecurity as an agenda item when they meet? Does the business, irrespective of its size, have state-of-the-art cybersecurity, not just state-of-the-art technology? How are information and data secured and used in the business with employees, with associated businesses and entities and, ultimately, with customers? These are all requirements of digital trust. Daily reports of data theft and threats to individual company’s brands are common, as are leaks by insiders. These are some of the threats. How would your business respond if it were you? I am pleased to see the government, under the national Cyber Security Strategy, offering
government grants to up to 5,000 small businesses to have cybersecurity tested by a CREST Australia New Zealand accredited provider.

On a personal level, I recently saw that our online reputation is our greatest asset. Tim Thomas, Detective Inspector for Technology Crimes Services, said in *The Sunday Times*:

No police investigation will ever undo the harm. Once the material is out on the internet it's there to stay.

I commend the eSafety Commissioner's work as well. I say to every parent: talk to your kids. If you look at iParent on the eSafety Commissioner's website, you will see they list seven ways to make your home cybersafe. I commend that to people. When I am out and about I also talk about the risks around some of the apps such as Snapchat. We have recently seen some of the risks around Tinder that parents need to be aware of, as they do with what happens with Instagram. Kik, in my experience, is meant for 17-year-olds but, from listening to the young people I talk to in schools, in my area it is mostly being used by children of the age of nine. That gives me great concern. Of course, there are other sites where parents also need to be very well aware of what is happening. You need to have a look at your child's history, talk to your children about this space and have a family plan.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly):** Is there a seconder for the motion?

**Mr Pasin:** I second the motion.

**Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (11:37):** Last week, in Stay Smart Online Week, the Australian Cyber Security Centre released its 2016 threat report. The report is a wake-up call. It suggests that malicious non-state actors could develop an offensive cyber capacity within the life of this parliament, so we need to be prepared. We need to prepare ourselves for that possibility, and our window of time in which to do that is narrowing by the day. The government's Cyber Security Strategy was released with great fanfare in April this year, and it recommended a number of 'priority actions', including the appointment of a Cyber Ambassador.

Labor recognises the need for diplomacy in the modern cybersecurity environment. That need was highlighted and underscored in the threat report that was released last week, which also highlights the lack of international consensus on what constitutes a 'proportionate' response to offensive cyberactivity. This is particularly challenging in the modern era, when the line between national security and cybersecurity is blurring. As the operation of critical infrastructure moves online, the scope for disruption increases. The destruction potential of a successful attack is growing, yet progress towards establishing a standard policy response to a state-sponsored cyberattack is standing still.

This paralysis is unacceptable. In most areas of national security, policy responses to state-sponsored activity are well established. They have been well established for decades—for hundreds of years. A country can expel diplomats in response to a spying scandal, issue a demarche if a country considers its sovereignty to have been violated, and use force in response to an armed attack. Clear and established policy responses such as these don't yet exist for cyberattacks. The Turnbull government has not outlined what sort of events it considers worthy of a proportionate response. It has not even decided what a proportionate response to a cyber attack actually looks like, and if we do not know, we cannot act.
This is a challenge that is not unique to Australia. The international community is working on establishing these thresholds and these benchmarks. These negotiations have important implications for Australia's national security, because Australia's interests are at stake in these negotiations. We need a place at the table to promote them, and that is why the cyber ambassador role is vitally important. That is what the cyber ambassador should be doing. Not only has a cyber ambassador not been announced by this government since the release of the Cyber Security Strategy—a major strategy with hundreds of millions of dollars of investments since its release in April this year—but also the government has not said when it will be announcing one at all. We do not have any idea when we are going to get a cyber ambassador. In the 2016-17 financial year, $2.7 million was set aside for this position. We are how many months into the financial year and we are still unspent on that position and there has been no announcement. This is a part of a pattern of growing delay with this government.

The strategy called for the Australian Cyber Security Centre to be relocated to enable the government and the private sector to work more effectively together. The strategy was announced in April this year and yet, just as we might have expected, the centre has not yet been relocated and we do not know when it will be relocated. Australia's Cyber Security Strategy also called for the establishment of joint cyberthreat sharing centres. The ACSC Threat Report 2016 that was released last week echoed this call, but the government has not established these centres either. So what have we got? We have got no cyber ambassador, we have got no relocation of the Cyber Security Centre, and there is no news on the joint cyberthreat sharing centres—no news on that at all. We do not even know when these hubs are going to be established. Meanwhile, the strategy makes no mention of mandatory data breach notification legislation. There is also no mention of that in the ACSC Threat Report. So, we have got a government here that is sitting on its hands when it comes to cybersecurity. Despite its call for priority actions, we do not have a cyber ambassador, we do not have a relocated Cyber Security Centre, and we do not have any information on when these cyberthreat hubs are going to be established. This government is just sitting on its hands. There is no priority action from this government when it comes to cybersecurity.

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (11:42): Last week was Stay Smart Online Week. The internet is effectively a story of the good, the bad and the ugly. With an estimated 20.6 million internet users in Australia, it is essential that we make sure all Australians are aware of cybersecurity and its importance. Just about every aspect of our lives is linked with some use of the internet. Almost everything to do with the internet is referred to as 'cyber' something: 'cyber cafe' means you can get internet services as well as a coffee and 'cyberattacks' means someone is trying to hack your system. I am sure, as we become more and more dependent on the internet, the use of the word 'cyber' will continue to grow.

While many parts of the internet that we know now are just great—Facebook to stay in touch with relatives, internet banking instead of going to the bank, and even sending a gift if we are so busy we forget; we can just google the gift, pay and get it sent—the bad part of the internet is its misuse by those who are trying to steal part of your personal life, part of your business or part of your intellectual property rights. This bad part of the internet is called cybercrime, and it is estimated to cost Australians over a billion dollars a year. However, there are a range of steps that can be taken to keep both families and businesses safe online. Last week the Turnbull government launched two cyber security guides: an updated Stay
Smart Online business guide and a Stay Smart Online My guide for individuals. These can both be downloaded from the Stay Smart Online website. More than 1,700 partners across Australia have combined to prepare these guides to help protect Aussies from some sort of cybercrime.

There are eight key steps for individuals: be careful of the information you share; use really strong passwords; if you receive a message that you did not really expect to get, delete it—if it was from a friend they will contact you again; when browsing the internet, be careful of the pop-ups that appear—are they coming from a trusted website?; keep your bank details away from prying eyes and do not share them with anyone; mobile phones and tablets are really convenient but they can be used by others so make sure the shut down time is pretty short and password protected; update your security software to keep yourself safe; and if you feel that something is too good to be true then it probably is and it is likely to be a scam so report the source so it can be investigated.

Approximately 84 per cent of small-to-medium Australian business have an online presence and it is super important that we all take the right steps to protect ourselves. You really have to have pass phrases that are unique to each employee. If you leave your desk for some reason, lock your computer; you may think you are only going to be a minute but you may take longer. Make sure everyone is 'cyber sensible' for your business or organisation. Maintain high levels of privacy; keep your friends close but keep information closer. Back up your data; you never know when you may have a system fail, and re-doing the work from scratch is both tedious and very un-productive.

I tell this story to many students during my visits to schools. It is amusing but it does really emphasise the need to back up. Many years ago, when computers were a pretty new concept and records were only just being moved from paper to floppy disks and clunky computers, I was a teacher and a form advisor for more than 300 students. I was often in the position of having to write lists of students going to different events, swimming carnivals and the like, so I thought I would capture all their names on a master list. Well I typed in all those names in alphabetical order and then prepared the sprocket loaded paper ready to print—that tells you how old this story is—but the paper bundle fell and knocked the power point out of the socket. Every name was lost and I had to begin all over, so the most important lesson was 'save as you go'.

Staying smart online will become more important as we advance our technologies and our digital applications. For parents, carers and responsible adults, there is potential in the ugly side of the internet. Do you know who your children are talking to? Are they educated about the different searches on the net? Have they switched off their geo-locators before posting Facebook photos? Are their posts showing them possibly drinking and that their parents are away from home? Are we doing everything possible to keep our children from being the subject of an online stalker? And finally, perhaps most important of all, are we helping them through ways and techniques to deal with online bullying from their mates at school or work who are supposed to be their friends? Too often we leave the wellbeing of our children and family to the potential influence of online cheating, cynicism, crime and criticism. We all have a role to play in so many aspects of our cyber life, both now, tomorrow and all the tomorrows ahead of us. For all our sakes, stay smart online.
Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (11:48): Last week was online safety week and an increasingly critical part of online safety today is data security. It is more important than ever that we keep personal data safe. Massive volumes of data are being collected online every second. Data about your spending patterns, your daily movements, who you associate with and in what contexts and obviously data that can be used for the purposes of fraud and theft—credit card details and the like. The responsibility to keep this data secure is a shared one. Individuals should take care to change their passwords periodically, to not use the same password across different internet sites and to use two-factor authentication where possible. However, while some of this data is stored on hardware owned by individuals, most of it is now shared 'on the cloud', which is geek speak for on someone else's computer—in a server farm controlled not by the individual but by a company. Australians rely on the companies entrusted with this data to protect it and, when they are unable to protect it, to minimise the consequences of these failures.

Unfortunately, data breaches are a continuing fact of modern life. Australia has more data breaches reported than anywhere else in APAC, according to the Gemalto Breach Level Index. So far in 2016 there have been 2,928 publicly disclosed data breaches which have exposed more than 2.2 billion records—records including the data of individuals like you or I.

In the past two years we have seen a huge number high-profile hacks around the world, including Anthem Health Insurance with 80 million records stolen, the DNC and Hillary Clinton’s campaign chair records, where five million records were stolen. Ashley Madison had 37 million records stolen; Mossack Fonseca, 11.5 million; and the Philippines’ Commission on Elections had 55 million records stolen. Recently, tech giant Yahoo had the details from 500 million accounts stolen—that is, 500 million records capturing names, email address, birth dates, and scrambled passwords, along with encrypted or unencrypted security questions and answers that could help hackers break into victims' other online accounts. This breach occurred in 2014 but was only publicly reported in 2016.

This is the new normal. Australian governments, businesses and individuals need to adapt to a new environment in which the security of their data is constantly challenged and in which data breaches periodically occur. Responding to this new online security environment will require a multifaceted approach. One crucial element of this response must be legislation requiring individuals to be alerted when their data has been compromised. Globally, Australia is falling behind in this respect. The majority of states in the US have already introduced data breach notification laws. The EU has similar regulation, and New Zealand and Canada are already well advanced on this matter.

In contrast, in Australia, companies currently report to the Privacy Commissioner on breaches on a voluntary basis. The previous Labor government introduced legislation to require such data breach notification through the Privacy Amendment (Privacy Alerts) Bill 2013, but the incoming Abbott government did nothing to advance the issue for the next two years. In February 2015 the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security produced a bipartisan report recommending introduction of a mandatory data breach notification scheme by the end of 2015. The government agreed with those recommendations in March 2015, and an exposure draft to deliver on this was subsequently released eight months later, despite this issue having been well ventilated for more than three years before this.
This draft legislation would require companies and organisations to inform people affected by a compromise of their personal data if there were a real risk of serious harm posed by the release of the information—for example, where a person's credit card details, identification details, passwords or other information were leaked or obtained fraudulently. The bill was included on a list of bills intended to be introduced during the winter 2016 sitting of the 44th parliament, but, like the end of 2015 deadline previously agreed by the government, there is no sign of the data breach notification bill.

Still no such bill has been tabled. The government has now indicated that it will be introducing a data breach notification bill in the spring sittings of this parliament. We will wait and see. But the delays to date are not good enough. Labor thinks that all Australians have a right to know when their data has been breached. In the modern environment this is a crucial element of overall online security. We can look to consumers and we can inform consumers about what they can do to protect themselves, but we need to ensure that corporations play their role as well in the data governance arrangements of this country. There is nothing that an Australian consumer can do if their data has been breached on a server in Singapore. We will continue to push the government on this issue until it takes action. I hope to see a mandatory data breach notification scheme introduced into this parliament as promised by the government in this setting.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (11:53): I welcome this opportunity to get up and talk about cyber safety and security. I do not think there is any ambiguity among members of parliament that this is a rising and emerging issue that needs to be addressed, particularly in the light of technological change. While I welcome the comments from members on the other side of the House, I think it is always important to deal with it in a substantive way and to make sure that we are taking the Australian community along with us in addressing cyber security.

We know it is an issue; we know it is going to continue to be an issue; and we know it is going to become more sophisticated over time. That is why it is so important to talk about it and why this motion has been put forward—to make sure every Australian is aware of the risks and the problems that they may face. When it comes down to it, we are leading by example to encourage everybody, businesses and individuals, to come forward and share information about the incidents and experiences they have directly around cyber security. We need to make sure that the strategy is in place so that people can be safe, their data can be secure and that people can use technology with confidence into the future, as it evolves and continues to face threats. That is why the government takes this issue seriously. In April we launched the cyber security strategy, which does an enormous amount to build and bring forward information that is relevant to the Australian people.

This government is doing an awful lot of work in this space—$230 million over four years for 33 initiatives in the Cyber Security Strategy; $38 million in cybersecurity initiatives through the National Innovation and Science Agenda; $400 million over the decade as part of the 2016 Defence white paper; and $80 million to improve public-private partnerships and cyberthreat sharing information. So it is easy to make criticisms and assessments that people want to add or contribute and they are most welcome, but we need to acknowledge the enormous amount of work that has already been done and will continue to be done to make sure that people are safe and secure.
Speaking perhaps from a position of history and experience, as the former Australian Human Rights Commissioner, these issues were regularly dealt with in terms of navigating the very difficult challenges around privacy, security and law in my term in that office. If we do not deal with them in a sophisticated and considered way, you can create problems where not only can too many things be reported to government but equally things are not appropriately dealt with by government. Those are some of the great challenges dealt with by the Privacy Commissioner in making sure that everybody’s information—commercial, personal, private, medical et cetera—is secure while also making sure that the government does not become a gatekeeper intrusive in all matters related to privacy. That is where the power of technology and its role can be so important in driving change, and the private sector has done so much in this sector through the evolution of technology that helps deal directly with the challenges of cybersecurity.

We also need to acknowledge that there is a very serious cost, if we do not properly address challenges of cybersecurity. There are not just obviously the human costs of sense of security and safety but also a lost productivity in income and the costs of diverting staff and resources, particularly in business, from other activities to deal with any compromise that may occur. There is the loss of revenue associated with the theft of information, particularly intellectual property which is so central to innovative businesses that are going to make a contribution to the future of this country, grow jobs for the 21st century and build Australia for the 21st century as well as, of course, if we are dealing with cybersecurity at a governmental level, particularly across boundaries, compromising our negotiating position, our security position, in some international fora.

There are of course broader costs to the Australian economy where information is stolen from networks, particularly around personal information for the purposes of fraud. As somebody who has had the occasional phone call from their bank saying that my credit card has somehow been maliciously used in a country I have not visited in some time and to purchase goods and services that I do not believe I have purchased, I know that experience firsthand.

But there is also, of course, a reputational cost that comes from negative social and news media exposure around the challenges of trust not just between individuals but individuals and companies. That is why dealing with cybersecurity, particularly at a local level is so important. In 38 of the primary schools in my electorate of Goldstein, there have been initiatives and efforts made to help children understand the importance of cybersecurity as part of protecting themselves and their families into the future. I encourage more of those initiatives, because, as most issues come back to personal responsibility, we need to make sure that these are expanded and worked as part of secondary schools as well. I thank you for your time.

Dr ALY (Cowan) (11:58): The internet has become a ubiquitous part of our lives, especially among young people who have been called AORTAs—always online and real-time available. In 2010, I presented a paper at the International Cyber Resilience Conference following the release of the Labor government’s 2009 Cyber Security Strategy which recognised cybersecurity as a top-tier national security priority. The paper I presented was entitled Building resilient cyber communities. In that paper, I spoke of the human link in the
security system as being the most vulnerable and the need to improve both individual and business culture towards cybersecurity.

I spoke about the need to raise awareness and educate people about the importance of maintaining strong and robust cybersecurity habits—things like ensuring our passwords are safe, logging off when leaving the office and being aware of suspicious messages. These may seem like small and insignificant actions, but the impact of not having a resilient cyberculture can be devastating to business. The 2016 IBM cost of data breach study found that the average organisational cost of data breaches for the year was $2.64 million in Australia. That is a per capita cost of $142. Most data breaches continue to be caused by criminal and malicious attacks. These breaches also take the most time to detect and contain and, as a result, they have the highest cost per record. But around one-third of data breaches were due to human error.

For individuals the impact can be equally disastrous, ranging from fairly minor inconveniences caused by malware to leaking of private photographs to identity theft. The recent leaking of explicit photos involving Perth schoolgirls underscores the urgency of a comprehensive cybersecurity education campaign to educate young people about the risks involved in posting private and intimate information online, particularly in an age when the so-called 'selfie culture' has infiltrated traditional boundaries of privacy and confidentiality.

It can sometimes be difficult for those of my generation—and forgive me for making generalisations here—to understand just how hardwired the lives of young people are, but understand it we must. It is not enough to just tell young people about the dangers of posting personal information or explicit photos online just as it is not enough just to tell young people about the dangers of engaging with certain violent extremist messaging online. We need comprehensive strategies in place that are build on an understanding of both positive and negative opportunities the internet offers, and we need to harness the positive and guard against the negative.

But it is also not enough for governments to tell people about the importance of cybersecurity while its own systems remain vulnerable to attacks and breaches. The ABS has reported 14 data breaches since 2014. Most recently, of course, we had the major denial of service attack on the 2016 census. A recent Four Corners investigation reported that sensitive Australian government and corporate computer networks have been penetrated by cyberattacks in the last five years. Newstat Limited, whose assets were sold off last year, was among those and was so completely hacked that it had to rebuild its entire network. And of course the most recent breach of Medicare and PBS data again reminds us that government is not immune. I reiterate the words of Labor's shadow minister for health that the government's 17-day delay in admitting the breach is simply unacceptable, particularly when there are reported to be around 1,500 downloads of that data.

While I rise today to commend any efforts to increase awareness of cybersecurity and individual responsibility in creating strong and resilient cybercommunities, I also rise to remind this government that they too above all have a responsibility to ensure that they take cybersecurity seriously. This should not be a case of 'do as I say and not as I do'. The government should lead by example, and cybersecurity starts with and ends with this government.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton) (12:03): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order for the next day of sitting.

Cox, Mrs Jo

Mr Giles (Scullin) (12:03): I move:

That this House:

(1) condemns the murder of Mrs Jo Cox, Member of Parliament in the House of Commons for the constituency of Batley and Spen, killed in the course of performing her responsibilities to her constituents;

(2) expresses its deepest sympathies to Mrs Cox’s family, colleagues, and to all who knew her; and

(3) pays tribute to Mrs Cox’s extraordinary contribution to public life.

On 16 June this year, a woman was brutally murdered while she was at work in the course of doing the job that she loved. Her name is Jo Cox. She was the Labour member in the House of Commons for Batley and Spen, amongst many other things. Today we remember her in this place, Australia's parliament. This is the least we can do. I hope this motion can be the start of a response, not simply a statement of respectful condolence. This motion follows motions in the House of Commons and other legislatures, including the United States House of Representatives. I note that many Australian members of parliament, along with parliamentarians around the world, have signed a statement expressing our shock, our horror and our sympathy.

I stand here with colleagues to pay respect and to extend deepest sympathy to Jo Cox’s husband Brendan, her children, all of her family and friends, to all who knew her and to all who loved her. I do not presume to understand what they have been going through. My words here cannot of course compare to the incredibly brave words and thoughts of her husband. In his moving editorial for The New York Times entitled ‘Brendan Cox: carrying on Jo’s work against hate’ he said:

… I’ve thought about what we can do to advance Jo’s beliefs. While she worried about the direction of politics in many countries, she was never despondent. She knew from a lifetime of activism that most people are good, and that human empathy is a powerful force for change.

I am in awe that he could say such generous words at such a time, and I am inspired to do justice to those words and to their spirit. I never met Jo Cox. I cannot speak today of her life from personal experience—I am grateful for the advice of those who did know her—but it is so important that her life and work are spoken of here. It is clear to me that her work and the way in which she did it made a great impact on those she encountered. I am aware of the extraordinary regard in which she is held by former colleagues from the humanitarian and not-for-profit sectors, and how deeply her death has affected so many in those fields and in the Labor Party more generally.

Jo Cox was born on 27 June 1974. She studied at Cambridge university and then at the London School of Economics before working for Oxfam and in significant political roles. She was elected to parliament in May 2015 with an increased claim a majority. In her sadly too short time in that parliament she made an impact, through both the work she did and the manner in which she did it. Across her working life she was a consistent advocate for equality, for a more peaceful world, for women's rights, against poverty, for inclusion and for
strengthening our democracy. At the time of her murder Britain was in the course of a bitter and too often rancorous debate about its future in Europe. Jo Cox spoke out bravely for her vision against those forces seeking to divide, in particular against the growing recourse of populists to mobilise insecurity by promoting hatred.

I make this contribution at a time when we confront great challenges to our democracy. On the one hand, there is a pervasive cynicism about the way in which political processes work, or don't. On the other hand, there is a rejection of pluralism, indeed of democracy itself. In her life and her work, Jo Cox confronted these challenges head on. This must continue. I note the memorial fund established to honour her has been supporting HOPE not hate, an organisation challenging extremism in alienated communities—hope not hate. In Jo's first speech, speaking with pride in representing a diverse community, she said, 'We are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us.' And we do.

Here in Australia, as in the United Kingdom, we must continue to choose hope over fear in how we carry on our representative work every day and in standing up against the voices of division and despair. It is necessary but not sufficient that we call out and stand up to the voices of division wherever we hear them. But we must also strive throughout our work for a kinder politics—through how we conduct ourselves, through demonstrating by listening attentively and leading our concern for those whose lives are insecure, and by instilling across the community a sense that politics still matters, that it is how people can come together to expand opportunities in their lives and in the lives of others.

Brendan Cox, Jo Cox's husband, whose heartbreakingly beautiful piece referred to earlier, began that article by saying, 'All our lives, Jo and I had been optimists,' and ends by returning to that optimism. If this brave man can do this then surely all of us here, with the chance and the duty to speak for others, can and must. Jo Cox demonstrated politics at its best. As her husband wrote, it is our job to realise her vision. We should continue to remember her and do this by striving to live up to the example she said. Rest in peace.
Today is the beginning of a new chapter in our lives. More difficult, more painful, less joyful, less full of love. I and Jo's friends and family are going to work every moment of our lives to love and nurture our kids and to fight against the hate that killed Jo.

Jo believed in a better world and she fought for it every day of her life with an energy, and a zest for life that would exhaust most people.

She would have wanted two things above all else to happen now, one that our precious children are bathed in love and two, that we all unite to fight against the hatred that killed her. Hate doesn't have a creed, race or religion, it is poisonous.

Jo would have no regrets about her life, she lived every day of it to the full.

At a later point in time, he said:

She was a politician and she had very strong political views and I believe she was killed because of those views. I think she died because of them and she would want to stand up for those in death as much as she did in life.

There is no doubt that Jo Cox was an incredibly brave woman who stood by her convictions. In a mere 13 months she made an extraordinary mark through the work that she did representing the constituency of Batley and Spen. She was born in West Yorkshire. She studied social and political sciences at Pembroke College in Cambridge. She worked first as a political assistant. She then joined the international humanitarian charity Oxfam, rising to become head of policy and advocacy at Oxfam GB. Her charity work led to her advising Sarah Brown, the wife of former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who was spearheading a campaign to prevent deaths in pregnancy and childbirth. Jo Cox was the national Chair of Labour Women's Network and a senior adviser to The Freedom Fund, an antislavery charity. She was selected to contest the seat of Batley and Spen after the previous incumbent decided not to stand in the 2015 election. Having stood and won the seat, she became a campaigner on issues relating to the Syrian civil war and founded and co-chaired the all-party parliamentary group the Friends of Syria.

Jo Cox is survived by her husband and their two children. In a couple of days time there will be a by-election in Batley and Spen. Tracy Brabin, who was previously and actress who appeared in Coronation Street, has been chosen as Labour's candidate to contest the seat. The other major political parties will not contest the election, as a mark of respect.

Jo Cox was an incredibly brave woman who stood up for her beliefs and ideals in the face of extraordinary opposition. She teaches all of us that, despite the challenges we face as members of parliament and, I have to say, despite some of the dangers that I think we all feel from time to time, and I know that I feel, it is absolutely incumbent upon each of us to stand up for our ideals and to fight for the people we represent. I convey my sincere condolences to her family, to her friends and to all British MPs on behalf of the Australian parliament.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (12:14): I rise to second the motion and to add my condolences to the people of Britain, and also to the family of Jo Cox, the Labour MP for Batley and Spen. Jo Cox died on 16 June after being stabbed and shot while conducting what we would call a mobile office. The 52-year-old man who was later charged with her murder shouted 'Britain first'.

Jo was 41; she had two children, aged three and five. Like every death at work, her death was a tragedy. It came about two weeks before the Australian election. Everyone in this place at the time was campaigning. We were meeting constituents on street corners, like Jo Cox was
when she was murdered. I felt her death very keenly, and I know that my colleagues, like the member for Lalor, who is here with us today, did as well. My guess is that each member of this place has received threats of violence, so I suspect that alongside the sadness we all felt there was a pang of fear and something like recognition.

Becoming a member of parliament is a very great privilege and a great opportunity to make change. And it is also an act of bravery that carries with it some sacrifice. We are ridiculed. We are hated by some people. We are looked upon with contempt. We are called children. We are told we are in it for the money. We are dehumanised. We are constantly spending time away from those that we love, like our kids and our partners and our families and our friends. Expectations of us are simultaneously so high as to be unachievable and so low as to be insulting.

Each person in this place could choose a much less difficult path, and it seems to be getting worse for those in public life, particularly for women. Witness the attacks on Hillary Clinton and the tacky obscenities and sledges of her opponent. As former Prime Minister Julia Gillard said in her speech at Jo Cox's memorial very recently:

Our community would not consider it acceptable to yell violent, sexually-charged abuse at a female politician walking down the street. Why is it okay to let these voices ring so loudly in our online worlds?

These voices weaken, ridicule, humiliate and terrify. Not only do they challenge the resolve of the women who cop the abuse, but they deter other women from raising their hand to serve in public life. For all the structural barriers to women's participation in politics, and for all the gender bias and sexism that must be addressed, so too must we challenge and defeat—the words that are said. She went on to say that it was very unclear at what point those sorts of online abuses would spill over into real life, into public life and onto the street. It is true. A friend of mine is a public figure—she is a columnist; she goes on television—and she is routinely abused online. But very recently she received, at her house in her mailbox, a letter containing a package of photos of gang rapes, of genital mutilation. It is horrifying to see these things happening in public now, and so the murder of Jo Cox really reminds us of the sorts of things that people in public life face and the fact that it is an act of bravery.

So you might say: 'Why on earth would anyone do it? Why would anyone put themselves up for public life?' The answer for every single person here, I think, is because we feel obliged. We feel a sense of duty. We ask ourselves these questions: 'If I say it is too much for me and I give it up, what message will that send to other people? If I don't do it, who will do it? If, being able to make change, I fail to make that change am I not failing in my obligation and my duty?' I really feel that those are the reasons why Jo Cox was in parliament. You can see it through her advocacy on Syria, on pregnancy and childbirth; you can see it through the work that she did on diversity and the imperative to bring people together. You can see it from all of the things that happened in her short political career, which was far too short, that did take her away from those beautiful young children and her husband too much. And you can see it in the fact that she was doing what we should all be doing, which is talking to our constituents and listening to them. And you can see that sense of obligation, that sense of duty and that imperative to make change in the words that her husband spoke at the memorial on what was to have been her 42nd birthday. He talked about the beautiful irony that there was to her death. Though it was an attempt to silence her, the act of murdering her had actually
brought people together, had continued her work to bring people together even after her death. It is really an honour to be able to stand up in this condolence motion to express my condolences to the British people and to Jo Cox's family. May she rest in peace.

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa) (12:19): I wish to join with other members of this House in supporting this motion of condolence to the family of Jo Cox. I commend the member for Scullin for bringing this to the House. Ms Cox was the first member of her family to go to university. Having graduated from Cambridge University, she went on to work in very important parts of the community, through Oxfam and through being a strong advocate for women's rights and refugees, and also as a political adviser. Ms Cox's experience in those fields made her a fitting member of the British parliament to represent her constituents in Batley and Spen, which is a diverse electorate. Ms Cox thoroughly enjoyed representing the people of Batley and Spen in the 15 months that she was in parliament. She quickly made her mark as a bright and compassionate representative for those people, advocating across political party lines to ensure that she got the best outcome, not only for the people she represented but also for the people of Britain. There is no doubt that her hard work and dedication was something that she saw as a commitment to the people of Britain and to the people she represented, and particularly to the most vulnerable in the community. She stood for parliament for that particular reason—to be the best representative and to be entrusted to represent them in that place.

From her time with Oxfam, where she worked on humanitarian issues, to her role as an MP, through which she sought to address some of the most pressing international challenges of our time, particularly in Syria, Jo Cox committed to making the world a better place. Her contribution to public life is an example to all of us as we carry on our parliamentary duties here. Her death at such a young age—similar to my age—is a tragic loss for constituents but above all for her family, particularly for her husband Brendan and her two small children—and that is quite poignant to me, because it mirrors much of my life and my family situation.

Ms Cox's death occurred in the midst of the Brexit campaign, and the attribution of the nature of the campaign to the stupidity of the man who wrongly took her life. I was not there, and I did not know Jo. I do not know the man who took Ms Cox's life, other than the reports that he was quite unwell. But I think that this tragedy illuminates more broadly the growing contempt of democracy and of the role that we as MPs play and the work that we do in representing the people of our constituencies, particularly when there are 69 countries around the world where democracy does not exist. Democracy is something that we as elected representatives should be custodians of, to ensure that it is seen as something precious. The voices of the people that we represent in this parliament—that is something that is precious to us, but also precious to them, in ensuring that democracy in our country is undertaken without the vitriol and hatred that this person exemplified by taking the life of Jo Cox.

These principles are really the foundation of any good democracy. But it is important that we as their representatives ensure that is encapsulated in our actions in this place—that we actually take the community with us, and that the community understands and respects that, while we have differences of opinion in this place, we are able to work together collectively for a better nation. There are plenty of examples that I have seen, only in my short five months in this place, where both sides of this parliament can work collectively and constructively to make our electorates and our country a better place. That is our
responsibility. It is also the responsibility of the media to ensure that they come on that
journey with us; that they portray the bipartisanship that does exist from time to time. This
tragic death should not be just a tragic event in history; it should be something that we should
all learn from. We should all ensure that we actually move forward as a nation, and that we
move forward as a world, to ensure that this type of hatred and violence is never accepted,
and that the community understands that each and every one of us, no matter our political
persuasion, is here to make this place a better place in the world.

Can I again commend the member for Scullin for bringing this forward: this is a very
important motion. I give my deepest sympathies to the British people and to Jo Cox's family.
Thank you.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (12:24): I also rise to send my condolences to the
British public and to Jo Cox's family. I echo the sentiments expressed by the member for
Scullin—and I thank him for the motion—in particular, the sentiments he expressed around
the notion that it is important that in this place Jo Cox's death be marked. For me, that is a
very personal thing. On the morning that I heard of Jo's death and across that day, I made
contact with many people—the member for Griffith was one, the member for Hotham
another—and I sent a text to former Prime Minister Julia Gillard. I have collected those things
together. My first response went like this:

And suddenly the thing we think isn't really possible - or the thing we won't contemplate happening
happens. It is not here and it is not our Julia Gillard but it is a younger version in a place we know too
well. It is one of us, a woman committed to representing a multicultural, multi faith community and the
killer is someone we know too well, someone whose hate has broken with all human decency.

I went on, 'And the sadness.'

My text to former Prime Minister Gillard was simple. I thanked her for teaching us to stare
down the hate. I lived as a personal friend of our former Prime Minister through her years as
Prime Minister and, like many of her friends and many of her constituents, of which I was
both, I worried. I worried that something like this might happen in our country. Jo Cox's death
reminded me how close we did come to those events. As the member for Griffith has
referenced, the online hate that is thrust upon women who stand up for their communities is
becoming almost intolerable.

Julia Gillard gave a speech recently at a commemoration for Jo Cox, and I would like to
quote her here. This was on 11 October in London:

Like millions of others around the world, I remember where I was when I heard of Jo's death. I was in a
hotel room in Brussels and—unusually for me—I had the television on. Normally, I get my news online
but I was sorting through documents and other stuff I had accumulated on the trip. I flicked the
television on for background but on hearing about Jo I stopped moving around the room, sank on to the
bed and watched—saddened, stricken and shuddering about what this said about our world.

Women friends of mine, who were campaigning in Australia's election, were particularly shaken. They
wondered, "What does this mean for us now?" Standing at street stalls and giving out pamphlets at train
stations they asked themselves for the first time ever—"Are we safe?"

How do those who loved Jo recover? How do we all move beyond the shock and the fear?

My answer is that while we must farewell Jo, we must never farewell the values that defined her.

I think with those words our former Prime Minister captures a lot of the thoughts that we had
across that day. Like the member for Griffith and the member for Scullin, we were
campaigning, as were those opposite, and we picked up our bags that day and we headed out and we said hello to our constituents, because ultimately, like Jo, we believe that most people are good. We believe that the things we fight for are important, and so we stood.

The links to Jo Cox, for me, are also there in her maiden speech, where, if I tweak a few of the words, I could be speaking about Lalor. She said:

Batley and Spen is a gathering of typically independent, no-nonsense and proud Yorkshire towns and villages. Our communities have been deeply enhanced by immigration, be it of Irish Catholics across the constituency or of Muslims from Gujarat in India or from Pakistan, principally from Kashmir. While we celebrate our diversity, what surprises me time and time again as I travel around the constituency is that we are far more united and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us.

I am Batley and Spen born and bred, and I could not be prouder of that. I am proud that I was made in Yorkshire and I am proud of the things we make in Yorkshire. Britain should be proud of that, too. I look forward to representing the great people of Batley and Spen here over the next five years.

The death of Jo Cox was an absolute tragedy. I hope that her death serves to remind us of why we serve, and I hope that it serves to remind the community of why we serve and to give us some credit and some value for doing that.

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Deputy Nationals Whip) (12:29): I join my parliamentary colleagues on both sides of the House to acknowledge the tragic death of UK member of parliament Jo Cox. As described earlier, Ms Cox died on 16 June this year after being shot and stabbed. It was tragic. She is survived by her husband and two children. Without going into the details of the case, it does highlight the vulnerability of MPs in all parts of the world, including Australia, when carrying out their daily role in the community. In many cases, mental illness plays a factor in the murder of political representatives worldwide; in other cases it is due to the radical ideology of the likes that we see in ISIS and in other extremist movements.

Back home in Australia, the incident is a reminder of how lucky democracies—like those based on the Westminster system—are to have access to politicians openly. MPs in Australia walk the streets and visit many events and places in their electorate, just like Jo Cox did. They do this because they seek to make a difference in their community, through taking local issues to Canberra. Interestingly, Australia is not immune from these incidents. There have been numerous attempts to murder politicians, and some have, tragically, been carried out—like that of New South Wales MP John Newman. This year sees almost 50 years since an attempt on the life of former Labor leader Arthur Calwell. According to reports, Calwell had just addressed a meeting at Mosman Town Hall in Sydney. He was in the car when a man he thought was a wellwisher came close, so he partly wound down the window. Nineteen-year-old Peter Raymond Kocan aimed a sawn-off rifle at Calwell’s face and fired. Fortunately, Calwell received only minor injuries to his chin, as the bullet was deflected by the window, but he ended up with a bullet hole in his coat.

Back to 2016—the tragic death of Jo Cox cannot be rationalised by either lawyers or health workers, but it does highlight the importance of preserving our democracy. Whether this murder was the result of mental illness or Nazi idealism is unclear, but it is not for us to judge here; it is for a court room in England. However, the general conversation around this incident
does create a new conversation on the safety of our democratic principles, and that includes the ability of Australians to freely elect anyone who can stand for nomination for an election into parliament. That is why we need to maintain high national security through strong border control and immigration processes. As John Howard once said, we choose who comes to our country. We should never be pressured by the green movement or social activists to change our standards for vetting people who want to come to Australia, no matter what form of transport they arrived on.

The recent anniversary of the Bali bombing, which killed many Australians, is a reminder that we must constantly be vigilant against extremists and their dangerous rants. We are a proud and peaceful multicultural nation, and we are known as the lucky country for good reason. May you rest in peace, Jo Cox. Our thoughts are with you and your family.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton) (12:33): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Welfare Reform

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (12:33): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises the importance of a generous social safety net;
(2) further recognises that it is essential that welfare is targeted to achieve better lifetime outcomes for recipients;
(3) welcomes the release of data that will help the Government to target interventions to Australians who need it most;
(4) congratulates the Government's Try, Test and Learn Fund, with $96.1 million allocated to it which will:
   (a) bring together stakeholders, academics, the states and territories and any relevant parties in the non-government sector, to trial new policies and initiatives to help achieve better lifetime outcomes for target cohorts; and
   (b) ensure new, bold and innovative ideas are trialled which will help to reduce long term and inter-generational welfare dependence; and
(5) looks forward to the first round of funding under the program which will improve lifetime outcomes and increase the self-reliance of young parents, young carers and young students.

I am pleased to be able to move this motion today in support of the government's approach to welfare. Thanks to the recent work of and the announcement from the Minister for Social Services, we have, for the first time, evidence of exactly what is happening to people in the welfare system. The Baseline Valuation Report contains crucial information about how people move in and out of the welfare system—information that is now being analysed so that we can work to genuinely improve people's lives.

While we are determined to secure Australia's future as a high-wage First World economy which includes a generous social safety net, we also recognise that it is important to divert the most vulnerable from a lifetime of welfare dependency. Like any responsible government, we want to be able to reduce the long-term costs of social security. At the moment they add up to around $160 billion a year. That represents around 80 per cent of all individual income tax raised in Australia that is going straight to welfare. Without further restraint, the welfare bill
is expected to expand to $277 billion by 2026. One in every three Australians is receiving welfare payments. Of those not currently in the welfare system, 88 per cent are expected to receive some type of welfare payment throughout their life. Adding all that up, a PricewaterhouseCoopers report estimates we will face a total future lifetime welfare cost for the present Australian population of $4.8 trillion. This alone suggests we need change.

As the minister said in his recent speech to the National Press Club, with this new data system 'we can be provided with greater detail about small groups of people and use that data to test policy approaches to see whether they actually do contribute to full, purposeful and self-reliant lives.' As the minister went on to say: 'With all the information that's assembled and the will from this government to be able to use it, we do have a real chance to provide welfare assistance to individual Australians in a way that delivers outcomes. This won't be done by ideology or emotions or money alone but by assessing the long-term effects on the lives of the people we are trying to help.'

So what will this response look like? The government has set three goals for a new direction in welfare policy: firstly, identify those at risk of long-term welfare dependency and help them find employment; secondly, identify and reduce the risks of welfare reliance crossing generations; and, finally, as I have touched on before, ensure the long-term sustainability of the welfare system. With this framework in place, the government can better identify and assist those who have particularly poor long-term outcomes in the system. These can be broadly broken down into three groups: young carers, young parents and young students.

In relation to young parents, in 2015 there were 4,370 young parents aged 18 and below receiving parenting payments, of which 77 per cent were single parents. Reducing support to young parents is not going to help them, but we do need to provide young parents with support to develop and maintain skills that will allow them to find employment. In April, the government launched ParentsNext, and the Try, Test and Learn Fund will seek to expand and improve this approach. The $96.1 million Try, Test and Learn Fund is worth highlighting. It is a key component of the Priority Investment Approach, and it is an innovative, creative solution to a complex problem. The fund will provide a platform for various stakeholders, both government and non-government, to share bold ideas for new programs to divert at-risk groups, especially our young people, from a future of welfare dependency. A public call for proposals will take place by the end of the year.

There is also an important program for carers, which takes on added relevance this week because it is the start of National Carers Week across Australia. We have started the Young Carer Bursary Program, a $3.5 million investment aimed at improving the educational rates for young carers and reducing lifetime dependency on welfare.

Finally, young students who move directly from student payments to unemployment benefits and stay there for 12 months are especially susceptible to long-term welfare dependency. The Priority Investment Approach builds on the work that the government is already delivering, including jobactive, Transition to Work and, in particular, the Youth Jobs PaTH Program for young people.

The Turnbull government is a strong believer that the best form of welfare is a job. Nobody wants to see a person spend their life in the welfare system from a very young age. With this
package, I do believe that the government has demonstrated a thorough, clear policy platform, and I commend the motion to the House.

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

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

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (12:38): In Anti-Poverty Week, I welcome any chance to discuss protecting vulnerable Australians and ensuring that help is available when they need it. Likewise, the $160 billion that the Australian government spends on social security payments annually should be used very wisely. It therefore follows that, from time to time, we must revisit our social security arrangements with an eye to improving them. Labor have never shied away from this process. The NDIS, pioneered by the Gillard government, demonstrates that we have the courage to innovate even in this extremely sensitive area of public policy. However, reforms should not be undertaken lightly or simply to test the limits of some economic theory. Welfare recipients are not lab rats. Even the prospect of changes to social security arrangements can greatly distress those who are doing it tough already.

Labor believes that it is necessary to bring people along with you, especially when big changes are planned. Hopefully, on this matter at least, the coalition intends to follow a similar course. The government’s priority investment approach proposals associated with a Try, Test and Learn Fund are not contentious. The former, in particular, has received very mixed reviews. ACOSS and others see the minister as more interested in budget savings than in helping recipients. I hope such fears, though understandable, are misplaced. This motion, like the minister’s 20 September Press Club address, is something of a curate’s egg: it is good in parts but iffy in others. Any proposal that is evidence based, invests in people’s potential and increases community involvement should be taken seriously.

Borrowing ideas from New Zealand is not bad in principle, either, if you recognise the limitations, including the differences in welfare and governmental arrangements in our two countries. Reassuringly ANU’s Professor Peter Whiteford sees some good in the government proposals, suggesting it may have learnt from the New Zealand model by not being too obsessed with cost cutting. He applauds the commitment to rigorous evaluations and early intervention. But his is a qualified endorsement, and I for one believe a similar level of spending on early childhood support, with much earlier intervention, is preferable and better targeted. This should include also ways to get vulnerable young children into preschool and early screening and intervention.

Then there is the difficulty in knowing if the proposed PIA scheme is actually working until many years down the track. We just do not know. It does have the potential to create an underclass of the permanently working poor. I am not quite ready yet to join the member for Robertson in congratulating the government on allocating $96 million to the Try, Test and Learn Fund. That strikes me as a bit premature. Let’s at least wait until something has actually happened and someone has actually been helped.

I am a little perplexed, too, by the member for Robertson wanting to remind us that it is essential that welfare is targeted to achieve better lifetime outcomes. If anything, it has been coalition governments that have been the unfocused and untargeted big spenders on middle-class welfare. The baby bonus and the wild-eyed Abbott parental leave schemes instantly come to mind. Australia already has a highly targeted social security system. Labor supports
it. Dollar for dollar, it is as effective as any in the world at reducing inequality and disadvantage.

Reliance on welfare is not rising, especially if you do not see the aged pension as a welfare payment—pensioners certainly do not. The percentage of working-class population on income support actually peaked in 1997 at 24.9 per cent, falling to 16.6 per cent in 2008, rising a little during the global financial crisis and easing back in 2013 to 16.7 per cent. Most Australians do not stay welfare dependent for lengthy periods. As the member for Fenner writes: 'Australia's welfare system looks a lot more like a piggy bank than a conveyor belt.' Accordingly, savings from an investment approach may well be more modest than has been claimed.

Labor, unsurprisingly then, is reluctant to up-end the world in the process of testing an interesting hypothesis. Any social security scheme is far more effective, more durable and easy to pay for if unemployment rates are low—lower than now. Selectively investing in worthwhile national projects will do a lot more to keep Australians off welfare than even the most arcane welfare regimes. It is very important to remember that many people have not benefited from a growing Australian economy in the last 20 years. It is very important that people on welfare feel that they are included, informed and can see the benefits of any changes to the social security system if it is to achieve its stated aims.

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (12:44): I am really pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this important motion moved by the member for Robertson. I commend her for moving this motion on this most important of topics. Social welfare is an extremely important and extremely complex area of policy. So let's start with the fundamentals. It is important that we as a society have a strong social welfare safety net—and we do. We have a very strong social welfare safety net. In fact, we have one of the strongest in the world. The vast majority of Australians would agree with the proposition that it is important that we as a society help those who genuinely cannot help themselves.

Just as we have a moral obligation to those who need support, we also have a moral obligation to those who pay for that support. You cannot have a strong social welfare safety net without very large expenditures of money. To put it into perspective, social welfare is by far the biggest item in the federal budget. It is sometimes said that we spend about a third of our federal budget on social welfare expenditure. My view is that it is closer to 41 per cent. The reason I think it is a bit higher is that our federal budget papers include, as expenditure, the GST transfer payments, which is effectively the money of the states, but that money passes through the federal books as expenditure and in my view it somewhat distorts the overall spending picture in the budget. If you take out the GST revenue, social welfare is 41c in every dollar that the federal government spends. It is a very large amount—five times what is spent on education, six times what is spent on defence, 40 times what is spent on immigration, 150 times what is spent on the ABC and more than 800 times what we spend on tourism and promoting trade. So it is a very large item of expenditure and it is absolutely critical that in public policy we look at social welfare expenditure and we determine whether or not it is working as effectively as it can, both for the people who are receiving it and also for the legions of taxpayers who pay for it.

That is precisely what the Minister for Social Services is focused on through the Try, Test and Learn Fund. The minister, aided by the work done by PWC, has discovered that we do
have, unfortunately, some structural problems in the social welfare system because people who become involved in that system perhaps early in life often stay on social welfare for a very long time. Frankly, that is not in the interests of those people because I think it is fair to say that decades of welfare dependence is not something to which anyone would aspire. If the system can more effectively intervene early on and help those people who are at risk of becoming welfare dependent to find other opportunities, then it should do so. That is exactly what the system is all about.

The PWC report estimated that the 11,000 young carers in the system at the moment are expected to access social welfare income support for 43 years over their lifetime and the 4,000 or so young parents who are in the system are expected to access social welfare support for 45 years. The 6,600 young students who were surveyed as part of this process are expected to access income support for 37 years. If you look at the entire cost to the budget of all the social welfare payments to all Australians over their lifetime, it comes out at $4.8 trillion, which is a staggering figure that obviously dwarfs every other number in the budget. What the Try, Test and Learn Fund says is let us target some sensible interventions especially in situations where people are at an early stage of their lives and perhaps have been involved in the welfare system for a limited amount of time, and do what we can to help those people get off welfare and break that cycle of dependence. That is an entirely sensible thing to be doing, and I commend the minister for this activity and I commend the motion.

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (12:49): Big scary numbers make great headlines. 'Welfare dependency costs Australia $160 bn each year', screamed The Daily Telegraph in September. The truth is more complex. Amongst Australia's so-called $160 billion welfare addicts, as one tabloid newspaper labelled people receiving social security, are people receiving the age pension and benefits under the NDIS. These are the people who the assistant social services minister, Zed Seselja, claims in Fairfax today are part of a 'welfare mentality' in this country. He goes on to say: 'We simply cannot go on assuming for huge numbers of Australians that welfare will just become the norm'. Well, with views like that it is little wonder the Canberra Liberals did so poorly at last weekend's election. I know Senator Seselja led the ACT Liberals for six years—a wonderful six years in opposition—until 2013, and perhaps they are still trying to recover from his failed leadership. If his comments to Fairfax are any indication, they may have some years of recovery ahead of them.

The single biggest growth item in social security is the age pension, because Australians are living longer and healthier lives, and because the baby boomers are now in the age pension phase of their lives. Are these the people that Senator Seselja believes are 'welfare addicts' or suffer from a 'welfare mentality'? What a disgraceful characterisation. Blind Freddy can see what this government is up to. Senator Seselja and his senior minister, the member for Pearce, are on a mission to demonise and divide—to demonise people receiving social security benefits, set their fellow Australians on them, and then make the cuts. The ministers are preparing the groundwork for more harsh cuts, just like they did in the 2014 budget: a one-month wait for Newstart for young job seekers, even though it is estimated that there is just one job available for every five; raising the eligibility age for Newstart, pushing people who are aged 22 and 24 years old onto the Youth Allowance—that is, a cut of $48 a week that makes it harder to live, let alone meet the costs of seeking work; the abolition of the
Pensioner Education Supplement; and cutting Paid Parental Leave to 80,000 new mums each year.

The ministers, and their young advisers on $100,000 salaries—and higher—may be doing high fives and backslaps. After all, the nation is ‘addicted to welfare,’ and addictions must be broken. But let us step back and look at the facts. Let us separate the truth from the untruths. Australia spends much less on social security, as a proportion of national income, than the OECD average. We spent 8.4 per cent of our average GDP, when the average is 12.3 per cent, and we spend less than both the US and the UK. By the tabloid headlines and the squawking of those opposite about the high cost, not many would know that. People might be forgiven for thinking nearly all our GDP is swallowed up in a vast mountain of social security payments. But it is 8.4 per cent—two thirds of what the OECD spends, and less than the US and the UK. What is more, more than 40 per cent of Australia’s social security spending goes to households in the lowest 20 per cent of incomes. That is exceptional targeting: people who need the most support get it. This is the best targeting of any nation in the OECD.

In my electorate of Lyons, in March this year there were 4,973 people receiving Newstart, 726 young people receiving Youth Allowance, 6,887 on a Disability Support Pension, and 15,632 on an age pension. Labor supports a properly targeted social security system to ensure payments go to those who need it most. We support investment in education and social services that ensure people get a fair crack at life and that seek to address intergenerational inequity. Labor does not support—and will never support—the demonisation of Australians who require assistance, and we reject attempts by this government to turn Australians on each other.

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (12:53): It is my great pleasure to rise and speak on this important motion. I want to congratulate the member for Robertson for bringing this motion into the House today. I want to briefly reflect on the contribution made by the member for Lyons and to say it is regrettable that the member was not able to focus at all on our very significant $96.1 million Try, Test and Learn Fund, which is integral to the motion before the House today. Isn’t it a shame that we have heard so much politicking and so much negativity from the member opposite, when this is a wonderful opportunity to work together?

It is a wonderful opportunity to bring your ideas and the ideas of all members to this House, because all of us must take the politics out of this issue and focus on what we as a parliament can do to lift the aspirations, the values and the lives of young Australians, middle Australians and seniors who are looking to get out of welfare dependency.

I think we would all agree that the best type of welfare available in this country is a job. But we as a government also recognise that one of the fundamental responsibilities of government is to look after those who most need our help—and there are some people in our community who will never be able to work, and they absolutely must get every support possible from government. But, for those who do have the capacity, we want to do everything we can to get these young people, and people who have lost a job and are struggling to find another job, into work.

In the budget, we committed in excess of $700 million to the Youth Jobs PaTH Program, a very significant program that focuses on reaching out to employers and saying, ‘Please look at this young person. Give this person a chance.’ There is an opportunity to trial them, to bring them in as an intern. They receive a $200 bonus per fortnight under their Newstart provisions.
Let us see how we can work with employers and those who are on Newstart to give them those opportunities.

I want in particular to commend the Minister for Social Services for the very important Try, Test and Learn Fund. It is a stand-out component of the priority investment approach that our government is taking. Stakeholders, academics, states, territories and anyone in the non-government sector will be able to put forward their ideas for programs to divert vulnerable groups away from welfare dependency. This is not a funding program where people have to meet particular objectives; this is a funding program where we are saying, ‘Whatever your idea is, please bring it forward to government.’ We want to work with the community. We do not have all the answers. It seems that those opposite think they have all the answers. We are saying that this is a fund that recognises that we need to work with all sectors of our community to try and drive job opportunities, to give young people in particular the very best lives.

In my electorate of Corangamite and also in the adjoining electorate of Corio, which takes in North Geelong, which is inflicted with high youth unemployment and intergenerational unemployment, this is an issue that worries the people of Geelong and the people of Colac. I want to commend G21 and its GROW project. I believe that the Try, Test and Learn Fund provides ideas like the GROW project with a very significant opportunity. The GROW project is all about partnering with our community to reach out to employers and to identify, through social procurement and also local procurement, how we can work with our key employers in our own community to drive job opportunities. We are not going to accept that intergenerational unemployment will continue in our community and that high levels of youth unemployment will continue. That is why we have introduced the Youth Jobs PaTH Program, which is so incredibly important. That is why we have our Try, Test and Learn Fund. I want to commend the Give Where You Live Foundation in our community, which has committed $2 million over 10 years to support the implementation of the GROW Strategic Plan across the whole G21 region. The GROW program is doing amazing work. The Victorian government has funded GROW to the tune of $1 million over five years. It is wonderful to see so many people in our community coming together, and I am hoping this fund will be part of the solution. (Time expired)

Ms KEAY (Braddon) (12:58): The Try, Test and Learn Fund is a program that is supposed to support people to stay in education and transition into the workforce. The federal government, in their wisdom, have tried to help people through this program, but such a one-size-fits-all approach is not realistic in rural communities such as Braddon. The cost, time and hours spent travelling are simply impossible to achieve. This is particularly the case for carers. Jaeyden Wardle of Devonport is just one of an estimated 73,800 carers in Tasmania alone. Jaeyden's experience is a really good example of how this fund does not work. It is extremely difficult for people like Jaeyden to access the fund because the location and hours of training provided need to work in tandem with the amount of care that carers like him need to provide. With training often only provided in places like Launceston and Hobart—which, for those who do not know, are many hours away—this leaves little opportunity for people in Braddon.

This week is Carers Week; and 2.8 million people provide unpaid care for family and friends. In Australia this week providing easy access to such training is just one of many ways
we can show them that carers count. This week alone, Australia's unpaid carers will spend 36 million hours caring for family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition or are terminally ill or frail aged. That is just one week.

The people carers look after and the carers themselves are not 'welfare dependent', a term the Turnbull government is happy to throw around. Those who are being cared for are people who, through no choice of their own, were born with or developed a disease, illness or other condition which requires consistent and quality care. Their carers may be family members, friends or neighbours; they come from all walks of life, cultures and religions; and they provide care for a variety of reasons.

At 17 years of age, Jaeyden looks after his mother who has been diagnosed with a heart condition. Besides having the responsibility to look after his mum's medication, Jaeyden also manages his family's finances and cares for his siblings. He has been his mother's primary carer for three years and has helped to manage her chronic condition since he was 10 years of age. It was not until he was 13 that he recognised the role he had taken on. This is a tough job that is deserving of reward, not punishment.

Jaeyden is not unlike many other carers in our community—they are on call for 24 hours a day and the effects on their lives are real and worthy of more than just negativity from the Turnbull government. For instance, when Jaeyden's grades started to be affected by his need to provide care, his teachers thought he was getting involved with drugs or crime. As a result, and despite being a talented and intelligent student, Jaeyden dropped out of school in grade 8. Jaeyden shared with the Sunday Examiner newspaper recently that he was constantly told he would not achieve anything because he was not attending school. However, showing his incredible determination, Jaeyden has resumed his studies and has taken on three community service diplomas. He finished grade 10 last year and he is now taking on grade 11.

The federal government, in their wisdom, have tried to help people like Jaeyden, offering this Try Test and Learn approach, which is supposed to support carers like him, but he, like many carers, is labelled by such programs as being trapped on welfare or welfare dependent, when in fact he is nothing close to that. According to the CEO of Carers Australia:

Young carers have been correctly identified as some of those most at risk of welfare dependence throughout their lives. They are mostly susceptible than other young people to the problems of workforce accessibility given the nature of their caring role. …It is also important to understand that many young carers face a range of complex challenges which impact on their capacity to engage in education and employment and these must be addressed under any program to support them into work.

In closing, it is time to recognise that carers provide invaluable support in caring for some of the most vulnerable people in our community and play a critical role in our health system. The fact is that anyone at any time can become a carer. This week, and indeed every week, it is time to know how much they all count.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Irons) (13:03):** The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

**Housing Affordability**

**Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:04):** I move:

That this House:
(1) notes that:

(a) having safe and affordable housing is a basic human right and the absence of which has a huge human, social and economic cost;

(b) housing stress and homelessness are serious issues in Australia—first-home buyers are having difficulty entering the market, rental affordability in cities is at a crisis point, waiting lists for social housing continue to grow, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are disproportionately represented in homelessness and housing stress and there are rising levels of homelessness with 105,000 people designated as homeless on any given night; and

(c) there are often complex social, financial and medical issues that cause housing stress and homelessness that are beyond an individual's direct control; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

(a) appoint a Minister for Housing and Homelessness to provide the necessary focus and leadership required to address the housing issues being experienced in Australia; and

(b) develop and implement a national housing strategy to ensure a sufficient, modern and equitable housing system for all Australians.

I rise today to move this motion before the House to highlight both the nature and the extent of Australia's housing crisis and the complete absence of a national strategy to address it. At a time when more than 105,000 people are homeless, crisis accommodation services are turning away more than half of those seeking new accommodation—mostly due to a lack of accommodation—and public housing stock is declining, it is astounding that the Australian government has no national housing plan.

There is little doubt that Australia is in the midst of a housing crisis. According to the most recent research, 105,000 Australians are designated as homeless on any given night, including some 1,000 men and women in the Newcastle and the Hunter region. Nationally, there are more than 200,000 households on waiting lists for social housing, with nearly half of those in greatest need waiting two years or more. Almost 60 per cent of people living below the poverty line are in rental housing, with most in private rental housing. Only 15.5 per cent of people living below the poverty line are home owners.

More than 40 per cent of people who receive Commonwealth rental assistance pay more than the commonly used affordability benchmark of 30 per cent of household income on rent. Of particular concern is the change in homeless demographics, with older people and, in particular, older women becoming the fastest-growing group of homeless Australians. This change in homeless demographics is certainly visible in my own electorate of Newcastle, which hosts an annual Hunter Homeless Connect Day. Attendance at this year's event saw a 10 per cent increase in the number of homeless people attending from the previous year and a substantial increase in the number of homeless women.

Labor took to the election a suite of policies to address housing need in Australia. Regrettably, the Abbott and now Turnbull governments' neglect of housing and homelessness policies speaks volumes about their priorities. Since 2013 the Liberal-National coalition has abolished the National Rental Affordability Scheme, which provided over 20,000 new affordable housing units and was on track to achieve its target of 50,000. It has refused to provide funding certainty for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and the Reconnect youth homelessness program. It has cut $44 million in capital funding for emergency accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.
Inexplicably, it has cut funding for Homelessness Australia, National Shelter and the Community Housing Federation of Australia, reducing the effectiveness of their advocacy and policy functions. It has scrapped the First Home Saver Account scheme which was helping people to save for their first home, and closed its mind to evidence by abolishing the National Housing Supply Council and the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness.

Australia's current housing crisis impacts on the most vulnerable in our community, which is why the lack of focus by this government is especially concerning. In contrast to the lack of focus by the government, I want to praise the work of our not-for-profit sector and their progress towards housing reform in Australia—organisations like Compass Housing Services in my electorate who, in addition to their work here in Australia, have been granted special consultative status as part of the UN's Economic and Social Council. As we speak in this House, they are participating in the UN Habitat III Conference on International Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. Shamefully, there is no minister from this government sitting at that table. Indeed, Australia is now one of only two UN member states that have not prepared a national progress report on our work towards achieving the goals outlined in the UN's Habitat II conference.

In 2016 it is our NGOs, not our government, that are leading the way on housing reform in Australia. As the ACOSS report released today makes clear, the housing problems experienced by low-income householders are a symptom of entrenched inequality within Australia. Unless inequality is addressed, Australia's housing problems will endure. Appointing a dedicated minister for housing and homelessness and developing a national housing strategy would be a very good start—indeed, it would be the very least that this government could do to try and get things back on track. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (13:09): Before I start, I would like to say that while homelessness is obviously a serious concern, as the chair of the recent housing inquiry I will focus my comments on the home ownership elements of this debate.

Providing a stable housing market is one of the essential tasks of government. It is our duty as policymakers to ensure that the Sydney and Melbourne bubble does not burst the foundations of our nation's economy. The importance of housing and home ownership should have deeper consideration and exploration to gain a full understanding and appreciation of the benefits of home ownership. A median price of close to $1 million for a house in our nation's biggest city is unsustainable. And while some people benefit personally from the surge in property values, this is not good news for the broader economy and the next generation of prospective home buyers. Home ownership provides a greater level of security for families, leading to stronger and more engaged communities, a more stable workforce and the foundation for the creation of wealth, lifetime security and independence. Home ownership is the key to providing the pathway to an Australia of common wealth.

The home ownership inquiry that I chaired uncovered evidence of a disturbing trend, but if appropriate action is not taken dire consequences will result. Negative gearing has been a commonly used method for many to invest in property. Ideally it provides affordable rental
housing for those who are unable to buy, with investors willing to operate their investment at a loss with the object to make a capital gain on sale. Previously these losses restricted investors to their capacity of funding these losses from other income. As interest rates came down, investors became more empowered as opportunities to neutrally or positively gear became a reality in many markets. This not only pushed up prices but also created a market dominated by investors, which led to the virtual exclusion of the first home buyer from the market.

Clearly something needs to be done; however, in a market as volatile and as sensitive as this one, it is vitally important that further changes happen incrementally. The stakes are too high for anything else. Labor’s negative gearing policy would have created a crash the likes of which Australia has never seen. Investors currently account for about one-third of new lending for houses. The stampede for the exits by investors would, therefore, have removed one-third of the potential market for every property, slashing the prices of our family houses that are the basis of many people’s wealth. We must do more to help first home buyers into the market.

What we need are more measured and calibrated proposals that help people enter the market without devaluing the homes that thousands of families pour all of their wealth into. Any changes must be finely calibrated and implemented incrementally to avoid destabilising our nation’s biggest asset. APRA has already made changes in the past year that have slowed the levels of lending to investors by restricting borrowings on investment property to 80 per cent. This has had the desired effect of calming the investor driven heat. The RBA recently responded with a concern of an overcorrection in major markets by reducing interest rates, citing a concern of a possible crash in major markets. Both of these regulators have acted with a great deal of consideration and concern for the strength of the market—our biggest asset class—and to have stabilising effects, effectively a counterbalancing of demand by investors and the concerns of those wishing to buy a house.

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (13:14): I thank the member for Newcastle for bringing this motion and the other speakers, because affordable housing and homelessness do need attention at every level. It is an effort that must be led nationally and that is not happening at the moment. Of course it is especially relevant in Anti-Poverty Week.

The starkest measures of deprivation relate to the absence of safe and secure housing. The inability to live and sleep warmly and in peace, to have a place where you can prepare food and eat properly, a foundation from which people can work and children can go off to school in the morning and have a bed each to themselves at night. Without safe and affordable housing, everything else is contingent and at risk—health, education, employment, social inclusion and participation, the opportunity to breathe out, to think about the future, to play, to love and be loved. That is why safe and affordable housing is a basic human right.

Not long after the election, I was invited to help prepare and serve breakfast at St Patrick’s Community Support Centre on Queen Victoria Street in Fremantle. I have been there many times. It is always a privilege. It is always a reminder of the acute and complex disadvantage that exists even in a prosperous country like ours. But it is also a reminder that there are many good people like Gary, Stella, Victor and Varnya, who put their hearts into helping people in desperate need.
It was a dark wet morning. It had been a bad night, a rough night. What struck me was seeing people come in through the door and walk with dignity and restrained urgency to grab a towel from the counter and go through to have a hot shower before coming in for breakfast. That shower and the prospect of food and a cup of tea or coffee in a clean and dry room must occupy your mind intensely for the last few hours of a bad night.

This year, during registry week, a survey of homeless people was conducted in Fremantle between 28 June and 1 July coordinated by St Pat's with funding from the City of Fremantle and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. Registry week is an initiative of Ruah Community Services. It seeks to identify the most vulnerable homeless people in order to prioritise them for housing and wraparound assistance as part of the 50 Lives 50 Homes Project. This targeted campaign tackles complex needs with the Housing First approach.

The survey effort in Fremantle involved 44 volunteers across seven street teams, and I want to acknowledge all the people involved in that effort for their good work. Around 68 homeless people participated in the survey—62 men and six women—of whom 49 were sleeping rough. A further 15 rough sleepers declined to participate. Of those surveyed, 65 were older than 25 years of age and three were younger than 24. One in five were suffering from liver disease. In the older cohort, 32 per cent reported a history of foster care or institutional care as a child; 34 per cent were Indigenous; and a third of the older cohort had been victims of violence or, of the younger cohort, had been victims of violence.

In the face of that bleak picture of disadvantage, I can tell you what is making a difference in Fremantle. St Patrick's Community Support Centre does incredible work. The Sisters' Place, which I mentioned last week, provides a safe house for women to sleep at night, some of whom are escaping domestic violence. The Fremantle Foundation, a community based charity, led by the inspirational Dylan Smith, has channelled substantial donations into projects like the commercial kitchen that was installed at 100 Hampton Road, a supportive social housing centre.

But what is missing is the leadership, program guidance, funding support and clarity from the Turnbull government. As the member for Newcastle rightly points out: there should be a dedicated minister in this space. We are still waiting to hear about the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness even though the delay itself will be doing harm to the many organisations that are trying to plan for the future, give certainty to their staff and manage budgets that are tight enough as it is.

It beggars belief that from July next year community legal centres will face substantial funding cuts. When the work of CLCs often goes directly to keeping people in stable housing and we have to remember that, with every dollar you cut from community legal services and financial assistance services, you push $2 or $3 of additional costs directly onto another part of the social safety net.

The evidence shows that homelessness is not decreasing, which itself is not that surprising when you consider that poverty and inequality are growing. However, nothing will change unless the government is prepared to change or unless we change the government.

Mr Wallace (Fisher) (13:19): The supply of affordable housing in Australia, particularly in the capital cities and the large regional centres, is at the centre of a great range of social service challenges currently facing the nation. Housing is a basic human right and,
despite the significant investment by governments to date, more needs to be done to ensure that all Australians have access to stable and affordable housing. In what we refer to now as a gap year, when I finished school I volunteered for a year and with the De La Salle Brothers started up a youth crisis centre for kids who were living rough, so I have a pretty good understanding of what it is like for young people to be homeless.

I know that no single level of government can act alone on this issue. Solutions that increase the supply of affordable housing while not undermining the overall strength of Australia's housing industry can only be found by all levels of government working together. Solutions must be collaborative, innovative and consistent across the nation, which is why the government will openly work with all Australian states and territories and, importantly, with local government area authorities who control the planning, zoning and land release mechanisms which are vital to increase the supply of housing.

The coalition recognises that homelessness is a complex issue that affects too many Australians. Solving it takes more than just rhetoric; it requires a long-term and systematic effort across all levels of government, agencies, business sectors and the broader community. In July 2015, after Labor's neglect, the coalition took the responsible step of restoring funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, the NPAH, by providing $230 million over two years, to be matched by the states, to fund frontline homelessness services in communities across this nation. In March 2016, the various ministers responsible for this program in each state and territory agreed to receive a report on future arrangements and funding options for NPAH by the end of 2016, which will feed into the COAG report.

Further to this, the coalition has finalised a number of initiatives to encourage new and innovative solutions to provide housing for people with a disability, including finalising the Specialist Disability Accommodation Pricing and Payments Framework, which will enable the National Disability Insurance Agency to establish a competitive price that attracts market players to supplying new and appropriate dwelling stock under the NDIS for people with a disability. The coalition is allocating $10 million to the Specialist Disability Accommodation Initiative to encourage the completion of housing projects for people with a disability outside of NDIS trial sites, and it is establishing housing pilot projects in NDIS trial sites. In February 2016, the coalition established the Affordable Housing Working Group to investigate ways to boost the supply of affordable rental housing through innovative finance models. Additionally, in the 2016-17 budget the government has committed to implementing a compulsory Rent Deduction Scheme for social housing and welfare recipients to help them sustain their tenancies and reduce the risk of eviction.

It would be remiss of me to ignore the hypocrisy and neglect of this issue from the Labor Party. It would come as no surprise that under Labor's administration of the National Rental Affordability Scheme, money was shovelled out the door with no accountability and no responsibility. From the very beginning, the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government scheme was poorly designed with multiple flaws, ambiguous legal requirements and mountains of red tape. Predictably, it was slow on delivery and it failed to meet its own targets. In fact, the usual hallmarks of Labor policy manifested themselves yet again with this scheme, in that more effort went into the announcement of the scheme than actually making it work. As always, the devil was in the detail—or lack of it—and they failed to put in the work in the planning stages in order to see the successful implementation of a scheme that promised so
much. Since then, the best that Labor has been able to come up with are proposed changes to negative gearing that have been very poorly thought through, a housing tax plan that would deliver a reckless trifecta— (Time expired)

Mr HILL (Bruce) (13:24): I support the motion. Australia's housing crisis is surely one of the most important policy debates that this parliament needs to have. I say 'parliament' as there is no apparent prospect of the government having this debate. They have absented themselves from the field. We have heard from the member for Newcastle that the 2011 census statistics showed 105,000 people were homeless. I fear it will be worse when the next census comes out.

As we know, homelessness has complex causes. Much of it is caused by housing stress and people falling out of the housing market. In much of Australia, we are in a diabolical mess. Over the last few decades, we have stuffed up the housing market to the point where it takes 10 to 12 times—or, for young people, 15 times—average weekly earnings to purchase a house in Melbourne or Sydney. I know from doorknocking that this is a powerful discussion point with young people in my electorate. It is that core question of: how will I ever afford a house? Ownership rates for young people aged between 25 and 34 have spiralled down from 60 per cent to 48 per cent. Generation Rent are not doing well as renters either. In fact, between 1994-95 and 2013-14 private renters have seen a 62 per cent increase in average weekly housing costs. That is compared to only 42 per cent for owners with mortgages. The market is especially diabolical where we want people to live—that is, in major cities near employment.

These price rises may be the subject of talk at the dinner table for those of us in the housing market, but no society should want to see prices rise in the way we have in the last couple of decades. We have lost our way. Housing is a social good to house people. Placing too much focus on investment and profits is forgetting its core role.

We have heard from the minister for Newcastle—the member for Newcastle, rather; the minister for Newcastle sounds good too, but let's see where we go—but there is nothing of substance to say. There is no minister. But that is a common trend. I remember there was a period when we stopped believing in science and had no minister for science, but eventually rationality returned. Tony left and we now have a minister for science. Perhaps when the Prime Minister's turn is up, we will see a minister for housing return, because 'get rich parents' is not a policy.

The government, of course, is wedded to policies that make things worse—in particular, tax system arrangements that fuel investor demand and contribute to ongoing, unsustainable price rises. Through the election campaign, we heard a ridiculous scare campaign, and we had a touch of it earlier from the otherwise earnest member for Bennelong. I agree with the previous member that this is a complex policy area. I have been a mayor of a major council. I actually ran metropolitan planning for a while in Victoria for both sides of politics and managed the land supply in Melbourne. Both sides of politics have done very well in managing the land supply and keeping affordability up, but there are supply and demand factors. Unavoidably, the logical conclusion of saying we need cooperation between the Commonwealth, state and local governments is that we need national leadership and a coordinated strategy. Random cuts and randomly distributed budget initiatives—in which someone has a good idea or thinks, 'Oh, we haven't got anything in housing this year'—are not a national strategy.
There are many levers that sit with the Commonwealth that need coherent thought. The reforms to taxation arrangements—negative gearing and capital gains tax—are some of them. I am proud that we have put forward a thought-out policy on this. They have been sacred cows for too long. It is difficult politics at times, but great policy. The majority of economists also agree, including think tanks and Joe Hockey in his retirement speech. One Malcolm Turnbull, before he became Prime Minister, used to think this was a good idea and that reform was needed. The consensus was that these arrangements increase demand, push up prices, reduce financial stability—as the Financial System Inquiry and the Henry review made clear—and reduce investment in the economy and more productive assets.

We do not want a society in which people are shovelling all their spare cash into the housing market to jack up prices, because it is the best tax break around. We want them to put money into more productive uses in the economy. Overwhelmingly, the benefits accrue to the top 10 to 20 per cent of people. On banking regulation, we have heard that there is a decent rationale for APRA’s changes to moderate lending practices, but try telling a young person trying to buy a house that it has had the desired impact—as the member for Bennelong did.

The final point I would make is that, in a new strategy, we need new ideas. We need to see the Commonwealth incentivising actions by state and local government and working in partnership. With rental housing, larger numbers of renters means we need to rethink how renters are treated, including national rental standards and more secure tenure. We need more long-term, affordable rental housing and a nationally recognised asset class of community housing. We need promotion of more and longer term investments, perhaps by superannuation funds, in a stable environment; national regulation of community housing providers; and inclusionary zoning—a percentage of affordable housing. National leadership is what we need.

(Time expired)

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:29): I partly agree with the member for Bruce. We do have an issue with housing affordability and housing stress in this country. But the fundamental problem is an imbalance of demand and supply. We simply do not have enough supply in the market, and the reason is simply that we have Labor and Greens state governments and local councils putting undue restrictions on the supply. That is what causes the stress. It is simple. You cannot defy those laws of supply and demand.

In fact, the ANZ Bank estimates that we currently have a shortage of 255,000 dwellings in this nation. That is the shortage that has crept up almost every year since the turn of the century, and it has all come about because of the green and red tape put on by Labor and the Greens. This is the whole cause of the problem.

And what is their solution? Their solution is to attack investors in the housing market through a misguided plan to try and distort the taxation system by getting rid of negative gearing. What will happen? All that will do is pull more supply out of the market, because those investors are actually investing in providing more housing. You have never seen a more confused policy from the Labor Party. This is what we see time and time again from the Labor Party. They see a problem and they introduce a solution that they think fixes it but actually causes more problems than they are trying to fix. That is exactly what we will see in the issue of housing.

The only way that we can solve this problem is by allowing the laws of supply and demand to work—allowing people to put more housing on the market. That also should be in our
regional areas. That is the way to tackle it—not through a misguided distortion of the taxation system.

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

Sitting suspended from 13:32 to 16:00

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Indi Electorate: Country Fire Authority

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:01): It gives me great pleasure today to wear this badge. It is a CFA badge and it is a 20-year service badge. I wore it on Sunday as we celebrated 100 years of the CFA working in the Indigo Valley. That is my community and my fire brigade, so it gave me great pleasure to be part of the day when Norm McLean, a long-serving member and former captain, gave us some of the brigade's history, along with Arthur Oates, Joe Baynes and Ian Welsh. We acknowledged the work of Jan Baynes, one of our amazing community workers, Arthur Oates and Ian Welsh.

We had a fantastic day. More than 250 members of the community got together and we told the story not only of the brigade over the last 100 years but also the work that brigade has done to create and build the community in Indigo Valley. Clearly it protects us all, it provides training and it is a way for newcomers to get together.

As part of the work of the fire brigade we have also had community meals. Once a month the whole community gets together in the building just near the fire brigade and we celebrate our community. The fire brigade was also responsible for setting up the Landcare group and doing all of the environmental group work in our community. But, most importantly, it symbolises the values and the connectivity of the families in the Indigo Valley that go back such a long way with such deep roots. Together we make our community work, so congratulations to everybody in Indigo Valley. I am so pleased to be part of the fire brigade, and congratulations on 100 years of service.

Rio de Janeiro Olympic and Paralympic Games

Mr EVANS (Brisbane) (16:02): I rise today to congratulate the Australian Olympians and Paralympians who have since returned home from their successful campaigns at the Rio Olympics. In particular, I would like to personally congratulate the athletes residing in my electorate of Brisbane, who act not only as ambassadors for their sport and for their country but also for the great city of Brisbane. I was lucky to meet so many of them last month at the welcome home ceremony conducted at Brisbane City Hall.

Australia came 10th overall in the medal tally; however, if I may be slightly parochial, out of the 29 medals Australia won overall Queenslanders won 14, representing almost half of the entire medal tally. Queensland is the Sunshine State, so it should come as no surprise that the Brisbane-based athletes competed in the pool and on the water, and I would like to personally congratulate each individual who represented Australia and Brisbane. Our Olympians included: Rhys Howden in water polo; Maddie Edmunds in rowing; and in swimming Jack McLoughlin; Georgia Bohl; Brittany Elmslie and Bronte Campbell—both gold medal winners in the women's 4 x 100-metre freestyle relay; Cate Campbell, who won silver in the women's
4 x 100-metre medley relay and gold in the women's 4 x 100-metre freestyle relay final; Emily Seebohm, who won silver in the women's 4 x 100-metre medley relay; and Bronte Barratt, who won silver in the women's 4 x 200-metre freestyle relay. Congratulations to them all. (Time expired)

Stokman, Ms Chris

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:04): It is with great sadness that I rise today to note the passing of Chris Stokman. Chris served as director of UnitingCare Canberra's community kitchen, the Early Morning Centre. A few years ago, an ugly concrete pillar sat at the centre of the centre. It sat between and divided the guests, making the room feel more like a foyer than an actual community centre. The centre applied for a grant to create a community mosaic and cover the pillar in beautiful art. Chris intended for the mosaic to bring the guests of the EMC together to work on something collaborative and communal and to share in a celebration of diversity and a celebration of community.

Two weeks ago, Chris received a visit in hospital from her friend and colleague Margaret Watt. Margaret asked her how things were. Chris expressed her disappointment at not having had the chance to contribute to the community mosaic. Chris left Margaret with some very firm instructions for exactly how she wanted her part to look, and there is a special space on the pillars that is reserved for Chris. I spent a morning at the EMC a few weeks ago. Putting the tiles together on my part of the mosaic, I felt what Chris intended.

Vale, Chris Stockman. Canberra will miss you. The people who use the services of EMC will miss you. Thank you so much for your contribution to Canberra for so many years. We are the lesser as the result of your loss.

Mackellar Electorate

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (16:05): Today in Davidson, a terrible tragedy has occurred. This morning, police found two children and their parents dead in what appears to be a murder-suicide. Our community is in shock and cannot quite comprehend what has happened. This is a tragedy without meaning. Those of us with children will find it hard to understand how this could have happened or, indeed, what has happened to push someone, anyone, to this point. We often hear of these things happening in other places, but never in our own communities. Today's events remind us that there are no boundaries to these tragedies. There are no places where they cannot happen. It is not restricted to a particular age, wealth, position or stage of life. It can happen anywhere. As the member for Berowra reminded us in his moving inaugural speech, we are stronger together and there is no shame in reaching out and asking for help.

In the next few days, more will become clear. We will need to talk about this, most importantly, with the children's schoolfriends. In the meantime, all we can do is offer our prayers and thoughts to their family, schoolfriends and community. I say to our community: we will work to ensure that what little meaning can be drawn from this tragedy is given full voice so that this may never happen again.

Greenway Electorate: Fiji Day

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (16:07): As a proud Australian of Fijian heritage, it has been my pleasure over the past week to join in two events celebrating Fiji Day. I firstly thank the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, who hosted their celebrations at the Marsden Park Mosque.
and whose congregation has a significant Fijian component. I am always impressed with the young people who contribute to these events—particularly, on this occasion, young Master Ramzin, who drew the analogy between Fiji being a tiny country at the corner of the globe and the Ahmadiyya teachings to spread their message of faith and peace to every corner of the world.

I acknowledge the High Commissioner, His Excellency Mr Yogesh Punja and the New South Wales Consul-General and Trade Commissioner, Mr Zarak Khan, for their generous interaction with the Fiji-Australia diaspora at this event and the Fiji Day celebrations held at Liverpool on Saturday. It was an honour for me to once again be received on this occasion by the Prime Minister of Fiji, the honourable Rear Admiral JV Bainimarama. The Prime Minister’s address was thoughtful and extremely well received, ranging from the international role of Fijian peacekeeping forces to an apology for what he called the lost years in Fiji, when racism and division drove so many from their homeland. To hear him proclaim his desire to progress one Fiji in both Fijian and Hindi rightfully drew spontaneous applause.

As we normalise the relationship between our countries, I look forward to focusing on increasing the economic and trade links between us. I also acknowledge the great exports from Fiji in the form of the human capital that is so influential in Australia, especially in my local community. In the words of the Fijian national anthem, may God bless Fiji. Ni sa bula. Vinaka vaka levu.

Boothby Electorate: Seacliff Hockey Club

Ms FLINT (Boothby) (16:08): On Friday night, I attended the Seacliff Hockey Club's senior presentation night. It was a highly entertaining evening. The Seacliff Hockey Club is one of the largest clubs in South Australia and one of the most successful. As we heard from President Daniel Roach, one-fifth of club members are either state league representatives or state league coaches. A number of junior and senior teams made the grand finals this year, although only three were victorious. I, along with the club, look forward to fewer red flags and more blue flags next year to add to the 2016 premierships won by the under-18 A men, Masters men and Premier League men. I also look forward to celebrating these wins at the new clubrooms that will be home to the Seacliff Hockey Club, Seacliff Tennis Club, Seacliff Sports Club, Holdfast Bay Music Centre and other community groups.

I pay tribute to the work done on this project, particularly by the City of Holdfast Bay mayor, Stephen Patterson; the sports club president, Paul Bond; and the former member for Boothby Dr Andrew Southcott. The upgrade has been made possible by contributions from the clubs and, most significantly, from the City of Holdfast Bay and a $5 million federal coalition government grant. The brand-new hybrid sand and water based hockey pitch is already in, and I had the pleasure of attending the opening in May. I look forward to attending more local, state and national games in the years to come. I commend President Daniel Roach, coaches, players and volunteers on their dedication and achievements. They are #seriouslyawesome.

Bobby the Brave's Gala Ball

Ms HUSAR (Lindsay) (16:10): At just seven months of age, a little boy in my electorate suffered horrendous abuse at the hands of an adult, an adult who should have been able to be trusted. Bobby, against all the odds, has battled uphill, and his prognosis was never the
outcome we have today. Through the love, support and dedication of his mum, Elise; Dad, Baz; and big sister, Olivia, Bobby is making progress each and every day. In Carers Week, I make particular mention of those people.

Recently our amazing community came together for Bobby the Brave's Gala Ball, via the genius of Nicole Galea, Bobby's godmother, to celebrate his achievements and raise much-needed funds for Bobby's family to buy a car that would accommodate his wheelchair, to maintain the family's independence. The initiative of Nicole spurred on another local champion, Greg Bond, to gather his mates and walk from Randwick Children's Hospital, where Bobby received treatment, to Panthers club, raising $14,000 along the way.

The evening was a great fusion of community support, compassion and working together. This is a testament to the community spirit that is very much the fabric of the electorate I proudly represent, Lindsay. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Nicole and Greg and their wonderful teams for the way in which they have changed this family's life, and to extend to Elise, Barry, Olivia and Bobby all the very best into the future. I look forward to continuing to work with them over the coming years. I would like to add that, since the fundraiser took place, Bobby's family have realised that dream of buying a car and are now able to maintain their independence.

Mountain Cruizers 2016 Car Show

Mr GEE (Calare) (16:11): I wish to draw the parliament's attention to the fact that the Mountain Cruizers 2016 Car Show for charity was held on Sunday, 16 October 2016 at the Lithgow Showground. The Mountain Cruizers Car Club was formed in 2006 by a group of Lithgow car lovers who were keen to go for Sunday cruises and attend car shows. Over the years the club has grown to over 90 registered members from Lithgow and the surrounding areas. It has to be mentioned that the main aim of the club is to be a family club.

The Mountain Cruizers also carry out community events such as raising money for charities in the Lithgow and district area, and this year was no different, with the 2016 car show raising money for Can Assist. This year marks the eighth charity car show. It featured some 125 cars, 20 bikes and over 10 trucks from all over the central west. The car show attracted a large variety of cars and a high number of visitors to Lithgow. This year was one of the biggest and best shows to date, with the Lions Club markets, food stalls, live music and various stalls around the showground.

It goes without saying that an event such as this cannot be organised without a dedicated committee behind it, and I must mention this committee now: Rodney Borland, Andrew Miller, Todd Nyitrai and the President of the Mountain Cruizers Car Club, Paul Sammut. I must also mention the support of a number of sponsors, including Mines Courier Services, Lithgow Tyre Service, G&D Engineering, Zig Zag Motel, JR Engineering, RYCO and D&J Ford Lithgow. I would like to congratulate the Lithgow Mountain Cruizers Car Club for hosting such a great community event. Well done and long may they continue to cruise.

National Carers Week

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (16:13): This week is National Carers Week. It is an important time to recognise the 2.8 million carers in this country who do unpaid caring work for so many. It is important to remember them this week and commit ourselves to providing support to those who care. These carers are right through our community, caring for people
with disabilities, older family members and younger children with a disability. They are not able to meet their full potential because they are caring for those in need.

Today, though, I want to recognise a group that is often forgotten about, and that is young carers, carers who look after mum or dad, grandma or grandpa or an older brother or sister. These carers are in our schools and universities, and we need to give them special attention for the work they do. In my electorate, Carer Support in the southern suburbs of Adelaide, in Morphett Vale, is providing that care for the carers. It gives a great opportunity for carers—young carers and older carers alike—to get together, to exchange ideas and, most importantly, to share a cup of tea and a bit of support. In National Carers Week it is important that we remember that carers count and that we recognise the very important role that unpaid carers play in our community.

Moore Electorate: Road Infrastructure

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (16:14): Many residents have highlighted traffic congestion in our suburbs as an issue of major concern in response to my annual community survey. May I take this opportunity to inform the parliament of some important road improvement projects.

Construction works to upgrade the major intersections of Marmion Avenue with Hepburn Avenue and with Whitfords Avenue have already commenced. These include extended turning lanes, upgraded traffic signals and CCTV monitoring for improved traffic management. Pedestrian and cycling facilities will also be enhanced. The Barnett Liberal government has provided $12 million in funding for this project, and I acknowledge the advocacy of the Hon. Peter Katsambanis MLC.

To the east of my electorate, the federal government has committed $20 million in road funding towards the grade separation of the busy intersection of Ocean Reef and Wanneroo Roads, replacing the existing traffic signals with bridges. This will greatly benefit the residents of my electorate and beyond, who commute east-west daily to the industrial hubs of Wangara and Malaga, alleviating traffic congestion and improving freight logistics. I look forward to working closely with my state colleague the Hon. Paul Miles MLA to progress this project. Investment in our local road network will alleviate traffic congestion in our suburbs for the benefit of all residents.

Kelly, Mr Ross

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (16:16): When Isam Gurung first came to Amaroo Primary School he was in an unfamiliar environment. Isam is deaf, and had moved from a specialist school in Sydney to a mainstream school in Canberra. He found it difficult to adjust and was initially very shy. That was before he befriended Ross Kelly, a boy who decided, after passing notes forwards and backwards, that he would go a step further and learn sign language to help his friend. As Ross Kelly put it:

If you write down 'look at that bird there', you write it down and you give it to Isam, [but] the bird's already gone.

So Ross took his time and learnt Auslan. That led to a strong friendship which assisted Isam's settling into the school. As Isam's father, Indra, said, the boys would play at scouts and in scouts they would also work to teach the other boys Auslan.
The Fred Hollows Foundation has given Ross a special award for his citizenship, for reaching out. Gabi Hollows said of Isam:

He came into a new environment here in Canberra and he had an interpreter at school but having a friend who can communicate with him is another thing again.

I commend Ross Kelly for showing the great values of Canberra in helping his friend incorporate into a new environment by learning Auslan.

**Bibi, Mrs Asia**

**Pakistan: Human Rights**

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (16:18): I rise today to highlight the case of Asia Bibi and the plight of persecuted Christian minorities in Pakistan. Mrs Bibi, a Christian in the Punjab Province of Pakistan, has been detained on death row for the last six years, often in solitary confinement because of the ongoing threats to her physical safety in prison. Her apparent crime? She drank from a cup that was intended for Muslim recipients.

Last week, I was honoured to meet with Mr Wilson Chowdhry, Chairman of the British Pakistani Christian Association. The association seeks to promote religious freedom in Pakistan and advocate for those, like Mrs Bibi, whose human rights have been denied because of their religious faith. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which Pakistan is a signatory, makes very clear those basic rights. Article 2 specifically states:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Freedom of religion is foundational. Without it, people are denied the potential for human flourishing.

Australia is a good friend of Pakistan, but we in this country care very deeply about religious liberty and are also universally opposed to the death penalty, particularly in a case such as this. We hope and pray for the speedy release of Asia Bibi and those like her.

**Australian Women's Masters Hockey Championships**

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (16:19): I am pleased to report that on Saturday my teammates representing Western Australia at the 2016 Australian Women's Masters Hockey Championships in Hobart won the gold medal in the 40s age division. WA defeated the noble Queensland two goals to one in the gold medal match. The Australian Women's Masters—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): Can I interrupt the member for Brand and ask her to put the sash around her neck so she can speak—

Ms MADELEINE KING: Certainly; I would be only too pleased to do so. I am honoured. Thank you. The Australian Women's Masters Hockey Championships bring together hundreds of women hockey players over seven age groups, ranging in age from 34 to 70—and even beyond 70 in some cases. The fantastic masters hockey community love their sport and are fiercely competitive. They show a lifelong commitment to being active, involved and sharing experiences of loss, disappointment, defeat, camaraderie and, happily, victory. Most importantly, we share the fun and joy of playing a great game.

In Hobart, Hockey WA women won gold in the 40s, silver in the 45s, gold in the 50s, the 60s got silver and the 55s and the inspiring 65s valiantly finished fourth. I commend all of the
women across this country who have been selected to represent their states in masters hockey, who have trained throughout a long winter and who competed last week in Hobart. You set a great example to us all of the value of participation. To my own team, the absolutely fabulous 40s, it looks like a great start for Hockey WA.

Corangamite Electorate: National Stronger Regions Fund projects

Corio Electorate: Building Better Regions Fund projects

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (16:21): I rise to celebrate the fact that almost $5 million has been awarded to three fabulous new projects in Corangamite under our National Stronger Regions Fund: the Destination Queenscliff Precinct Revitalisation project, the Bannockburn Civic Heart project and the Winchelsea Town Centre Beautification project. These projects are so important for their local communities. They are very much focused on creating local jobs and improving community infrastructure. It was regrettable that the member for Corio in talking about Stronger Regions did not, in fact, acknowledge the very significant funding that has been provided to his electorate in previous rounds. There was $7.25 million to help fund Baptcares Norlane community hub and another $1 million for Diversitat's Healthy Living Centre for Ageing in Norlane. So this is our government, very proudly standing up and investing in regional communities. And there are more opportunities under our Building Better Regions Fund. Unlike its predecessor the Stronger Regions Fund, the Building Better Regions Fund will consider small, medium and large projects separately, so that small community projects do not compete directly with large infrastructure projects, and there are some fabulous projects up for consideration. I will continue to fight very hard for the Geelong Waterfront Safe Harbour Precinct project and the City of Geelong’s bowls project and encompasses an agribusiness centre of excellence. The Building Better Regions Fund is all about our government's commitment to building better regions right across Australia.

ACT Election

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:22): I rise with great joy to congratulate Andrew Barr and his stellar team for a Labor victory on Saturday night. Yes, hear! Hear! On Saturday, Canberra's voted for a positive and progressive future for our wonderful nation's capital. They voted for a Labor Party that has a vision for our future that includes decent infrastructure, renewable energy, innovation and growth and direct international flights that will deliver significant benefits to capital region tourism and to small business.

I want to congratulate the following people who look like they are going to be elected—as you know we have Robson rotation and Hare-Clark here. At this stage there is Andrew Barr, Mick Gentleman, Yvette Berry, Tara Cheyne, Rachel Stephen-Smith, Chris Steel, Bec Cody, Meegan Fitzharris, Michael Pettersson, Suzanne Orr and Joy Burch. Well done to all of you. I also want to say well done to all of those candidates who do not look like they are going to get over the line. Well done, particularly to Leah Dwyer and to Karl Maftoum. I campaigned with both of them over the last few weeks. Karl Maftoum wore out three pairs of shoes during the course of the campaign. We ran a very coherent and cohesive grassroots campaign. We put in a great effort. Congratulations to all those involved and thanks to the volunteers.
Berowra Electorate: Middle Dural Public School

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (16:24): I rise to congratulate Middle Dural Public School on celebrating 125 years of education for students within the federal electorate of Berowra. I had the privilege of attending the school community for their Christmas in July fundraiser and Middle Dural Public School's 125th anniversary fair in September. Middle Dural's motto is Learn to Live. The school's nurturing approach accepts each child, no matter their background, and helps them to grow to be the best they can be. With only 21 students and three teaching staff, the school provides a caring but challenging learning environment where students' creativity and natural eagerness to learn are encouraged. For example, the school has a highly original philosophy in the art program that it offers. Rather than having students learn to draw or paint an object, for instance a portrait or a still life, they study an artist and learn to produce artworks in the style of that artist. Middle Dural uses its small size to its advantage. Among other things, it allows a greater blend of student friendships and interactions across grades, and a deeper understanding of the child as an individual. I wish to acknowledge the great work of the very active Middle Dural Parents and Citizens' Association, and in particular the acting president, Ian MacArthur. I also acknowledge the work of Middle Dural's extraordinary principal, Ann Mills, whose name is synonymous with the school as she has been teaching at Middle Dural for over 40 years. I wish Middle Dural school a very, very happy 125th birthday party.

Newcastle Electorate: National Carers Week

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (16:25): Last Saturday I was privileged to host of the launch of National Carers Week 2016 in my electorate of Newcastle, kickstarting a week that gives all Australians an opportunity to let Australia's 2.8 million carers know that they count. I especially want to thank Carers Australia for choosing the magnificent Merewether Beach as the site of this year's national launch. The restorative powers of the surf are well known to all, and I know that the carers present that morning really enjoyed the opportunity to have breakfast by a very stunning beach. I want to pay particular thanks to Teigan Power, one of the ambassadors for Carers Australia this year. Teigan had her life turned around when her fiance, Alex McKinnon, had a horrendous injury during a Newcastle Knights rugby league match and she became a full-time carer of her fiance. Her testimony on the morning of the launch was very powerful, reminding us all of the need to take time not only to thank our carers but also to check in and make sure they are well. I also want to thank Amber Nichols, a carer and a finalist in The Voice, for entertaining us, and to acknowledge the tremendous work of the NDIS and Life Without Barriers. National Carers Week is a timely reminder that we should all take the time to show that carers count.

Petrie Electorate: Small Business

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (16:27): Over the weekend I had the opportunity of meeting some of Queensland's brightest business minds at a networking event for entrepreneurs. Incredible technological changes are transforming our lives, our workplaces and how we communicate. We need to embrace this innovation if we are to create new jobs, harness new sources of economic growth and encourage advanced manufacturing. I want to thank Deborah Morandin from the Petrie electorate who runs the Butterfly Experience for inviting me to the event. I would like to thank everyone who attended, whether they are established business owners or just starting out. The coalition government has a strong record when it comes to
supporting innovation and businesses, because we know that businesses ultimately create jobs and economic prosperity—not the government.

I had the chance to meet quite a few people there including Brett Godfrey, who started Virgin in Australia with Richard Branson and is now involved with ecotourism in Tasmania; Mr Ben Southall, winner of the Best Job in the World; Michelle Hespe, global editor-in-chief of CEO Magazine; Leesa Gill, CEO and her partner, Gary, of TFH—Australia-wide, they hire some 400 staff across 40 branches, and do the biggest temporary fencing hire at every major building site, mine and event in Oz. It was a great opportunity: thanks to everyone involved.

Wills Electorate: Neighbourhood Houses

Mr KHALIL (Wills) (16:29): I rise to acknowledge the 11 Neighbourhood Houses in my electorate of Wills and to inform the chamber about the wonderful services they provide to the public. These facilities serve as community hubs and are committed to enriching lives through continuing education programs and a raft of social activities. Last month I had the opportunity to visit the Sussex Street Neighbourhood House in the suburb of Pascoe Vale. At Sussex Street, like all Neighbourhood Houses, they approach the concept of community enrichment in the most holistic of ways. Computer classes allow workers the chance to hone essential skills for the modern workforce and empower them to prosper at every stage of their careers. They offer English as an Additional Language classes to assist members of our vibrant multicultural population. They offer respite from our fast-paced world at their health and wellbeing events, including meditation classes. They offer an array of outlets to satisfy the creative instincts and, of course, there are the social offerings such as the choir, the book club, the regular Scrabble tournaments that so many in the community relish.

Vic Isell and Thea Bates, who manage the Sussex Street Neighbourhood House, showed me the plans for their new facilities, which will further expand their capacity to offer value to the public. But the blood in the veins of all neighbourhood houses is public funding. I look forward to helping all neighbourhood houses in Wills get access to grants to promote their good work and great cause.

Bennelong Electorate: Chinese Language School anniversary

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (16:30): I am delighted to request the House join me in congratulating the Australian Chinese Cultural Association of New South Wales Chinese Language School on their 40th anniversary. Bennelong is very fortunate to be enriched with cultures from around the globe. The Chinese community, in particular, have come to Eastwood and made a permanent home, combining the great benefits of our cultures and fusing the two into a unique, strong, local identity.

As one of the most multicultural electorates in the country, we celebrate Bennelong's cultural diversity and identity in many ways. However, to have such a stalwart community institution reach their 40th anniversary and continue to enrich our area through social and educational initiatives is truly a reason to be proud. Local organisations like the Australian Chinese Cultural Association are essential in sustaining our appreciation of cultural heritage.

I applaud the association on the far-sighted work they did 40 years ago to set up the language school and I congratulate them on keeping it running to such a high standard ever
since. Congratulations to the principal, Mr Phil Xu, and everyone who has been involved in this wonderful local organisation over the past 40 years. I thank the Australian Chinese Cultural Association once again for their contribution to our local community and wish them all the best for many years to come.

Moreton Electorate: Art Exhibition

Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (16:32): On Saturday I had the pleasure of attending the St David's Neighbourhood Centre's display, the Painting for Pleasure art group's art show, held at the Corner Cafe in Coopers Plains. I think it was staged for free in the community room, and so I thank the Corner Cafe.

This was the culmination of the Wednesday morning art groups, organised by Robyn Solomon and her team. Robyn is the deputy chair of the board of management at St David's Neighbourhood Centre. They meet each Wednesday morning; they bring in guest artists, such as Joan Cooper, Elizabeth Duguid and Cees Sliedrecht, to help improve the artwork of those who turn up. They have displayed at other places including the Coopers Plains library.

Some of the artists I saw on Saturday included: Claire Bethany, Gayle Bodsworth, Rosalind Davis, Carolyn Grant, Ineke Hartman, Bev Kraves, Tim O'Dwyer, Denise Sandilands, Robyn Solomon and Marie Watson, to name a few.

I picked up a few pieces of artwork. They do everything from water colour to oil to sketches—big pieces of art down to gift and greeting cards. Obviously, the art in and of itself are works of beauty, but the art provides the community a chance for people to come out, pick up some skills and interact with their neighbours. I commend St David's Neighbourhood Centre for the great work that they do and I look forward to seeing future Painting for Pleasure art group displays.

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (16:33): Well, it has come to this. Today we have a government instrumentality coming after the cartoonists of this nation. We have the Human Rights Commissioner out touting for work by attempting to solicit complaints against a cartoon drawn by Bill Leak. The skill of a political cartoonist is to take a controversial political issue and exaggerate it to absurdity by using their artistic skill to provoke thought. In our society we can prosecute that under the current settings of 18C. If we have cartoonists in this country being prosecuted under that law, I put it to members of the opposition that there is something fundamentally wrong with this law. Free speech, the contest of ideas—they are the things that have created the great Western civilisation and everything that we benefit from today. As Bill Leak said in his own words:

… 18C is an outrageous piece of law which leads to completely farcical situations like this.

I call on members of the opposition to please work with us. Let's fix this anti-freedom-of-speech law.

HighWater Theatre Company

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:35): I would like to acknowledge in this House the wonderful work of the HighWater Theatre company and to thank them for their performance on Friday night. This innovative partnership between Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company, Gateway Community Health Service and the Victorian education department began in Wodonga in
2000 and is now into its 16th year. It is regarded nationally as a model of best practice for its successful community collaboration as an arts-led education program for disadvantaged people. Ninety-two per cent of the performers have experienced homelessness and many other types of disadvantage but, through this wonderful program, they have been able to achieve great success—not only in theatre, but 85 per cent of HighWater Theatre participants have now entered mainstream schooling; nine have completed year 12; 15 have found employment and two have completed university degrees. It is a wonderful, wonderful collaboration, and I am very proud to support it.

However, as you know, Mr Deputy Speaker Broadbent, these programs need money, and this particular program is short of $300,000 or it might fold, which would be such a sad thing to happen. So I am coming here to parliament to ask the government to find that extra bit of money to enable this really good program to continue. In the meantime, I would like to acknowledge the work of everybody involved, but particularly Maud Clark, Vern Hilditch, Leonard Peardy, the Gateway Theatre people and the different schools for all the work that they do. To the performers: it was a fantastic night on Friday. You did so well, and I am so proud of your work. Thank you.

Foreign Fighters

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (16:37): Wasn't it great today to see Lieutenant General Peter Leahy entering this debate on dual citizens engaged in that odious and rabid group called Daesh trying to find their way home and get back onto welfare payments again? Good on you, Peter Leahy, for saying, quite clearly, ‘Rip the passports off them.’ But I would also ask both sides of this chamber where we stand on sole nationals doing precisely the same thing.

I commend the multiagency approach that we have over in that part of the world. We need to be absolutely sure, before they land on this soil, that we know precisely what they have been up to in those prohibited areas of Iraq and Syria. We need to know exactly what ex-combatants and witnesses are saying, what those host nations think about these individuals and whether they should face charges in those countries. This multiagency approach is vital. Of course, children in these circumstances must be spared and protected and given safety wherever possible, but I have no problem in using time, before we issue the laissez-passers and those limited validity passports, to be utterly sure whom we are repatriating and what their background is.

If they chose this path and walked away from Australia and our values and held them in such contempt that they elected to even fight, kill and harm Australians who are serving in such a self-sacrificing way in our armed forces, then we must defend the legacy of those in our armed forces. Australians who call themselves that deserve no easy passage of return till we know precisely what they have done over in Iraq and Syria. (Time expired)

Australian Transplant Games

Ms HUSAR (Lindsay) (16:38): On Sunday, 25 September I attended the opening ceremony of this year’s Australian Transplant Games, held in Penrith and Blacktown over the week, hosted by Transplant Australia and supported by DonateLife. On 26 September, as part of the games, I attended the ‘Transplant Train’, where participants and supporters caught a train from Penrith to the city of Sydney and marched through the city to raise awareness of organ and tissue donation. Over the course of the games, I was able to meet with fellow organ
donor families who, like me, had been touched by organ and tissue donation through the generosity of their loved ones who had passed. I met with many participants who had been given the opportunity of a second chance of life through the generosity of those who had opted to become donors.

I applaud the work of the games organisers, Chris Thomas and his team, for a successful 2016 games. The games bring together a range of people, but the ultimate aim of the games is to create more awareness and increase the rates of organ donation through the national Organ Donor Register. Through organ donations, people like my mate Jess Sparks are able to have a second opportunity at life. Jess is currently recovering from her second double-lung transplant, and I wish her a speedy recovery. I congratulate each and every athlete, supporter and volunteer or organiser for their participation in the games, and I am looking forward to attending the next games, which I am hoping to be able to support and even to participate in as a member of an organ donor family.

**Capricornia Electorate: Bridges Renewal Program**

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Deputy Nationals Whip) (16:39): I am pleased to report that work is underway to replace four old timber bridges along the Peak Downs Highway west of Walkerston in the northern part of Capricornia. This is expected to create an average of 114 jobs. The Turnbull-Joyce government is providing $35 million towards the $70 million project under the Commonwealth Bridges Renewal Program. The bridge replacement work comes on top of the $166 million in federal government funding being spent to realign the notorious Eton Range section of the Peak Downs Highway to reduce heavy-vehicle accidents and fatalities.

Under the Bridges Renewal Program, four old timber bridges are being replaced with new concrete structures to make it safer to travel in that area. The new bridges will cross Fiery Creek, Lonely Creek, Boundary Creek and Cut Creek. This is the largest investment in an individual package of works under the Commonwealth Bridges Renewal Program. People who travel on country roads deserve good facilities just as much as those in major cities, and I am proud to have helped facilitate this funding. Work is expected to be completed in 2018.

**Canberra Electorate: Centenary of Anzac**

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:41): Last Thursday night after we had finished a sitting week where we had been locked up in this House all week, it was an absolute pleasure to get out into the sunshine, to get out into the gardens here in Canberra, and to unveil a beautiful piece of artwork that had been commissioned by the Australian Garden History Society, ACT Monaro Riverina Branch, as part of the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program.

The project is of three panels and is called 'Planting Memories'. It brings remembrance of the men from the local region, the capital region, who served in France, back to Westbourne Woods down in Yarralumla. It does this through the eyes of Charles Weston and his staff, who planted the trees that now make up our wonderful Canberra environment and make it so distinctive and treasured. For those who do not know, Charles Weston was a horticulturist. He was the man who essentially led the creation of the gardens here in our bush capital. He is an iconic figure here in Canberra.
The society searched records of the Australian War Memorial and the ACT memorial to establish that some 350 men from the capital region served in World War I. Many of these men were drawn to work in the region as the foundations of the new capital were being laid. Others came from the existing local community, including pastoral properties. I want to congratulate the society and the designer, Mariana Rollgejser, for a beautiful creation and encourage Canberrans to go and have a look. (Time expired)

**Clarence Valley Sports Awards**

**Mr HOGAN** (Page) (16:42): Every year *The Daily Examiner* sponsor the Clarence Valley Sports Awards. This year is shaping up to be another great year, with 20 finalists all vying for the top spot. A previous winner was Tahlia Marsh for BMX in 2014, and last year's winner, from the sport of longboard surfing, was Di Ellis. Both junior and senior athletes have a chance of taking out the top spot, with voting now open on the paper's website. This year's contenders are junior bull rider Ethan McConnell, bodybuilder Brad Clarke, cricketer Amy Riddell, sailor Joe O'Keefe, sprinter Nathalie Avery, triathlete Lindsay Wall, swimmer Charlie Steele, cyclist Lauralea Moss, dog trainer/handler Ethan Davies, hockey player Michael Russ, rugby league player Lewis Cooper, athlete Mitch Cristiansen, cricketers Carly Leeson and Greg Mears, hockey player Sam Young, shooter John Matthews, dragon boater Travis O'Connor, motorcyclist Luke Mitchell, surfer Carly Shanahan and basketballer Hamish Denshire. There is obviously a lot of sporting talent in the Clarence Valley, and I wish all of them the very best and congratulate them all on being nominated.

**World Teachers' Day**

**Mr PERRETT** (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (16:44): As you are well aware, Deputy Speaker, on Friday, 28 October, it is World Teachers' Day. I am giving clear notice to all the teachers in my electorate that I will be recognising and celebrating the great work that they do. The member for Scullin, the member for Griffith and the member for Sydney will also be doing what they can to recognise the great work of the teachers in their electorates.

I would particularly like to mention three of my teachers: Lorna Locke, Anne Reilly and Linda Noriek, or Linda Walsh, for the great influence they had on me. I had an 11-year teaching career before I found another career, and they were a great influence. I could mention various nuns as well, particularly Sister Anthony, who terrified me in grade 7! But these were people that called me to a teaching career.

I would like to mention also four of my very best friends who I make music with irregularly but we all formed a band back at teachers college—

**Ms Butler:** What was it called?

**Mr PERRETT:** The four members of that band—I can't recall the name, member for Griffith—were John Carozza, Brendan Logan, Brendan Bowinger and Sharon Weir—or Sharon Schofield as she is now called. They are all still teaching 25 years on from when we formed and are making a great contribution in music and also in shaping young people's minds. Congratulations to all of them and all teachers in the world.

**Fuel Prices**

**Mr ENTSCH** (Leichhardt) (16:45): I recently heard about Brisbane's call for the ACCC to do a deep-dive investigation into a perceived petrol cartel in the western suburbs of Brisbane.
Given that motorists can drive 10 minutes and save 20c per litre and have an otherwise competitive market, I think that resources need to be directed to communities like Cairns where we recently recorded the highest fuel prices on the eastern seaboard. Motorists are paying 130.2c per litre on average for unleaded in September making it the third most expensive place in Queensland to fill up behind Blackall and Cunnamulla.

The ACCC is carrying out an investigation into fuel prices in Cairns and have sought submissions from stakeholders and have met with local retailers in Cairns. They have sent out requests for data on petrol prices to retailers at every level in the supply chain leading into Cairns, and analysing this information will take some time. I certainly hope that their study will be released sooner rather than later.

It is amazing how the prices are just locked in right across the CBD area, and the RACQ say retailers should be already dropping prices. It is certainly not happening in my community. This is an ongoing issue and it is one that I will continue to monitor. It is a disgrace—the price of fuel—and the fact that there appears to be no competition and ridiculously high prices are having a huge impact on my community.

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

**BILLS**

**Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017**

**Consideration in Detail**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent) (16:47):** In accordance with standing order 149, the Federation Chamber will first consider the schedule of the bill.

**Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (16:47):** May I suggest that it might suit the convenience of the Federation Chamber to consider the items of proposed expenditure in the order and grouping shown in the schedule which has been circulated to honourable members. I also take the opportunity to indicate to the chamber that the proposed order for consideration of portfolios estimates has been discussed with the opposition and there has been no objection to what is proposed.

_The schedule read as follows—_

Education and Training
Industry, Innovation and Science
Health
Health—Sport
Social Services
Social Services—Human Services
Treasury
Foreign Affairs and Trade
Environment and Energy
Agriculture and Water Resources
Finance
Immigration and Border Protection

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FEDERATION CHAMBER
Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (16:48): If I may make some brief remarks to begin with. Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. On behalf of my colleague, the minister Senator Simon Birmingham, I want to make some brief remarks to being this particular appropriation in the education and training portfolio. It is a pleasure to do so in the company of the assistant minister.

Firstly, the whole concept which we are pursuing as a government is that a better educated workforce and population is fundamental to Australia's successful participation in the global economy. It is also fundamental to the realisation of each individual's capacity to aspire to be their best selves, so it serves the individual. It serves the community and it serves the society. It is not just a mercantilist perspective; it is a deep, profound human responsibility. In that respect, the 2016-17 budget within the portfolio is focused on improving student outcomes in literacy, in numeracy and in what is known as the STEM subjects—science, technology, engineering and mathematics. STEM is a term that is sometimes used by insiders and it can alienate others, so, wherever possible, I prefer to talk about it as science, technology, engineering and maths, or as the individual components.

It is also about teacher quality reforms—again, something of fundamental importance to the performance of our education system and our capacity to participate and achieve on a global scale to the highest levels. It is about delivering more support for students with disability, allowing those with the greatest need to have additional opportunities which will allow them to aspire to be the best participants they can be within our community. It is about improving our attractiveness as an education destination for international students and assuring the quality, reputation and affordability of our higher education system. In particular, we know that schools will receive more funding from 2018, due to the schools funding measure, which involves indexing school funding with an education specific index rate of 3.56 per cent.

As a government, there is no doubt we inherited education funding arrangements across the board that were not only unsustainable but which also, sadly, entrenched inequality. For that reason, we will push for school funding reforms to remove the inequities of the previous government's approach during the period of the Rudd and Gillard prime ministerships and to
provide for a system that is genuinely needs based and affordable. Those are the two indispensable elements which we wish to pursue. In particular, under the schools funding measure, states and territories will receive additional funding to provide students with disability better access to learning. This new funding is in addition to the current students with disability loading provided through the Australian Education Act and will target funding where it is needed most: to support quality education programs and initiatives for students with disability. It will help schools to meet their obligations under the Disability Standards for Education 2005.

I also want to note that in 2017 the Early Learning Languages Australia program trial will be extended nationally to all preschools. This is really a tremendous step forward and something that should be acknowledged. The ELLA program is a series of language-learning interactive applications. It helps children, at the earliest years, to engage in learning languages. We know from around the world that young children are sponges for the study of languages across the spectrum, but it is about speaking to them in the right way. Research shows that learning a language develops children's overall literacy—it does not just assist with the second language, it also helps with the primary language. It strengthens literacy related capabilities, and these are transferable across all learning areas. Language is the building block. It also provides children with a head start towards language study at school. This program will enable children to become more comfortable with different languages early in life so that they stay engaged during their later years. I am happy to deal with other elements of what is a $1.333 billion budget during the course of this consideration in detail.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (16:53): It is a great opportunity for me and for my colleagues to examine the education and training portfolio budget, but I want to start by making a few general comments in response to the Minister representing the Minister for Education and Training. We, of course, on this side, have no objection to the emphasis on STEM—on science, technology, engineering and maths, as you say. It has been a central part of our education policy both in government and in opposition. We are very great supporters of the emphasis on teacher quality. We know that the most important thing you can do to improve standards in our classrooms is to invest in supporting teachers not just in their early years of training but right throughout their professional lives, when teachers seek professional development and career support.

Aside from the areas the minister was talking about where there is such clear agreement, there are also some areas of quite stark disagreement. This portfolio budget shows us where some of those areas of disagreement are. The minister spoke about disability funding. This is a particular failure of this government. After repeated promises by this minister and the previous education minister that the issue of the disability loading for schools would be resolved, we still see no resolution in sight. The minister talked about removing inequities in our schooling system. The only inequity that the minister could be proud of, the only equal opportunity approach that the government is taking, is to cut funding from every school in every system in every state. These portfolio budget papers show a commitment to a continuation of the $29 billion of cuts that we saw in the Abbott-Hockey budget.

Budgets are about choices. They are about priorities. We know that this government has made a choice to prioritise tax cuts for big business, including the four big banks, over properly investing in our children's education. It has made this pointless expenditure on the
big end of town a bigger priority than our kids' education at schools, at universities, at
preschools and—as my colleague will discuss—in vocational education. If we want to be a
high-wage, First World economy with a generous social safety net—as the Prime Minister
said again in question time today—then we need to invest in education. OECD evidence and
other evidence from the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency and the Economic
Society of Australia all show that this investment is the best return we can get.

This appropriations bill entrenches the $29 billion of cuts, including a $3.8 billion cut in
years 5 and 6 of Gonski—an average of around $3 million in schools. We would like to know
why the government believes that a tax cut for some of the biggest businesses in the country
is more important than properly investing in our schools and why the government is not
prepared to instead, for example, adopt Labor's negative gearing and capital gains tax policies,
which would more than cover any additional costs of the school education funding reforms
that we would like to see.

I want to make a few very brief comments on universities before I will, unfortunately, run
out of time. This budget cuts more than $2½ billion from universities over four years and
$13½ billion over 10 years. Some of that will come from very important areas that ensure
higher standards in our universities, such as the $18 million cut by abolishing the highly
effective Office of Learning and Teaching, which was created to help improve teaching
excellence and innovation and support student retention in our universities. There is also the
$152.2 million cut over four years—a cut of 40 per cent by 2019—from the Higher Education
Participation and Partnerships Program. We are absolutely committed to getting more kids
who will be the first in their family to attend university or to be able to go to university. These
are kids from poorer backgrounds—in particular, from low-SES communities and regional
areas. We have seen this work. The Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program
has helped. We have seen Indigenous student numbers up by 26 per cent, regional student
numbers up by 30 per cent and 36,000 extra kids from low-income families going to
university. So why is this government cutting this highly successful Higher Education
Participation and Partnerships Program, which has helped so many people from
disadvantaged backgrounds? After 25 reviews, is another review the best thing that this
government can think of for our university sector?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): I have a question, Minister. Do want to take
a number of intervals first, or do you want to take each one as it comes?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (16:58): I would
rather deal with them as they come out of respect for the speakers, if that is acceptable. I wish
to address probably three issues from the deputy opposition leader and spokesperson in this
space. Firstly, in relation to schools funding, overall I think the starting point is that there is a
very significant, continued path to growth outlined in this budget in relation to schools
funding. Let me make that clear because sometimes it can be lost in the hurly-burly of debate.
Each year, we see an increase of approximately $1 billion from 2014 through to 2020. That
represents a 29 per cent increase from 2014 to 2020 in real terms. In real terms, there is a 29.8
per cent increase.

For the record, I think it is worthwhile to understand that we went from, in 2014, $13.8
billion of funding to, in 2015, $15 billion of funding; 2016, $16.1 billion; 2017, $17.4 billion
of appropriation; 2018, $18.2 billion; 2019, $19.1 billion; and 2020, $20.1 billion. So the
fundamental point here is that schools funding increases each year, every year. But, when you bring it altogether, what you see is an increase of 29.8 per cent, not just in nominal terms but in real terms. So in real terms you see a significant increase in the capacity of schools to provide for the needs of students.

One of the fundamental mistakes here is the cargo cult mentality, and that is the notion that funding alone equals better outcomes. What we see when we go to the Quality schools, quality outcomes report is that it is much more than just funding; it is about the combination of the very things which I set out at the beginning and which the Minister for Education and Training and the Prime Minister have talked about in this space throughout the course of the current administration, and that is: literacy, numeracy, standards and teacher training, things which are fundamental to allowing students the ability to achieve and to lay down a foundation stone for their entire educational career. Those are extremely important points, but, going back to the start, it is about increasing each year, every year, the funding but then adding the quality—the whole notion of quality schools, quality outcomes.

Then I want to deal with something which was also raised, which is in relation to funding for students with disability. I think it is extremely valuable for the House to understand that the government is providing more than $5 billion in recurrent funding for students with disability over the period from 2014 to 2017, through a loading. This includes over $1.3 billion in 2016, which increases by $200 million to almost $1.5 billion in 2017. So we see a significant increase in funding which allows for more opportunity for those who are most in need—and I agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that these are the people who are most in need. We all work with schools within our electorates and parents. In my case I was fortunate to be able to work with the Insight school for those with vision impairment, a school which did not exist but, through extraordinary parents who were incredibly committed, we were able to work and to create that sort of opportunity.

I would note that in the 2016 budget the government announced an additional $118 million for schools to support students with disability for the 2016 and 2017 calendar years. These funds will be allocated and informed by the new Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability and will target those schools with the greatest need. I think that that is an extremely important outcome.

Thirdly, I just want to mention—and I will cover this in greater detail later—in relation to higher education that the fundamental point is that funding goes up from $16.6 billion in the financial year just completed to $16.9 billion, then to $17.4 billion in 2017-18; $17.6 billion in 2018-19; and $18.1 billion in 2019-20. So, whether it is schools or higher education, it is about a sustainable upwards trajectory and a focus above all else on quality.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): Minister, if you wish you can cover a few at a time rather than one on one.

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (17:04): I wish to ask the Minister representing the Minister for Education and Training why his proposed childcare funding bills leave almost 40 per cent of the families accessing child care worse off and also how he plans to target those children most in need of early childhood intervention programs.

I have some experience in this area. I have worked as a paediatrician, specialising in seeing children with developmental disabilities for over 30 years. In my own electorate of
Macarthur, we have a large number of children with developmental needs. We have a large Indigenous population, a large number of single-parent families, a large number of children living below the poverty line, a large number of families suffering from chronic illness and a large number of families with learning difficulties and entrenched educational failure.

Many of the families that I have seen through my work as a paediatrician present to me quite late and they have to wait in the present system for over a year for formal developmental assessment and often have difficulty accessing recurrent funding and engaging with preschools, therapists and other interventional agencies. There is a huge need, and it appears to me that these bills do not target the children most in need with sufficient priority.

There is overwhelming evidence that intervention in the first thousand days of life makes the largest gains in developmental outcomes for these children. However, the government’s bills will reduce the ability for these children to access quality child care and do not appear to recognise the needs of the most disadvantaged children. The government is to be applauded, I think, for some of its measures with language intervention in preschools, but the most disadvantaged children often have multisystem requirements. They require lots of therapies and they do not appear to be adequately targeted. I have seen many families with multigenerational educational failure and poverty, and these families need to be targeted for intervention when the children are young—under three years of age. The only way out of this cycle for these children is with education and early intervention.

Mr Hunt, what is this government doing to break the cycle of multigenerational educational failure? Why is there such a delay in implementing the funding? Why do we have to wait until July 2018 to start the funding? Why is there such a complicated plan for intervention? What plans are there to better integrate preschool to school transition for these children and their families with learning difficulties and complex needs? Many families I see are of low income; many of them also see their access to preschool halved. Why is that? Why do we have to wait so long for these children to access care? We know that, if they can get preschool intervention from the age of two or three onwards, their outcomes will be much better.

The Minister for Social Services has trumpeted his reforms to reduce spending, but the money would be much better spent and would give much more value to our society if preschool placement could be made available to children at risk. If we can improve their educational outcomes, their families will also benefit and our social security spending will be much less. Our aim should be for all children to receive quality child care and that in particular means that everyone should have access. In my experience as a paediatrician astute preschool teachers are the best people to identify the children most at risk of poor developmental outcomes. So we need to get early intervention and early preschool placement for the children most at risk. It is vitally important that this assessment happens before the child is three if the intervention is to be of most benefit.

Many studies have shown that, if we improve developmental outcomes for the children in high risk families, then the whole family will benefit in terms of income, stable housing and a stable family environment. In the 21st century, surely, we can do better to provide quality early childhood support to all of our children, but in particular to those most at risk. This is about equality and access. Education begins at birth. We owe our children the best early childhood education that we can give them. They are our future.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (17:08): I would like to explain how some of the needs based funding actually occurs in the electorate of Gilmore, where they have identified the needs of our children in low socioeconomic, disability and special-needs children and allocate some of those funds in that way. I am going to be asking the minister how we will be continuing that.

One of the best principals in the local area, who has done additional training, has said that funding not only transforms schools but has also transformed the entire community. They have used some of their allocation for a family-support worker, as the homelessness issue was becoming quite significant. We all know that the home environment is one of the ones with the greatest influence. They have done extensive staff training, including trauma training and STEM training, to bring their teachers into the current century. They have changed little classrooms into robotics labs, they have a video production room, and they have a 3D printing room, which has been absolutely fabulous. They have students who have extended themselves into amazing areas with STEM. We have language and literacy development, we have maths games from one end of the playground to another, and the children are all thriving. On Nelson Mandela's birthday last year, the students went and mowed lawns and tidied the yard of a person who had just been discharged from hospital. The community workaround has been making such a difference in the community. The children are learning a completely new set of values. In addition to that, because it is a very low socioeconomic region, they have introduced the idea of Sanctuary Point dollars, which is that when a parent does a couple of hours helping students learn to read or doing some maths, or helping in the library, or even working in the tuckshop, they earn Sanctuary Point dollars. So when that child cannot go to an excursion, they earn Sanctuary Point dollars to help fund that child to go on the excursion. This an amazing way in which they have used the additional funding they have been getting under the current system of needs-based funding. The children love seeing their parents involved in the school, the children's attendance rate has improved and their achievement rate has improved. The school is also supplying 80 breakfasts every day for kids in the school, and it is helping some of them get uniforms. This is the way we get needs-based funding for our children.

I wondered if the minister would be happy to answer a question on how our coalition government's needs-based funding model is assisting our schools, and in particular how this funding is helping local schools in my electorate. Many of them have done language and literacy development. How will our future Commonwealth funding help support the improvement of student outcomes?

Mr GILES (Scullin) (17:11): The one thing that this bill, the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017, makes clear is that in this government's mind we cannot afford to invest in our students—yet apparently we can afford massive tax cuts for big banks and multinational companies. This budget, the first by now Treasurer Morrison, was supposed to be and was described to be a break from the unfair budgets of his predecessor, the former member for North Sydney. Unfortunately, what it shows upon consideration is that the Prime Minister and government have changed in name only. The coalition's agenda to cut from our schools has never been clearer, despite the rhetoric of the minister opposite.

The funding for 2017-18 is based on an education-specific indexation rate of 3.56 per cent. In the portfolio-specific budget statement this is referred to as additional funding, but it is clear these are funding cuts which will have a large impact on the ability of particular schools
to meet the needs of students. If the government planned to continue with their move to not properly fund, or to not fund at all, the vital years five and six of needs-based funding, I ask the minister: how can a flat indexation rate bring schools up to the Student Resourcing Standard? In answering this question, perhaps the minister might have regard to Budget Paper No. 1 which, despite his assertions to the contrary, makes clear that education spending is stable in real terms.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (17:13): Minister, thank you for being here. The logical connection between your portfolio and the Minister for Education and Training is obvious. It is also good to have the assistant minister here. My concern is child care. There has been a lot of public debate, even in my electorate, about fraud in family day care in particular. Everyone in this chamber would recognise just how important flexible forms of child care are, and both sides of the chamber have worked to increase those choices for Australians. But the record is not so good on the other side of this chamber, Minister, as you well know, in relation to closing the loopholes in family day care that led to some of the stories that hit the media the last few weeks. In particular, we will be concerned about value for money for the taxpayer, whether is it what we call sharp practices in family day care or genuine fraud—which we have seen in a few cases that have hit the media in the last few weeks. Everyone here would be concerned about value for money for the taxpayer. But above all, we are looking after the wellbeing of the child. In these very difficult spaces to regulate, we have literally hundreds of providers operating thousands of locations. We leave to the state and territory governments the role of both certifying and regulating these practices, obviously bringing into play the challenge of two tiers of government regulation.

It is quite damning though that the previous government, as you would know, Minister, set up a situation where some of these very odious but not illegal practices began to flourish, and child swapping was one of them. I do not need to explain that in too much detail, except to say that, effectively, one exchanges children and claims family day care payments for both. I think this caught in the throat of many Australians, who appreciate just how precious the taxpayer dollar is. For all of the protested commitment to early years that we have heard from speakers on the other side—for goodness sake, a dollar wasted is a dollar never spent on that frontier on the most vulnerable children of all.

It is also worth noting, as you would know, Minister, that in many areas only around two per cent of vulnerable children are in formal day care arrangements, and many fall out of this network completely. So we can work on the quality of the system, but we actually need to connect these vulnerable children, who previous speakers have referred to, to some form of formal day care. It can only be done if the reputation of family day care is untarnished by the practices we have seen.

Closing loopholes is something very close to my heart. It obviously disappoints me that hundreds of millions of dollars can go out the door. Despite all of our best efforts, it took months or years to finally tighten up previous arrangements. I am glad to see that that is now occurring. More specifically—Minister, you will well know this—I know it is okay to say you want to focus on two-year-olds, but we know very well that, under the previous government, none of the Medicare Locals entities took any particular focus on vulnerable children. None of them had it as a KPI and none of those GP superclinics did anything in this space whatsoever.
Minister, I commend you for the fact that we are finally focusing on this area. But just six years ago there were 100,000 kids in family day care and there are now 200,000. They are now claiming twice as many hours and, on average, 40 per cent more in the hourly charge. So we have seen an explosion in family day care that virtually represents the entire increase in day care costs overall. The long day care sector has stayed relatively stable throughout this whole time.

You would agree, Minister, that we need homelike environments where siblings can often stay together, and, in the circumstances of some of the most unusual work environments, family day care is ideal—we appreciate that. But we are also mindful that long day care and family day care have completely different educational requirements. I would be really alarmed if those requirements—such as a diploma minimum or a certificate III minimum—were taking years, not months, to fulfil. There are not many professions where you can go out and say, 'I'm working towards qualification, so let me start providing.' We do that in family day care, so we have to be absolutely certain that they are, in good faith, undertaking their educational requirements, with some view to finishing within two or more years. The federal government should be interested in that quality framework, which was established by the other side of politics and never had an end date.

For those who are going to be cared for in someone's home, my concern is that this explosion in numbers has predominantly been in Sydney and Melbourne in areas with high degrees of poverty and high rates of non-English-speaking backgrounds. That is not quite where I want the most vulnerable children to be if I do not know that family day care is providing the highest possible educational quality, if not equal to long day care.

So, Minister, I would specifically like to know some of the measures that have been taken by the department, pushed by you and the minister, to make sure that these loopholes are closed and that the reputation of family day care is untarnished.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (17:18): Minister, I was pleased to see that one of the eight additional P-TECH schools announced so far is in the St Patrick's Technical College in Edinburgh North, which is in South Australia. As you would be aware, the college is in an area that will suffer greatly once Holden closes its manufacturing plant. So introducing new pathways from school that are linked to industry partners is a positive step. Minister, how were the schools selected and what criteria was used? Of the remaining four P-TECH schools still to be announced, are there likely to be any in South Australia?

Minister, I would also like to ask questions in relation to Youth Week. Youth Week is not just a celebration of young people; it is also a week that brings much awareness to the wider community about the issues facing young people. As there is no longer a minister for youth representing the three million young people aged 15 to 24, it is vitally important. Can you please confirm that there will be no further federal funding for National Youth Week beyond 2017? I understand that the federal government previously provided funding to the states and territories for National Youth Week activities and then the states and territories would also contribute funding. I would like to ask how much funding was given to each state and territory, and how much do each state and territory contribute?

Minister, with what I believe is the defunding of Youth Week, I would like to ask whether there has been an evaluation of the National Youth Week program to determine its effectiveness. If there was not an evaluation to determine the program, what criteria or
evidence was used by government to inform the decision to discontinue the funding? If an evaluation was conducted, what were the key findings of this evaluation?

I would just like to ask about young people who are disengaged from school. A program called Youth Connections was defunded in December 2014. It was a highly successful program. It cost $79 million a year. I would like to know what evaluation the department has done post the Youth Connections closure to address the levels of disengagement among young people and whether the department has seen a correlation between the defunding of that program and Partnership Brokers, another highly successful program that was defunded at that time, and our increasing youth unemployment rate. Thank you.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (17:20): I want to thank all of the previous speakers for their contributions and, where it has taken the form of a question, for their questions. Let me begin with the member for Macarthur. The member for Macarthur sadly has left the chamber but asked a sincere question in relation to early childhood education and care. This is an absolute priority. The support that we give to young children from the most vulnerable backgrounds is extremely vital. It is fundamental to the safety, security and development of those children.

On that front, the government is continuing to support the National Quality Framework by providing the states and territories up to $61.1 million over the three years to 30 June 2018. It is an important initiative and one which I am very pleased that we are supporting. Obviously, beyond that, there is the prospect of further and additional support.

In relation to the member for Gilmore, she asked in particular about her own electorate and the support being provided to schools. I am happy to inform her constituents that she has been tremendously successful in being part of a government that is adding to school support within the electorate of Gilmore over the 2014-17 calendar years. The Australian government will be making available an estimated total funding of $320.5 million for all schools in the electorate of Gilmore. This includes an estimated 28 per cent increase in recurrent funding to the electorate of Gilmore.

I just want to say to the those constituents that the member for Gilmore has helped deliver a 28 per cent increase in schools funding. On average, this equates to $323,000 across government schools and $462,000 across non-government schools. The total funding includes an estimated $157.8 million for government schools and $162.6 million for non-government schools, bearing in mind of course that the states bear primary responsibility for funding the state based schools themselves.

Moving on from that, I want to deal in particular with the member for Scullin. The member for Scullin asked a question about schools funding, and I could not be clearer that we see from 2014 through to 2020 funding go from just under 14 to 15 to 16 to 17 to 18 to 19 to $20 billion per annum, a 29.8 per cent increase in real terms—clear, categorical and unequivocal. That is something that we want to see, and I think it is extremely important.

Moving on from that, the member for Bowman asked very important questions about childcare compliance and, in particular before he left the chamber, the issues in relation to what we are doing. I want to commend the Minister for Education. The actions taken by the department and the authorities on his watch include cracking down to ensure the arrest of 16 people; the seizure of over $8 million; more than 3,100 compliance checks; enforcement
action taken against 109 services; hard work to shut the loopholes and stopped around $421 million going to rorters. We have increased compliance checks by 500 per cent during our time in office and we have been using all of the appropriately available intelligence to us to zero in on fraudulent operators. This has become a major area of crackdown.

Finally, I want to deal with the issues raised by the member for Mayo. In particular, the member for Mayo asked about the very creative, constructive and, I believe, successful P-TECH pilot program. She asked in particular about schools—I can refer her to South Australia's St Patrick's Technical College. These sites have all been selected in consultation with different government and state based entities, and the advice is very clear. She asked about how the additional schools will be selected. The remaining five sites will be determined in consultation with state and territory governments, non-government school authorities and industry—the same process used to determine the first round—and there will be a phased approach to pilot implementation. Five sites will commence in 2017, with others starting in 2018 and 2019. I will take the remaining points that she raised and deal with them in my next answer.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (17:25): My grandparents and parents are smart, talented and good people, yet I have had vastly more opportunities available to me in my life. That is because I had the good fortune to be born at a time when people like me, kids like me, had higher education available to us. In a time when inequality is increasing and when the opportunities open to people are beginning to depend more and more on the circumstances of their birth, it is imperative that we in this parliament take seriously our obligation to act. Education policy made in this place, therefore, should be aimed at setting the right conditions for opportunity and optimism.

One of the greatest forces there is for dignity and a better life for all is education. If people in this parliament want to act on worsening inequality—and we should—then we should work to make sure that more people have access to education and we should take action to create, in the minds of all kids, aspiration for education and the opportunities that follow. This means education from the cradle to the grave, whether it is parents as first teachers, like when I read Octopus's Garden to my kids—I know there are many people who are much bigger Beatles fans than I am, but I do—or whether it is early childhood, school, vocational or university education throughout our long and changing lives. That is why I am so grateful to the education sector for the work that they do.

I have visited many universities in the past two months and seen their work firsthand. It makes me even more concerned that this Turnbull government is planning measures that will undermine higher education in this country and its competitiveness internationally: cuts to the Commonwealth Grant Scheme that are still in the budget, cuts to the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program and the proposal to allow some course fees to be deregulated. Accordingly, I am grateful for the opportunity to ask some questions of the minister.

Minister, firstly: cutting public funding for universities is bad for Australian students and will make it harder for universities to compete in international markets, so will the government drop its plan to cut the Commonwealth Grant Scheme by 20 per cent? Secondly, how will the government's cuts to the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program of $152 million in the 2016-17 budget affect the enrolment and participation of
lower socioeconomic status students, Indigenous students, and regional and remote students? In passing, I note in that regard that I met with some students in Western Australia recently who had had their aspiration to go to university effectively created through outreach programs from universities—kids who lived two days drive or more from a capital city.

Minister, I would also like to ask you when we can expect to see the legislative package for the changes that the government intends to introduce to take effect in 2018. I understand it has been announced that those bills will be introduced in 2017. Can the minister confirm whether that package will be introduced in or before the autumn sitting? Of course, universities, students and others need certainty and, if measures are intended to commence in 2018, there needs to be ample time in advance of that period for the package to be tabled, considered and debated in this parliament so that students, prospective students, universities and others who are stakeholders in the sector will have appropriate opportunities to have input.

Minister, a panel has been established to assess the some 1,200 submissions that your government has received in relation to your higher education options paper. What are the parameters, if any, for that panel? How will that panel's consideration of those submissions be informed? How will that panel report to the minister and on what basis will that panel make recommendations to the minister? What will be the considerations that are relevant to that panel in assessing those 1,200 submissions, summarising and reporting them to the minister?

The shadow minister for education earlier touched on the fact that there have been some 25 reviews affecting higher education since this government came to office. That is 25 reviews, option papers, discussion papers and the like. How many more reviews, options papers, discussion papers and the like are we to expect before we see some action from this government in relation to higher education?

Finally, in the 2016-17 budget the government announced it will not proceed with its planned fee deregulation program in full, though of course the flagship courses are still in the options paper. The 2016-17 budget estimates this will give rise to savings of $2 billion. The 2014-15 budget did not contain any specific expenses associated with fee deregulation. How is the $2 billion sum calculated in respect of the savings that are intended to be made?

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (17:30): I rise to speak about the Adult Migrant English Program. I will ask a question of the minister about that program. I am very lucky to represent a highly diverse electorate in Berowra. We have significant Chinese, Indian, Korean, Sri Lankan, Lebanese and Italian communities. Some of those communities are very well established. The Lebanese community has been there for the best part of a century. Some of those communities, like the Indian community, are more recent arrivals to our area, but all of those communities are enriching the nature of the Berowra electorate as they enrich Australia generally.

I have particularly enjoyed the friendship of the leadership of the Chinese community for many years and I particularly acknowledge the work of the Chinese Australian Forum, its past presidents Patrick Voon and Tony Pang and its current president, Kendrick Cheah, who will be known to members opposite. Some years ago the Chinese Australian Forum invited me to a discussion about current issues that faced the Chinese community. One of the key issues that they said faced the community is the issue of social isolation of older Chinese Australian
migrants and also of women, particularly stay-at-home mums in communities. This was an issue that was recently drawn again to my attention by Justine Slapp, who runs a tremendous organisation: the Hills District Mums. She has acknowledged the fact that, when children are playing at playgrounds, the Anglo-Australian mums will congregate together, and often the Chinese or Indian grandparents who have responsibility for looking after the children are embarrassed to get involved with and talk to the Anglo-Australian mums because their English is just not high enough quality.

We have had an English-language program for migrants in this country since the 1940s. My family were all here by the 1930s. By 1936 the last part of my family came from Germany. I remember the woman that helped rescue my family and get them out of Germany. I got to know her very well. She told me that she got to learn English by taking the dogs for a walk in the park. If your first language is German, it is actually not that much of a jump to learn English. But, if your first language is one of the Chinese languages—Mandarin or Cantonese—if it is Hindi or one of the other Indian dialects, if it is Arabic, if it is Farsi, if it is many of the other languages that are now spoken by people who have come into Australia in more recent times, it is a much more difficult thing to pick up English. So I think we need to do more to support people whose first language is not English and particularly older people because older people and stay-at-home mums are more likely to be socially isolated. If you have good English, it is a passport to social integration. It is a passport to work opportunities. It is a passport to a better life in Australia generally.

The last census revealed that there are 513,583 people who filled in that census who said that they spoke English not well or not at all. Of those, 253,627 had been in Australia since before 1996. This is an issue that disproportionately affects women: three-fifths of people who responded to the census in that way were women. You have to imagine that that number is under-reported because (a) people would be embarrassed to report that they did not speak good enough English and that, if their English was not good enough, then (b) people would not have been able to adequately fill out the census. In my own constituency the last census revealed that there was something in the order of 3½ thousand people who spoke little or no English. That is why I think it is so important that we have a high-quality Adult Migrant English Program that can help integrate people who have come from a variety of different countries and provide a high-quality Australian experience to people not just in my electorate but right across the country. I think this is a wonderful passport to a great Australian future, to social integration and to better job opportunities. So my question to the minister is: what is the government doing to improve the delivery of services under the Adult Migrant English Program?

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (17:35): Given the high level of interest from government members in using this time to ask questions of their own ministers, I am going to have to squeeze two different portfolio topics into this five minutes, so forgive me if I do some speed talking.

I will begin on early childhood education. These budget papers do something pretty extraordinary: they outline how we can spend an additional $3 billion of taxpayer funds to make hundreds of thousands of Australian children and their families worse off. I know that, despite increasing expenditure of taxpayers money, the government's proposed changes make one-in-three families, that is 330,000 families, worse off. The government's proposed changes
also leave almost half of all families either worse off or no better off—556,000 Australian families—and over 71,000 families within an income below $65,000 per year worse off.

Perhaps what is worse than all of this is the impact that these reforms have been shown to have on some of the most vulnerable children in Australia. By now the parliament should be clear on what all of the evidence makes very clear: the children who benefit the most from access to quality early childhood education services are those in the two years before school or those children who come from dysfunctional families who are particularly vulnerable. What we do know is that, under the Budget Based Funded Program, Indigenous and mobile services will be placed under serious threat as a result of these changes, as a result of what is in this budget.

This is a government that stands and talks about closing the gap, that stands and talks about needing to invest in education, and that claims to know that this is the greatest way that we can increase opportunities so that Australian children today have greater potential and greater opportunities than the parents and grandparents who came before them. At the very same time, we know that under the Budget Based Funded Program the Indigenous and mobile services that are accessed by 20,000 children in mostly rural and remote communities will be put under threat. Many of the services will not be financially viable and will close as a result of the proposals placed in this budget, and as a result of the Australian taxpayers spending an additional $3 billion at the very same time. My question is: why won't the government listen and change their approach on funding these services when the PC has identified that 15,000 more early education places are needed for Indigenous children, not less?

On early childhood education we also know that, as a result of the measures in the government's budget, they have already ended all professional development programs for early childhood educators. A government that regularly stand up and say that they recognise that teachers are the most important part of our education system, when it comes to our schools, are providing absolutely no ongoing professional development for our early childhood educators. Why won't the government support educators to support our children?

With regard to vocational education, there are a number of reforms that the government has announced. When Labor announced a number of policies earlier this year, in May, the government claimed that they would not work. I ask: what is it that made the government change their mind? The government claimed the policies would not work; the government claimed that they were in the wrong direction. The government claimed that capping student loans to stop rip-offs was the wrong approach—though of course they are now trying to adopt it. Labor announced that we would crack down on brokers. We announced that we would link publicly funded courses to industry need and skills shortages, and that we would require providers to reapply under new standards. What is it that made the government change their mind from May this year, when they opposed many of these very same proposals?

And my question with regard to the budget is: obviously there is no funding contained within the budget for the next national partnership; given the reforms that the government have announced, many of them copied at the last minute, quite hypocritically, how is it that they are going to ensure a sustainable future for the vocational education sector of Australia at the same time as, by their own account, they will be saving billions of dollars from that sector if it is not through the national partnership? How much funding will be provided for the national partnership, and when will this national partnership be negotiated and announced?
And will the government ensure that the strong future of TAFE is guaranteed as a result of the upcoming national partnership?

**Ms FLINT** (Boothby) (17:40): I have a question for the minister around early language learning, which I will get to in a moment. Part of the provision in Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2016-2017 covers an innovative learning program, the Early Learning Languages Australia app, otherwise known as the ELLA app. This is part of the government's measures which have been designed to encourage the ongoing learning and teaching of languages in Australian schools.

I am an enthusiastic advocate for the learning of languages in schools and I am proud to be part of the Turnbull Liberal government that is extending the opportunity to learn a different language to preschool students. I started learning German in primary school. In the small country town where I grew up, Kingston SE, we were lucky to have several German teachers who had travelled from Germany to teach us in their native language. I enjoyed German so much that I continued it through high school, studied it in year 12 and went on exchange to Germany. My sister Belinda also enjoyed German and took the same path, although she was far more talented than me and ended up studying German at university as part of her teaching degree. Belinda and her husband, Josh, who is also a teacher, have just returned to Australia after three years living and teaching in Germany. My niece Gwenyth is fluent in German and English, as she attended preschool there. This is an opportunity that most Australian children do not have unless they are lucky, like my niece Gwenyth, to have parents who have jobs that let them travel the world. Australia, as we know, is an isolated nation, relatively speaking, and we have to travel significant distances to other countries to be surrounded by people who speak a different language all day, every day, in every aspect of their day.

I recently spoke with one of my constituents, Natalie, who is a mother of four, who is a very talented Japanese speaker. One of Natalie's children has displayed a similar proficiency for languages, and I hope that this app may assist parents like Natalie and young children who show a talent for languages at a young age. This is why I am encouraged by the ELLA app, aimed at making language learning engaging and interesting for all young children. In 2015 the Australian government provided $9.8 million to trial ELLA in 41 preschool services. The first step was designed to determine the effectiveness of children learning a language through apps without a proficient language teacher. A total of 35 apps, consisting of seven unique apps for each of the five languages, were developed in Arabic, Chinese, Indonesian, French and Japanese. As noted in the opening statement to this consideration in detail, research shows that learning languages develops capabilities that are transferable across a different range of different literacy related areas. This program is also sure to provide a head start towards language study at school. From a very early age, children will become more comfortable with a different language, which then increases their chance to engage in later years of life. The apps engage children in ways suitable for their age, through playing games and singing songs. You can see how engaging this app is when young children are counting, following recipes and singing in a different language they would not otherwise be familiar with.

I will certainly be promoting the ELLA app to childcare centres and preschools in my electorate such as the GoodStart Early Learning centre in Aberfoyle Park, which I had the pleasure of visiting on Saturday. The ELLA app is attractive, because a Deloitte evaluation of...
the program showed that 78 per cent of parents had seen their children using words from the language outside of preschool and around 49 per cent of parents said their children were showing interest in the culture of the language they were learning through the ELLA apps at home. Not only are students benefiting but Deloitte found that the app has helped 70 per cent of educators in the pilot program feel more confident about incorporating language in their lessons.

Following Deloitte’s evaluation of the 2015 program, the trial was extended to nearly 300 preschool services in 2016. This expanded program has been such a success that the budget will expand the program to all preschools as of next year. I look forward to seeing the rollout of this expanded program in my electorate next year and ask the minister to explain the benefits of this program and the plans to expand it.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (17:45): The member for Lalor is pleased to join my colleagues on this consideration in detail. I have a couple of questions for the minister. As someone who worked in the public education sector at the time of the Gonski review and the way it travelled around the country, I was part of that process. We all know in this room that that review determined that what we needed was a sector blind, needs based approach with a student resource standard set for primary school students at $9,271 and for secondary school students at $12,193. We all know that that is where we began this journey. We all know that the notion of it being sector blind was critical to move beyond what I would have termed the ‘education wars’ that had gone on under the Howard government for a decade.

I look at and study the data in the electorate of Lalor. Being in Victoria, with a state Labor government committed to transparency, I can actually access the 2017 projected budgets for every state school in the electorate and have done so. There are 30 mainstream public schools in the electorate of Lalor. In 2017, they will educate 27,000 students. What I found in looking at that data was that not one of those 30 schools has yet reached the student resource standard, neither in the primary sector nor in the secondary sector. Although on the ground you can see, because of this transparency, the variation in the needs based loading that is going into those schools, none of them have yet reached the base at which those loadings were supposed to add.

I have stood here and looked at the budget papers and I have heard the education minister say that education spending goes up and up. My question is quite simple. Without years 5 and 6 of Gonski, exactly when in these budget predictions will that SRS be met in every school for every child in this country as was originally promised?

An opposition member interjecting—

Ms RYAN: And the loadings of course on top of that. Which takes me to the disability sector. I bring a question to the chamber today from a concerned constituent, a family member who works in the disability sector and has done so for many many years. Her question is: is this government committed to continuing to not fund the disability loadings that would see families choose mainstream education for their children while continuing to build specialist schools that may in essence be fabulous schools and wonderful? Are we in a space and is it this government’s intention that they drive parents of students with disability to a special school rather than provide the funding that is required in the mainstream sector to educate those children in a mainstream setting? This is a critical element because we can replicate special schools in particular suburbs but unless we are going to put one in every
neighbourhood then we are discriminating against some sectors of our community who may not live within reach of a special school.

I bear in mind news recently from one of my local special schools, where a student suffering from cerebral palsy who attends this special school was accustomed to being on a bus for a maximum of 40 minutes to and from school as the school picked up students on their way to the special school—obviously highly disabled students with a specifically fitted-out bus and process. That family told me recently of changes that are coming through which mean more students are being required to be taken by that bus. In the first few weeks, their daughter was sitting on the bus for an hour and 20 minutes, rather than 40 minutes, both to and from school. You can imagine that that is going to present all sorts of difficulties for families and for the young people who are involved in that transport. The creation of the funding to ensure that all students with a disability can attend a mainstream school as an option is critical, as it is to ensure that the appropriate funding levels reach our special schools.

The last question I have for the minister is around the retention rates, and around this government's insistence that they continue to raise the amount of money and yet do not calculate increased retention rates into that. We are aiming for a 100 per cent retention rate to year 12; I would think that needs to be in the budget papers.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (17:50): Just to complete the points in relation to the member for Mayo's questions, the primary focus for the government in the youth training area going forwards is through the PaTH program. There are three stages to this program, but overall there are about 120,000 placements to assist young people to gain work, on top of the 500,000 youth jobs that were created in the 18 months prior to the last budget. Stage 1 is about pre-employment skills training, stage 2, as we well know, is internship placement with support for business for 120,000 internships, and stage 3 is the support for wages within employment—again, an absolutely critical step forward.

Let me turn to the member for Griffith's point, primarily about public funding for universities: I will be clear and categorical here that the public funding increases each and every year. To address one of the member's points, I can repeat the words used by the minister that we will not be bringing in full fee deregulation. I have reconfirmed the minister's words, position, and policy framework in anticipation of just this question and reaffirm that to the House with complete confidence. The member asked in particular about the expert panel; the advice is very clear that we will develop the reform proposals, taking account of submissions, with a view to legislating by mid-2017 and implementing reforms from 1 January 2018. That is the work of the expert panel.

In relation to support for the disadvantaged under the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program: as we go forwards, we see that the government has announced it would re-evaluate the HEPPP as part of the 2016-17 budget. The valuation is underway and being conducted by ACIL Allen in consultation with Wallis Consulting, and we expect it to be completed later this year. Obviously, I will not pre-empt the elements of a review which is being undertaken.

With regard to the very moving points made by the member for Berowra, the Adult Migrant English Program is the government's largest English-language program. It provides English-language training to eligible new migrants and humanitarian entrants. Changes have been introduced—as the point was made by the member—to refocus AMEP towards tailored
training. In particular, participants have two streams of training which they will now be entitled to enter. This is within a client’s 510-hour entitlement. Firstly, there is a pre-employment English stream, particularly for many members of the Chinese community that he mentioned—extremely important; and secondly, a social English stream for some of the parents and some of the older members of the community, particularly many women, who are isolated. These are extremely important developments and steps going forward.

The member for Adelaide raised issues in relation to early childhood support. It is very clear: the government’s package here will increase by $3 billion to a total of $40 billion, the funding being made available over the forward estimates. One million families will benefit through this process, in particular, low-income families, as we make sure that the subsidies disappear—believe it or not—for things such as childhood zumba and advanced yoga lessons. If the opposition has a problem with that, I am sorry.

The member for Boothby raised in particular the early learning and languages or ELLA program. I think that her points go straight to the fact that this is an outstanding program. The government is investing an additional $5.9 million so that from 2017 all preschool services can access the ELLA program. I want to thank her and other members, whether as members, or in her case as a candidate, fought for and managed to achieve this very outcome.

Finally, the member for Lalor wanted to raise the issue of expenditure and disability choice. It is very clear that what we see is an increase each and every year in relation to government expenditure within the education sector. She asks the question which I am delighted to complete and finish: are we committed to choice for families with disabilities? That is a fundamental precept of what we are looking at. Whether it is within mainstream schools or specialist schools, it is ultimately about giving the family the choice.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (17:55): As I used to say to witnesses, it would be useful if you would answer the question that is actually asked, not the question that you think is being asked. I would like to follow up with some additional questions. I appreciate that the minister said that he would not pre-empt the HEPPP review outcomes; however, the budget has pre-empted the HEPPP review outcomes by budgeting for a $152 million cut to that program, so I ask again: what does the government intend to do in relation to that program; and how will the government's cuts to the equity program affect participation and enrolment by students from low-socioeconomic status backgrounds, Indigenous students and students from regional and remote areas?

Secondly, I ask the minister to commit to ensuring that the legislation for the government’s package would be tabled not later than the autumn sittings and I explained the reason for that so prospective students in universities could prepare. The minister answered that the expert panel would report by mid-2017, but of course the expert panel is not the parliament. The government has to get their package through the House of Representatives and through the Senate before university students and prospective students can rely upon it. Look at this government’s woeful track record when it comes to higher education changes since they were elected in September 2013. Look at the catastrophic 2014 federal budget that introduced the idea of the $100,000 degrees through fee deregulation that introduced the 20 per cent cut to Commonwealth grants scheme—the 20 per cent cut, that is, to public funding.

If you look at the comprehensive failure of this government to be able to prosecute its case for those changes, you will know that it is not sufficient for the government to tell us when to
expect a package to be published. We need to know when it is going to get into the parliament so we can know when the public are going to have an opportunity to have a real say through the representative democracy in this country. That is why it is important for us to know when we can expect the package to be tabled. I do not think there is a person in this country who would say that this government can be relied upon to bring forth a legislative package for higher education changes that could be acceptable to the Australian people through the Australian parliament.

It is almost laughable, given the ridiculous nature of their attempts at higher education changes, to wander into government and say 'What we're going to do everyone—have we got a deal for you. We're going to completely deregulate fees so that people will have a lifetime of debt so that it is possible to have a $100,000-degree.' And guess what? If you happen to go into a lower-paid occupation at the end of your degree and you happen to go and work for a community legal centre instead of a top-tier law firm, then the debts are going to last longer, because not only will it take you longer to pay it off; you will also have the indexation, which will mean you will pay more for the same degree. There was the ridiculousness of that idea that they floated and then, on top of that, they really put the pressure on the university sector to accept this terrible idea to say, 'We're going to give you a cut of 20 per cent to your Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding.' Saying that we are going to cut public funding to universities at the same time as we are insisting on this full fee deregulation is utterly ridiculous. This is an act of economic vandalism to undermine higher education in this country, which the minister well knows. He well knows of the importance to domestic students of having the opportunity to get a fantastic higher education and he also knows the importance of higher education as an export market.

Higher education and international tourism have a symbiotic relationship. Those two sectors combined have an export value almost equal to the export value of iron ore. That is how important those two sectors are to our community and to our economy. It is extremely reckless to think about cutting public funding and therefore making it harder for our universities to remain internationally competitive at a time when Asian universities are beginning to improve their quality, are beginning to really step up the sort of money that goes into higher education in their countries—at a time when our economy needs to diversify.

Everyone in this room and in this parliament knows about the importance of diversifying our economy. We all know about the fact that investment is dropping off in resources. Of course it is; the big projects have largely been built. We are transitioning in our resources to having still a lot of strength, of course, in our resources exports, but needing to diversify our economy and needing to diversify our exports. That means supporting higher education and supporting international tourism. As I said, they are symbiotic. Students come to this country. They learn. They then bring back family members and friends once they find out how fantastic we are.

Finally, I would like to know why there are cuts to the equity program. What are the consequences going to be? What is the basis on which the $2 billion worth of savings for scrapping fee deregulation has been calculated? (Time expired)

Mr LEESER (Berowra) (18:01): The people of Berowra have a range of different educational outcomes. There are 16,339 people in my constituency that have certificate-level qualifications, 11,748 that have advanced diploma or diploma-level qualifications, 7,481
people working in technical areas or in trades and 1,731 machinery operators or drivers. The Hornsby TAFE has been educating people in technical and vocational skills for generations, and there have been a range of different private providers that have also been educating people across Sydney in this space. Many of the most successful small business people in my electorate have vocational qualifications and have made good lives out of the high-standard qualifications that they have got over the years. However, in recent years the whole vocational education sector changed, and it changed because of the lack of regulation and the poorly introduced program that the former Labor government brought about. It was a poorly designed, poorly regulated VET FEE-HELP program that has opened the door to rotters, to fly-by-night merchants, to people whose rules are Rafferty's rules—people who are looking to turn a quick buck who are not interested in education, who are not committed to students, who are not committed to the vocational education sector. Students were left without qualification, but they were left with big debts.

We heard from the member for Griffith about concerns about student debts. I am particularly concerned about the students who have undertaken vocational education courses who have no qualification because the completion rates are so inadequate but have very large debts because of Labor's inadequate regulation and poorly introduced VET FEE-HELP scheme. As always, it is the coalition that has to clean up this mess. In 2015 the coalition made a number of changes to the way the scheme was administered, including banning inducements. We know lots about the activities of recruiters in this area. There are stricter requirements on marketing and brokers. They removed barriers to withdrawals. They also introduced provisions to include a freeze on total loan limits at 2015 levels. The ACCC has been taking action against unscrupulous providers in this area—providers who have been able to operate, providers who have been able to charge fees that are well out of whack with what state education authorities have suggested, because of the poor and inadequate regulation bequeathed to us by the previous Labor government.

To give a sense of this, for instance, the Redesigning VET FEE-HELP: discussion paper looked at the New South Wales Smart and Skilled prices for VET FEE-HELP tuition and compared it to average tuition fee per full-time vocational student. In, say, a diploma of marketing, the New South Wales Smart and Skilled qualification price was $5,800, but the diploma of marketing in the average tuition per full-time student was $28,596. This is evidence of people looking to turn a quick buck rather than to actually focus on quality vocational education outcomes.

The completion rates are terrible in this space. Completion rates are in the low 20s. Because Labor completely failed to put in place adequate regulations, because they completely failed to look at this vocational education sector properly, what has essentially happened is that the most disadvantaged people—Indigenous people, people with disabilities—have been preyed upon by people in this space. It is why it is important that something is done in this space. It is why my question today to the minister is: what is the Turnbull government doing to fix the VET FEE-HELP loan scheme mess that the coalition inherited?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (18:05): I understand that the Education and Training portfolio has, because of the interest of the chamber, eaten into the time of the Industry, Innovation and Science portfolio. I am aware
that the relevant minister for the Education and Training portfolio is in the House. Out of respect for that minister, I am happy to take all further questions that have been laid on the table before the chamber by the member for Griffith and the member for Berowra and put them on notice to have them answered. That will allow us to move expeditiously to Industry, Innovation and Science.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

**Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio**

Proposed expenditure, $1,244,888,000

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science) (18:06): It gives me great pleasure to support this appropriation. The Industry, Innovation and Science portfolio is fundamentally about the jobs of today, the jobs of tomorrow and the jobs of the future. Although there is not a perfect identity between the three pillars of the portfolio—being industry, innovation and science—the fundamental relationship can be based on and viewed through the prism of those three elements.

I think it is very important to make the point, as I have repeatedly since coming into the portfolio, that innovation is absolutely about new firms and start-up firms. A quick analysis we did today shows I have had the fortune to meet with more than 100 different firms, industry organisations, players and critical funders within the sector since coming into the portfolio, including universities and those who are supporting venture capital operations.

It is also about jobs in existing firms such as Dulux, a 100-year-old Australian paint manufacturer which has reinvented itself and tripled its share price in the process by using R&D, by using innovation. It is also about firms such as BlueScope, which have redeveloped fundamental products such as ZINCALUME and COLORBOND. When I visited the BlueScope plant at Port Kembla, the workers explained to me the way in which they had been engaged in innovation and the way in which R&D had directly assisted in the process of creating a thinner coating which was more effective and gave greater properties to ZINCALUME and COLORBOND and, in the process, had improved their product identity, their product quality and, therefore, their sales. This was a classic case of innovation in existing firms being at the heart of the workers being able to maintain their job security. It was a really interesting example. Having BlueScope in my own electorate was a very important insight.

The overarching perspective that I want to give is that this portfolio views its critical terms through looking at the macro-economic, the micro-economic and the innovation and science agenda. Firstly, we know the macro-economic task before the country: bringing the budget back into surplus and assisting us to make our firms more competitive through an internationally competitive corporate tax rate. Secondly, it is about, as we see now, ensuring that there is safety and security in the workplace and that the Australian Building and Construction Commission and the registered organisations bills are about removing intimidation and allowing our businesses to flourish. And thirdly, it is about ensuring that the free trade agreements which we have established—and then others such as with Indonesia, the Middle East, Europe, India and the UK—give our businesses more and further opportunities going forward.
The microeconomic reform squarely sits within the Industry, Innovation and Science portfolio. In particular, we have the six growth centres and a $250 million budget over the forward estimates for that. One of those, in terms of the advanced manufacturing, has a critical role within the Geelong and broader area around Deakin University—and is supported by, and driven by, the member for Corangamite, I have to say, who is a fearless advocate for advanced manufacturing in the growth centre.

Then we have $400 million for the Entrepreneurs' Program—more than $400 million, in fact; it is up to $450 million—which is assisting commercialisation, and over $650 million for the 31 cooperative research centres, which are really treasured national institutions. Going forward, we know the first wave of the Innovation and Science Agenda is underway through the critical science infrastructure such as the Synchrotron, the Square Kilometre Array and the national quantum computing program at UNSW; through the support for young people to come into science with over $100 million of funding for science, technology, engineering and maths and, in particular, is focused on women and the support for new investment.

The second and third waves of the innovation agenda are to be delivered in 2017 and 2018 respectively. They will be about investment and additional public support for critical science infrastructure, and then about our National Business Simplification Initiative as part of the third wave, twinned with support for the great growth of university precincts. That is the agenda going forward.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (18:11): That was an interesting performance. I noticed the minister touched on the ABCC bills, which was one of the last things I expected to hear really. You would have thought the minister might have talked about the catastrophe that is going on in the Australian car industry, which was one of the big contributors to research and development and a big employer of Australians—some 50,000 Australians, many of them in Victoria, of course—

Mr Hunt interjecting—

Mr CHAMPION: as the honourable member interjects. But the minister did not talk about that industry, because this government has presided over a catastrophe. It is interesting—I remember the headline very well: ‘Hockey dares GM to leave’. I remember that day very well and I remember only about a week ago when the particular section of the line at GMH Elizabeth that manufactured the Cruze—Australia's small car—stopped. There will be no more Cruzes off the line. These are all things that worry Australian workers; these are all things that worry Australian industry. And we worry that the government is in denial. I notice the minister made a speech in the Spencer Gulf, I think, recently where he set out his views. I did read it.

Mr Hunt interjecting—

Mr CHAMPION: We might talk about some of that later on. I find it interesting. He says: As the car sector shows, government grants will not help a business to survive in the long run if it is not competitive.

It is interesting that he talks about competitive forces. I do wonder what role he thinks the Australian dollar played in the demise of the Australian car industry, which was one of the factors that Holden talked about when they announced the closure of the factory.
It would be interesting to know what the government's view is on the movements of the Australian dollar and whether assistance should be given to ride out those conditions or whether he thinks that the cabinet should have considered them in the light that the dollar, when they made the decision not to provide any further assistance to GMH, was about $1.08 and today it is 70-something cents. That is a big difference in the competitiveness of our industries. I can tell you that if we had had a billion dollars worth of investment in the Australian car industry—if the government had facilitated that—we would have currently been exporting our heads off. We are already exporting cars to the United States, but there would have been many, many more exports were the government to have backed GMH in.

From a philosophical point of view, I would be interested to hear the minister's position on that.

I would also be interested to hear if the minister's department or if the government had actually got any estimates of the cost to the whole of government—including income taxes, social security costs, retraining costs—on the closure of the car industry. Has his department done that or thought about that? Has the cabinet done that or thought about that? There seems to be a contribution to the Growth Fund—I think that is what they are calling it—and they are claiming it is $155 million, even though it also includes money from GM Holden and state governments in the figure. I would be interested to know if his department has looked at any of those costs, what those costs might be and, in particular, what the employment options are for employees in that industry. How are the retraining packages going? Are any of those employees being employed in any of the next gen manufacturing opportunities that are coming up from the grants? They would all be interesting answers to hear, to see if the government actually knows what is going on.

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (18:16): It is my great pleasure to rise in this debate and to put some questions to the minister in relation to what I consider is very significant support, particularly in advanced manufacturing. The member for Wakefield, as he is prone to do, has attempted to rewrite history in relation to the car industry. He has clearly forgotten that in my great city of Geelong it was under the Gillard government in May 2013 that Ford announced it was closing and ending manufacturing in Australia. After 91 years of manufacturing almost half a million vehicles in Geelong, it has been a very emotional time for Ford employees and suppliers, their families and the broader Geelong community. I do want to pay tribute to the incredible contribution that the Ford Motor Company and its workforce have made to our community.

But it is important to reiterate that while this is the end of a manufacturing era, it is not the end of manufacturing for Ford in Geelong. The member for Wakefield has been very misleading in the comments he has made about our car industry. Ford will continue to play a very important role in our community, employing more than 500 people—at the moment it is about 650 people—in the Geelong region at its research and development centre and also at the Lara proving ground. The RDC and the proving ground in Geelong are one of only four global centres of design, innovation, engineering and testing. The RDC and the workforce of Ford employees are working to design and engineer and test Ford cars for the global Ford market, so it is an absolutely wonderful credit to Ford that they are continuing to make this important investment in our region. It was a great pleasure to visit, with the minister, that Lara proving ground recently and to look at the multimillion dollar investment
that Ford is making in that particular area. It is also a great pleasure to reflect on the very important investment we are continuing to make in advanced manufacturing, which is supporting not just the auto market but also advanced manufacturing across the board.

The member for Wakefield mentioned our Growth Fund, and what an amazing fund of $105 million that is. If you have a look at the election commitment that the Labor Party made in the lead-up to the election, it was giving a paltry $7 million—$7 million—for manufacturing in the Geelong region. It was an absolute embarrassment! Our government have not only committed $155 million in total, with $105 million of that coming directly from the Commonwealth, but we also have a number of very important programs under that fund. We delivered the Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund as well as the Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre. And, as part of the Growth Fund, we delivered some other very important programs: the Next Generation Manufacturing Investment Program and Automotive Diversification Program. And that program is actually helping wonderful local manufacturers like Backwell-IXL export in excess of $1 million of Ford components. They are doing that for components for the Ford Everest and the Ford Ranger, and those parts are going to Thailand, China, South Africa and Argentina.

Let us consider how we are focused on building our auto manufacturing sector into the future and have a look at Carbon Revolution. It is a company that we should all be celebrating. Clearly it is a company that maybe the member for Wakefield has not heard about. With the support of $5 million through the Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund, it has become a global leader in the manufacture of carbon fibre wheels for the likes of Ford's Shelby, Mustang, GT 350 in the United States, and it is an incredible example of local manufacturing success.

With great pride under difficult circumstances, we are working very hard to support advanced manufacturing. I am keen to ask the minister to outline further ways in which the Turnbull government is investing in our manufacturing and advanced manufacturing sectors with a focus on creating jobs, building a strong economy, including in my electorate of Corangamite and in the broader Geelong region.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (18:21): I just have a few more questions on cars before we move onto other subjects. I would be interested to know what the minister considers to be the future of the automotive industry in Australia, I really would. He has not said terribly been much about it. We know the honourable member clings to her carbon fibre wheels at every chance. We could barely miss it.

A government member interjecting—

Mr CHAMPION: I am just saying. You are the one who brought it up with me. I would like to know, for all those blue-collar employees out there who are in the process of losing their jobs, what does the minister see as their future in that automotive industry, if any? Could the minister please outline: are there markets for after-market vehicles that he would consider giving support to? And also has he received any representations from state government industry groups or any other organisation or business regarding the adequacy of the growth fund?

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (18:22): This is an opportunity to ask some valuable questions of the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, particularly around collaborations that
are developing between our tertiary education sector and industry. There has been a lot of publicity around the global ranking showing that Australia is not high on industry-tertiary education collaboration. Whether that methodology is absolutely watertight or not, we know that countries like the UK rank very highly in that area. We know that that translational work that starts with workplace integrated earning is vital so that the great work being done in our world-class universities actually translates into the commercial sector.

We know how the economic growth that keeps people in jobs is utterly reliant on the work that you are doing, Minister Hunt, and your portfolio. You have got the car keys, effectively the economic engine in your control as well as the front two rows. So asking these questions is pretty critical about where we will be in maybe 10 or 20 years' time.

We have antecedents coming through the education system and we are asking questions about why young women are dropping STEM related subjects of maths and physics. I know both sides of the chamber would be most concerned about young women dropping science as they go from primary to high school. We have high schools that have just a handful of students doing advanced maths C in grade 12, so few students in some of our state high schools that they cannot even employ a teacher to teach it. We are going to see the demise of math for a whole range of reasons but mostly it is the laissez-faire approach, where students can pick what they feel like doing regardless of workplace signals that are often generations down the track. The decisions that are made by students in subject choice do not reflect the workplaces they going into. They do not have absolutely perfect and symmetric knowledge in this respect.

You do not have to go much further, Minister, and you have the teaching faculties around Australia playing absolutely no active role in ensuring that teaching graduates take up STEM related courses and get a major in maths. In Queensland, we have a plethora of 16,000 proud primary school education graduates without a job, and we are producing more. At the same time, we can barely find teachers with a maths major.

That presents a problem that is often not observed by us in this place—that is, the misallocation of maths teaching resources. You will see general statistics saying that about 30 per cent of our children with maths teachers in secondary schools do not have a teacher who has a maths major. There are a whole host of reasons around that, but I will tell you where most of the qualified maths teachers are. They are more likely to get a job in the city, where they want to be, and they are mostly teaching higher SES high schools, low-fee independent schools and private schools. That is where the maths teachers are. They are mostly teaching students who are going on to do professional degrees and who are not going to use their maths very much—people like many of us here. But out in regional Australia—this is the engine room—you are flat out finding those maths teachers, and you move to these perilous statistics that around half of these students do not have a maths teacher teaching them maths. If you come from a regional area of Australia, the proportion of your teachers trained in maths should be of great concern to you.

Minister, you will know that we have plenty of health and physical education teachers—we are not short on those; we have a generation worth of HPE teachers—but the issue here is that you just study what you feel like in your first year of university. When you are busy working your way through your first year of drinking, you are also deciding what area of teaching you are going to go into. There is no driving of these young students into subject areas. There are
inadequate rewards for them to go into the areas of STEM. They are hard. These areas have atrophied down to vestigial levels even before those students get to university, and we are paying the price.

How are we paying the price? We just need to look at PISA. We are producing one-third as many students in the top quartile on PISA as the five best education systems in the world and we are producing twice as many in the bottom quintile. We are producing twice as many who are going to struggle and become social and economic issues and a third the number of geniuses in the top quartile—the people who are meant to be driving this fabulous ideas based economy. If you are worried about ideas, creativity and problem solving, I do not really care what you study, but I need to know, Minister, that those degrees absolutely maximise the human capital of Australian students.

At the moment my concern would be whether industry itself feels that it is getting the antecedents that it needs, and the clear message that I am getting is that it is not. Is workplace integrated learning adequately provided for from the industry side of things? Universities talk about long- and short-term placements being few and far between once you move outside of some areas like engineering—they are certainly low in most other STEM-related areas. We have physics departments that are citadels unto themselves. We have STEM that is not being translated across university sectors, and then, ultimately, we have an industry that feels that—despite these fabulous CRCs, with billions of dollars invested—it has no real chance of developing a link with the tertiary education sector.

*A division having been called in the House of Representatives—*

Sitting suspended from 18:28 to 19:49.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:49