INTERNET
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the Senate and committee hearings are available at

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SITTING DAYS—2013

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

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

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

Senate Office holders
President—Senator Hon. John Joseph Hogg
Deputy President and Chair of Committees—Senator Stephen Parry
Temporary Chairs of Committees—Senators Cory Bernardi, Thomas Mark Bishop,
Suzanne Kay Boyce, Sean Edwards, David Julian Fawcett, Mark Lionel Furner,
Alexander McEachian Gallacher, Scott Ludlam, Gavin Mark Marshall,
Anne Sowerby Ruston, Dean Anthony Smith, Ursula Mary Stephens, Glenn Sterle and
Peter Stuart Whish-Wilson

Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. Eric Abetz
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. George Henry Brandis QC
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator Hon. Penny Wong
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy
Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator Hon. Mitchell Peter Fifield
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator Claire Moore

Senate Party Leaders and Whips
Leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate—Senator Hon. Eric Abetz
Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate—Senator Hon. George Henry Brandis QC
Leader of The Nationals in the Senate—Senator Hon. Nigel Scullion
Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate—Senator Hon. Fiona Nash
Leader of the Australian Labor Party—Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party—Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy
Leader of the Australian Greens—Senator Christine Anne Milne
Chief Government Whip—Senator Helen Kroger
Deputy Government Whips—Senators Christopher John Back and David Christopher Bushby
Chief Opposition Whip—Senator Anne McEwen
Deputy Opposition Whips—Senators Catryna Louise Bilyk and Anne Elizabeth Urquhart
Australian Greens Whip—Senator Rachel Siewert

Printed by authority of the Senate
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<th>Senator</th>
<th>State or Territory</th>
<th>Term expires</th>
<th>Party</th>
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Pursuant to section 42 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, the terms of service of the following senators representing the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory expire at the close of the day immediately before the polling day for the next general election of members of the House of Representatives.

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<td>CLP</td>
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</table>

(1) Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice H. Coonan, resigned 22.8.11), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

(2) Chosen by the Parliament of Western Australia to fill a casual vacancy (vice J. Adams, died in office 31.3.12), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

(3) Chosen by the Parliament of Tasmania to fill a casual vacancy (vice Hon. N. Sherry, resigned 1.6.12), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

(4) Chosen by the Parliament of Tasmania to fill a casual vacancy (vice Hon. B. Brown, resigned 15.6.12), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

(5) Chosen by the Parliament of South Australia to fill a casual vacancy (vice M. J. Fisher, resigned 15.8.12), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

(6) Chosen by the Parliament of Western Australia to fill a casual vacancy (vice C. Evans, resigned 12.4.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

(7) Casual vacancy to be filled (vice B. Joyce, resigned 8.8.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

(8) Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice M. Thistlethwaite, resigned 9.8.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

(9) Chosen by the Parliament of Victoria to fill a casual vacancy (vice D. Feeney, resigned 12.8.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

(10) Casual vacancy to be filled (vice R. Carr, resigned 24.10.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**


**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

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

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<tr>
<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Tony Abbott MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Brett Mason</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>The Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>The Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
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<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
<td>The Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
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<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Communications</strong></td>
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<td>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon David Johnston</td>
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<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of</em></td>
<td><em>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ANZAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</em></td>
<td><em>The Hon Darren Chester MP</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Environment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment</em></td>
<td><em>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</em></td>
<td><em>The Hon Michael McCormack MP</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Shadow Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Science</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Small Business</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</strong></td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
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<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Defence</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Gai Brodtmann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</strong></td>
<td>Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Stephen Jones MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for External Territories</strong></td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Competition</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Ed Husic MP</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water</strong></td>
<td>Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Climate</strong></td>
<td>Senator Louise Pratt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change and Water</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Vocational Education</td>
<td>Hon Sharon Bird MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Manufacturing</strong></td>
<td>Tony Zappia MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td>Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

136
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Shadow Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney General</td>
<td>Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
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<td>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Justice</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Lisa Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Education</td>
<td>Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Resources</td>
<td>Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Northern Australia</td>
<td>Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Health</td>
<td>Hon Catherine King MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Hon Melissa Parke MP</td>
</tr>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>Senator Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Sport</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health</td>
<td>Hon Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families and Payments</td>
<td>Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Disability Reform</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Doug Cameron</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jan McLucas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Carers</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Payments</td>
<td>Senator Carol Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Hon Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Shayne Neumann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Aged Care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
<td>Hon Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Services</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CONTENTS

**WEDNESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2013**

### Chamber

**BUSINESS—**
- Days and Hours of Meeting ................................................................. 131
- Senate Temporary Orders ............................................................... 131
- Rearrangement ............................................................................. 131

**COMMITTEES—**
- Allocation of Departments and Agencies ........................................ 131

**BUDGET—**
- Consideration by Estimates Committees ........................................... 132
- Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements ........................................ 133

**GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH—**
- Address-in-Reply ........................................................................... 133

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST—**
- Parliament ......................................................................................... 177
- Tasmania: Genetically Modified Crops ............................................. 180
- Science .............................................................................................. 183
- Defence: Commemorations ............................................................... 186
- Blue Mountains Bushfires ................................................................. 189

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—**
- Superannuation ................................................................................ 192

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS—** ......................................................... 194

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—**
- Economy .......................................................................................... 194
- National Commission of Audit ....................................................... 196
- Climate Change ................................................................................ 197
- Carbon Pricing ............................................................................... 199
- Budget .............................................................................................. 200
- Syria .................................................................................................. 202
- Environment: Waubra Wind Farm ................................................. 204
- Automotive Industry ....................................................................... 205
- Medical Workforce ......................................................................... 206
- Asylum Seekers ............................................................................. 208

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS—**
- Superannuation ................................................................................ 210
- National Commission of Audit ....................................................... 210
- Climate Change ................................................................................ 215

**BUSINESS—**
- Consideration of Legislation ............................................................ 217

**NOTICES—**
- Presentation ..................................................................................... 217
- Postponement .................................................................................. 223

**BILLS—**
- Australian Capital Territory Water Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2013—
  - First Reading .............................................................................. 224
  - Second Reading .......................................................................... 224
Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2013—
First Reading ................................................................. 225
Second Reading ................................................................ 226
DOCUMENTS—
Reserve Bank of Australia—
Order for the Production of Documents ................................... 226
BILLS—
National Integrity Commission Bill 2013—
First Reading ...................................................................... 227
Second Reading ................................................................ 227
DOCUMENTS—
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 5th Assessment Report—
Order for the Production of Documents ................................... 228
MOTIONS—
International Day of the Girl Child ...................................... 228
World Sight Day .................................................................... 229
COMMITTEES—
Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee ........................................ 229
BUSINESS—
Consideration of Legislation .................................................. 230
BILLS—
Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Amendment Bill 2013—
First Reading ...................................................................... 230
Second Reading ................................................................ 230
Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013—
First Reading ...................................................................... 231
Second Reading ................................................................ 231
MOTIONS—
World Sight Day .................................................................... 233
Wheat Exports ........................................................................ 234
Great Barrier Reef ................................................................... 235
MATTERS OF URGENCY—
Australian Automotive Industry .............................................. 237
FIRST SPEECH ................................................................... 248
FIRST SPEECH ................................................................ 253
MATTERS OF URGENCY—
Australian Automotive Industry .............................................. 258
DOCUMENTS—
Tabling .............................................................................. 261
COMMITTEES—
Membership ........................................................................ 262
Environment and Communications References Committee—
Reference .............................................................................. 265
Environment and Communications References Committee—
Reference .............................................................................. 271
BILLS—
Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Amendment Bill 2013—
Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013—
Explanatory Memorandum ................................................................. 274

DOCUMENTS—
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs ........ 274

DOCUMENTS—
Consideration ...................................................................................... 275

ADJOURNMENT—
Remembrance Day .............................................................................. 282
Female Orphan School Building .......................................................... 283
Federal Election .................................................................................. 285
Climate Change .................................................................................. 285
Cardwell and Mission Beach Reconstruction ........................................... 287

DOCUMENTS—
Tabling ................................................................................................ 289
Tabling ................................................................................................ 290

Departmental and Agency Appointments—
Tabling ................................................................................................ 291

CONTENTS—continued
The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. John Hogg) took the chair at 9:30, read prayers and made an acknowledgement of country.

The PRESIDENT (09:31): Before I call the Clerk, I note the presence in the President's gallery of senators elect. Welcome to the Senate. We look forward to you taking office from 1 July next year.

BUSINESS

Days and Hours of Meeting

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (09:32): I move:

That the days of meeting of the Senate for 2013 be as follows:

Spring sittings:
- Tuesday, 12 November to Thursday, 14 November
- Monday, 2 December to Thursday, 5 December
- Monday, 9 December to Thursday, 12 December.

Question agreed to.

Senate Temporary Orders

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (09:32): I move:

That the temporary order of the Senate relating to modified rules for question time, which applied until 30 June 2013, be adopted to operate as a temporary order until 30 June 2014.

Question agreed to.

Rearrangement

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (09:32): I move:

That consideration of the business before the Senate on the following days be interrupted at approximately 5 pm, but not so as to interrupt a senator speaking, to enable senators to make their first speeches without any question before the chair, as follows:

(a) Wednesday, 13 November 2013—Senators Seselja and Peris; and
(b) Wednesday, 11 December 2013—Senators Tillem and Dastyari.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Allocation of Departments and Agencies

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (09:32): I move:

(1) That standing order 25(1) be amended as follows:

Omit 'Education, Employment and Workplace Relations’
Substitute ‘Education and Employment’.
(2) That departments and agencies be allocated to legislative and general purpose standing committees as follows:

- Community Affairs
  - Health
  - Social Services, including Human Services
- Economics
  - Industry
  - Treasury
- Education and Employment
  - Education
  - Employment
- Environment and Communications
  - Communications
  - Environment
- Finance and Public Administration
  - Finance
  - Parliament
  - Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
  - Defence, including Veterans’ Affairs
  - Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Legal and Constitutional Affairs
  - Attorney-General
  - Immigration and Border Protection
- Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
  - Agriculture
  - Infrastructure and Regional Development.

Question agreed to.

**BUDGET**

**Consideration by Estimates Committees**

*Senator FIFIELD* (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (09:32): I move:

(1) That the 2013-14 supplementary Budget estimates hearings be scheduled as follows:

- Monday, 18 November and Tuesday, 19 November 2013 (*supplementary hearings—Group A*)
- Wednesday, 20 November and Thursday, 21 November 2013 (*supplementary hearings—Group B*).

(2) That the committees consider the proposed expenditure in accordance with the allocation of departments and agencies to committees agreed to by the Senate.
(3) That pursuant to the order of the Senate of 26 August 2008, cross portfolio estimates hearings on Indigenous matters be scheduled for Friday, 22 November 2013.

(4) That committees meet in the following groups:

**Group A:**
- Environment and Communications
- Finance and Public Administration
- Legal and Constitutional Affairs
- Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

**Group B:**
- Community Affairs
- Economics
- Education and Employment
- Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade.

Question agreed to.

**Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements**

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (09:32): I move:

That notice of matters in accordance with standing order 26(10), for the 2013-14 Supplementary Budget estimates hearings scheduled for Group A be lodged no later than by the close of business on Thursday, 14 November 2013.

Question agreed to.

**GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH**

**Address-in-Reply**

Senator RUSTON (South Australia) (09:32): I move:

That the following address—in–reply be agreed to:

To Her Excellency the Governor–General

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY—

We, the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia in Parliament assembled, desire to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the speech which you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

It is an honour and a privilege to move the address-in-reply to Her Excellency the Governor-General's speech yesterday to the 44th Parliament. I echo Her Excellency's sentiments on the endurance of our democracy, founded on the principles of freedom in which the people who govern do so at the behest of those who give their consent to be governed.

This day marks the return of a majority government to the Australian parliament. It marks an end to the dysfunction, vitriol and divisiveness of the last three years. What Australians expect from those gathered in this place is a return to the stability of a government with a clear mandate to represent the aspirations and wishes of the people of Australia.
Stability does not mean stagnation; it does not mean Australians will not embrace meaningful change for the good of their nation; it does not mean we do not vigorously debate the issues. What stability means is the provision of an environment which gives Australians the confidence to propose, debate and implement change peacefully and democratically. That is what Australians look forward to from the 44th Parliament. This majority government has been given an emphatic mandate to deliver meaningful change. It is time for government to get out of the way and let Australians get on with their lives and their business. This is a priority commitment of an Abbott coalition government. This commitment is demonstrated in the words of Australia's longest-serving Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies:

This is a wonderful country. It’s going to be more wonderful still, but it will achieve greater wonders on the hard work and efforts of its people and not by a spirit of dependency, not on the kind of attitude towards governments and what governments ought to do that our opponents find so easy.

I say it often in this place and I will say it again: governments should only do what individuals and the private sector won't do, can't do and shouldn't do. We are committed to the principles of small government.

We will repeal legislation which increases the costs of living and the costs of doing business. We cannot expect Australian businesses to profit and to create jobs by controlling every aspect of their operations. We cannot expect Australian businesses to be competitive by nullifying their inherent comparative advantages with increasing costs and time spent complying with thousands and thousands of regulations; nor can we expect investors, both foreign and domestic, to inject the much-needed capital into our economy by scaring them away with excessive costs of regulation.

In this parliament we will dedicate entire sitting days to winding back the legislative and regulatory burdens which shackle our economy and threaten our prosperity. Our commitment is to reduce red and green tape by the equivalent of a billion dollars every year. As a priority we will introduce today legislation to repeal the carbon tax.

In 2010, Australians installed a government they were told would not introduce a carbon tax. This year Australians installed a government that is committed to repealing it. The responsibility of this government and those opposite is to acknowledge the Australian people's rejection of the carbon tax. Rejection of the carbon tax is not a rejection of the facts of global warming and the contribution of human activity to it. Australians overwhelmingly accept the science; as does this government, which is committed to a five per cent reduction in emissions by 2020. We will take direct action with an emissions reduction fund which will allocate funds to emissions reduction projects wholly within Australia. We will not spend a cent on foreign carbon credits. Our aim is to meet our national target by not forcing businesses to reduce emissions through the imposition of a tax which damages the economy and raises the cost of living but empowering and enabling businesses through incentive to contribute to the good of Australia and the global community. The Abbott government will also move to abolish the minerals resource rent tax, a massive impediment to the investment in one of Australia's most important sectors, the mining sector.

Our commitment to small government also means a commitment to efficient and responsible government. Governments should not be a jobs program. It should not be an endless parade of committees and councils, agencies and authorities, convened and established at a whim, creating yet more layers of stifling bureaucracy and interference in
Australian life. The Abbott government has already started the process of making government more efficient in this respect, winding up bodies whose activities are better and more efficiently handled within existing government departments.

Most importantly, this government will work to get public spending under control. Our aim is to return to sustainable budget surpluses in a responsible manner as soon as possible and to pay down Australia's record debt. This debt has been costing the Australian taxpayer more than $7 billion in interest payments alone every year—funds that would be far better spent on critical public services and infrastructure.

We aim to get spending under control through a number of means: reduction of duplication and overlap between different levels of government; allowing natural attrition to reduce the burden of the Commonwealth Public Service payroll; refocusing the public service towards better provision of effective front-line services; and ensuring value-for-money government programs.

We have established the National Audit Commission headed by Mr Tony Shepherd, the president of the Business Council of Australia, to identify savings which must be made to reverse Australia's budget crisis. The escalating budget deficits and national debt have been a massive and completely unnecessary drag on the economy which the Abbott government will address as a priority.

The development of a strong, productive and diverse economy will indeed be the driving force behind the Abbott government's policies. A healthy economy is fundamental to achieving every national goal: a high standard of living, job creation, quality health and education, and competitive industries and modern infrastructure that will meet the needs of the 21st century. Building a stronger economy also requires building infrastructure that makes it productive.

The Abbott government is committed to completing the National Broadband Network more quickly than the previous model at a cost that is lower to taxpayers and more affordable to consumers. Every household and business will have access to the NBN by the end of 2016. We will give greater priority to areas, particularly in rural and regional Australia, where existing services are basically inadequate. Most importantly, we will not raise the expectations of Australians about the NBN and then fail to live up to them. We will be upfront and transparent about the progress of the NBN rollout and deliver the network Australia needs at a price Australians can afford.

The Abbott government is also committed to building the roads of the 21st century. Her Excellency the Governor-General highlighted some of the major projects to which we are committed. I take this opportunity to welcome the Prime Minister's commitment to address the critical bottleneck on Adelaide's South Road.

The section of road between Darlington and Sturt Road, which includes the Southern Expressway intersection, has been a major traffic choke point for decades. Motorists from the Adelaide's southern suburbs will welcome the relief this project will bring. It will be part of a long-term plan to upgrade the entire north-south corridor in Adelaide with the ultimate aim of creating a nonstop flow of domestic and freight traffic right through the heart of South Australia's capital city. The Abbott government is keen to see this project through to fruition.
A healthy economy is also one in which government interference and regulation is minimal. Since the foundation of this country, the free market has been the most efficient and effective mechanism for regulating the economy, while government has always been the most inefficient and ineffective. Boosting productivity will be the key to building a stronger economy, and we aim to do this in a number of ways: we will encourage more people into the workforce by providing incentives to employers to hire young people and seniors; by introducing a genuine and inclusive paid parental leave scheme; by introducing a job commitment bonus for people who get themselves off welfare; by introducing a job seekers relocation bonus for young people prepared to move to take a job; by supporting more opportunities for Indigenous employment; and by tightening requirements for people on the dole, including making working for the dole mandatory for all long-term unemployed under 50 and suspending payments for people under 30 where work is readily available to them.

The best form of welfare is always a job. Having a job provides purpose, self-esteem and the means for a person to look after their affairs instead of that responsibility being taken on by someone else. Having a job means a person is making a contribution to Australia rather than depending on the support of the Australian taxpayer. The Abbott government aims to create a million jobs over the next five years and two million jobs over the next 10.

We will also improve productivity through improved government services and ensuring our essential public institutions are more efficient and responsive to the needs of the Australian people. We will improve productivity by reviewing and improving competition laws, and providing for a genuine level playing field in the marketplace for both big and small business. We will improve productivity by building the infrastructure Australia needs for the future and reducing the bottlenecks that hamper both industry and the Australian worker. We will also improve productivity by bringing workplace relations into balance and ensuring all stakeholders are playing from a similar set of rules.

A key focus of our plan to build a stronger economy will be small business. I make no secret of the fact that I am unashamedly an advocate for small business—after all, every big business started life as a small business. Small business employs almost half of the Australian workforce and is a sector in which job creation is more readily achieved, provided that government gets out of the way and instead helps foster the conditions in which business success can be achieved instead of penalised.

Small business is the sector where people bet on their own innovation and skills, their ideas and their vision, and really make things happen. Small business is also the backbone of many of our rural and regional communities. We aim to double the growth rate in the number of small businesses by addressing the poor circumstances and regulatory burdens which see so many start-up businesses fail within their first year.

The Abbott government's economic policy also seeks to ensure prosperity and manage economic risk through diversity. Our policy recognises that the mining, energy and resources sector, while critical, is not the be-all and end-all sector that drives our economy. Our aim is to build a five-pillar economy to unleash the potential and make the most of the wide range of inherent advantages that Australia enjoys. In addition to mining, the pillars include world-class education and research, advanced services, manufacturing and innovation, and agricultural exports. Australia has sometimes been referred to as the clever country, but it is essentially an empty phrase unless we as a nation foster education and research, both publicly
and within industry, and utilise our expertise and innovation for the benefit of the nation and the world. For too long, the rhetoric has not been matched with actions; so often the policy settings have been in total conflict with the professed position. This must stop and under this government it will stop.

We must also allow individuals and businesses to follow through on their ideas and inventions, and embrace new technologies and the benefits that they bring. The Abbott government will encourage modernisation and the development of world-class education and research capabilities in Australia and support the use of new technologies, particularly digital and information technology. We will also expand our education sector with a focus on our neighbours in Asia. The services sector has much potential for growth and export, again with a focus in Asia. We need to cut the red tape which stifles this sector and allow our world-class expertise in finance, health, engineering, agriculture and education to meet this potential. A good example is the Abbott government's commitment to give priority to the Johnson report on Australia as a financial centre, to enhance the financial services industry's ability to export its expertise to the world.

Manufacturing innovation is another important pillar of our economy, although one could be forgiven for perceiving manufacturing as a sector in considerable difficulty. The closure of Australian based manufacturing operations is always wrenching—particularly for those who find themselves suddenly without a job, and their families and communities. The closure of such an operation is particularly devastating when it happens in a regional area. One such closure recently announced in South Australia was McCain's closure of a potato-processing factory in the south-eastern town of Penola, leaving about 60 people without work just before Christmas and the local potato farmers with a very uncertain future. However, we cannot expect companies to maintain manufacturing operations in Australia unless we foster the conditions which make it desirable for them to be here. That means we must cut business costs and red tape, ensure business has the incentive to invest and innovate, and do what a government can do to level the playing field to make Australia competitive. These measures are a priority for the Abbott government.

Agricultural exports have been the foundation of the Australian economy for two centuries and they remain equally important today. Australia has the capacity to sustainably and significantly increase agricultural production. However, for the sector to achieve this potential we must get out of its way and instead play the role for which government is best suited. In this respect, I am a strong supporter of public investment in research and development and I know farmers and agricultural industries wholly welcome the Abbott government's commitment to spend an additional $100 million per year in this area. This research effort will be absolutely critical to maintaining Australia's edge in quality, ensuring that Australian food is an aspirational product for overseas consumers and enabling productivity growth while sustainably managing our natural resources.

The Abbott government has also committed an additional $20 million per year to enhance Australia's biosecurity, including the establishment of a biosecurity flying squad to immediately respond to pest and disease incursions. Our relative freedom from the pests and diseases that plague agriculture across the world is another strong competitive advantage which we must protect. This government will also prioritise free trade agreements with China, South Korea, Indonesia, India and Japan and help bring down the barriers to these massive
markets for our Australian farmers. The government will also provide $15 million in support for small and emerging horticultural exporters seeking to establish or maintain a foothold in lucrative overseas markets. Improving overseas market access in a way that does not place onerous compliance burdens on our farmers will be crucial to increasing our exports, building a sustainable farming sector and providing a long-term future for our rural and regional communities.

Those same communities will have a stronger voice on an issue of great importance to eastern Australia and particularly to the state which I am privileged to represent here: the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. If policymakers had listened more to those voices, they would not have been so surprised at the resilience the basin showed with the return of high river flows in 2010. The Abbott government is committed to a more balanced approach to water reform in the basin. We will ensure the recovery of water necessary to restore the system to health. We will not compromise the rural industries and regional communities that rely directly upon it. Our goal is a working river system, a healthy river environment and sustainable river communities.

Let me conclude with an example of what a government should not do—that is, interfere with free speech, one of the foundations of modern democracy. Since Federation, except in extreme emergencies such as the last world war, the citizens of Australia have been free to speak their minds on any subject and to express their opinions regardless of how many might disagree. This is a right for which Australians have fought and died—if not in this country, then certainly overseas. They did not fight to prevent people from being offended or insulted. That is not a right, if one could call it that, which is compatible with freedom of speech. In a healthy democracy there should be no institution, organisation, individual or government that is free from criticism or accountability.

The Abbott government trust the Australian people to inform themselves as they choose and to hold us to account for our conduct and policies. We trust the Australian people to exercise their right to freedom of speech without fear or favour and to do so responsibly. Unlike the previous government we will not make any attempt to interfere with this important freedom through regulation or legislation. We will not attempt to prevent the commercial media from taking any editorial position or make them accountable to government through legislation or regulation. This government was not elected because or in spite of headlines and editorials; it was elected by the Australian people. As this government trusts Australians, so they have entrusted us with a mandate for change.

**Senator McKenzie:** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Senator BILYK** (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (09:52): This government has barely begun and yet today it has already proved to be a sad, shallow disappointment. It is certainly not a reforming government. It has no clear policy agenda for improving our nation for the benefit of all Australians. It does not seek to drastically improve education funding or provide appropriate care and support for those with disability, like the previous Labor government strove to do. It is not a government with a clear vision—just hollow, three-word sound bites which are increasingly becoming meaningless. Its most disappointing feature, though, so far is its utter lack of transparency.

Just a couple of months after being trusted by the Australian people to form a new government, those opposite do not trust the Australian people enough to tell them what they
are doing. Its ministers are in hiding, its members are in hiding, the Prime Minister is in hiding and the minister for immigration is in hiding. Sorry, I should say the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection is in hiding. The new title is meant to show, I presume, how tough he is, like some form of poorly dubbed animated superhero. Mr Morrison is reduced to making a once-a-week appearance to the media to ignore questions and spin the latest diplomatic disaster with Indonesia. If the government truly thought that talking about boats that arrived increased the number of arrivals, why did they constantly talk about that when they were in opposition? Day after day after day in this place when those over there were in opposition they constantly talked about boats arriving. Why didn't they suggest then that the Labor government only hold weekly press conferences? And should we have tried that, what would their response have been?

The weekly press conferences are designed to hide the issues from the Australian people. They are designed to hide what we saw earlier in the week where Tony Abbott's 'turn back the boats' policy failed miserably and Indonesia refused to accept 65 asylum seekers Mr Abbott wanted to force on them. They are designed to hide the embarrassing gaffes, where Mr Morrison criticised senior Indonesian officials by saying about their policy, 'There is no real rhyme or reason to it.' They are designed to hide the bizarre 'buy back the boats' policy that Indonesia objected to so strongly and that has now fallen off the radar. And they are designed to hide the fact that Tony Abbott spent much of his time on his first trip to Indonesia apologising for things he said during the election campaign and came back empty-handed on both his 'turn back the boats' policy and his 'buy back the boats' policy.

The government does not trust the Australian people and certainly did not trust them enough before the election to explain the government's plan to privatise HECS-HELP debt for university students, creating American-style student loans to keep people indebted for decades. Sorry, it isn't a plan. To quote education minister Christopher Pyne:

It's been floated as an idea …

And:

It wouldn't be insensible for us to do so. Why would you rule anything like that out?

Well, a good reason to rule it out, Mr Pyne, is that Australia's $23 billion worth of HECS-HELP debt would only fetch between $11 billion and $16 billion, as reported, if it were to be privatised, meaning a handy profit for the government's mates in whatever banking organisation picks it up at the loss to the Australian taxpayer. It would also mean that commercial rates or above commercial rates of interest would apply to HECS-HELP debt rather than the current indexation at the rate of inflation as occurs at the moment. This would leave students with more debt and higher interest payments. It would increase the overall costs and of course it would take longer to pay off. It is a bad idea, because these changes will obviously make it more difficult for people from low-income families who cannot afford to pay full fees up-front to afford to go to university. It is a bad idea because it acts as a massive deterrent for students to study for professions that are vitally important for Australian society but may not pay graduates terribly well. The latest Graduates careers Australia report released in July revealed that pharmacy graduates are the lowest paid of all university leavers, with an average salary of just $37,000 a year. I think we would all be in great trouble if all the people studying pharmacy decided it was now no longer feasible for them to do so and moved into a career with a better graduate salary.
Australia needs to encourage higher education to make us a smarter country capable of providing the high-level services and products of the 21st century. Privatising higher education debts would do the reverse, and it is disturbing we have not heard of these plans until recently. It is something that many of the around four million university graduates should be terrified of.

The Abbott government is also being less than forthcoming on what it plans to do on infrastructure grants allocated to local communities under the Regional Development Australia Fund, or RDAF, round 5. In my home state of Tasmania that is 34 projects with almost $3 million worth of allocated federal funding for total project expenditure over $5 million at risk. These include projects like the tourist information bays in the Central Highlands, erosion control measures at the New Norfolk esplanade, outdoor gym equipment at Scottsdale and Bridport, redevelopment at the Northern Tasmanian Cricket Association facilities at Launceston and the Wynyard waterfront, and the Cam River reserve recreation facilities project, just to name a few.

What I have not heard from the new federal Liberal members for Bass, Braddon and Lyons has been them out there pushing to get these projects underway. In fact, they have been remarkably quiet on the future of all these projects and the others that make up the 34 projects I mentioned. Of course, these projects that Labor promised would drive jobs and growth in regional Tasmania. They would provide new facilities to increase the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians and they will improve facilities for tourism and regional communities. Communities in regional Tasmania need to know with certainty that these projects will go ahead rather than them being left in limbo while the government decides behind closed doors what they are going to cut. Mr Abbott himself has said that Tasmania is a special case—that Tasmania needs jobs and development. That is a statement that Labor agrees with. That is why Labor agreed to fund those positions. So why hasn't the funding for the RDAF 5 projects been guaranteed? This funding will create jobs in regional Tasmania, as I said.

And while we talk about projects in regional Tasmania, there are tens of thousands of Tasmanian premises that will no longer receive fibre to the premises, despite the contracts having been previously signed. The government promised that they would honour all contracts signed. Now, looking at the NBN Co. interactive rollout maps, I find large swathes of Tasmania that were set to receive fibre to the premises no longer there. There is no detail about when or if these suburbs will get fibre to the premises, or even when they will get the government's outdated, inefficient and ineffective fibre-to-the-node fraudband alternative. We will end up with two classes of Tasmanians, with many Tasmanian suburbs and towns missing out. Those Tasmanians in the Hobart suburbs of New Town, North Hobart, Mount Stuart, Lenah Valley, Risdon, Geilston Bay, Rose Bay, Lindisfarne, Claremont, Granton, Auilds Ferry, Montrose, Rosetta, Glenorchy, Chigwell and Berriedale, who were all expecting to receive NBN fibre to the premises within the next year or so, now have no idea what their future internet connections will be. Tasmanians in the Launceston suburbs of Prospect, South Launceston, Summerhill, Kings Meadows, Prospect Vale, West Launceston, Norwood, Punchbowl, Kings Meadows, Mowbray, Newnham, Mayfield, Riverside and Rocherlea are also being kept in the dark about what the government plans for their suburbs. Many towns across regional Tasmania, including Legana, Rosevears, Grindelwald, South Arm, Opossum Bay, Bell Bay and Low Head, will no longer receive fibre to the premises.
They will be looking at a two-tiered system, where neighbours on the even-numbered side—for example, of Elphinstone Road in North Hobart—will have NBN fibre, while the odd-numbered side will have the government's fraudband. Neighbours in one part of Cambridge street in West Launceston will receive NBN fibre, while next door will have fraudband.

The government did announce that they would scrap the low-income superannuation tax offset linked to the mining tax, which shows they were honest in that regard. However, it is extremely disappointing that generous tax breaks for around 16,000 wealthier Australians are maintained while at the same time concessions of $500 per year for 3.6 million workers on lower incomes are cut. The removal of the low-income superannuation contribution hits women particularly hard, with 2.1 million women affected. A significant percentage of these are mothers working part-time, and they are also looking after young children. This is exactly the part of a woman's career where an additional $500 a year going into superannuation will be of most benefit for building savings for their retirement. It is short sighted to cut superannuation contributions for those on the lowest wages, as these are the people who will be most likely to require support in their aged life. Every dollar invested into the superannuation funds of these people now will reduce by several times their need for the age pension.

Before the election, Mr Abbott told us he was committed to the NDIS. Since then, we have seen reports in *The Australian* that the government is looking to overhaul the independent National Disability Insurance Agency. I am very concerned that the government is preparing to do what many in the community have feared. Many spoke to me about this before the election—they were concerned that, if an Abbott government came to power, it would make savage financial cuts and delay the full rollout of the NDIS. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is, for the first time in our country's history, providing people with disability with the care and support they need to live a better life. Labor will fight any attempt by this government to make savage cuts to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Mr Abbott and the senators opposite must rule out any cuts to the NDIS and give people with disability, their carers and families the certainty that it will be delivered in full and on time, as they promised. They must immediately reaffirm their commitment to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, including the financial commitment and schedule for the full rollout developed by the Labor government. Overwhelmingly, people with disability need certainty—certainty that the scheme they have been tirelessly campaigning for will not face cuts or delays; certainty that the financial commitment that was made by federal Labor will be maintained; and certainty that they will be allowed the support to live life with equality and with dignity. Any cuts or delays will be a betrayal of people with disability and a broken promise to the Australian people.

I note already that this government is following a pattern. The government does not explicitly state what it plans to do. It uses weasel phrases like 'it's been floated as an idea' and 'we won't rule anything out' to prevent it from actually owning up to these nasty, petty little policies and to these nasty, petty little cuts. It uses inflated language and rhetoric without shame. Before the election, Mr Abbott said there was a budget emergency. An emergency? A crisis? Then why has it taken 10 weeks for us to return to this place to discuss remedies to this so-called emergency? Why has there not been a minibudget to rectify this so called emergency? Why have we not seen his MYEFO? Is it because there was never an emergency?
Is it because we in fact have a AAA-rated economy, six years of unbroken economic growth, low rates of inflation, increases in per capita GDP and one of the lowest debts as a percentage of GDP in the developed world? Guess what? We got all those under a Labor government.

Why has Mr Hockey given almost $9 billion dollars to the Reserve Bank that it does not need? Is it merely to make the 2013-14 budget bottom line look worse than it actually is and blame Labor for the blowout? Of course it is. On this side, we know that game. We know what those opposite are up to, and the people of Australia know as well. At the cost of hundreds of millions of dollars of extra interest repayments, they are just trying to score a political point. How pathetic is that? The government constantly shouts, 'Debt is bad, debt is bad'. Then why does the government want to lift the debt ceiling to a ridiculous $500 billion? That is an increase of $200 billion on the current limit; an extraordinary $200 billion, or 66 per cent, increase in the current amount. It is an utterly ridiculous policy that they wish to rush through this place and the other place by Thursday.

While the coalition announced before the election—two days before the election to be precise—that they would cut the foreign aid budget by $4.5 billion, they did not tell the Australian people that they would close down the entire AusAID agency. It was announced by Mr Abbott a few hours after he was sworn in as Prime Minister. Would it not have been appropriate to tell Australians before the election that he planned to destroy an agency that had existed almost 40 years, through Labor and Liberal governments—an agency that had served the nation with distinction over its history? It is insulting to the people that have worked there over the decades that their work no longer warrants an agency—that it can be thrown away on a petty, nasty whim.

Another agency that has been axed that the Australian people were not informed of before the election is the Climate Commission. Just one day into the new Abbott government the agency was razed to the ground—a body designed to make clear the science and economics of climate change. I would just like to take a moment to mention two of the recommendations from the Climate Commission's report The critical decade that those in government now may have found inconvenient. These are:

We are already seeing the social, economic and environmental consequences of a changing climate. Many of the risks scientists warned us about in the past are now happening—and—

Three years into the Critical Decade it is clear: substantial progress is being made globally to reduce emissions. However, far more will need to be done to stabilise the climate. This decision demonstrates to the Australian public that the government is not interested in talking to them about climate change science or climate change action. It is not serious about getting frank and fearless advice from its agencies—only advice that fits its ideological world view. I guess it is not surprising from a Prime Minister that believes climate change is 'absolute crap'. If you actually allow an independent body to explain the science and economics of climate change to the Australian people, they might decide that Tony Abbott's 'direct action' policy is 'absolute crap' as well.

Unfortunately, the Climate Commission is not the only victim of the Abbott government's antiscience agenda. For the first time since the science portfolio was created in 1931, it has been abolished. Mr Abbott certainly did not announce to the Australian people before the election that he would cut the science portfolio. He did not tell the Australian people that...
Australia would be a nation that no longer cared about science and no longer had a vision of Australia as a major player in the scientific world. He did not say that his cuts to 'public servants' would include sacking hundreds of scientists from CSIRO, an organisation whose achievements Australians are so proud of.

This government has indicated a trend to hide things from the Australian people and the Australian media that it would find politically uncomfortable. It has a reluctance to be free and open with its future plans. But this chamber will hold it to account, as it is designed to do. This chamber will not simply be a rubber stamp for whatever thought-bubble idea the government comes up with to help its mates in the banking sector, the mining sector or the business sector to increase their profits. It will not be bullied or threatened. It will not roll over and accept policy that discards scientific wisdom. It will not roll over and accept policy that was written by right-wing think tanks and that helps the rich at the expense of the poor.

Australia is a nation that has always helped those less fortunate. The new Abbott government may have forgotten that, but the Labor Party and this chamber will constantly remind it.

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (10:11): I rise today to respond to the Governor-General’s speech outlining the Abbott government’s agenda for this term of parliament. Usually such a speech sets out a vision for the nation. Yesterday there was no vision in the Abbott government agenda for Australia except to confirm that, during this period of government, Australia will be on track to be regarded as a small, selfish, inward-looking, isolationist, 'back to the future' quarry Australia. That is where we are going. It is right back to mid-last-century, when Australia saw itself as separate from the rest of the world and thought that brawn was better than brains and that digging up, cutting down and shipping away was all we had to do to essentially make ourselves prosperous. There was no futuristic thinking, and that is exactly where we are now.

The agenda of the Abbott government, set out in yesterday's speech, can be summarised with the repeal of the carbon tax; the bringing in of a commission of audit to signal smaller government; massive deregulation, allowing business to do whatever it wants; and the higher productivity agenda, which is likely to be an attack on workers receiving the minimum wage and on workplace relations. We had talk of strengthening border protection, and that is code for isolationism and being seen internationally as a global pariah. Finally, 'building the roads of the 21st century' really says it all. The infrastructure vision of quarry Australia is to just build more roads. Yet here we are in 2013. A vision for the nation should be about our people and our future. In the second decade of this century, we should be looking out for the next 100 years.

As we do that, we are beginning to reflect on the last 100 years, because we are coming into, of course, the anniversary of the beginning of the First World War. People will be looking back over the last 100 years and thinking about, as former Prime Minister Keating said in his address at the War Memorial earlier this week, how the First World War was a war without virtue. He also indicated that it was a war that heralded one of the most appalling centuries in terms of the level of violence brought upon people because of the technological revolutions that allowed disaster on a scale that had not before that been possible. He also talked about the inscription which will now be on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier: 'He is all of them and one of us.' And that is the way Australians are going to be thinking about the last 100 years and thinking about those young Australians who gave their lives at that time so
that the rest of us could benefit from a better life, from freedom, from democracy. There was great hope and optimism that the sacrifice was worth it. That is the perspective in which we have all looked back over the last 100 years.

In thinking about that, I wonder what people in 100 years are going to say looking back on those of us now facing the challenges of this century as we asked our youth to face in 1913. When we look forward from here in terms of intergenerational equity and what people will say in 100 years, I do not think they will be able to look back on 2013 and say that we were honest with ourselves, bold, courageous or thoughtful in terms of facing up to what we know the world is going to have to deal with.

The first thing you would ask yourself now if you were looking forward for the next 100 years is: where are we as a nation right now globally and domestically? How are we placed as a nation? Domestically we are a rich country. It is extraordinary when we hear the level of critique in terms of what it is like in Australia. We have never been so well off. Of course that is not to say there are not serious issues of poverty, homelessness, disadvantage and intergenerational inequity; but, nevertheless, compared with the overwhelming majority of the world's population, we are an extremely rich country. Globally we are a country that is capable of leading because we are a rich and developed country capable of facing the challenges that are in store. And the greatest challenge in store is that of global warming. That is what we are not facing up to as a parliament.

I want to draw the attention of the Senate to the meeting that is taking place right now in Warsaw at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conference of the parties. It is the 19th conference of the parties, where the world has come together to face the realities of the challenge of actually making sure that people can live through this century and centuries to come. I draw to the attention of the Senate the speech that was given this week—and which has had very little publicity in Australia—from Yeb Sano, who is the spokesperson from the Philippines. He made a very powerful speech, especially since his speech coincided with the shocking disaster that is Typhoon Haiyan, which has hit the Philippines and left at least 10,000 people dead.

In that speech he said:
This will have profound implications on many of our communities, especially who struggle against the twin challenges of the development crisis and the climate change crisis. Typhoons such as Yolanda (Haiyan) and its impacts represent a sobering reminder to the international community that we cannot afford to procrastinate on climate action. Warsaw must deliver on enhancing ambition and should muster the political will to address climate change. In Doha, we asked "If not us then who? If not now, then when? If not here, then where?" (borrowed from Philippine student leader Ditto Sarmiento during Martial Law).

He went on to say that we should be asking exactly the same questions in Warsaw:
What my country is going through as a result of this extreme climate event is madness. The climate crisis is madness.

... ... ...
By failing to meet the objective the Convention—
that is, to keep global warming to less than two degrees—
we may have ratified the doom of vulnerable countries.
He spoke about the fact that 'we have entered a new era that demands global solidarity in order to fight climate change and ensure that pursuit of sustainable human development remains at the fore of the global community's efforts.' He goes on to say:

We must stop calling events like these as natural disasters. It is not natural when people continue to struggle to eradicate poverty and pursue development and gets battered by the onslaught of a monster storm now considered as the strongest storm ever to hit land. It is not natural when science already tells us that global warming will induce more intense storms. It is not natural when the human species has already profoundly changed the climate.

He finished his speech by calling for concrete pledges to ensure mobilisation of resources for the Green Climate Fund and, in particular, the pledge for $100 billion that has to be made to help developing countries. That is the context in which we are now speaking about the next 100 years from 2013, and I would say that we in Australia need to ask ourselves: if not us, then who? If not now, then when? And, if not here in the federal parliament, then where? Where are people going to face up on behalf of current and future generations of Australians, everyone else we share the planet with and every other species on this planet? When are we going to stand up, accept the science and act?

Today is historic because today is the day that the Abbott government introduced legislation to tear down the only framework of action on global warming that is reducing emissions in Australia, and that is our clean energy package. That is why responsibility has to be taken for this. By doing that, you are acknowledging that climate change is driving extreme weather events which are killing people and sending species to extinction, and you do not care, because you do not accept the science. It is as simple as that. That is the challenge that is facing this parliament. That is the challenge that is facing Australia, and the Australian Greens are up to that challenge because we are prepared to stand up and say, as leading economists around the world are saying, 'Economic growth must be decoupled from environmental degradation and resource extraction.'

Equally, climate change is having a massive impact on food security around the world and it is why we are now seeing countries going around grabbing land and water—they know they are going to have to feed their own people. That completely undermines the whole so-called free trade agenda, and yet in the Abbott government's back-to-the-future 1950s outlook it is all about free trade. It is no longer about free trade; it is about fair trade and maintaining ownership and control of your own land and water so that you can not only provide for your own food security but also enable other people to do so as well.

Australia is situated in the right place at the right time for this challenge. As we see this profound development in the Asian region, this is the first time in our history that we have been located, in a physical sense, in the right place in the world. I ask: will we lead or will we undermine progress in the world on critical issues such as human rights? On human rights in Sri Lanka we have already abandoned the page, with the Prime Minister saying that it is not for us to lecture other countries—even though we know that people are disappearing in white vans in Sri Lanka as we speak and that there is no press freedom. We know that, and yet this government is prepared to turn its back. On democracy in Cambodia, it is exactly the same. We should have been calling for the international community to investigate the election abuses in Cambodia, but we did not; we turned our back. On sustainability, we have had the International Energy Agency come out overnight and say that Australia is going to be the
biggest coal exporter in the world by 2035 and that we will be contributing not to green growth in Asia but to black growth. The International Energy Agency has been damning by saying that a golden age for Australia will set the world on a path of dangerous climate change as fossil fuel sourced emissions soar. That is Australia’s contribution to the Asian century.

I go on: how could we have an address from the Abbott government without mentioning the G20? In a couple of weeks, we take the presidency of the G20. What are we going to do with it? What is the Abbott government’s vision for the G20 and for our leadership of the G20? We heard from Greg Hunt, the minister, before the election that he was going to put climate change on the G20 agenda. How interesting is that going to be, with world leaders flying into Brisbane being told that Australia is abandoning any kind of global responsibility and is only going to stick with a miserly five per cent, which is an insult to the rest of the world, and will not contribute a cent to the Green Climate Fund. So, is climate change going to be on the G20 agenda or not? If not, what is? The G20 is in a precarious position. It came together through the global financial crisis. It is struggling to know what its purpose is. If its purpose, as the leader of the global economy, is to address the major trends in the global economy then climate change has to be front and centre of that. If it is not, Australia stands to actually undermine the whole future of the G20.

What about the Security Council? We heard nothing in the speech about the Security Council. What is Australia’s agenda on the Security Council? Do we accept that security in this century is about securing our borders, as the Prime Minister said? Actually, it is about securing our planet. Every other defence force around the world is looking at the impacts of extreme weather events and the insecurity and conflicts that are going to arise because of that. Australia’s whole agenda on security seems to be trying to demonise refugees rather than face up to the fact that this is going to be a century of people being dislocated for a range of reasons in countries around the world. We have to come to a way of accommodating the fact that people are going to be moving. We have to do our fair share and play a role in dealing with that humanitarian crisis.

I go beyond that to the environment. All we heard on the environment in the speech yesterday was about green tape and deregulation. All that is code for is give Australia to big business, give Australia to quarries, and give the Institute of Public Affairs and the old agendas the green light. Let them go and trash the environment as much as they like. A one-stop shop for the states means disaster and no more so than in Tasmania. This whole notion of a new economic package for Tasmania, which has a one-stop shop to enable major development approvals, spells community conflict and environmental destruction in Tasmania. It will not work. It sounded just like Robin Gray at the end of the 1980s. That is exactly what his agenda was, and now we are having Tony Abbott deliver it.

Far from being a careful, consultative and straightforward agenda, this government’s agenda is radical and ideologically-driven. It is going to be secretive and implemented by stealth. We are already seeing it. As I indicated, this is isolationism in how we are treating the rest of the world on climate change. It flows through to AusAID, as we have heard. Abandoning AusAID is abandoning one of the main tools we have for peace, engagement and building sustainability. You either help people and build friendships or you build up the defence forces and expect to fight. I think it is a ludicrous proposition that we want to pour
money into the defence forces, ignore global warming, ignore those global people movement shifts and global emergencies and instead rip out the money from AusAID, which is our main diplomatic tool for being a good global citizen and building strengths and friendships that will stand by us in difficult times. It is a backward and foolish move. It is handing the puppet master role over to the Institute of Public Affairs and to big business in Australia.

I end on infrastructure. Unless you live in a quarry, the government's imagining that the infrastructure of this century is roads just shows the limitation of their thinking. The resource of this century is imagination. The infrastructure of this century has to be building human potential and capacity. That means massive investment in education and research and development—building capacity so that what we export is not what we dig up and cut down but capacity and capacity building.

We export through the arts as well. There was not a mention in the speech of creative culture as a transformative influence. If you accept the trends of this century, that we need to change, you have to understand that investing in the brain rather than the brawn is what Australia needs to do. We need to invest in creativity, in imagination, because that is the resource of this century. Words in a speech that say that your aim is to see cranes over cities and bulldozers on the ground say that you are right back in the 1950s. If you were serious about infrastructure what you would be envisaging is fast broadband and the fantastic education infrastructure in this country which is reaching out to share capacity with our neighbours and around the world. That is the infrastructure: building the health, education and capacity of our community to be able to deal with and assist people around us—not only in our own communities but in our regional community—and that is where we need to be going.

I return where I began. We have no vision but an ideologically driven agenda for quarry Australia: small, selfish, inward looking, isolationist and back to the future. It is a missed opportunity for Australia and we will pay heavily for it in years to come not only because of the impacts of global warming but because the rest of the world is going to see us for what we are. (Time expired)

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (10:31): It is an honour for me to second the motion supporting the address of the Queen's representative in Australia, the Governor-General, outlining the government's agenda for the 44th Parliament. It is a key part of our democracy. I would like to refer to our founding document, the Constitution, which says:

The legislative power of the Commonwealth shall be vested in a Federal Parliament, which shall consist of the Queen, a Senate, and a House of Representatives, and which is hereinafter called The Parliament ...

In looking back in preparation for this speech, I had a look at the first address-in-reply speech, made in 1903. The senators, to a man, all stood up and argued with several aspects of the Governor-General's speech that was presented to the Senate at that time. I think there were some issues around the High Court. But I will not be doing that today, because I am very, very proud to be a member of the Abbott-Truss government for the 44th Parliament that will be delivering on the Governor-General's address, which was given yesterday in this place.

I note that the Governor-General grew up in regional Queensland and has spoken often about the importance of Australia's connection to the land and how important it is for our cultural heritage to pass on that love of the land to future generations—particularly for her,
her children and her grandchildren. So I second this motion as a National Party senator representing the interests of regional Victoria. As a party we recognise that great connection that the Governor-General has spoken about. The Nationals are the second-oldest political party, celebrating 93 unbroken years of representation of rural and regional Australia in the federal parliament. We are proud partners in the new Liberal-National government, as we have been in so many successful Liberal-National governments in the past. We help to bring to government and to parliament the voice, concerns and aspirations of the one-third of Australians who live outside our capital cities. Within the new Abbott-Truss ministry the range of portfolios reflect the diversity of regional Australia, concerning health, employment, Indigenous affairs, finance, defence, agriculture, infrastructure and regional development.

I know that the Governor-General and, indeed, the Prime Minister have made several references to the importance of stable government since coming to government. As we begin this 44th Parliament, it is worth reflecting on our history and the importance of developing the strong and stable government that we have today. Our Constitution was drafted in a spirit of fairness, balancing bigger states with smaller ones. It was simple and pragmatic. We held constitutional conventions right around Australia, bringing the people to the document and ensuring that citizens were at the heart of the government of this new nation, drawing on the British and American experiences. And they got it right. I think the government that we have today for this 44th Parliament will completely reflect the intentions that the drafters of that original document had in bringing the people to the parliament, reflecting the people's desire. We look forward to delivering on the mandate that they have given us.

Our Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, has indicated that the 44th Parliament will be a respectful parliament, a parliament focused on the real concerns and aspirations of the people of Australia. Much of the work of government is already underway, as we parliamentarians have traversed the regions talking about the challenges and opportunities that we face as a government and as a nation. The new government wants a parliament which is less about political point-scoring and more focused on raising the issues of the people we represent. I support the comments of Senator Ruston in welcoming the return of majority government. The coalition will provide strong, stable government and we have a clear mandate for our legislative priorities.

Our regions urgently need good government that delivers competent, efficient and predictable administration. Regional Australia needs a government with the same characteristics that have helped it survive and thrive: independence, resilience, creativity, an entrepreneurial spirit and an outward focus. That is what has driven success for regional Australia and I know those are the characteristics that will underpin an Abbott-Truss government. The role of government should be to support and develop a nation, not to bury it in restrictions, regulations and pointless paperwork. This is precisely where Labor went so wrong, as it shackled Australia with tax upon regulation upon further tax: 21,000 new regulations in such a short space of time.

In the regions we are not looking for welfare but simply for a fair go, and that means a government that works to provide opportunities for people and businesses in the regions as well as the cities, and I know that, unlike the last six years, the Abbott-Truss government will have regional Australia right at its heart. It is a government that will deliver on transport and better communications to our regions, a government that will deliver education, health
services and infrastructure. It is a government willing to unlock the potential that lies within regional Australia, the potential for rural Australia to prosper and help maximise Australia's standing as a global partner.

And there are significant opportunities for growth in regional Australia—agriculture, agribusiness, tourism and energy to name a few—in coming decades. This government is ready, willing and able to ensure that regional Australia is able to capitalise on those opportunities in coming decades. In agriculture, we can then help meet the needs of global food demand, expected to grow by 60 million people a year over the next 20 years. We already boast the cleanest, most efficient and least subsidised agriculture sector in the world. We need to ensure that that continues and that we capitalise on that aspect of our economy.

International tourism is growing at four per cent per year and will double over the next two decades, providing employment for more than half a million Australians and accounting for $107 billion of economic activity and $25 billion of export earnings. A lower Australian dollar is making Australia attractive again, especially to the growing middle class in Asia, which is both close and in a similar time zone. Tourists want to see the Opera House and the MCG, but I think we all know that they love our magnificent natural heritage. They can experience that within the regions, whether it is along the Great Ocean Road, up in Senator Scullion's country in the Northern Territory or, indeed, Mr Acting Deputy President Smith, in your own beautiful WA. The natural heritage and environment of Australia has so much to offer, but I think we can actually do more to ensure that our cultural heritage is similarly promoted to the international tourism market, and there may be some opportunities for us there.

There is growing demand, similarly, for energy worldwide, providing significant opportunity to regional Australia—not only to lower our CO₂ emissions as we look towards other sources of energy but also for jobs in the regions. We just need to ensure we do this in an environmentally responsible way, and one that is in the national interest.

The government's agenda will support the growth in regional Australia right across tax reform, small business policy and deregulation, the Commission of Audit, trade with Asia, communications, education, defence and environment—the list goes on. We have taken a very holistic approach, as the Governor-General outlined yesterday. And I am only going to touch on a few of those aspects.

Tax reform is essential, as I mentioned earlier. Today we start the work: we begin the agenda that Her Excellency outlined for us yesterday by, as we speak, the carbon tax being repealed in the House of Representatives. This fulfils the mandate given to us by the Australian people in such a resounding electoral result. We will also cut the company tax rate from 30 per cent to 28.5 per cent. We are also repealing the minerals resource rent tax, another significant election promise. Axing these taxes, if we are to do this responsibly, requires very difficult decisions to be made because some spending must also be cut to balance the books. But it is the right thing to do, it is the grown-up thing to do and it is the responsible thing for the government to do, to ensure that we are not keeping the goodies while we are taking with the other hand.

Much of Labor's spending promises relied on phantom revenue from the mining tax, whereas initiatives like our $1 billion National Stronger Regions Fund are fully funded. I think that is going to be of great benefit to those regional areas that require significant support
from government. It is a practical measure that is fully costed, unlike the previous government's support.

Labor claimed that agriculture was exempt from the world's biggest carbon tax; but for those of you who are interested I know that Devondale-Murray Goulburn has actually upped the bid for Warrnambool Cheese & Butter down in western Victoria, showing that domestic and international investors are realising the potential that Australian agricultural industry provides. Dairy farmers, particularly down in my state—we are the heart of dairy farming—were slugged under the carbon tax, upwards of $10,000 per farm in electricity costs. This was totally not factored into the carbon tax, despite the rhetoric that agriculture would not be affected.

Similarly, the coalition government's white paper on tax reform will review the efficiency and effectiveness of all taxes. We actually recognise the interconnectedness of the tax system and that you need to take a holistic look at the system, rather than cherry picking what you can look at and then cherry picking the recommendations you choose to adopt. Already the government has dealt with 93 tax measures that were left unlegislated and unresolved—getting the house in order. We have scrapped 63 other new tax measures because we want to encourage and reward people who work hard and get ahead.

As a daughter of a small-business owner I know that when you grow small businesses you grow Australia. I am very passionate about small business and I am extremely excited about the Minister for Small Business's pursuit of this issue. While he was the shadow minister and since he has been the minister he has been promoting small business and getting on with the business of assisting small business from day one. It is about time that government got off the backs and out of the pockets of small business, and the new government is making its first root-and-branch review of the Competition and Consumer Act in 20 years. A lot has changed in 20 years in competition across our economy. Relationships between processors, producers, retailers and consumers have changed because of the uniqueness of our market. We need to take a look at that and assess whether the regime and the legislative framework we have in place are actually delivering on the policy outcomes that we need. So that is going to be a fabulous initiative of this government.

Deregulation is desperately needed. We must dismantle the regulations that are smothering everything from small business to universities. Education providers have also been complaining about the former government's regulation and the impact it was having on educating the next generation of young Australians. I think it is always useful to bear in mind that it is not just business that is affected.

As Thomas Jefferson said:

My reading of history convinces me that most bad government results from too much government.

I agree! So we are taking active steps as a government to reduce the impact of government in our lives and on our industries.

Our National Commission of Audit is already underway. It is an essential step in addressing Labor's record of waste and mismanagement, dealing with a century of regulation and legislation that has built up over time and actually having a really detailed look at it. The government has three principles at its heart that I think encapsulate our philosophy as a coalition government: firstly, that we respect taxpayers by ensuring every dollar of their
money is spent wisely; secondly, that we should live within our means—not much to ask; and, thirdly, that the government should only do for the people what the people cannot do for themselves as free, independent beings. That is exactly a government's role. This aspiration actually is not new for the Nationals in a coalition government. John 'Black Jack' McEwen, a Victorian member of parliament, the member for Murray—the food bowl of Australia, I would argue, with the Goulburn Valley, SPCA et cetera, right in the centre of my state of Victoria—who went on to be Prime Minister, said in his maiden speech in parliament in 1937 that it was the task of government 'to discover the basic facts upon which our national economy is founded, and search there for the root causes of problems. That is exactly what the National Commission of Audit will do, receiving submissions.

Jobs are much more than just a pay packet. They are about independence, dignity, social interaction and family. So one very important role of government is to ensure that all our citizenry have fair access to the workplace: young people—we have seen the issues in Spain; older people; Indigenous Australians; and women, through increasing their workforce participation. Every young Australian who moves from unemployment to work represents a building block towards Australia's future. Indigenous Australians for the first time have a Prime Minister who is passionate about their plight and a minister, in Senator Scullion, who genuinely understands their issues and is committed to ensuring they reach their maximum potential and contribute to the building of a strong Australian future. I support the government's workforce participation initiatives, which will particularly benefit women, including a Productivity Commission inquiry into child care and a real paid parental leave scheme. Access to child care has been a real challenge for many families in regional Australia who do not have the same choice available as parents in the cities, without the benefit of economies of scale.

International trade has been part of the Nationals' DNA since well before the previous government suddenly discovered the Asian century and it has been at the heart of coalition governments. Trade has always been essential to regional Australia, which has always had to look offshore to sell its goods and to build a nation. Regional Australia will benefit greatly from the Abbott-Truss government's determination to seize the opportunity presented by the economic growth in Asia, not just in China. We will progress trade arrangements with Korea, China, Japan, Indonesia and India—great opportunities for Australian agribusiness, farmers and our food processors. It is worth mentioning here that the food-processing industry represents the largest part of our manufacturing industry, employing more than 300,000 Australians, more than half of them in regional Australia, and value adding to the fabulously clean, green Australian produce before we ship it offshore. So it is surely in our national interest for this to continue. We will end the delays and confusion that agribusiness has had to struggle with under previous governments.

Technology means that the world is also now in our lounge room and holds untold opportunities, particularly for those of us in regional Australia. The coalition's broadband plan to deliver communication services to regional Australia—much, much faster, Senator Polley, and at a much more reasonable cost—provides untold economic potential gains for those of us that live in the regions. Similarly, it is not so fabulous delivering gold-plated broadband in Kew whilst people in Wycheproof cannot make a phone call, so our commitment to improving technology for those of us out in the regions means a $200 million investment to
improve mobile coverage in regional Australia, particularly in smaller communities, along major transport routes and where black spots exist. Acting Deputy President Senator Smith will agree that those senators who travel the highways and byways of regional Australia know very well where the black spots are—not that we are the ones on the phone! This is going to be the hallmark of this government: dealing with the everyday concerns of people in a practical, efficient manner.

I am passionate about education and the opportunities for young people. For too long they have had to move away from home without the support of government. This coalition government will be determined to ensure that education is something that all Australians can participate in. We also will address cyberbullying. Senator Bilyk, I know you have been a part of that, but it was a great privilege for me to be part of the coalition's committee that examined cyberbullying right across the nation and we will be making some significant announcements about that. We are also going to ensure that parents and communities are much more engaged with local schools.

I briefly want to touch on defence because, as we withdraw from Afghanistan, there is no greater responsibility for the Commonwealth government than the defence of a nation. Regional Australia makes a significant contribution to the defence industry through our small and medium enterprises. We are also going to continue the strong tradition of past Liberal-National governments of ensuring a practical response to environmental leadership—and I do not say that lightly. What I am looking forward to is having a leadership team in Tony Abbott and Warren Truss that is committed to the service of the Australian people, and I think that is unique. I think that character, if you like, will be a good role model for all of us senators and members who are part of their government to actually remember why we are here and what we are about. We live in a dynamic and changing world and I think we now have the government that will allow our nation to participate fully. (Time expired)

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (10:51): It gives me great pleasure to make a contribution in this debate on the Address-in-reply. It will come as no surprise that I was honoured to be appointed as shadow parliamentary secretary for aged care. Anyone who has followed me in public life knows that I have had a long-held passion for aged-care policy and making sure that older Australians receive the care and support they need. I will be working alongside the new shadow aged-care minister, the member for Blair, and I am really enjoying the prospect of meeting lots of people in the sector and sinking my teeth into this new challenge.

I have spoken on numerous occasions in this chamber on another issue of great importance to me, the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It is of course designed to afford those with intellectual and physical disabilities autonomy and dignity in how they live their lives. That new role gives me the opportunity to improve the lives of older Australians in a similar fashion. It is a sad reality that unless we work diligently many older people will not live their lives in a way that is beneficial to their long-term physical and mental health. We must never be complacent and we must never assume that older Australians will automatically be able to live independently and comfortably just because they are blessed to live in a First World country.

It may surprise some to learn that my home state of Tasmania not only has the highest percentage among the states and territories of people with disabilities but also a higher percentage of older people. In fact our population is the oldest in the country and ageing faster
than any other state or territory. It presents enormous challenges, but also opportunities. It is just one of the many reasons I have developed a strong interest in aged care.

Aged-care organisations in Tasmania are generally not as consolidated or as big as those interstate, and Tasmanian aged-care homes rely on their community connections and on dedicated volunteers. Older Tasmanians are still able to live in aged-care homes in the community where they have lived and contributed all their lives. Many leaders in the local industry are striving to maintain this model because it is seen to be the best model for those residents.

I was also thrilled to discover several days ago that Smithton's aged-care facility Emmerton Park won the prestigious aged-care organisation of the year award at this year's National Aged Care Awards just this past weekend. The chief executive, Rob Barden, believed the award was recognition for the commitment and tireless work achieved by the organisation's team and its implementation of programs and initiatives that provide a fun, inclusive and caring environment for residents. Once again, I congratulate the whole team down there. Yesterday I had the opportunity to speak to Chris, the deputy CEO, and relay how delighted I was and how beneficial it was to once again show that Tasmania can lead the way, and what better place than in aged care. It shows just what can be achieved when aged-care facilities across the country continue to strive for excellence to ensure that residents are provided the best care possible, while also pushing new and exciting initiatives to ensure residents are active and involved within their community more broadly.

I want to help shine a spotlight on numerous issues that I believe receive insufficient attention in the media. Aged care may not always appear exciting or newsworthy to mainstream media outlets, but what could be more important than making sure that some of the nation's most vulnerable people are looked after properly? Last year I was thrilled when Labor delivered on yet another promise and passed historic reforms to aged care, the $3.7 billion Living Longer Living Better program. Labor delivered what the coalition, when they were previously in government, was unable to achieve.

Sadly, this package of reforms did not receive the attention it sorely deserved. It creates a flexible and seamless system that provides older Australians with more choice, control and easier access to a full range of services, where they want it and when they need it. It also positions Australia to meet the social and economic challenges of the nation's ageing population. It is vital to our future and it is something that Labor should be incredibly proud of. In particular, we can attribute this achievement to the tireless efforts of the former Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, the Member for Port Adelaide. We are the ones with a positive plan to ensure the best possible care for older Australians, to substantially increase aged-care places and to build a stronger aged-care system.

One aspect of aged care that I intend to take a particularly strong interest in is dementia. For Australia, like many other advanced countries around the world, dementia is a tidal wave on the horizon. The numbers are sobering. An ageing population means that there are over 320,000 Australians living with dementia right now and in the absence of a major medical breakthrough the number of people with dementia is expected to be almost 900,000 by 2050.

It is also vital that we consider those whose lives are affected by people with dementia, not least the estimated 1.2 million Australians who are caring for their loved ones with dementia. It is also the single greatest cause of disability in older Australians aged 65 years or older. It is
the third leading cause of death in Australia. There is no cure. Fortunately for Australia, the Living Longer Living Better reforms deliver key outcomes for the future of assisting Australians with dementia. The package expands the Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Services into acute and primary care settings. It also focuses on achieving a timelier dementia diagnosis with GPs and practice nurses receiving much-needed training and education. There is also a new dementia supplement to provide extra financial assistance for dementia care.

It is vital that the coalition takes dementia, and indeed aged care, seriously and there are troubling signs that this may not be the case. Tony Abbott has decided not only that his government does not require a minister with specific responsibilities for aged care but also he has decided to lump aged care and ageing into the social services portfolio. This certainly shows that wherever the priorities of his government lie they certainly do not lie with improving the lives of older Australians. As things currently stand, aged care and ageing will be jostling for attention amongst a range of other broad social issues including families, housing, social services and disability services. It is certainly a step backwards for confronting key challenges in aged care that we must not shy away from.

We also know that the Prime Minister plans to abolish Labor's $1.2 billion scheme to deliver pay rises to the nation's 350,000 aged-care workers. These are people who work extraordinarily hard to care for older Australians and the coalition does not believe they deserve a boost in their pay. When the coalition released their aged-care policy—and I use that term very loosely because it was a pamphlet of a few pages—just before the election we also discovered that they propose to relax vital aged-care regulations including accreditation periods. As was pointed out by the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association, this shows a poor understanding of the problems of abuse, neglect and premature death in Australian nursing homes. We need to do everything we can to protect those in aged care, yet the coalition appears to be willing to relax the strong standards that are in place.

In addition to this, there is more recent and troubling news: the coalition government is abolishing the panel on positive ageing, a key council set up to ensure that the needs of older Australians were promptly considered in the formation of government policy. The rationale offered was that the Prime Minister wanted to streamline government where 'activities are no longer needed or can be managed within existing departmental resources'. The chair of this panel, Mr Everald Compton, has understandably spoken out on how short-sighted and reckless this decision was. The panel was just six months away from finishing a blueprint on how Australia can turn an ageing population into an asset. Those who are older and ageing were developing a blueprint for the future. Two years of solid work went into this blueprint. Two years of work for nothing. If that is not short-sighted, I don't know what is.

I can assure you that Labor will hold the coalition to account. I also think that this new role as shadow parliamentary secretary will provide me with the opportunity to look closely at the options for further improving palliative care in Australia. Older Australians deserve to spend their last days living comfortably and with dignity, and there is absolutely no reason Australia should not aspire to have the most efficient, well-funded palliative care system in the world.

When it comes to aged care more generally, I think that we should never shy away from big ideas; we should never be afraid of thinking outside the box. During the first of the Labor leadership head-to-head debates, both candidates backed the idea of higher superannuation
payments to build a sovereign wealth fund to help pay for the care of the increasing numbers of Australians living into their 80s and 90s. Referring to a plan floated by the former Prime Minister Paul Keating, our now opposition leader said Labor should consider 'big' new ideas, like 'encouraging people to save for a sovereign wealth fund that enables people to draw down on that resource when they need it'. It is certainly something that should be considered, because the cost of caring for older Australians is only going to rise.

I think it is also vital that we consider how a range of policy areas overlap with aged care; we must never view issues relating to the care of older Australians in isolation. For example, it is not surprising that many older Australians living in rural, regional or remote communities suffer from a distinct lack of access to medical specialists to assist in making a timely diagnosis of dementia. This is particularly concerning, because experts agree that an early diagnosis is crucial to treating dementia. However, one area where we can really hope for improvement in this regard is by encouraging innovative approaches to dementia diagnosis and care, including telehealth initiatives. Of course telehealth can only really benefit those who can connect to reliable, fast broadband that is available under, for example, fibre-to-the-premises NBN. Now that is of course under threat because the coalition wants to create a digital divide that will only allow some to access 21st century internet speeds.

Over the weekend, the sorely missed Tony Windsor was speaking at the Victorian Women's Trust event honouring Julia Gillard—the Prime Minister who of course presided over the passage of Living Longer, Living Better. When considering cost-benefit implications of the two opposing broadband plans, he had this to say about the real costs of not embracing fibre-to-the-home broadband:

We have a significant problem—Peter Costello recognised this some years ago—in terms of the ageing of the population; we are going to have a big bump of older people … coming through the system. If five per cent of those people could stay in their homes for one or two years additionally … what impact would that have on the capital costs of this bump coming through the system? What impact would it have on the operational costs of supplying those beds? What impact would it have on the psyche of the people and their families? That one issue—and we've done the numbers on this—pays for the scheme. It pays for the scheme on its own.

Fibre to the premises is a network which provides a medical-grade, reliable connection to each home and a complete standardisation of equipment. It is as simple as that. We need to consider just what the digital divide could mean for older Australians, in particular those who are at risk of dementia, and how many may not be afforded an early diagnosis if using inferior broadband alternatives.

Even though I now have new responsibilities as a shadow parliamentary secretary, I will of course continue to work diligently for the people of Tasmania. I think it is fair to suggest that the electorate of my home state sent us a strong message and one that we should listen closely to. There are of course many, many people in the state still committed to Labor, but it is also fair to suggest that some have, at least for the time being, issued a protest vote in key electorates that swung away from us. I prefer to see this as an opportunity: an opportunity to rethink our approach and an opportunity to reconsider the future of Tasmania and how we can improve the state's prospects.

During the recent federal election campaign it was clear that the chief concern for many Tasmanians was jobs and growth. The challenge lies in identifying precisely where Tasmania
can exploit competitive advantages and in the process find new, innovative ways of boosting the economy. One such area where I think Tasmania can get ahead and achieve positive change is the renewable energy sector, an important component of the modern economy that is no doubt bracing for the worst now that the Abbott government is in power. Unfortunately Mr Abbott and the coalition do not understand that encouraging developments in renewable energy has the capacity to transform the economy and lower total carbon emissions.

As I noted in the Senate chamber earlier this year, in recent times the policies delivered by Labor have ensured that the renewable energy industry has gone from strength to strength. To take just one example, wind capacity in Australia rose from just over 1,100 megawatts to over 3,000 megawatts during Labor's time in power. In fact, last year wind farms in this country produced enough electricity to power over one million homes, a target that seemed impossible not that long ago.

Tasmania was the recipient of several grants under the Clean Technology Investment Program and the Clean Technology Innovation Program, which allowed numerous local outfits in northern Tasmania and indeed across the state to upgrade equipment and reduce emissions intensity. There is much planned for the future of Tasmania's renewable energy sector as well, including a 200-turbine wind farm development on King Island.

Now is the time for Tasmania to embrace the renewable energy sector and make sure that the Abbott government does not hinder progress. If approached intelligently, renewable energy will allow the state to take advantage of new innovations in the coming decades that promise to revolutionise how energy is produced. It is not good enough to stick our heads in the sand. If we do not jump on board and do everything possible to encourage renewable energies then the accompanying jobs and growth opportunities will flow elsewhere and overseas.

Renewable energy represents a potential goldmine that will benefit all Tasmanians but only if we work to make it happen. Proactively fostering developments in the renewable energy sector, including putting a price on carbon, is about long-term vision. It is about considering what sort of planet we want to leave behind and new jobs and opportunities that have the potential to enhance Tasmania's economic prospects for generations to come.

I certainly hope that the member for Bass and his coalition colleagues do not continue to exploit outdated views to suit their own political objectives. The Prime Minister has on numerous occasions channelled the incredible Rick Perry and said that 'Australia is back open for business'. I can tell you that the businesses of the future will not be the same as the businesses of today, and if we want to position ourselves to take advantage of future areas of growth, including renewable energies, we need to act now.

Tasmania is also a state that can prosper by focusing on new innovations and new technologies. In order for Tasmanian businesses to innovate and thrive, particularly those in remote and regional areas, we need world-class broadband. Once again I am talking fibre-to-the-premises superior broadband, not the tin-can-and-string approach favoured by the current government. Earlier I spoke about how superior broadband outcomes could benefit those Australians with dementia or at risk of dementia, yet that is just one facet of how Labor's version of the NBN will benefit us all.
If we create a digital divide, we are also effectively closing the door on opportunities for many businesses which were not lucky enough to get in first. As I said in this chamber several months ago, the people of Tasmania, along with Australians everywhere, are eager to take advantage of fibre-to-the-premises broadband. When it comes to our internet speeds, we can afford to be bold. We have to be because if we are not the opportunities that come from fibre-optic cables delivering world-class internet speeds will be enjoyed elsewhere. It is as simple as that.

This highlights why this coalition government will be such a predictably disappointing and uninspiring government. They have this view that if left alone with minimal government intrusion that any economy can thrive. But what they do not understand is that any playing field is never perfectly level and it is not acceptable that one household can afford a computer for their child while another cannot. It is not acceptable that one business can enjoy superior broadband speeds whilst another cannot.

But it is more than that: it is not just about what is fair; it is also about what is smart. If Australia invests in its people, in its infrastructure, in new innovations and in ensuring that we do not suffer from a dual-track economy, I promise you we will thrive in ways that would not have been imaginable a generation or two ago. We are the lucky country, and we all like to say it and remind ourselves of it but it is true. But we are only the lucky country because we have not allowed complacency and complicity with vested interests, greed and selfishness to dominate our public policymaking. We need to always be looking ahead to the next opportunity rather than just enjoying what we have now. Our future depends on this. We have to change our mindset, and I call on this government to show some initiative and innovation so we can move forward.

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (11:11): Madam Acting Deputy President, isn't it nice to be back? I rise to respond to the Governor-General's speech and I want to open with some observations about the ritual that we are presently engaged in. I want to draw on the former Clerk of this place, Harry Evans, when he made some observations in 2004 at a conference of presiding officers about the address-in-reply and the degree to which the ritual that we are presently engaged in of making an observation in reply to Her Excellency's speech yesterday is or is not in accord with our own Constitution.

Mr Evans observes in his essay of 2004 that:

The Governor-General's opening speech, which sets out the government’s program, involves the Governor-General, who is otherwise supposed to be a politically neutral head of state, in speaking as if he or she were the actual head of government and in making contentious and partisan political statements.

I certainly in no way want my remarks to be construed as criticism of the Governor-General. In the Boyer Lecture we had the pleasure and the benefit of her considered views, and I think yesterday we would all agree that Her Excellency acquitted her responsibilities with dignity and managed to make her way through the entire speech with a straight face.

There were only two moments where the decorum that is expected of this chamber broke down during the speech. As I recall, the first was the proposal that the new government's foreign policy priorities are Jakarta not Geneva—and I think you could forgive this side of the chamber a moment of dark humour as we reflect on the diplomatic omnishambles that have unfolded as the government has blundered from one disastrous engagement with our
counterparts in Jakarta to the next—and, on the other occasion, where Her Excellency was forced to commend the new government's priorities for fast broadband for all Australians while presiding over the deliberate destruction of an entity that was poised to provide just that.

Those observations aside, we listened carefully, as we do to all addresses, because they set out the agenda of the forthcoming government. I congratulate my colleagues on the other side of the chamber for the new responsibilities which they have assumed. Senator Johnston, who has joined us, is taking on one of the greatest of all responsibilities: the oversight of the Australian Defence Force while we are still deployed in a theatre of war. It is an enormous responsibility that settles on all of us as we contemplate the challenges before us.

As a republican, I want to close these observations with the sense that I look forward to the day when we do not persist with the ritual of Her Majesty the Queen's representative in this place, summoning parliament—summoning the members of the House of Representatives into this chamber to advise the Crown. I would put that, as one of the world's oldest democracies, we have probably outgrown this ritual that we are presently providing a reply to. The Daily Telegraph states—so we know that it must be true; we also know that it is one of our Prime Minister's favourite news sources, but this is not an actual quote so if members of the government want to contradict me I am happy to correct the record—that our new Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, is saying that opposition is 90 per cent theatre and 10 per cent hard policy grind, and government is the reverse. If our Prime Minister has been correctly quoted in that regard, in many ways that is actually quite instructive. It is quite an illuminating observation: opposition being 90 per cent theatre and 10 per cent hard policy grind explains for me the policy vacuum that was described to the chamber yesterday on behalf of the new government.

It also describes and, for me, very well illuminates the degree of dissembling and deception that the now Prime Minister and his shadow frontbench of the time engaged in from opposition in order to win government, using this precept that it does not really matter what you say, it is 90 per cent theatre: 'The carbon tax will wipe Whyalla off the map; the mining tax will catastrophically damage an important export industry; border protection will protect people in Western Sydney from people fleeing war and genocide in other parts of the region because they are making you unsafe and making Parramatta road busy.' This 90 per cent theatre idea is transformed when you actually win government, through that Murdoch enabled process of mass deception over a period of years, and you wind up holding the Treasury benches and frontbenches in this place without much of an idea of what it is you want to do. The 10 per cent policy grind then has to unfold into a program for actually governing a nation in a deeply uncertain time. What we see on display, and what has been commented on already in the press and in this place, is effectively government by stealth—an agenda that unfolds behind closed doors and under cover of military operations and bland euphemisms. The theatre starts to fall away.

What I did last time we were given an address-in-reply by the Governor General—and it is no slight on her—is observe what was not in the speech. What was not in there? What is occurring in the background that was not forwarded for our contemplation and consideration today? That, I suppose, is the great flaw in the ritual, and it is not something that I particularly hold the Liberal Party to because the Labor Party did the same thing when they were in
government. You foreground the things you are proud of and want the country to talk about
and you background, or you hide and bury, the things that are going on that you are not so
proud of.

For me, the most critical thing that did not exist in the speech and so, presumably, does not
exist on the government's agenda is the fact that this is the age of dangerous climate change.
Global warming is not some mid- or late-21st century phenomenon that our grandkids had
better get geared up for; it is real. It is flattening cities, aggravating and enhancing the severity
of bushfires and causing more violent weather around the world now. That policy blind spot,
if you could call it that, on this government's agenda is probably the most dangerous thing
about the present government and its policy stance.

There was no mention of resource depletion. There was no mention whatsoever of the
fragile global economic climate. It appears that the lessons of the global financial crisis of
2008 have been swept into an untidy pile under the carpet and we are proposing to simply
continue to make the same mistakes. The budget emergency: if anything fits the template of
political theatre in order to win government at any cost it is the budget emergency. I have not
seen it. Anybody who wants to jump up and make a contribution from the government side as
to where their missing budget emergency has gone would set a lot of minds at rest.

There was nothing at all about homelessness or the housing affordability crisis. The
100,000 Australians who are homeless, and the roughly 10,000 of that number who are
sleeping rough and have absolutely nowhere to go, were completely missing from the speech.
The broader housing affordability crisis as it impacts on nearly everybody—particularly the
entire generation of Australians who have been priced, probably forever, out of owning their
own home and who will rent for life—was also airbrushed out of the speech.

Paralysing traffic congestion in nearly all of Australia's major cities did not make its way
onto the agenda but, as we compared our notes after the Governor-General's address
yesterday, we noted that everybody is getting a brand new freeway. There will be bulldozers
down the end of everybody's street, but no attempt to engage with the traffic congestion—the
vast traffic jams that now paralyse our great cities—because of decades of underinvestment
and the abandonment of the cities agenda by the coalition when they had government for 13
years during the Howard era. We saw, in recent years, the beginnings of an attempt to turn
that around and now we are back to the age of the bulldozer and the freeway.

There was nothing spoken of, so presumably nothing the government wants to draw
attention to, its ongoing proposals to dump radioactive waste in the Northern Territory, which
were pursued with great dishonour by the Labor Party when they were in government but
which, we must remember, were initiated by the Howard government. There was nothing at
all about the prospects of the uranium sector. We discovered yesterday that the honeymoon is
over in South Australia: yet another uranium operation has hit the wall. There was nothing
there at all about that most toxic of mining sectors.

There is nothing whatsoever about the unfolding surveillance scandal enveloping countries
around the world and that our great and powerful ally the United States has been embroiled in
surveillance overreach of the highest order. This has led to remarkable soul searching in the
United States, including from those who drafted the Patriot Act, inquiries in the UK, inquiries
and huge diplomatic uproar in Europe, and proposals originating in Brazil for an entirely new
governance structure for the internet. There is nothing at all from the Governor-General on behalf of the new Prime Minister about these issues which affect us all.

What we hear instead is the agenda that the Australian government is 'open for business'. This manifests very strongly in the way that Prime Minister Abbott frames the debate around Australia being opened for business, as though we can just run this ancient continent as if it was a giant corporation. There is the election of the coal billionaire from Queensland, Mr Clive Palmer, to the other place, who seems to believe that commercial experience is the only prerequisite you require for running something as complex as the continent and Commonwealth of Australia. There is Mr Maurice Newman, who perhaps gives us the essence, if you like—the free base economic theory that says markets in the unrestrained form will run everything to the benefit of all, the minimum wage is about twice as high as it needs to be and if only we simply let big business have its way all would be well.

This is a government backing into the 21st century with its eyes fixed on a past that no longer exists. These are dangerous times to be governed by an executive with its back turned to the century and to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. It is a government of stealth that proposes to be run by corporations for corporations. It is going to take all the resources this parliament can bring to bear to hold you to account. That is a responsibility that we in the Australian Greens and on the crossbenches take enormously seriously. When you come to government proclaiming a new age and a new era of transparency, this chamber will be testing those claims. The budget estimates committees will test those claims of a new transparency and openness next week.

As this parliament unfolds, make absolutely no mistake that a government with its back turned to the challenges that confront us is going to end in tears. As we have with the last government and the one that came before, the Australian Greens are open to negotiation and collaboration with this government. We are open to working with the crossbenches and to members of all sides and all parties on the deep challenges that confront us. But the first thing that the Abbott government will need to do is turn around and actually open its eyes to the challenges that are bearing down upon us.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD** (Queensland) (11:25): Can I start my address-in-reply to the Governor-General's speech by expressing my loyalty to her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia. Although I am a minimalist republican myself, I have great admiration for Queen Elizabeth and the work that she does. Long may she reign in Great Britain and long may we be part of the Commonwealth of Nations.

I was interested in all aspects of the Governor-General's speech, but I want to concentrate my address-in-reply on two particular parts of it:

Northern Australia is Australia's growth frontier.

If we prepare ourselves well, our cities and industries in the North will be well placed to capitalise on the expected growth from the Asia and Pacific regions.

Unlocking Northern Australia's potential with more investment, more exports and more jobs will not only benefit the region but the entire country.

I emphasise this last point about the entire country. Just prior to that the Governor-General spoke about Asia and the region and said:

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As the Asian middle class grows and demographics shift, there will be new demand for Australian education and research, expertise in advanced services, manufacturing and agricultural products.

To make sure this moment is not missed, my government will fast-track free trade agreements with South Korea, Japan, China, Indonesia and India.

I think those are two of the most important parts of the Governor-General's speech, particularly to that part of Australia that I represent, the state of Queensland, and particularly to that part of Australia where I live and have worked all of my parliamentary life, indeed all of my life generally—that is, in the north of our country. Prior to the election the coalition did release what I humbly consider was a very, very good Northern Australia policy paper, which detailed a future coalition government's aims and ambitions and aspirations for the north, and I am pleased to see in the Governor-General's speech reference was made to that.

The potential of northern Australia has long been recognised. As you know, Acting Deputy President Ruston, over 60 per cent of Australia's water falls above the Tropic of Capricorn in an area containing, according to the CSIRO, anywhere between five and 17 million hectares of arable soil. We currently use only about two per cent of the water that falls above the Tropic of Capricorn. The North covers almost three million square kilometres, more than half of the Australian land mass, but accounts for only one million people and less than five per cent of the population. Regrettably, only eight lower house members and four senators represent that area out of a parliament of over 200. Regrettably, particularly on a personal basis, there are no ministers north of the Tropic of Capricorn in that huge area—apart from Senator Scullion, who is there in his capacity as Leader of the Nationals in the Senate. Whilst those of us in the North have little influence on what happens in the more populous parts of Australia, I guarantee on behalf of those of us who are from there that this parliament will do everything possible to make sure northern Australia is never again forgotten, as it has been in the last six years.

Some years ago I was the minister for regional services, and we embarked upon a northern Australia forums process which resulted in some very good work. Regrettably, at the end of the process, I moved from that ministry to another ministry and my successor as minister for regional Australia did not have the same interest in the North—coming from Tasmania, that is probably quite understandable. There is this feeling in the North that the rest of Australia does not really understand us and does not really care. Lip service is paid to the North of Australia, but, when it comes to votes and money, governments of all persuasions naturally enough look to where the most votes, the most people and the most things needing assistance are. I know those of us who do represent the North, regardless of our political allegiances, will be vocal in ensuring that the great policy of the coalition and the future mapped out by the Governor-General in her speech are adopted, because there is such potential and wealth in the north of Australia that will—and I repeat the Governor-General's words—not only benefit the North but will benefit Australia as a whole.

Asia is very much a part of northern Australia. In fact, prior to European settlement, the peoples who then inhabited the north of Australia and the south of South-East Asia made up the one trading bloc. Clearly the climate, attitudes, wealth and natural facilities of northern Australia and the nearby Asian islands and mainland are all one and the same. That is why it is so important that we are able to use the wealth and the opportunities we have in northern Australia to build upon our relationships with Asia.
As the Governor-General mentioned—she did not mention these figures in detail, but she alluded to them—by 2030 there will be 3.3 billion middle-class Asians. Just to put that in perspective, there are 23 million people in the whole of Australia. Those middle-class Asians will want good food—clean and green food—they will want good education and they will want good medical facilities. That is where northern Australia can contribute so much. We already have world-class universities—and I particularly mention James Cook University of Townsville and Cairns, which is a world-leading university in several areas but particularly in marine science. It has a focus that is directed to the North rather than to the bulk of the Australian population in the south. We have medical expertise up there that is unique in the world. Australia is a developed country. We are one of the few developed countries in the tropic zone—that is, the part of the world which contains over 60 per cent of the world's population, between the Tropic of Capricorn and the Tropic of Cancer—with expertise in tropical health and medicine, in tropical education and in tropical sciences. They are the sorts of things that Australia has to focus on.

I was delighted to see, prior to the election, the coalition promise the contribution of $40 million to the Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine. That is something we promised in the 2010 election, subject to the Queensland government matching it. I am delighted to say that the Newman LNP government in Queensland have already put their $40 million in, and now, after the election, the coalition will also be contributing. The Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine is essential not just to human health but also to plant and animal health, and we are in a position to help the 60 per cent plus of the world's population who live between the Tropic of Capricorn and the Tropic of Cancer. There are real dangers there. Some of the bugs that proliferate in the tropical north of Australia could destroy Australian crops, animals and, indeed, people. We have all heard of the untreatable strains of tuberculosis coming from PNG into the Torres Strait Islands and into Cairns. These things have to be addressed, and it is essential that we focus on those areas.

It is essential that our defence forces are put where they need to be. I have often said that, unless we are expecting an attack from the penguins in Antarctica or the New Zealanders, the reason we have the major part of our naval fleet in Sydney Harbour escapes me. It should be up where it is needed, either for defence purposes or—for humanitarian purposes. Our ships are often used to help our friends in Asia and the Pacific with natural calamities, and why we would then have to steam two days from Sydney to get up into the North when those capital ships should be based in Townsville, Cairns, Darwin, Broome or Port Hedland again escapes me. HMAS Cairns is the second biggest naval base on the east coast of Australia. It should be upgraded and more of our ships should be put there. I am delighted that in our northern Australian policy we indicated that, subject to strategic considerations, we would be seriously looking at moving our Defence forces further north, where they are more likely to be needed than living in the luxury of southern capitals adjacent to some of the best entertainment areas of Australia. So that is something that needs to be pursued and it is certainly something I will be pursuing in my next six years in this chamber.

Zone tax was mentioned in our northern Australian development paper, and that is something that must be addressed. We do have a zone tax system and, for those politicians who say it is unconstitutional, we have had this zone tax system since the early 1950s and it has not been found to be unconstitutional yet. It was introduced in the 1950s to give some
compensation to those people who lived remote from the capital cities, and not just from the economic aspects there. Madam Acting Deputy President, do you realise that, if you live in, say, Cloncurry in north-west Queensland and you want to see an orthopaedic surgeon, you have to jump in a plane, spend $3,000 and be away from your family for a week? If you happen to live in Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane, you get on a tram or a train at the bottom of the street and you are at the hospital and the orthopaedic surgeon within a couple of minutes. Similarly, if you want to go to a major sporting or cultural event or to the best schools in Australia, you just catch a taxi at the front of your house and you are there in 10 minutes. People in the south have to understand that living in the areas that produce most of Australia’s wealth is a cost. It is costly. Sure, those living there might get a bit extra in pay, but people in the south do not understand all of the additional costs—health, education and merely living, with the cost of petrol and food—that happen. That is why years ago our forefathers in the parliament brought in a zone tax system which, if it had kept pace with inflation, would today be worth in the vicinity of $15,000 to $20,000. What is it these days? It is in the order of $300. When it was introduced, I repeat, it was worth about $20,000 in today’s currency.

Northern Australia has a number of industries besides the mineral industries. I repeat that about 60 per cent of Australia’s export earnings come from northern Australia. In addition to mining and metals processing, we have some very good agricultural industries. The northern beef cattle industry sustained a lot of the North, and in one of the most criminally stupid decisions of any government at any time the previous government banned the live cattle trade from northern Australia, thereby destroying what had been a very significant Australian industry. Do I see any of those who clamoured about animal welfare in those days up there now trying to help feed cattle that are dropping before their owners’ eyes because they cannot get feed or water? Where are all these animal liberationists now? The animal welfare issues alone—forget about the human welfare issue and all the families that will be without a home, an income or an education because of this criminally stupid decision—are right up there.

If there is one thing this government does, it will be to provide compensation for those that the previous government decision destroyed. Farmers everywhere will take their chances with drought, bushfires and floods, which have happened in the North. Farmers up there do not expect anything more in relation to those natural calamities that will occur, but they cannot be expected to deal with, and cannot ever deal with, capricious decisions of governments, made without consultation or any warning, overnight. Cattle were on the back of trucks ready to go to the ports for export to Indonesia. The previous government criminally decided to stop that trade there, and as a result of that most of the pastoral properties in northern Queensland—indeed, northern Australia generally—are in dire financial straits and something needs to be done by this government to make up for the criminal stupidity of the previous government in relation to live cattle.

The wealth of Australia is in the North, but to get the wealth out you need good transport infrastructure, and you need good health and education infrastructure as well for the families of those who go to gain and export that wealth that makes Australia the great place it is. So I am delighted to see, for example, that the current government has given $33 million to the Outback Way, a visionary road that will run from Laverton in Western Australia to Winton in Queensland, or effectively from Cairns to Perth. That $33 million is great—and I am delighted to see that, and it continues long-term support by the coalition for that road—but
there are many other roads up there that need to be fixed. I know you need six-lane highways in Sydney and eight-lane highways in Melbourne, but you do need—and you will not get votes for this, because there are only eight members of the lower house there—a decent, workable road network and rail network across the north of Australia.

There are many other issues in the North, and the commitment to getting those free trade agreements going, particularly with Japan and Korea, as I mentioned, is great for Australia and particularly good for northern Australia. I could—and will—spend a lot of time over the next six years talking about these things. I am delighted that the Governor-General in her speech did highlight that important connection with Asia and the importance of northern Australia. I congratulate the government on the commitment. I and, I am sure, everyone in this chamber will be there making sure that those commitments are actually honoured, as we expect of a coalition government.

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (11:45): I rise to speak to this address-in-reply. Firstly I want to begin by acknowledging the result of the federal election on 7 September and to recognise the efforts of the Australian Electoral Commission, which is and remains, I believe, one of the world's best electoral agencies and a model for both developed and fledgling democracies. Obviously, though, some of the results have not yet been finalised, and I acknowledge the extraordinary—if not bizarre—circumstances in Western Australia and the challenging situation in which my colleague Senator Ludlam and my colleague and good friend Senator Pratt find themselves. It is my hope that that situation is resolved in a way which gives Western Australians the faith in their electoral institutions that they rightly deserve and have come to expect. It is also, of course, my hope that Senator Pratt is returned as a senator in this place.

It is also incumbent upon me to reflect on the result of the election in my home state of Tasmania and to pay tribute to those outgoing members of the other place. I shall not eulogise their time as members of parliament too much, because I am sure that their contribution to public life, whether it is as legislators or in some other roles, is not yet over, but I would like to pay tribute to my good friend Sid Sidebottom, to Dick Adams and to Geoff Lyons. I want to say thank you to them for their service to their communities and for their commitment to our state and our nation in their time as members of parliament. Also, Julie Collins, the member for Franklin in the other place, deserves congratulations for once again being recognised by the people of Franklin for the work that she does representing them in parliament, fighting for the rights and interests of people who are most in need of help in our community.

Finally, I must also make note of the dedication of our Labor candidate for the division of Denison, Jane Austen, who drew on a depth of experience as a teacher and as someone who has worked in mental health to run a campaign that very much connected with people. While her efforts over more than a year did not result in the return of Denison to Labor, Jane helped to ensure support for community organisations, responded to literally hundreds of constituent matters and brought together employers and jobseekers in Denison. Jane was, of course, assisted by many volunteers and supporters from Labor and from the community, all of whom give their time and energy out of a belief in the values and potential of the Labor Party and our candidate.
But there is no doubt that around the country there was a certain ambivalence at the last election, leading to some unexpected results in both a number of lower house divisions and in the Senate contests. Unfortunately, there were a high number of informal votes in some places as well. But our democracy is an ever-changing system, and we should welcome new voices. We should also, however, remain alert to the capacity of our system to cater for new electoral trends and adjust our system to ensure the most democratic outcome. This, along with the question of tracking and securing ballots to avoid a repeat of the situation in Western Australia, will no doubt be a matter of some consideration by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and a matter of serious public interest in the next three years.

Ultimately, the votes of the people of Australia have delivered government to the Liberal and National parties joined in coalition, however unstable or uncertain that coalition can sometimes be, particularly on matters of foreign ownership, farming or issues affecting rural communities, to name a few. Yesterday we heard the Prime Minister speaking, by that antiquated quirk of the monarchy system, through the Governor-General, who delivered an address on the government's agenda. I must say I hope that one day we can rid ourselves of that curious and quaint convention and speak as a democracy ought to speak: directly and with a sense of our own national identity.

But what was most striking about that address was the lack of ideas contained within it. The fact is the government, almost uniquely in the history of Australian governments, has been elected not with an agenda of its own, not with any ideas of its own but instead with a handful of slogans and with a pledge to repeal the vital reforms introduced by the previous, Labor government. With characteristic negativity, the coalition has failed to make that transition from opposition to government, instead outlining a plan to undermine existing plans in the national interest.

The government has begun to tear up those plans and the maps for the National Broadband Network, dividing this country into digital haves and have-nots. It has reduced the potential for future growth in our economy in doing so. The government has pledged to repeal the carbon price, the emissions trading scheme that almost all economists and scientists believe is the best and most efficient way to achieve carbon emissions reduction. The government has pledged to repeal the minerals resource rent tax and tried at the same time to perpetuate the fiction that, if the MRRT goes, it will also need to repeal the low-income superannuation contribution and the schoolkids bonus, presumably just because it is on a roll.

One of the government's first acts following the devastating bushfires in New South Wales was to take the extraordinary decision to repeal important payments to families affected by those bushfires, including people who were shut out of their homes for more than 24 hours. Despite the plea from the opposition and members of the community to not cut off a payment that was so rightly provided by the last Labor government, Minister Keenan has not reintroduced payments to those families affected by the bushfires in New South Wales.

This government, which yesterday tried to spell out its agenda, has revealed a hollow negativity unbecoming of any Australian government. In fact, on Sunday evening, two days before the opening of this parliament, the Prime Minister used his office and his website to release a social media message which claimed that 'as far as the Government is concerned the adults are back in charge.' This is coming from someone who, when he was Leader of the Opposition, allowed and encouraged dismissive, insulting and misogynistic language to be the
principal tool of his political attack. This social media message was particularly insulting. It confirms the Liberal born-to-rule mentality and demonstrates the approach the coalition has to government in general—that is, to treat the Australian people like children.

In the eyes of the Abbott government, the people of Australia are not old enough, are not wise enough and are not Liberal or National enough to understand the business of government, so they ought not to be told. The people of Australia do not need to hear about on-water matters, the state of the economy or how the government is dealing with the budget emergency it spoke so much about in opposition. The people of Australia do not need ministers to front the media and explain themselves or even have ministers face up to parliament to explain matters in their own portfolio. As far as the government is concerned, the adults will deal with that—Abbott's adults will deal with that and the people of Australia should be seen and not heard. That is the way this new government is treating the people of Australia—like they are children who should be seen and not heard while the adults are back in charge. How insulting to the people of Australia, who have every right to know what this government has in its agenda.

Over on this side of the Senate we believe in quite the opposite: that the people of Australia deserve to be furnished with all the information so that they can make decisions about the need for effectiveness of policies for themselves. We believe in transparency in our government and openness in our government. For all the Prime Minister's and the Attorney-General's talk about freedom—and they are clutching onto motherhood statements—they have very little faith in the Australian people and even less regard for the intellectual freedom of the electorate.

The government's other early distinction is its exercise of astounding vindictiveness against those it perceives to be enemies, threats or outside of its old school tie network. Only days after the election the coalition announced that it would, for no reason other than spite, rescind the worthy appointment of former Victorian Premier Steve Bracks as consul-general in New York. Shortly after, the Attorney-General made a point of requiring Barrie Cassidy, the respected ABC journalist and stalwart of the press gallery, to step down from the volunteer position of chair of the Old Parliament House Advisory Council despite his manifest qualifications to continue in that position. The heads of departments who had, according to the tinted perceptions of the coalition, been altogether too compliant in executing their duty to the government of the day under Labor were also rolled.

Such vindictiveness goes more to personal prejudice and private vendetta than to any sort of public interest. The public interest is and always has been best served by having the brightest and the best around the table. It should be said that the brightest and the best tend to also be a diverse group of people. It is not served by lining up yes-men to close ranks around unprepared and incapable ministers or by executing the enemies of the club. The victims of the coalition's vindictiveness of which I have spoken are eminent and capable people. Although the country will be poorer without their service, I hope they will be able to forge ahead and contribute in other ways to Australian society.

There are many more victims of the coalition's petty spite who will suffer more lasting damage from the government's actions. These are the families who will no longer receive the schoolkids bonus and the low-income earners who will have less super on which to retire. The coalition has demonstrated a willingness to risk community safety and sacrifice the lives of
young Australians in their quest to send a political message and a threat. I am talking, of course, about the government's decision to review funding for successful applicants under the National Crime Prevention Fund. The National Crime Prevention Fund is a $40 million component of the Australian government's package of measures to address gang violence and street crime in our community. The NCPF is designed to support those who address the cause of street crime, particularly the cause of street crime amongst young Australians. Diversionary activities, particularly training and employment opportunities, are known not only to reduce the risk of crime in communities but also to give young people the tools to build more meaningful, law-abiding lives. It is there to ensure that our young people stay out of the criminal justice system. Those programs support crime prevention for young people.

The NCPF is funded through the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, under which proceeds of crime that break foreign or state laws can be confiscated and redirected to good use in preventing crime. That is, money from criminals goes into crime prevention—fairly simple. Applications for this year's program closed in May. In August this year, after an anxious wait, organisations across the country were informed of their success by the then Minister for Justice. The names of some of the successful organisations will be familiar to all senators; they include Father Chris Riley's Youth Off the Streets charity and programs run by the Police Citizens Youth Clubs. Some successful applicants were local government organisations doing local crime prevention work but others were small organisations doing important grassroots work. The funding delivered under the NCPF would either sustain these organisations or allow them to expand into areas where they would be able to make a very substantial contribution and a difference to the lives of young people at risk of coming into contact with the justice system. They were going to really make a difference to those young people's lives, to ensure that they live a life free of crime—exactly what the National Crime Prevention Fund is designed to achieve.

One such important program in my home state of Tasmania is run by an organisation called Training Opportunities and Options for Learning—TOOL—which applied to run a program called the Youth Employment Challenge to connect disadvantaged young people to after-school work, employment and traineeships. It is difficult to imagine anybody opposing such a worthwhile program which has such a groundswell of community support and such potential to encourage young people to invest in their own wellbeing and behaviour and to live their lives free of crime. This particular program cost $190,000 to run and it certainly saves the government and the community a lot of money in the long term. That is perhaps why this program has bipartisan support in Tasmania. Both the Tasmanian Liberals and the state government support this program, and it has also received great acclaim throughout the community. Therefore, it is difficult to understand why, in mid-October—more than two months following notification to TOOL that they had been successful in receiving funding from the National Crime Prevention Fund—the Attorney-General's Department got back in touch with TOOL, as it did with many successful recipients under this grants program, to tell them to stop what they were doing because the new government was reviewing that very program in light of its election commitments. Here was a very worthwhile program, in fact there were eight similar programs in Tasmania, and many more across the country, who had been notified that they were successful—only to find out after a change of government that that notification was not worth the paper it was printed on, because this new government had basically torn it up.
TOOL have sensibly gone about retaining staff, ready to commence their project, and now, in the face of this government decision, they must consider retrenching people. Other organisations are at risk of closing down, given that they have incurred expenses to prepare for various initiatives that they were told they would receive funding for. Why? Because the new government have decided that they are reviewing the program in light of their election commitments. Let us remember: they are reviewing a program that comes from the National Crime Prevention Fund. The National Crime Prevention Fund has nothing to do with consolidated revenue. As I outlined earlier, this is proceeds of crime funding. This is funding from criminals that is going into crime prevention. Why on earth would any government want to take money away, put a halt on such a program, when these organisations are doing such an effective job in the community to ensure that our young people live a life free of crime? These organisations have been stonewalled by this government and, I understand, have been reminded by my Tasmanian colleague, Senator Eric Abetz, that the process of review 'may take some time.' These organisations do not have time. Organisations like the PCYC are, every day, ensuring that our young people get the best opportunity to live a life free of crime. They need this funding to ensure that our jails, our criminal justice system, do not end up with these young people in there through the support of such organisations. (Time expired)

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (12:05): I rise to give my contribution to the address-in-reply. I point out that this is clearly a government that does not understand complex policy issues. It has been so used to three-word slogans to undermine the previous government and to get itself elected that it actually does not understand that Australia is facing many complex policy issues that need a set of well-thought-through policy initiatives. There was no understanding and no mention of the poverty that faces many, many Australians or the fact that our income support system is broken, that people are living in poverty or are being condemned to living in poverty.

It is clear that the government have no grasp of the fact that these are complex issues that need addressing, because they started their term by getting rid of the Social Inclusion Board. This is the very board that was put in place to look at the issues around the most disadvantaged and the most vulnerable people in this country and to looking at the policy levers needed in order to address this very complex program. From the rhetoric that we heard throughout the electorate, we know this government will push more and more social service delivery responsibilities onto the not-for-profit sector.

But it has in fact ended the not-for-profit reform agenda. It has wound up the body that was working on this reform to enable us to have a strong not-for-profit sector and a strong civil society. And, of course, we all know that it is turning its sights on unwinding the most recent reforms in the not-for-profit space, including getting rid of the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commission.

Our social services are already struggling to keep up. I undertook a survey of just some of the community service delivery organisations in my home state of Western Australia and found that the burden on those organisations was increasing almost exponentially. There is clearly an expectation on the sector that it is to do more and more but without adequate support and adequate funding, and with more and more people in quite desperate situations. More children are living in poverty.
The Greens understand that poverty is a complex problem, and we understand that barriers to work are not simply a lack of motivation or being geographically removed from where those jobs are. The big items that the government outlined yesterday were, in fact, just recycling their policies from previous terms in government: Work for the Dole, relocation funds and review of child care. Three governments have relied on these solutions and three governments will have failed to address the structural and personal barriers that people who are looking for work continue to face. These are complex barriers that real-life people face in real life.

New information that we got from estimates in May demonstrate that the number of people on Newstart is up 55 per cent from 2007. We know this is partially due to the decade of policies that aimed to push more and more people onto Newstart from parenting payment single and from the disability support pension. The fact is that these numbers are growing—the number of long-term unemployed is growing—and the policies that we have in place to date have not been working.

Despite the punitive regimes of welfare to work, people are still being kept out of the system. Children are being denied the basic support they need and being condemned to live in poverty. Newstart is now so low that it is impossible to live on for any length of time. It is ridiculous to maintain this old approach that it is for the short term when we know people are on it for many years—and that number has gone up sharply as well. Even coalition senators conceded during the inquiry into the adequacy of Newstart last year that it was too low.

Then the coalition seemed at least committed to tackling these barriers to work through better jobs services, training and support and better support for employers. But yesterday what we heard was more of the same: about the dignity of work and the intention of government to get those who are not in work to work on the dole—that is, back to digging ditches and pulling out weeds.

The government's agenda is very shallow here. Again, they have not addressed the complexity of the issues that need to be addressed. It is a great irony of this failure to understand the complexity of this social exclusion in that the government will ensure that more and more people remain in the poverty trap, too poor to afford to maintain their home and their health and living in constant insecurity, literally having to choose between eating and some more personal expenses—say, for example, as people have frequently pointed out to me, getting health addressed and even getting a haircut. These are the true barriers to work.

These are also, of course, barriers to our next generation. One in six children in Australia is living in poverty—strange this was not mentioned yesterday! I would have thought this would have been a priority. In some cases they do not have enough to eat and they are living in cramped one-bedroom flats. Many more are living in families that are only just getting by. This is an insidious form of poverty, where children do not have the ability to participate fully in their schools, they are excluded from extracurricular activities, they are not eating enough and, if they are eating enough, it is often of a poor quality because that is all that can be afforded. They have clothes and shoes that do not fit.

I have told people's accounts in this place on many occasions. Just to quote one mother who was affected by the cuts to single parent payments, when they were dumped onto Newstart, she said, 'I don't buy anything anymore. My son even had shoes that were a size too small and he refused to tell me as he knew I had no money to buy new shoes.' These parents
are struggling to care for their families and trying hard to find suitable, stable work under sensible conditions where they can still be able to look after their children. This was not contained in the government's speech about their so-called vision for this country.

Another group that is facing significant pressure is those who find themselves out of work after the age of 45. As I have discussed with a number of people, when it comes to employment 45 is the new 65 if you happen to find yourself out of work. Most of the complaints that the Age Discrimination Commissioner receives are around the area of employment—68 per cent of the complaints in 2011-2012. It is clear that age discrimination is affecting those over the age of 45, and there is a rapidly increasing cohort of those who are unemployed; one-third of the people on Newstart are over the age of 45. This is going to grow.

Older people who are currently unemployed need an opportunity to improve their income and in doing so enable them to live more fulfilling, independent and dignified lives in retirement. These are people who are being condemned to live on Newstart, which we know makes them live in poverty, to the age of 65, and in the future of course it will be 67. And then they retire with nothing. It is urgent that we address this age discrimination and help them overcome their barriers. Offering only subsidised places in employment is not enough. We need to address their barriers to employment and to help them retrain and reskill, and to tackle head-on this issue of age discrimination in our workplace.

Clearly, at the heart of this, our job services and barriers to work need to be addressed, not just for older Australians and those with a disability but for everybody across the board. Our job services are not addressing the complex barriers to unemployment, particularly for the long-term unemployed. I have had so many stories shared with me over the last two years by people who are being pushed into despair and condemned to live in poverty without adequate support so they can overcome those barriers to work. Just telling people they are bludgers, just putting people on Work for the Dole programs will not deliver the outcomes. We are condemning a generation of people who fall into unemployment after the age of 45 to permanent poverty. We are condemning one in six children to live in poverty. We need to ensure that we are taking a caring approach to our society, and that needs to be part of the DNA of our society. It is clearly not in the DNA of the coalition and the new government, if the opening address to the parliament is anything to go by.

Similarly, I am deeply concerned that the government has failed to grasp the challenge of aged care. This is a serious and growing challenge. We know Australia is ageing and that our aged-care system is simply not up to the challenge at this stage. I welcome the commitment to dementia funding. This is something that the Greens identified as a priority and we have spoken at length to the sector about it, but Alzheimer's Australia has identified other key areas as well as an increase in funding for research. We need better home care, better residential care and better respite care. We also need to address the quality of that care. Just yesterday Alzheimer's Australia drew attention to the need to address the quality of residential care and to ensure that that is the norm. This means that we need to be doing more than just investing in research; that is great, but we need to be doing more. In particular, we need to be training our aged-care workers to address the issues around dementia.

That brings me to a great disappointment. After the very significant debate we had on the aged-care agenda last June, when we managed to agree to increase the payments for aged-care
workers, who will be needed in significant number into the future, this government is now intent on unwinding that. That will mean that aged-care workers will go backwards. They will not get the wages they are due and we are not going to attract the numbers of workers with the skills that we need in the aged-care sector. That is another cut that is not part of a caring society.

One of the key commitments by the Greens has always been to constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. We have participated in the cross-parliamentary approach to this issue. I participated in the expert panel report, as did members of political parties and the Independents in the last government. We welcome the government's commitment to constitutional recognition. We think that the 12-month deadline may be hard to meet, but we hope we can meet it and we are committed to doing that. But I must emphasise the need for genuine consultation. The expert panel undertook extensive consultation and came up with a set of recommendations that we are confident have support as a result of that consultation process. Any move from these recommendations or substantive changes to them will require more consultation with the community. The Greens will not be supporting any question put that is not supported by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. As we know, any question needs the support of the broader community, but we need the support of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community first. We will be working hard to ensure that we come up with an effective process and that a question we put to the community is one we are confident they will support. We cannot afford to put a question and get a no vote.

I want to turn to some other areas in my portfolio responsibilities touching on agriculture and the marine environments. It is vital that we have a strong and sustainable agricultural system in this country. We were extremely disappointed to hear just last week that the government has gouged out money from Landcare and natural resource management in order to address the ongoing drought. What the government does not get, while it is busy getting rid of the very effective carbon legislation by repealing it, is the link between sustainable agriculture and the need to address climate change. Our climate is changing. One of the first industries that impacts on is agriculture—sustainable agriculture. Agriculture in this country is already being affected by climate change, and I need look no further than out the back door in my state of Western Australia, where we have been coping with the impacts of climate change, a decrease in rainfall and seasonal variation, for a significant period of time. Not only has the government raided Landcare, it has raided drought money out of my home state of Western Australia to transfer to the east, completely ignoring the fact that we are trying to address drought, which is affected by climate change.

If we do not have good land care and natural resource management practices we will not be able to deal with drought; we will not be able to put in place a system to ensure that our agriculture system is drought resilient and to actually drought proof our agriculture. It is such short-sighted thinking. And I must say also that it comes after the government's promise that they would not take any money out of Landcare and natural resource management. Not only have they taken money out, they cannot commit that they will not take more. It is robbing Peter to pay Paul. It also misses the point that, by being climate deniers, you are actually doing-in agriculture in this country.
You are also doing-in our fisheries industry by being climate deniers. Our ocean ecosystems are already changing as a result of climate change. We already have global warming. We already have ocean acidification. We already have our currents being affected. We already have our marine species being dislocated. There is now a website called Redmap that you can go on to and log where you catch marine species out of location. Go on it and have a look—it is really educational. There are lots of species there, I can tell you, that have already been dislocated. Fishers know this because they are seeing these species now when they go fishing. It is really interesting to see the map, again, particularly for my home state of Western Australia. The oceans are changing, our ecosystems are changing, and it means that we need to have good fisheries practices and management that adapts to and addresses these changes. It means that we need a strong and effective system of marine protected areas.

And what is this government doing? I notice this was not mentioned yesterday: they are trying to undermine and wind back the world-leading marine park protected system in this country that many people have worked so long to put in place. Not only does it protect our marine ecosystems it also protects our fisheries and puts in place a management system. It ensures we do have sustainable fisheries and a marine environment in the face of climate change. But of course we should not be taking action on climate change—I forgot that!

Another area of sustainable agriculture is of course biosecurity. I would probably run out of time into tomorrow if I were speaking on my feet and repeating everything I had heard a coalition senator say about biosecurity in the last eight years. Yet what is one of the first acts of this government and of the agriculture minister? It is to cut funding to biosecurity, to cut funding on border compliance. Again, biosecurity is fundamental to sustainable agriculture. Where is the vision? We have seen a cutting of 220 jobs that are absolutely critical for our agriculture and to provide protection from invasive plant and animal species.

Then of course we get to GrainCorp. This is one area where I agree with the Nationals. I am very concerned about the takeover by ADM of GrainCorp and I agree with the Nationals: it does present problems for our farmers. We should restart the inquiry into this takeover. We are concerned that it will be anticompetitive, that it will have a negative impact on our farmers, and we urge the Nationals to continue their opposition to this takeover.

Then we come to the government's agenda for northern Australia: the pipedream that northern Australia will save the rest of Australia. Again, it is a complex environment with complex issues but they are going back to the dream that there is plenty of rainfall up in there and we will just build a few dams and put agriculture in. Australia needs a very different approach in the way we manage northern Australia and not repeat the mistakes we have made in southern Australia. Number one out of that is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need to be at the heart of that process. We cannot repeat in the North the mistakes that we have made in the south. We do not agree with the government's vision for this country. We believe we have a much better vision for this country and we will be seeking to implement that whenever we can, and that will be at the heart of our decision-making.

**Senator BIRMINGHAM** (South Australia—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (12:25): It is a great honour to rise and speak on the address-in-reply debate marking the commencement of the new parliament and, importantly, the beginning of a term of a new government, a government determined that we will get Australia back on track. The cornerstone of the mandate that we took to the Australian people at the election.
was to create a stronger economy and to deliver that stronger economy by reducing the tax and regulatory burdens that Australians face, especially the carbon tax imposed by the previous government. Our new Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, and our new coalition government were elected with an unambiguous policy to abolish the carbon tax, fixed or floating, lock, stock and barrel. As promised, legislation to repeal the carbon tax was the first parliamentary act of our government introduced to the House of Representatives earlier today. We as the new government are getting on with the job of building a stronger economy so that all Australians have an opportunity to get ahead. We are abolishing the carbon tax, ending Labor's wasteful spending, securing our borders and building the roads of the 21st century, just as Her Excellency outlined as the government's agenda yesterday.

Labor's legacy from their six chaotic years of government was: 200,000 more unemployed Australians, gross debt skyrocketing towards $400 billion and beyond, the five biggest deficits in our history, more than 50,000 illegal arrivals by boat, and the world's biggest carbon tax as one of many new tax and regulatory imposts. Pleasingly, our government has been elected with a significant majority and holds some 90 seats in the 150-seat House of Representatives. At least 1.4 million more Australians voted for the coalition than voted for the Labor Party with Labor's share of the national vote dropping to its lowest level in one hundred years. The punters across Australia spoke overwhelmingly. The mandate for the new government and our agenda is extraordinarily clear.

In our home state of South Australia, Mr Acting Deputy President Fawcett, we recorded a 5.5 per cent swing to the Liberal Party and secured a majority of 52.4 per cent of the two party preferred vote. At a personal level I am incredibly pleased and proud of Matt Williams' win in Hindmarsh, which ensures we once again hold a majority of House of Representatives seats in South Australia. Having been our candidate for Hindmarsh in 2004—and having helped to manage the campaigns through the 2007, 2010 and 2013 campaigns—I know how hard so many people have worked over such a long period of time to return that electorate to the Liberal fold. In Hindmarsh, we secured a swing to us of 8.1 per cent, well above both the South Australian and the national averages, and the largest swing to the Liberal Party in any of the mainland seats won off Labor. I have known Matt for close to 20 years and am confident that he will make an outstanding representative of the people of Hindmarsh and of the Liberal Party.

I pay tribute also to Tom Zorich, Carmen Garcia, Sue Lawrie, Damien Mills, Nigel McKenna, Cathie Webb and Gary Burgess, who deserve gratitude from all members of the Liberal Party for their hard work as candidates at the recent election. I congratulate Christopher Pyne, Andrew Southcott, Rowan Ramsey and Jamie Briggs for increasing their margins. I know how hard they all worked to ensure a successful victory in South Australia. Tony Pasin, the new member for Barker, also deserves congratulation and welcome to this parliament. I thank former member Patrick Secker for his loyal service to the Liberal Party and I wish Patrick and Sharon every success in the future. I also thank those Senate colleagues who worked so hard with their campaigning efforts—grassroots campaigning and mobilising volunteers across electorates—specifically Sean Edwards in Wakefield, Anne Ruston in Adelaide and David Fawcett in Kingston.

Our local Senate result was, however, disappointing. The failure to secure two quotas in our own right is unprecedented. I would like to make special mention of Senator Nick
Xenophon. I congratulate him on his extraordinary result. Nick increased his vote to a record 24.9 per cent. I congratulate all senators-elect as well. I had the pleasure of meeting them just a couple of hours ago. I appreciate the diversity of Australian interests that will be represented in the Senate and I look forward to us working together.

However, it is important that our electors retain confidence in this chamber. It is safe to say that the gaming of the electoral system, by those who call themselves 'preference harvesters' or the like, played a role in creating some surprise outcomes, especially in some other states. This gaming must be addressed through appropriate consideration of electoral reforms so that we have ongoing public confidence in the way senators are elected in the future. In the interim, between now and 1 July next year, the challenge to Labor and the Greens is to behave as decent legislators who respect this place, proper process and most importantly the will of the Australian people. That will was incredibly clear at the last election. The challenges for our government are great due to the mismanagement of the last six years, but we are determined to get Australia back on track.

In my home state, we have viewed the successful federal election result as the first stage of getting South Australia back on track. Pleasingly, the federal results show that our state team has much to be positive about. Through hard work, discipline and fresh ideas, stage 2 of ensuring South Australia is moving forward again can be achieved. On 15 March next year, South Australian voters will have the opportunity to change their state government. Currently, the state Labor government is focused on more spending, higher deficits, more debt, slower growth and encouraging our young South Australians to move interstate or abroad.

Earlier this year Steven Marshall—and it sounds like a familiar story to the government we just saw depart at the federal level—was elected leader of the state Liberal Party. Steven Marshall is an outstanding businessman who brings great acumen, great drive and great vision to our state, and I have the confidence that he will outline a plan of action to get South Australia back on track; to deliver the growth for our economy and the investment in our next generation. Distressingly, in South Australia we have seen almost 28,000 full-time jobs lost in the past five months. There were almost 10,000 full-time South Australian jobs lost in October alone, which equates to one full-time job lost every five minutes. South Australia lost the most jobs of all states in Australia, with 5,500 South Australians joining unemployment queues.

From 2016-17, South Australians will be paying $952 million each year in interest payments on debt. That is a staggering $2.6 million in interest payments each day for a state of our size. It is clear that South Australia is at a crossroads. We need to attract more investment, prioritise better and build the infrastructure our state so desperately needs to get the economic opportunities we need in the future.

Regardless of decisions taken by multinationals, like Holden, in the coming weeks or months, far greater priority in terms of the economic development of South Australia needs to be given to new industries and new opportunities that can sustain new jobs into the future. We cannot continue to rely solely on industries that are at the whim of international decisions and that rely so heavily on government support.

As well as representing the people of South Australia in the federal parliament and having the honour of having been re-elected in the recent election, I have been honoured to be
appointed as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment. In my portfolio area, the coalition has provided bipartisan support for the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and I have recommitted our government to ensure the Basin Plan is implemented on time and in full.

We understand the need to ensure that the environment, communities and economies are all considered under the Basin Plan. We need to have a healthy environment and healthy towns, businesses and farms. The water reforms of the Howard government were not about decimating the productive capacity of towns in the basin, but about striking a balance between environmental needs and the social and productive aspects of the basin. Unfortunately, the previous government went seriously off track in that regard. Our government has made a commitment to communities of the basin that we will ensure that this balance is again the focus for implementation of the Basin Plan. Our government will implement a 1,500 gigalitres cap on buybacks and, consistent with this, we will give priority to infrastructure programs to bridge the gap necessary to fully implement the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. This commitment will be articulated shortly in a new water recovery strategy. As most members of the Senate would be aware, I have championed effective management of the basin for a very long period—essentially, my entire 6½ years in this place. The opportunity to ensure the basin plan is implemented in a sound way that is reflective of community concerns is one that I relish and I am delighted to have this role in government.

Our approach will provide certainty to people living in the basin that our government will honour our commitments to deliver the basin plan and do so in a way that reflects the triple-bottom-line approach of environmental, economic and social management decisions being taken in harmony.

In line with this, the government has committed to rephasing some of the budgeting in the water portfolio so that we give effect to higher priority around infrastructure spending, and environmental works and measures activities over the next few years, so that buybacks to bridge the gap are taken as a last resort in strategic cases, not a first action in terms of the implementation of the plan. By doing this we can and will deliver the environmental outcomes sought by the plan while minimising the impact on basin communities. It is our commitment to all of those people living throughout the Murray-Darling.

Our approach is a significant point of difference from the modus operandi of the former government, who waged a destructive and non-strategic buyback campaign since 2007 and which has had significant and far-reaching impacts on basin communities—not just economic impacts but social impacts and impacts, importantly and significantly, that have undermined their confidence in the reform process.

I want to see a situation where communities throughout the Murray-Darling Basin embrace the reforms underway, see them managed in a positive way and see positive benefits for the environment, for their productive capacity and for the future of those townships.

As a government we will work with the states to ensure that implementation of the basin plan does not undermine the social and economic foundations of those communities by delivering on these commitments to infrastructure and environmental works and measures targets.
I have already met, and discussed implementation arrangements with, all of the state water ministers and am pleased with the cooperative approach each of them is taking with regard to the implementation of the basin plan and look forward very much to chairing my first meeting of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council on Friday of this week.

Addressing the issue of inefficient infrastructure through on-farm efficiency programs and infrastructure modernisation is the best way to return water to the environment in a win-win circumstance that gets those entitlements for the Commonwealth water holder whilst maintaining the productive and agricultural capacity of basin communities, thereby minimising the impact on those communities of this important reform.

While the water portfolio is dominated by the Murray-Darling Basin matters and implementation of the basin plan, there are also numerous other matters of considerable importance that I am pleased to be playing a role in the management of—particularly elsewhere in water management, the ongoing management of the Great Artesian Basin, where great work is again being done as a result of initiatives of the previous coalition government to cap bores and improve the sustainability of the Great Artesian Basin and the Lake Eyre Basin, where new challenges continue to arise to ensure sustainable management of that unique and amazing asset that Australia holds.

Effective management of all these important water systems is vital to the future of our environmental health and economic opportunities in Australia. We have placed great priority as a government on supporting the key pillars of economic development and activity, especially in the space of agricultural exports. The Murray-Darling Basin is Australia's largest food bowl, and I am determined that it will remain Australia's largest food bowl with the right infrastructure and the right approach to utilising water such that in years to come it continues to see maximum levels of food, fibre and produce grown here in Australia by Australians for Australians and for export to the rest of the world.

I am also privileged to have responsibility for a range of other agencies: the Bureau of Meteorology, Parks Australia and the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. The bureau provides regular forecasts, warnings, monitoring and advice spanning Australian and Antarctic territory. It is one of the most fundamental and widely used services of government. It is one of our key agencies in terms of providing warning systems and effective advice in relation to events of natural disaster and risk to Australians and providing important information to sustain economic activities, be they agricultural, aviation, transport or otherwise. I pay tribute to the great work the people of the bureau have already done in the short time of our government in providing effective assistance to people concerning the New South Wales bushfires and ensuring timely advice to help with the management in fighting those bushfires.

Commonwealth National Parks protect some of the country's most stunning natural areas and Indigenous heritage. The unique Australian biodiversity is protected and conserved from the coastal Booderee National Park to the world heritage listed terrestrial park of Kakadu. I take this opportunity to congratulate Peter Cochrane, the long-serving director of National Parks who was appointed by former coalition environment minister, Mr Robert Hill and will shortly retire, for the great work he has done.

I am also pleased to have responsibility for the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, which has an important role to ensure that world-renowned Sydney Harbour is protected and
integrated into the life of the city while preserving the range and extraordinary mix of historic buildings, pristine natural landscapes and Defence heritage.

Beyond my direct responsibilities, I look forward to continuing to work across the broader environment portfolio with our new Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt.

We have a range of priorities that are core to the government's overall objective of getting our country back on track with a stronger economy. At the centre of those are one-stop-shop reforms to ensure we minimise the level of green tape that applies across the Australian economy, such that environmental standards are held at the highest level but undertaken and ensured in the most efficient of ways. I also look forward to working again on the repeal of the carbon tax and on ensuring that our agenda is fully implemented, and I trust this Senate will work with us in that way.

Debate interrupted.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Ludlam) (12:45): Order! It being 12.45 pm, I call on matters of public interest.

Parliament

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (12:45): I rise to use my first speech as some sort of a guide to how I feel I have been performing in parliament. The issues I particularly noted as those I wanted to address while I was here were: to raise the profile of and deal with the very desperate lives that are lived by people with disability and their families; to look at the ridiculous amount of regulation we have around small business, particularly family business; and to look at how we go about being a parliament. In the first two areas, I feel I have contributed to some of the success that has happened. In the last area—the area of how we are a parliament and the productivity of this parliament—I do not think I have made a significant contribution at all. That is something I want to talk about today.

I was moved to reconsider this matter by a number of valedictory speeches made by retiring members of parliament, particularly in the House of Representatives, at the end of the last session of parliament, which I initially thought of as perhaps indicating a matter of shame. It was the very great largesse with which families were thanked for the extraordinary sacrifices that they had made that, in some way, almost made it seem that people were quite proud of how badly their families had fared during their time in parliament. On reflection that is not the case. I have reread those speeches; people are sad about how this happened.

We need to do more than be sad about it, and I would like to reprise some of those speeches to give you a sense of what people were saying. The former Attorney-General, Ms Nicola Roxon, said in her valedictory speech:

Most of all I thank my gorgeous, reliable and very funny husband, Michael. Together, Michael and mum helped me manage a busy life as a senior cabinet minister with a young child, the first woman to combine such roles. Without mum travelling with me for the first year while I was breastfeeding, I am not sure I would have managed …

She goes on to thank Senator Joe Ludwig and Mr Anthony Albanese for their assistance:

Joe Ludwig for covering me so willingly while I was on maternity leave, and Anthony Albanese for insisting that I be given leave to attend Rebecca's first day at school.
These are all the sorts of things that one would expect to happen in any business, where someone could get leave to go at least for the first couple of hours of their child's first day at school, and yet it is apparently remarkable enough to be mentioned in a speech in this place. I am sure her views on how she could not have done it without her mother and husband would be endorsed by Mrs Sophie Mirabella, were she in a position to give a valedictory speech.

I was even more interested to read the comments of Mr John Forrest. He even comments that someone thought he was perhaps too much of a gentleman to be a member of parliament. He talks, in terms of his family, about them being the most precious resource you can have:

… someone to keep the castle well-resourced for you to retreat to when it all gets a bit too tough. I have been blessed to have such a person in my wife, Pam, and confess my awe as to her achievements.

He goes on to say:

To our two daughters, Tanya and Anik, now getting on with their lives despite the legacy of a too-often absent father, to Pam belongs all the credit for that, thank you.

Other speeches were from Mr Stephen Smith, Mr Robert Oakeshott—who says he did not want to be here to make the 'guilt speech' in 10 years about being an absent father, and yet pointed out that he had not been around for much of his children's lives—and Mr Tony Windsor, who made the point that his children were tiny when he first went into parliament and were now both about to get married. Those who saw the interview last night with former Prime Minister Paul Keating will note that he spoke about the enormous pressure on families and marriages of being absent in Canberra from at least Monday night to Friday night; of course, at that stage he was only coming from Sydney, not the extraordinary distances that some of our members travel.

The reason this is particularly important is that it is very relevant to the number of women who perceive becoming a federal member of parliament as something they would want to do. Why on earth would you want to do it? Why would you put yourself in the situation where, as you will have heard from some of those speeches, you simply could not get by without your mother and husband to support you non-stop? It was quite interesting that, while the male members of parliament who were retiring thanked their wives for the way they had looked after their children, the women pointed out that they could not have done the job without other help apart from that of their spouses.

Once again it just reinforces the point that women continue to be the main driving force behind childrearing and, whilst they can happily get by with having others to help manage that, they are still seen as the ones who manage the rearing of children. Until we can see ways to improve the way we go about parliament I cannot see how we can have a significant increase in the number of women who are interested in becoming members of parliament. Of course that means we therefore have a somewhat more shallow talent pool in than we might otherwise have.

Because of this I was interested in looking at the subject of the productivity of parliaments. Whilst parliaments seem to be very good at inquiring into other people's productivity, they do not do such a good job of inquiring into their own. I am very pleased, of course, with the establishment of the Commission of Audit that the Abbott government has set up. We need to regularly reassess productivity. I advocated about four or five years ago for an audit of the amount of assistance that we put into rural and regional communities, because in many ways,
apart from an inquiry into the drought relief packages, we have no idea how useful or how efficient some of that funding is. So in every area looking at your productivity is fine.

Unfortunately, when you look at parliamentary productivity you tend to get a fairly superficial overview. I have just pulled out one typical Canadian response which says, 'We have doubled parliament's productivity and implemented key commitments we made to Canadians.' Basically all they say is that they have passed a lot of legislation. Of course, that may be extremely productive. It may be extremely unproductive. I am very pleased that one of the things that this government will be doing is spending two days a year repealing legislation. That can be extremely productive as well. The amount of legislation that has gone through is in fact meaningless as a way of assessing productivity. It can be very unproductive legislation.

I was interested to read in a very good paper recently published by the Parliamentary Library called *Expertise in public policy: a conceptual guide*, by Matthew Thomas and Luke Buckmaster. They make the point that in the first five years of the existence of the Australian House of Representatives an average of fewer than 30 pieces of legislation were considered each year. I sometimes felt in the death throes of the Rudd-Gillard government we were considering that many in a day. For the period 2008-12 the average grew to 220 each year. The 17 acts that were made in 1901 covered taxation, post and telegraph services, immigration, revenue and administrative matters.

The point made by the researchers is that whilst that 1901 legislation did include some technical aspects—for example, the 1901 Distillation Act apparently describes the distillation process in some detail—the scientific expertise required to assess this legislation was minute given the amount of expertise that is required to underpin many of the acts and the policy that we pass today.

This leads us to the question of the committees that support the work of the parliament. If you look at the number of committees that we have in the House of Representatives and the Senate there are a number of double-up committees. I see no problem with this per se. I remember that the Senate Community Affairs References Committee chose not to inquire into the topic of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, despite a strong interest in the area, because the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs was also interested in the topic and was working on developing an inquiry, which they have since held.

I have the figures here. From February to June last year the Senate committees inquired into 105 matters. For the same period the House of Representatives inquired into just over 40 matters. I beg your pardon, 32 bills were also referred to House of Representatives committees in the same period last year.

So the question is whether these inquiries are actually achieving what they should. Certainly in my view doubling-up of inquiries is a very unproductive thing to have happen. I did raise this issue at one stage with former Speaker Harry Jenkins, who undertook to consider the issue, but unfortunately that got lost in the many issues that developed in the days of the Rudd-Gillard government.

I was also interested in the inquiries the procedure committees have undertaken. The last inquiry by the Senate Procedure Committee was into petitions and I am pleased to say that I think even we have got that system well and truly sorted now. There is a very, very long and
impressive list of inquiries held by the House of Representatives Procedure Committee looking at, most recently, electronic voting in the House of Representatives. I note with interest that in June 2010 they presented to the then Rudd government a report called *Building a modern committee system—an inquiry into the effectiveness of the House committee system*. To date there has been no response from the government. The Rudd-Gillard government had that report for three years but did nothing with it. In my view, the reason the committee system is quite important is that we spend a lot of time in committees and we make some extraordinarily important decisions and recommendations. We need to use expertise as wisely as we possibly can—certainly having witnesses appear twice before two different committees on exactly the same subject in exactly the same building within days or weeks of each other is not a productive use of the time of any member of this parliament. As I have pointed out, we have quite enough to do in simply attending the parliament itself, with the effects that that has on our families. There are all manner of other areas—Skype and other ways to communicate—that we need to explore further, and I am hoping to do that in the next six months.

**Tasmania: Genetically Modified Crops**

**Senator THORP** (Tasmania) (13:00): It is no secret that Tasmania has suffered some severe economic blows over recent years, as international economic instability and the high Australian dollar have brought many retail, manufacturing and tourism businesses to their knees. But our agricultural sector has bucked this trend, proving itself to be a real shining light in our state's economy. In fact, it is one of the very few sectors that have continued to deliver improved performance in the long term.

Over five years, from 2003-04 to 2008-09, the gross value of our agricultural produce grew by a massive 42 per cent. In 2009-10, our agricultural and fisheries industries, for example, injected $1.6 billion into the economy. This direct farm-gate output contributed approximately five per cent to our gross state product and generated six per cent of the total state employment. When agriculture's post-farm-gate activity is added to the mix, the contribution to the economy increases to 16 per cent of gross state product and 20 per cent of state employment. As we move forward into the Asian century, there will be even more opportunities to expand this vital and productive sector to build greater wealth for our producers in the state economy and generate much-needed employment opportunities.

But Tasmanian producers also face significant challenges. While our geographical isolation provides confidence for our trading partners in the quality and purity of our produce, this can also be a double-edged sword. We are a small island and we are very far away from our major trading partners. As a result, we are always going to be faced with the hurdles of distance and scale in getting our produce to market. Leading economist Saul Eslake recognised this challenge recently during a visit to Launceston when he said:

In order to be economically sustainable in those circumstances, Tasmanian producers have to concentrate on producing premium products for which customers can be persuaded to pay high prices.

There is no future in the old Tasmanian model of producing what, for us, might be large volumes, but on a global scale are small volumes of essentially undifferentiated commodities competing only on price.
If we want to pay ourselves first-world wages and observe first-world standards of environmental protection and health and safety standards, then we can only do that while selling goods that people will pay high prices for, not competing on the basis of the lowest price.

To my mind, if Tasmanian agriculture is going to continue to grow, we need to take advantage of every opportunity to leverage our natural advantages to secure premium markets and lucrative contracts. Currently, a very clear advantage that Tasmanian producers are able to access is the state's GMO-free status. In 2001, the Tasmanian state government, of which I was a part, showed great foresight in placing a moratorium on the production of genetically modified crops. This move recognised that a GMO-free status would provide a vital point of difference for Tasmanian produce that would capitalise on our clean, green brand.

In 2007, I sat on the state government's joint select committee which was tasked with revisiting that moratorium. This was a robust and extensive review, which again concluded that our GMO-free status provides Tasmanian producers with a competitive advantage that far outweighs any potential benefits of genetically modified crops. Thanks to this state government moratorium, our producers have an iron-clad promise to their customers that produce is completely free of genetic modification. This is an asset that has proven to be valuable—and very saleable—to our international and domestic customers. But, with the moratorium set to expire in November next year, we again find ourselves at the GMO crossroads.

The Tasmanian government has established another review, and a decision should be made before the end of this year. But the government should be very aware that any potential decision to sacrifice the state's GMO-free status is one that cannot be unmade. It could also have far-reaching implications for many primary producers and for our clean, green Tasmanian brand. I believe that the government made the right decision in previous years, and I believe it is still the right one in 2013.

In recent months, I have actively met with the heads of industry and government to learn more about their perspective on the issue. The vast majority have agreed that allowing GM crops into Tasmania is a risk we simply cannot afford to take. Representatives from the honey, beef, fruit, feedlot, organic and vegetable sectors have told me not only that they are securing higher contracts on the basis of our clean, green, GMO-free reputation but also that they simply could not enter a number of markets, particularly in Europe and Asia, if the moratorium were to be lost. We must also recognise that if we open the door to GMOs we may be unwisely investing in a product that people simply do not want.

It is undeniable that innovation is needed to drive productivity within our agricultural sector, and I support advances that may increase farm profitability, but there are many ways to do this without turning to genetic modification. Better soil, water and traffic management all have a proven capacity to increase yields without the potential risks and negative market perception of GMOs. It would also be counterproductive to embrace innovation that results in products that consumers do not want to buy or that we have to sell at a reduced price for biofuel or animal feed, like many GM crops in North and South America. Across the globe, people are becoming much more food aware and they are increasingly concerned about what goes into their shopping baskets. We simply cannot afford to ignore this groundswell of community concern about gene technology in a world where 61 countries already have
mandatory labelling of GMOs and at least 24 American states have GMO labelling bills before them this year.

We also need to look at the genetically modified crops that are currently available and consider the potential benefits they could offer producers and whether these benefits outweigh the benefits of maintaining the moratorium. Currently only two broadacre GM crops are approved for commercial growing in Australia: cotton, which is not suitable for Tasmania’s climate, and canola. There has been talk of a genetically modified rye grass which the dairy industry is interested in pursuing, but by the industry’s own reckoning there will not be a market-ready product for at least six years. This is likely to be beyond the time frame of an extension to the moratorium. Similarly, some poppy growers have called for an end to the moratorium, but to date there have been no commercial GM poppy crops grown anywhere in the world. In fact, in Australia all licences for research into GM poppies have been surrendered. The poppy industry also needs to be cognisant that a move to GM poppies would almost certainly impact opportunities to sell into the lucrative European market, which is notoriously concerned about GMOs.

So that only leaves genetically modified Roundup Ready canola. This product comprises only 10 per cent of national canola crops, showing farmers are still choosing conventional canola over its GM relative. This is not hard to understand given that discerning Japanese and European customers are offering premiums of up to $60 a tonne for GM-free produce. Very recently, Tasmania secured a contract for 600 hectares of oilseed from a new Japanese buyer at a price premium. I understand that Tasmanian non-GM canola is actually garnering the greatest price of all Australian canola, even above the prices for non-GM produce from other states. This sends a very clear message that it is not just the GM-free status of the individual crop that matters but also the confidence that the state-wide moratorium brings.

Some have suggested that Tasmania will somehow be left behind if we do not open our doors to genetically modified crops, with many claims being made of increased yield and productivity. However, some important studies have cast doubts on these claims. In fact, a very recent study undertaken by New Zealand genetics expert Professor Jack Heinemann compared agricultural productivity in North America and Western Europe over the last 50 years. The study concluded that GM-free crops in Europe actually yielded more per hectare than the USA’s GM crops. Similarly, back in Australia a Birchip Cropping Group report on the 2011 canola season found GM varieties yielded no more than the best conventional varieties and were actually less profitable than non-GM crops by $150 a hectare due to higher input costs.

We should also recognise that GM crops bring with them potential environmental risks. The vast majority of currently approved GM crops across the globe are designed to exhibit one of two traits: either they are resistant to Monsanto’s Roundup herbicide or they have a pesticide built into the cells of the plant itself. Unfortunately, many growers have found weeds develop resistance to the chemicals the GM crops are designed to withstand. This has resulted in increased herbicide use and has forced farms to turn to tank mixes of older, more dangerous chemicals to get the same effect—something I think all of us in this place would agree is undesirable.

Another risk of some GM crops is their capacity to spread their seed a great distance, escaping into the wild and putting neighbouring crops at risk of contamination. In New South
Wales GM canola jumped containment lines within a year of the state's moratorium being lifted, and in Tasmania we still have rogue plants cropping up from small-scale GM canola trials in 1998-99. Western Australian farmer Steve Marsh learnt about this risk firsthand when seeds from his neighbour's GM crops blew into his fields, contaminating his crops, causing cancellation of his organic certification and sparking a legal battle for compensation. Contamination can also have large-scale trade implications, as we saw last year when Japan and South Korea suspended wheat imports from the United States after the discovery of unapproved genetically modified wheat in a field in Oregon.

In Tasmania our beekeepers are acutely aware of what they stand to lose if the moratorium is not maintained. Unfortunately, bees cannot tell the difference between GM and non-GM plants, and premium contracts in Europe would be jeopardised if there is any risk of GM contamination. Opening the doors to GMOs in Tasmania could also spell the end of vital pollination services for some of our vegetable crops if honey producers are forced to withdraw to maintain their GM-free status. This could threaten millions of dollars in revenue.

This reality stands in stark contrast to assertions in a recent report into the economic impacts of maintaining the moratorium which was commissioned by the state government and undertaken by Macquarie Franklin. In this report the authors asserted, 'Tasmania's GM-free status is not of itself a market advantage for honey producers.' The Macquarie Franklin report also failed to quantify the financial impacts on other industries, instead referring to the 'intangible benefits' of maintaining the moratorium. In doing so, it did not take into account the lucrative and very tangible contracts our producers are currently securing on the back of our clean, green GM-free status. While I believe the Macquarie Franklin report offered a solid contribution to our understanding of the issue, we simply cannot rely on 'intangibles' in making this important decision. As far as is practical, we need an industry-by-industry, contract-by-contract analysis of the situation to make an informed decision. To this end, I would strongly support further investment by the state government in this area. I am sure Senator Bushby would agree that, until we have this information and until GM products demonstrate incontrovertible benefits that outweigh the risk for Tasmanian primary producers, the moratorium needs to remain.

It is my great hope that the state government will recognise the value of the moratorium to our producers and the wider Tasmanian brand. However, even if the moratorium is saved, I still have a concern that it could potentially be threatened by current federal government negotiations into the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, in particular the potential for investor states' dispute settlements. These provisions could, as I understand it, allow companies to sue the Australian government for decisions that result in the loss of profits. The previous Labor government opposed ISDS provisions during earlier Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations, but there have been some reports that the new coalition government may support them. I urge the government to ensure that Australia retains sovereignty over its decision-making capacity and Tasmania's GMO moratorium by ensuring that any investor dispute provisions be excluded from any free trade agreements. (Time expired)

**Science**

*Senator DI NATALE* (Victoria) (13:15): It is with some regret that I stand here today to give my first speech in this new parliament to mount a strong defence of science. It appears that the role of science in this parliament is once again under threat. The situation now is even
more dire than it was in the previous government, and the forces of antiscience have been very powerful in this new Abbott government. The first piece of legislation that has been introduced into this, the new 44th Parliament, has been to wind back action on climate change—some of the most significant and ambitious action the world has seen to address the issue of climate change. In the face of the mounting scientific consensus around climate change that we have a looming catastrophe that all the evidence says is getting worse, what do we see? We see the introduction of a bill that would repeal action on climate change.

The government dismisses action on climate change as an impost on business and it uses this fact as though it somehow trumps the physical realities of chemistry, physics and the laws of thermodynamics. The physical world has a very inconvenient way of intruding on our lives. Witness the bushfires in New South Wales, witness the storms in the Philippines and you understand that the impost on business comes a very distant second behind the impact on the lives of ordinary people if we continue to sit on our hands. We have been accused of politicising some of these great tragedies, but it is a uniquely Australian proposition that to mention what scientists right around the world acknowledge—that climate change means more fires, more floods and more superstorms—is somehow a political act. The political act is in staying silent. The political act is in ignoring the pleas of the lead negotiators at the current climate change talks in Warsaw who came from the Philippines and asked us to take urgent action to prevent more of these storms hitting their shores.

But, of course, the antiscience agenda of this government is not restricted to climate change. We are now seeing that we face the prospect of cuts to higher education, which really undermines the ability of this nation to tackle some of the most pressing problems that confront us. Instead of investing in research and development; in building a thriving pharmaceuticals industry so that we can once again lead the world in high-tech industries; instead of investing in smart, low-carbon manufacturing, we continue to subsidise fossil fuels to the tune of billions of dollars. And now we hear that the CSIRO is to be gutted and with it the hopes and careers of countless Australian scientists, who may well go overseas. We can add to our export list the collective wisdom and investment of these great Australian minds. It is a backward-looking, regressive, dangerous, economically irresponsible agenda to take unless you somehow think that we are miraculously immune from the impacts of climate change, unless you think that the future of the Australian economy is to continue to be the world's quarry and to ignore the potential for high-tech industries that the new economies present us.

And nowhere is this antiscience agenda clearer than in the campaign to undermine renewable energy. We have seen the issue of wind power continue to be politicised, and now we see that the Australian government is subsidising some of those very groups who undermine the transition towards clean, renewable energy. Some of those groups have gone so far as to create a new medical condition: wind turbine syndrome.

We need to say a few things about wind turbine syndrome. It is a very loose collection of symptoms: nausea, headaches, abdominal pains, vertigo, absence of nausea and so on. This loose collection of symptoms is very real to many people and very distressing. It is not with those people who are experiencing those symptoms that I take issue; it is with the campaign that is being run to ensure that those people continue to suffer harm and they recruit new people to experience some of those distressing symptoms.
It is worth reflecting on how this condition has gained some traction. Much like the placebo effect in medicine, where, if you give somebody a treatment and tell them that it is going to work, there is a good chance they will get benefit even though that treatment may be nothing more than a sugar tablet, the same is true in reverse. If you tell someone that somebody is going to experience a harm in response to a particular exposure, there is a good chance they will experience that harm regardless of what that exposure might be. In fact, there is a lot of empirical research in this area that shows that when we expose people to the supposed mechanism of wind turbine syndrome—that is, infrasound—they experience symptoms regardless of whether or not that exposure is real. It is an issue that has been investigated. The NHMRC have made it clear that there is no established link. If you look at the epidemiological evidence—that is, the patterns of disease—you see a very clear pattern. There are 200,000 wind turbines operating in countries right around the world, and you see the presence of this disease in the areas where these campaigners are most active.

In Australia we have 51 wind farms, yet 70 per cent of all complaints about poor health come from those six wind farms where the Waubra Foundation—one of those misleading groups—has been most active. In fact, 90 per cent of all complaints came after the Waubra Foundation in 2009 added health complaints to their list of concerns against wind farms. We have a situation where a group that is spreading misinformation—based on no plausible biological mechanism through which this disease could occur—and perpetuating harm rather than protecting the public could be, for example, campaigning against the real impacts of poor air quality as a result of coal mining. In fact, last year I led an inquiry into this issue. We are seeing more people die from poor air quality than in the road toll. The mining, combustion and transport of coal is one of the reasons that that is happening—yet this group campaigns against a clean and renewable form of energy, despite the fact that if we are able to make the transition towards clean and renewable energy we mitigate some of the most important health impacts that climate change will bring against us.

The issue here is not the Waubra Foundation continuing to spread the misinformation that it does. The issue here is that the Australian taxpayer should not be subsidising that activity. Taxpayers are subsidising the work of the Waubra Foundation—that is, every person in this country makes a donation to the antiwind activities of the Waubra Foundation because it has been granted deductible gift recipient status. Donations to the Waubra Foundation are tax deductible. How can that be, you might ask. They have been granted status as a health promotion charity, when in fact their work is much more likely to cause poor health than prevent it. There is an item in the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act that says that the entitlement to registration exists for an:

Institution whose principal activity is to promote the prevention or the control of disease in human beings.

The Waubra Foundation are doing the exact opposite of that, and we are paying for their activities. Even worse than that, we have learnt that the Waubra Foundation are commissioning tax-deductible donations on the basis of their status as a health promotion charity so that they can take action in administrative tribunals against new wind developments. So, their health promotion work extends to appeals in administrative tribunals so that they can stop the development of new wind proposals.
When you start joining the dots, it is not hard to work out what their real agenda is. Peter Mitchell is the current Chairman of the Waubra Foundation. He is a current and former director of a number of oil, gas and uranium related companies—surprise, surprise! He is a director of Lowell, who are basically the ultimate holding company of a resources fund for companies engaged entirely in mining and energy investment, including oil, gas and uranium. He is also the former director of the Australian Institute of Petroleum Ltd and Molopo Ltd, a company entirely investing in oil and gas. He was the founding public officer for the Western Plains Landscape Guardians. The landscape guardians are a group of people who object to wind on the basis of their impact on the landscape. That is a legitimate concern. Some people do not like looking at wind turbines. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but science is not in the eye of the beholder. Whether wind turbine syndrome exists is a testable, objective fact. It has been tested and it does not exist. The science is in.

Sarah Laurie is one of the other directors of the Waubra Foundation. She is a non-practising doctor and the so-called medical director. I have no doubt she is genuine in her belief that wind turbine syndrome exists and makes people unwell. But if we all as medical practitioners acted according to our beliefs, our gut instincts and our hunches we would be using leeches and burning witches at the stake. My concern with Sarah Laurie is that she has violated the fundamental principle of what it means to be a medical practitioner: first, do no harm—the Hippocratic oath. This group does enormous harm. Other directors include Liberal politicians, climate change deniers and people with a long history of opposing wind developments. If you are going to oppose them, be honest about it. Do not ask for subsidies from the taxpayer. Do not dress this all up in some sort of cloak of medical impacts. Be honest about what you are doing if you do not like them. You might be invested in the fossil fuel industry; come clean about that. Do not invent the charade of wind turbine syndrome.

This is a group with all the hallmarks of a front group using the same tactics as the tobacco industry did more than 50 years ago—sow the seeds of doubt and muddy the waters. They are doing everything they can to stymie an industry that has the potential to reduce our emissions—a viable industry in this country that is not one that relies simply on digging stuff out of the ground and shipping it out, but creates meaningful jobs for people right around the country.

I have just learnt that the people of Waubra have taken issue with the Waubra Foundation because they rightly believe that they have damaged the reputation of this town. I visited Waubra recently. It is a town that benefits from that great development there. It means people have jobs and the local engineers in Ballarat can provide components. It means local workers in the region have full-time employment in an industry that they believe is the future of this country. I will be taking further action on this issue and I look forward to the Australian Taxation Office and the charities commission explaining why taxpayer funds should subsidise this group.

Defence: Commemorations

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (13:31): I rise to discuss a matter that is already of great interest to many people across Australia and which I hope will become of great interest to many more over the next 12 months. As our nation grows we celebrate and we commemorate. Just last month the Royal Australian Navy marked its centenary with the International Fleet Review in Sydney Harbour. National and international dignitaries joined
with Australians from all walks of life in paying tribute to our Navy's proud tradition of service and the significant role it has played in keeping our nation secure and free. Appropriately, the tone was one of celebration, with music and fireworks displays entertaining the throngs of people who lined the many kilometres of the foreshore to take part in these historic events.

In just under one year from now, on 1 November next year, our nation will commemorate another significant milestone in the history of the Royal Australian Navy and our nation. Instead of Sydney Harbour, the national spotlight will be on Western Australia and its first European settlement, the township of Albany. It was on the morning of 1 November 1914 that 36 merchant ships sat anchored in the waters of Albany's King George Sound joined by the newly born Royal Australian Navy ships HMAS Melbourne and HMAS Sydney along with HMS Minotaur, which had escorted ships from New Zealand. Aboard the merchant ships were some 30,000 troops from the Australian Imperial Force and the New Zealand Expedition Force, 26 nurses from the Australian Army Nursing Service and 7,500 horses, who together would establish one of Australian history's most enduring chapters.

Yet the meaning of this chapter continues to arouse passions. In April this year, on the eve of ANZAC Day, La Trobe University professor Marilyn Lake gave a speech in which she dismissed the Anzac experience as 'a myth that should be cast off'. At the same time, alleged comedian Catherine Deveny took to Twitter to dismiss the Anzacs as 'racists, misogynists and rapists'. I found it disappointing in the extreme this week when former Prime Minister Paul Keating chose to use his speech at the Australian War Memorial on Remembrance Day to continue what has been a consistent pattern of divisive behaviour by him. It is one thing for an attention-seeking quasi-celebrity like Catherine Deveny to say outrageous things about Australia's war dead—her comments are of little consequence and of even less value. However, comments from a former prime minister are quite different; by virtue of the position Paul Keating once held, his words are accorded weight. Knowing this, I was saddened that Mr Keating chose a solemn occasion such as Remembrance Day, in a place as hallowed as the Australian War Memorial, to say what he had to say. I am sure many senators are by now aware of the contents of Mr Keating's speech. I take particular exception to this passage:

Young Australians ... can no longer be dragooned en masse into military enterprises of the former imperial variety on the whim of so-called statesmen. They are fortunately too wise to the world to be cannon fodder of the kind their young forebears became: young innocents who had little or no choice.

Paul Keating's obsessive need to rewrite our nation's history, chiefly to recast the United Kingdom as the villain of the piece, borders on the absurd. As columnist Miranda Devine noted yesterday, many of those Australians who fought in the First World War, including her own grandfather, made a conscious choice to answer the call to duty. Moreover, at that time many of them did feel a deep and abiding connection to the United Kingdom—as alien and distasteful a concept as that may seem to Paul Keating and his like. Many of those Australians who fought in the First World War did not feel as though they were being oppressed by an empire; they saw it as their duty to protect and serve that empire. To reduce the heroes of Gallipoli to the status of simpletons who were marched off to fight Britain's wars is offensive in the extreme. It is the kind of low-rent dial-a-comment rhetoric in which this former prime minister has long specialised.
To try and retrospectively project the attitudes and thinking of a section of contemporary Australian society on those who lived a century ago is absurd. Yet it is something Mr Keating has often tried to do. I was working in this very building twenty years ago, in October 1993, as a staff member for the then member for Cowan. At that time Mr Keating was Prime Minister and preparations were being made for the service to bury the Unknown Soldier at the Australian War Memorial. It was announced that Mr Keating would serve as chief pallbearer. As I recall, the government had at that point made no provision for the Leader of the Opposition to participate as a pallbearer. This, of course, was outrageous. These occasions should always be bipartisan. And I think all senators and members of the public would agree that the recent joint visit to Afghanistan by Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten set an entirely appropriate tone.

The then member for Cowan made a contribution to the adjournment debate to highlight the then government's appalling decision. He said:

This Armistice Day will be a particularly unique one with the entombment of Australia's own Unknown Soldier. The date of 11 November 1993 has been marked as a national day of importance, and correctly so. However, I am personally distressed and saddened by the decision to allow the Prime Minister (Mr Keating) to be the chief pallbearer.

The member for Cowan went on to say:

When we examine who the other five pallbearers are on this occasion—the Chief of the Defence Force Staff, the chief of each of the services, and the Vice-Chairman of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission—the decision to make the Prime Minister the chief pallbearer leaves me very concerned.

The Prime Minister should take his rightful and respected position behind the official mourner, the Governor-General, in the company of other parliamentary and political leaders, the mayors of two French cities which were located on the western front and representatives of national veterans and widow organisations.

I recall Labor MPs that night affecting outrage that Mr Keating's right to serve as chief pallbearer would even be questioned. I recall the even rarer sight of Mr Keating himself—who generally tried to limit his parliamentary appearances as Prime Minister—wanting to come back to the chamber. The then member for Cowan was speaking for many in his own electorate and, I am sure, across the country and in the wider community.

Eventually, on that occasion, Mr Keating was forced to back down. That has not stopped his relentless campaign to rewrite Australian history to suit his own ends. In this task, he can always be relied upon to support a small but vocal group of academics and attention-seeking public figures who think that they are wiser or more virtuous than others in the community. Happily, these embittered and irrational voices are drowned out by a more enlightened and enduring perspective. The vast majority of Australians recognise that what occurred at Gallipoli birthed a determination that remains one of our nation's defining characteristics—the Anzac spirit.

The departure of the first ANZAC convoy that November morning in 1914 was a dramatic spectacle. Albany residents lined the shores to bid the troops farewell. Some climbed to the top of Mount Clarence to obtain a fuller view over King George Sound, and watched as the ships sailed over the horizon. For those on board the convoy, it felt like the start of an exciting adventure. Few could have anticipated the horror of what was to come when they arrived in
Gallipoli in April of the following year. For many, what started as an adventure would end in the ultimate sacrifice.

All Australians of the generations that have followed have heard the story of what was to come. But the sheer enormity of it remains staggering. When the guns finally fell silent at Gallipoli in December 1915 after eight months of fighting, some 8,700 Australians were dead, and a further 19,000 had been injured. Nine Australian Victoria Crosses were awarded over the eight-month Gallipoli campaign—seven of them in the three-day battle at Lone Pine. In military terms, the battle was a failure. Yet in the calamity there was birthed a determination that remains one of our nation's defining characteristics to this day—the Anzac spirit.

Just as many thousands of Australians make the pilgrimage to Turkey each year to stand on the hallowed ground at Gallipoli, Western Australia's central role at the dawn of the Anzac legend is now set to receive its due recognition. In November 2014, Albany will commemorate the departure of the convoy from King George Sound with a series of events that will be the subject of national and international attention. Among the highlights will be a re-enactment of the convoy's departure, comprising ships from the Royal Australian Navy, along with ships sent by our friends and allies abroad. The brand new Anzac Interpretive Centre near the Princess Royal Fortress on Mount Adelaide will provide all visitors, but especially younger Australians, with a deeper appreciation of our state's role in the Anzac story and of the heroic sacrifices made by those who never returned. The construction of the new centre, along with a commemorative walk, will help to cement this part of Western Australia as a site of tremendous historical significance.

Of course, the events in Albany next year will differ in tone from what we witnessed just recently on Sydney Harbour—they will be a commemoration, not a celebration. As noted in the report of the Anzac Centenary Advisory Board to the previous government, the focus will be on a 'small scale symbolic event that is reflective of the sombre reality of the experiences that faced the servicemen and servicewomen on board the convoys when they reached Gallipoli and later the Western Front'. Nonetheless, West Australians, particularly those from Albany and the Great Southern region, will take enormous pride in their community's central place in the Anzac story being commemorated so significantly and 1 November 2014 will be the first of many commemorative events that mark the centenary of the Great War. It will be a fitting tribute to that Anzac spirit first recorded by Australian historian Charles Bean; a spirit that stands for 'reckless valour in a good cause, for enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship, and endurance that will never own defeat'.

Blue Mountains Bushfires

Senator CAMERON (New South Wales) (13:43): I rise on a matter of public interest and that is the incompetent response of the federal coalition and the state coalition to the bushfire emergency in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. The Blue Mountains were severely impacted by the recent bushfires—203 homes destroyed and a further 110 homes damaged. Before I go any further, I want to acknowledge the IFS, the interstate firefighters, the SES, the police, the national parks personnel and the volunteers, who played a fantastic role in assisting the Blue Mountains community—my community—to recover as quickly as possible from the immediate impact of the bushfires. Across the state of New South Wales, which I represent, we had a period of damaging and destructive bushfires. I am not convinced that this will be
the last and that we will have of damaging and destructive bushfires as the summer progresses.

I want to acknowledge the loss of life in the recent bushfires: David Black, the pilot who was fighting bushfires west of Ulladulla, and Walter Linder, the resident and retiree who suffered a heart attack following his attempts to save his home. I offer the condolences of the federal Labor Party and my condolences to the families and friends of those who suffered these grave losses.

I also acknowledge the skill and professionalism of the emergency response groups. Professionalism played a great role in making sure that there was no further fire damage loss. But there was a lot of luck, in that the fire went through when many people were at work and houses were empty. If you see the destruction of the houses in the Blue Mountains, you can understand why standing beside your home with a garden hose in 80- or 90-kilometre winds is not a very safe thing to do. Communities along the Bells Line of Road, including Bell and Bilpin, and the communities of Yellow Rock and Winmalee were devastated by these bushfires.

I want to note the findings of the RFS and the involvement of the Defence Force in the fires. I do not want to pre-empt any inquiry, but I think it is quite clear that the north-western fire did emanate from activities of the Defence Force.

I have been criticised by the member for Macquarie, Mrs Louise Markus, and the state member for the Blue Mountains, Roza Sage, for apparently politicising the bushfires. I believe that, in a situation like that which my community faced, it is a politician's responsibility to represent the community's needs to the government, not the government's needs to the community. I think Senator Payne, who is the Minister for Human Services, Mrs Markus and Mrs Sage have failed in their responsibility as parliamentarians to look after people in distress and to look after their community when it is under real pressure. I think they fail to understand the difference between representing their party's position in the community and representing the community's position back to their party. It takes some courage to stand up on an issue, and they have failed the test of having the courage to stand up for the community that they represent. I do not care if people say I am politicising this, because my responsibility, first and foremost, is to my community when it is facing a disaster. First and foremost, I will represent the views and the needs of my community. Unfortunately, the coalition, at both the state and the federal level, have failed to do that.

The climatic conditions that led to the fires in the Blue Mountains are consistent with the forecasts of the CSIRO, the Climate Commission—

Senator Nash: Oh!

Senator CAMERON: the Academy of Science and the IPCC. I know we have the climate deniers on the other side—the moans and the groans when you talk about scientific endeavour. I am quite used to the National Party not having any understanding of scientific endeavour. It is not unusual. At least former Senator Joyce can practise his antiscientific rhetoric in the House of Representatives and we do not have to put up with it here anymore.

The Climate Institute has indicated: 'It’s time to face up to real and growing climate change risks and impacts, such as the growing severity and frequency of our bushfires. Our national, state and individual interests depend on better preparation for growing climate change risks
and impacts, which threaten personal health and safety as well as economic stability and our fragile environment. The evidence and analysis is clear: climate change is impacting Australia now and will only drive more risks, unless we engage in global efforts to avoid global warming of 2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial average. With just 2 degrees Celsius warming, south-east Australia can expect up to five times the number of days of very extreme fire danger by mid-century.' This work has been facilitated by the CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology and the Bushfire CRC. These are the experts telling us what the situation is.

I think it is quite bizarre that when the Labor Party is up here defending communities in the Blue Mountains we have the Prime Minister in the lower house talking about destroying real action on climate change. How bizarre is it that their anti-scientific, ideologically driven approach is being pursued in the House of Representatives when we have people suffering now as a result of climate change influenced bushfires?

I want to acknowledge the work of the Blue Mountains Bushfire Recovery Committee, which I am a member of, and especially the chair of the committee, Phil Koperberg. I want to acknowledge the work of the staff and the agencies involved. But I want to say this: that that committee has been hindered, and not helped, by the lack of political action on behalf of the state by the O'Farrell government and the Abbott coalition government. I want to express grave concern at the lack of preparation and effective response by the state government of New South Wales. I want to express my disgust at the poor management and ineffective response of the Abbott government. What is the first responsibility of government? It is to make sure that when Australians are in trouble—when Australians are facing a disaster—that you do everything possible to assist your fellow Australians. Let me tell you that test has been failed by the Abbott coalition and failed by the O'Farrell government.

There are three key failures at the moment for these two coalition governments, who stood here in opposition and railed against the Labor government time and time again and who said they were great managers of the economy. Here is an instance where it is clear that the rhetoric is nothing more than rhetoric; it is nothing more than pouting their three-line slogans and not delivering for people when they are in trouble. My community in the Blue Mountains have been denied by the coalition government a disaster relief payment that went to residents who were affected by the fires in Victoria and in Tasmania. My office's rough estimate of the money that has been ripped out of the Blue Mountains community at a time of great need is $4 million. The day after the bushfires had raged through my community, the coalition Minister for Justice, Michael Keenan, was taking away the rights of families to get federal government assistance in their time of need.

The second failure is that the then Leader of the Opposition, and now Prime Minister, Tony Abbott and that then opposition small business spokesperson, and now Minister for Small Business, Mr Billson promised a small business concessional grant. They argued that you needed to respond quickly to problems in disaster areas and that they would provide extra resources and extra money for small business in a disaster. What has happened over a month after the disaster in the Blue Mountains? We have not had any response from the federal government to deliver on the promise to look after what they claim is their base—that is, small business. Another key failure of the coalition government.

The third problem is that they have failed to learn the lessons of the Victorian and Tasmanian bushfires and organise a coordinated demolition and clean-up of the properties
affected by the bushfire. When you go through the reports and the analysis of bushfires in Victoria and Tasmania, it is clear that the benefits of a coordinated outcome was that business regenerated more quickly, because you cleared the debris, you cleared the waste and this let the community rebuild. So, it is in business regeneration and economic issues that the coalition have failed. It is about economic stimulus through the rebuilding, and the coalition have failed on that test. It is about the reduction of dependence on government assistance, and the coalition have failed on that test. The coalition talk so much about their care of Western Sydney but, when they have an opportunity to support the residents of Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, they have failed abysmally. They have failed at the first hurdle; they have failed their first test.

My view has always been that this government is economically incompetent and socially distorted in terms of what its priorities should be. We have many, many families in the Blue Mountains who would have been at least $2,800 better off to help them recover from the bushfire and they have had that ripped away from them by this government because of its penny-pinching, cost-cutting approach. It is an absolute disgrace. I must say that when you see any community in trouble, look at what has been done. Look at what has been done in the Blue Mountains community by the coalition, ripping money away from them—not caring about them or coming in and telling them, as Senator Payne did, that the issue is under active consideration. That was one month ago, Senator Payne, and we have not seen you up there for some weeks now, because you cannot deliver, you will not stand up and you are a disgrace in your position.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE
Superannuation
Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:00): My question is to the Leader of the Government in the Senate and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service, Senator Abetz. I refer the minister to the government's decision to grant a tax break to some 16,000 Australians with superannuation balances of around $2 million at the same imposing a tax grab on 3.6 million Australians earning up to $37,000 a year. Can the minister explain to Australians why the government believes this is fair?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:00): I thank the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate for her question.

Senator Cameron: You're looking after your mates!

Senator ABETZ: Nothing changes with Senator Doug Cameron, does it? Nothing changes.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Abetz, ignore interjections. You are aware they are disorderly.

Senator ABETZ: Mr President, we believe in having a fairer tax system for all Australians—

Senator Wong interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Abetz is entitled to be heard in silence.
Senator ABETZ: What we as a government have acknowledged is that a few tough decisions need to be made to get the economy back on track. What I would invite those opposite to recognise is simply this: having trashed the house, don't stand in the doorway and refuse entry to the repair men and women who are charged with repairing the house.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind senators even at this early stage that if you wish to debate the issue the time to debate it is after question time. The minister is entitled to be heard in silence. When there is silence on both sides we will proceed. Senator Abetz, continue.

Senator ABETZ: Those on the other side do regrettably seek to engage in the issues of class warfare. They do seek to engage in the business of cutting down the tall poppies in our community; we don't.

Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order.

Senator Cameron interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Moore, you are on your feet for a point of order but someone on your own side is interrupting you and it is very difficult for me to call you.

Senator Moore: Mr President, I draw the minister's attention to the standing order on direct relevance in response to questions—one that he used very often himself in this chamber; so I draw his attention to that.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The minister is answering the question. The minister has 49 seconds remaining.

Senator ABETZ: Can I help Senator Moore and those listening as to why this matter is relevant. It is because these matters were part and parcel of the policy that we took to the people in relation to the removal of the mining tax. The Labor Party had matters that they predicated in relation to the mining tax money that was never going to come in. Having trashed the economy, I invite those opposite to allow us to get on with the task of fixing the economy. Just for the leader's attention, I indicate that we do not accept the figures that she mentioned.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:04): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer the minister to the Assistant Treasurer's justification of the government's decision on 7 November—and I quote:

We've always been on the side of those people who are aspirational …

Is it the government's view that the 3.6 million Australians earning up to $37,000 a year have no aspiration?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:04): We believe that the vast majority of Australians are aspirational, and that is why we want to get government out of the way to ensure that they can achieve their aspirations. Indeed, that is what the coalition's policy is all about: getting the very best out of the Australian people to achieve the very best for the Australian nation. When my good friend and colleague the Assistant Treasurer, Senator Sinodinos, made the comments, which I trust were faithfully quoted by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, I would say: 'Ditto. I agree with Senator
Sinodinos.' He is a very good Assistant Treasurer and will be assisting in implementing the recovery plan for our nation.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:05): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I refer the minister to the Prime Minister's election promise that he would not leave anyone behind. Did this promise by the Prime Minister simply not apply to the 3.6 million hardworking Australians the government is now turning on?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:05): If there is one cohort in the Australian community that was left behind by those sitting opposite now, it is the 6.25 per cent that they predicted would be unemployed as a result of their economic policies. They are the people that have been left behind. When Labor came into government they had an unemployment rate, courtesy of the coalition, of 3.9 per cent. Today it stands at 5.7 per cent. They are the people that have been left behind, and they were left behind by the previous government. We have made no apology of saying that we feel for those people. We are seeking to put the economic parameters in place to ensure that they can get gainful employment.

Senator Cameron interjecting—

Senator ABETZ: Senator Cameron, who presided over huge numbers of job losses in the manufacturing sector, can jeer, but these people want jobs and we'll try and get them. (Time expired)

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT (14:06): Before proceeding to the next question, I draw the attention of honourable senators to the presence in the President's gallery of former President of the Senate, Alan Ferguson. Welcome to question time.

Honourable senators: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Economy

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:06): My question is to the Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator Abetz. What will the government do to create and support jobs, to reduce cost-of-living pressures on Australian families and to build a strong and prosperous economy?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:07): I thank Senator Bushby for his question. He is a man who has established himself in this place as having a true understanding of all matters economic. The coalition took a very strong policy platform to the Australian people, a platform that the Australian people endorsed on 7 September. We said to the Australian people that we would work methodically and purposefully to restore the Australian economy. I might say to my friend and colleague from Tasmania that, as was heard in this place just yesterday in Her Excellency's speech, that is especially so for our home state of Tasmania.
But what we are seeking to do specifically in relation to our policy is to abolish the carbon tax. Abolition of the carbon tax will mean a cost-of-living benefit to Australian households of approximately $550 per annum—a real, genuine economic stimulus. Instead of having to pay tax, they will have more disposable income to stimulate the economy. In removing the carbon tax, we will remove the imposts on the manufacturing sector that those opposite allegedly support. We will be removing the mining tax so that the great wealth generator of this country can continue to provide the dividends that our nation and economy so desperately need. We will restore the Australian Building and Construction Commission which, whilst it was allowed to operate under us, provided an economic welfare gain of $6.2 billion per annum. We will put the budget back into the black. We will methodically and purposefully work to ensure that the economy is put back into shape to create and support jobs. (Time expired)

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:09): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister outline to the Senate any impediments to building a stronger economy and reducing cost-of-living pressures on Australian families?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:10): Regrettably, I think I am looking at the main impediment, and that is the Labor opposition and the Australian Greens. What they have not learnt from the election result is that the Australian people have spoken. The economic management of the past six years was simply not deemed to be up to scratch by the Australian people and, therefore, they voted for a change of government.

Senator Kim Carr: It was the best in the world.

Senator ABETZ: If it was the best in the world, Senator Carr, you might like to contemplate why Australians voted for a change of management. Just think about that. They might remember that this was the minister for industry and the auto sector who saw the demise of Mitsubishi and then the demise of Ford. Now all of a sudden he is claiming that he is somehow concerned.

The cost of living for pensioners will be enhanced by the removal of the carbon tax by $550 per annum. That will be of real benefit. And who is in the way? The Australian Labor Party— (Time expired)

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:11): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. How will the policies of this government help young Australians get jobs?

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Abetz is entitled to be heard in silence. If people wish to use question time to debate across the chamber, they are wasting the time of question time.

Senator Cameron interjecting—

Senator Cormann interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order, on both sides! If you wish to debate the issue, the issue can be debated post question time. The minister is entitled to be heard in silence.
Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:11): Senator Bushby, as the father of three young children, is rightly concerned about the future of the young within our country. They are our hope, they are our future and they are entitled to have proper job prospects. Under the past Labor regime, youth unemployment went from a disgraceful 10 per cent to an even worse 13 per cent. It is vitally important that we restore the economy to ensure that it has the capacity to employ and, especially, to employ young people.

The social data is there for all to see: employment enhances physical health; it enhances mental health. And young people especially, on their way through life, should be given the opportunity of a job. We as a government will purposefully and methodically seek to bring that about by creating an environment—(Time expired)

National Commission of Audit

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:13): My question is to the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Minister representing the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's election commitment and his absolute assurance to the Australian people that this government would not make any cuts to health and education. Can the minister rule out any cuts to health and education programs for the term of this government?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:13): This may come as a shock to those opposite, but this government has every intention of abiding by its election promises.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: When there is silence we will proceed. Senator Wong is wanting to ask a question, and Senator Wong is entitled to be heard in silence. When there is silence, I will call Senator Wong.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:13): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer the minister to the Treasurer's statement in announcing the Commission of Audit in which he made it clear that no area of the budget was ruled out, declaring there were no restrictions. I will also refer the minister to the terms of reference of the commission, which do not rule out any cuts to health or education. So I again ask what I asked in my first question: can the minister rule out any cuts to health or education programs for the term of this government?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:14): What we have said very clearly is—

Senator Wong interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! You have asked the question, Senator. The minister is entitled to answer—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order on both sides!
Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:15): It really does come as a shock to those opposite that we can have a government in this country that has every intention of abiding by its election promises. In relation to health and education, we have said that the totality of the moneys made available in those portfolios would remain. What we have also said is that we will look at the quality of the spend in areas to ascertain whether money can be redirected and, as a result, get even better results but within the parameters of those two portfolio areas. We were very specific in relation to that. So if the minister asks about programs et cetera, she is getting into the weeds and the detail; but in relation to the total parameters we have said that health funding and education funding will remain. But can we spend it better sometimes? I think so. (Time expired)

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:16): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Minister, isn't there a simple explanation for your refusal today to rule out program cuts, for the Treasurer's statement and for the Commission of Audit's mandate, and that is this: the government has absolutely no intention of honouring the Prime Minister's pre-election commitment?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:16): I just wish Senator Wong would not judge us according to her own standards. The past six years were a litany of broken promise after broken promise after broken promise, and that is the basis on which the Labor opposition seeks to judge us. I can indicate—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator ABETZ: if the Leader of the Opposition can just close it down for a little while, I can advise that the coalition government's Commission of Audit will look at the whole of government. No area of government is excluded. The coalition government will abide by—

Senator Wong: There you go. Thank you.

Senator ABETZ: Listen, listen! We will abide by our election promises. On education we have guaranteed to retain the schools funding profile of the previous government over the forward estimates period. On health we have said we will look for efficiencies but our intention is to get every possible health dollar away from administration. (Time expired)

Climate Change

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (14:18): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Senator Cormann. I ask: does the minister agree with the Philippines delegate to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Mr Yeb Sano, who said after super typhoon Haiyan, 'Science tells us that, simply, climate change will mean more intense tropical storms' and 'What my country is going through as a result of this extreme climate event is madness'?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:18): I thank Senator Milne for that question. The Abbott government has not, and never has, questioned the science of climate change.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator CORMANN: We are committed to appropriate action on climate change—
Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I realise it is the first question time since the election and some people are a little bit excited, but the minister is entitled to be heard in silence. When there is silence we will proceed—simple as that.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Milne has asked a question; she is entitled to have her answer—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: On my left!

Senator Cameron interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Doug Cameron. When there is silence we will proceed. Senator Cormann, continue.

Senator CORMANN: Thank you, Mr President. I am really pleased that between Senator Milne and myself we have been able to lift the spirits of Her Majesty's most loyal opposition. Let me repeat: this government has not and never has disputed the science of climate change. We are committed to effective action on climate change, but we understand, like the Australian people understand, that the Labor-Greens carbon tax, the biggest economy-wide carbon tax in the world, is not effective action on climate change. We on this side of the chamber understand, and the people across Australia understand and have voted that way at the last election, that your carbon tax, Labor's carbon tax, imposed on the Australian people by the Labor Party and the Greens, just pushes up the cost of electricity, pushes up the cost of living, pushes up the cost of doing business, makes Australian businesses less competitive than businesses overseas, shifts emissions to other parts of the world along with economic activity and jobs, shifts emissions to other parts of world where for the same amount of economic output those emissions will be higher than they otherwise would have been. The Labor-Green—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cormann, resume your seat. I'll give Senator Cormann the call when there is silence. Senator Cormann.

Senator CORMANN: The Labor-Green carbon tax arguably makes climate change worse, not better, because it shifts emissions to other parts of the world where for the same amount of economic output they would be higher than they would have been if that production had happened more environmentally efficiently here in Australia. What we are committed to is to reducing emissions in Australia in a way that is good for the environment and good for the economy.

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (14:22): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I thank the minister for avoiding the point of the question and going to the cost of living. I ask him again: is there a connection between extreme weather events and climate change?

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am consistent on this! Those on my left—I am consistent: I do not call the minister until there is silence.
Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:23): I answered that question in my first sentence in saying that the Australian government does not dispute the science of climate change. There is nothing else really to add to that answer.

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (14:23): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Quite clearly, the government is refusing to answer the question as to the link between extreme weather and climate change. So I ask the minister: is a future when super typhoons become a way of life a future acceptable to you and the Abbott government?

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Just wait a minute—it applies on both sides. There has to be silence so that the minister can be heard.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:23): It might surprise the chamber and it might surprise Senator Milne: I am not a scientist. I am a minister as part of the Abbott government. The Abbott government is committed to effective action on climate change. We will implement the policy that we took to the last election to address climate change in an effective way that is good for the environment and good for the economy, and which does not hurt families, pensioners, workers and businesses across Australia without actually making any difference whatsoever—without actually making things arguably worse than when we started.

Carbon Pricing

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (14:24): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Senator Cormann, and I congratulate Senator Cormann on his elevation. Can the minister explain to the Senate why repealing Labor's carbon tax is so important to building a stronger Australia?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:25): I thank Senator Smith for that question. I know that he is very committed to the coalition's promise to scrap the carbon tax as swiftly as possible, because scrapping the carbon tax is very important for Australia's future. Scrapping the carbon tax will help families and pensioners across Australia. It will help workers and businesses across Australia. It will help strengthen our economy and, of course, it delivers on a clear and emphatic commitment that we took to the last election. Unlike the Labor Party, we stick to the commitments that we take to the election after the election.

Unlike the Labor Party, which went to the 2010 election promising that there will be no carbon tax under a government led by Julia Gillard—only to introduce one after the election—we are committed to delivering on the commitments that we took to the last election. Scrapping Labor's carbon tax will help families and will help pensioners because it will bring down the cost of electricity. In bringing down the cost of electricity it will bring down the cost of living. It will help businesses across Australia because it will help reduce the cost of doing business and it will help make the position of workers more secure. It will make jobs more secure because, of course, it will help businesses across Australia prosper.

It will help to strengthen the economy. Look no further than the former government's own economic modelling: the modelling released by the former government showed that as a result of their carbon tax our economy was going to grow by $1 trillion less in 2012 dollars...
between 2012 and 2050—a whopping $1 trillion of economic growth was taken out of our economy as a result of Labor's carbon tax. Scrapping the carbon tax will strengthen Australia. 

(Time expired)

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (14:27): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. What support has the government received for its plans to abolish the carbon tax?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:27): Thank you, Senator Smith. The most important support we received was, of course, the support of the Australian people, and the Labor Party is in complete denial about the result of the last election—in complete denial. Today we have had support from the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Industry Group, the Business Council of Australia and the Minerals Council of Australia—all calling on Labor to help us scrap the carbon tax as soon as possible in the national interest.

Senator Wong: You didn't listen to them when they supported an ETS!

Senator CORMANN: We have these interjections, Mr President, because they say, 'Well that is of course obvious that they would support that sort of policy.' We have also had some support, I am pleased to tell you, from an unexpected source—none other than the Labor Party; none other than Senator Louise Pratt, who circulated a flyer at the last election: 'Carbon tax: abolished. Kevin Rudd and Labor have removed the carbon tax'.

Senator Pratt: I sure did!

Senator CORMANN: Perhaps Senator Pratt was thinking ahead! Perhaps Senator Pratt was thinking about the next election! (Time expired)

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (14:29): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. What would be the impact on Australian families and businesses if the carbon tax is not scrapped?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:29): The impact would be higher electricity prices for families, higher electricity prices for pensioners, higher electricity prices for business, fewer jobs, a slower growing economy. That would be the impact of Labor's plans to stop us from implementing our mandate to scrap the carbon tax.

There was no footnote, no fine print, no qualification, nothing whatsoever in this flyer that made the commitment here to scrap the carbon tax conditional. This is what it said, and I repeat it to the chamber. I was surprised to come across this flyer in Western Australia, but Senator Pratt distributed this flyer and she is nodding, she is confirming it: 'Carbon tax: abolished. Kevin Rudd and Labor have removed the carbon tax.' Nowhere here does it say that there will be some sort of additional tax, a different tax, another tax, a floating tax instead of a fixed tax. It says, 'Carbon tax abolished' and Labor should— (Time expired)

Budget

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Finance. Can the minister confirm that since the election the government has determined to provide $8.8 billion to the Reserve Bank to give a tax break to Australians with superannuation balances around $2 million and to reopen tax loopholes enabling profit shifting and other tax minimisation behaviour by large companies? Can the minister advise the Senate what is the impact of these decisions over the forward estimates?
Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:30): I can indeed confirm that the coalition government is hard at work to fix up Labor's budget mess. I can confirm that we are hard at work, in a methodical, careful and orderly fashion, making decisions that strengthen our economy and that repair the budget mess that we have inherited from the Labor Party. Unlike Labor, which inherited a budget with no debt, with a $20 billion surplus, with cash at the bank, this government inherited a budget with a $30 billion deficit and growing, with net debt heading for $200 billion and beyond, with gross debt heading for $300 billion and beyond, without the government having taken the prudent and appropriate steps to ensure that the government was able to borrow the money necessary to fund the operations of government.

Senator Conroy: Mr President, I raise a point of order on relevance. The question was very specific. It asked: what is the impact of these decisions over the forward estimates? The senator has been going for nearly half his time and has not once attempted to address the question, so I ask you to invite him to address the very specific single question that was asked.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. I believe the minister is answering the question. I am listening to the minister's answer. I call on the minister to continue.

Senator CORMANN: Thank you very much, Mr President. Of course, in answering these questions directly and in a relevant fashion it is always important to provide the appropriate context in which we have had to make those decisions. I can confirm what has been publicly announced, and that is that we have provided a grant of $8.8 billion to the Reserve Bank, which was the responsible decision to make, given Labor recklessly and irresponsibly depleted the reserves of the Reserve Bank and made a whole series of other bad decisions.

The former minister for finance very well knows that budget positions are updated in the usual way in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, which will happen before Christmas. Let me just address one other point that was raised in that question.

Senator Conroy: Mr President, I raise a point of order on relevance. There may have been the odd occasion in the past where you have invited me to address the question, but even I would have been embarrassed by avoiding the question this directly. What are the estimates over the forwards? That is a very specific question and, with 20 seconds left to go, I invite you to get him to have a stab at it.

The PRESIDENT: Can I say firstly that flattery gets you nowhere! Secondly, can I say in applying the standing orders I have been listening to the minister's answer, I believe the minister is addressing the question. The minister still has 17 seconds remaining. I call on the minister.

Senator CORMANN: Thank you very much, Mr President. Of course, Senator Wong and Senator Conroy well know that the budget estimates are updated in the usual way in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook. That is what this government will do. But let me just reject one other inaccurate assertion. Labor's tax on earnings from superannuation—

(Time expired)

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:34): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer the minister to his comments on 22 October
where he indicated that the budget position is deteriorating. Can he please advise the Senate of how much the budget has deteriorated since he became minister?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:35): I can confirm that we inherited a budget in a mess from the Labor Party. And not only did we inherit a budget that was in a mess we inherited a budget that was deteriorating at a rapid rate as a result of the bad decisions that were made by the former government. Furthermore, yes, we have been forced to make a series of decisions to fix the bad decisions, to fix the messes created by the Labor Party. As the Treasurer has said, every time we open another cupboard we find some more spiders that we have got to clean out. Every time we open another drawer there are some more Labor spiders that need to be sorted out. This government of course is committed to repair the budget mess that we have inherited from the Labor Party. I have to say, Senator Wong, you are very courageous, may I say, to bring up a question about the state of the budget when you are the minister—

Opposition senators: You!

Senator CORMANN: Senator Wong was the minister who presided over a budget blow-out of more than $107 billion in the three years that she was the minister for finance— (Time expired)

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:36): Mr President, I have a further supplementary question. I note the minister is unable to indicate by how much the budget has deteriorated since he became minister. How does the minister expect the Senate to agree to a $200 billion increase in the debt cap when he refuses to provide this basic information about the current budget position—basic information about the current budget position that the Minister for Finance is unable to provide.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:36): The Labor Party are even more reckless, if that were possible, in opposition than they were in government. I refer the minister to their own economic statement released before the election, which showed that gross debt as a result of Labor's budget, Labor's mismanagement, was heading for $370 billion. I also refer the minister to advice read out by the former Treasurer Mr Swan in the House of Representatives that as a matter of prudent financial management there should be a buffer of $40 billion to $60 billion above the expected peak debt. In 2012 the former Treasurer read that advice into the House of Representatives Hansard, and she might care to have a look at it. So when the Labor Party irresponsibly and recklessly comes in here and says that they would only approve an increase in the debt limit to $400 billion, when we are cleaning up your mess, Senator Wong, is irresponsible. (Time expired)

Syria

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (14:38): My question is to the Attorney-General and Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Brandis. The question is: can the Attorney-General please update the Senate about reports of a suicide bomber in Syria which has killed 35 people?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:38): I thank Senator Eggleston for his question. The Australian government is aware of these reports and
deplores the violence and suffering that is occurring in Syria. We support international efforts to find common ground for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

I am aware of reports that a jihadist has killed himself in a suicide bombing in eastern Syria and I can inform the Senate that the Australian government understands that the individual is indeed an Australian. If that were to be confirmed, that would be the first time an Australian citizen has killed himself in a suicide bombing. This is a new and serious development.

I remind the Senate that it is illegal under Australian law for any Australian, including a dual citizen, to fight, provide funding for, provide training or supply weapons to either side of the conflict in Syria. The Crimes (Foreign Incursions and Recruitment) Act 1978 prohibits any participation in an armed insurgency against foreign governments including preparation and recruitment. As well, on 13 May 2011 the then foreign minister announced sanctions measures against Syria under the Autonomous Sanctions Act. Those measures also make it illegal for an Australian to engage in fighting for either side or to fund, train or recruit someone to fight or to supply or fund weapons to either side of the conflict in Syria. The foreign minister may also cancel the passports of anyone likely to engage in harmful conduct including travelling overseas to illegally train or fight in a conflict.

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (14:40): Mr President, my supplementary question may in fact have just been partly answered at least. Is the government concerned about Australians travelling overseas to engage in terrorist activity?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:40): Indeed, Senator Eggleston, the government is seriously concerned about Australians fighting in Syria including some who, we understand, are fighting with Jabhat al-Nusra, which is a listed terrorist organisation. As the Director-General of the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation reported in the ASIO annual report, which was tabled on 31 October this year, there has been an increase in the number of Australians travelling overseas to participate in terrorist training and to engage in foreign disputes, with Syria being the primary destination. The concern is not only for Australians who risk their lives overseas but also we are concerned about the likelihood of radicalised Australians returning home with an increased commitment and capability to pursue violent acts on our shores. The government shares the Director-General’s concerns about radicalised Australians who return home and pose a serious threat to Australia’s national security.

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (14:41): Mr President, I would like to ask a second supplementary question, and that is: what is the government doing about the issue of Australians engaging in terrorist activity overseas?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:41): In addition to the criminal sanctions and the embargo I mentioned in my earlier answer, the Minister for Foreign Affairs may cancel the passports of anyone likely to engage in harmful conduct, including travelling overseas to illegally train or to fight in a conflict. Australia has listed the al-Qaeda linked groups fighting in Syria under the counter-terrorism listing regimes. The Jabhat al-Nusra Front was listed under Australia’s domestic implementation of the UN Security Council 1373 on 16 March 2013, and al-Qaeda in Iraq has also been listed under the Criminal Code since 2 March 2005 in implementation of the UN Security Council al-Qaeda
Sanctions Committee resolution 2004. The government is considering what other measures may be necessary to discourage or deter Australians from travelling to Syria to participate in the conflict and will continue to monitor the situation and in particular the involvement of Australian citizens. (Time expired)

Environment: Waubra Wind Farm

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (14:42): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Senator Cormann. Minister, in light of the fact that on 21 August this year I wrote to the Clean Energy Regulator asking it to suspend the accreditation of the Waubra wind farm for breaches of the Renewable Energy Act and the regulator's response dated 17 October that stated that it has 'no reasonable grounds to suspend the Waubra wind farm under section 30E of the act' and that the regulator 'has received no evidence that the conditions attached to the planning approvals have been breached', I ask: has the Clean Energy Regulator exercised its powers under section 125A of the act to obtain any information or documents from the Victorian Department of Planning that would provide him with reasonable grounds to suspend Waubra wind farm?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:43): I thank Senator Madigan for the question and for giving me some notice of this question shortly before question time. I have been provided with the following advice: firstly, some of the information the senator is seeking—and I understand that this has been the subject of a lengthy correspondence with the Clean Energy Regulator, and also various FOI requests and correspondence with the previous and the current government—is specific to a specific business and it would breach relevant privacy provisions to provide that direct information. However, I will seek to assist the senator by advising him that the Clean Energy Regulator requires all wind farms which are accredited to demonstrate that they have obtained and met conditions of relevant state planning permits. Misrepresentation in this area would be a serious offence and, if the regulator had concerns along those lines, those concerns would be investigated. Deregistering a wind farm would be a very serious step, as it would undermine their financial viability and put them in breach of contract. It is open to the Clean Energy Regulator to commence such a process, but only on the basis of sound evidence, such as action taken by a state planning authority to cancel the planning permit. I am happy to assist the senator further if there is something else that can be provided with a bit more time.

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (14:45): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. In relation to advice from the Clean Energy Regulator that Mr Paul Jarman from the Victorian department of planning recently gave to a Victorian council which inquired about reporting wind farm breaches, what section of the renewable energy legislation requires that an enforcement order be taken out in either a tribunal or a court of law before the Clean Energy Regulator will act on a wind farm breaching its planning permit?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:45): Technically this is a question about the law; however, in an effort to assist Senator Madigan, I can say that a breach of an enforceable undertaking, I am advised, allows the Clean Energy Regulator to apply to a federal court to order the person to comply or pay the Clean Energy Regulator. This is set out in Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act 2000, at section 154R(1)(c).

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (14:46): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Given the availability of information evidencing reasonable grounds to suspend
accreditation of the Waubra wind farm, have the accreditation application, the annual returns and the standing notices submitted since 2009 by this wind farm been checked by the Clean Energy Regulator to determine whether they contain misleading information that incurs penalties as per section 125E of the act?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:47): That is a question seeking very specific information in relation to a specific business. There is not really anything I can add to my answer so far. I am aware that Senator Madigan has written to Minister Hunt, and I am sure that in appropriate time Minister Hunt will respond to Senator Madigan's letter.

Automotive Industry

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (14:47): My question is to Senator Ronaldson, the Minister representing the Minister for Industry. The Prime Minister has said he wants to protect and create jobs, yet some 200,000 Australians who rely on the automotive industry are still waiting to see if he will save their jobs. Given that the rise in the value of the Australian dollar has increased costs by 30 per cent and given the fact that the timetable for investment decisions by General Motors has been known for some time, how can the government justify leaving the auto industry dangling until after the South Australian election?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:48): Ultimately, the decision about who asked questions about what probably lies with the Manager of Opposition Business. I find it quite remarkable that a former industry minister has used his first opportunity to ask a question which at best is crocodile tears dripping with insincerity: 'This minister should be acutely aware of the state of the automotive industry in this country. Under his watch, we have seen quite dramatic declines in automotive workers in this country.'

I want to place on record the Minister for Industry's comments in relation to this issue, and then I will talk about some other matters. As the minister has quite clearly said, the industry is facing significant short- and medium-term challenges as it adjusts to the high value of the Australian dollar, a highly competitive market and the policies and regulations introduced by the former government. The minister has also made it quite clear that—and again I will repeat the minister's comments—'Australia needs a sustainable car manufacturing industry as it produces $5.4 billion of industry value-added, invests nearly $695 million in research and development and generates $3.7 billion in export income a year.' Just for the interest of the Senate—and again I am utterly amazed with the tone of the question asked by the former industry minister—in 2012 the three local vehicle manufacturers—(Time expired)

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (14:50): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I note the minister's answer. I simply ask: how can this government be prepared to spend $5.5 billion on a rolled gold paid parental leave scheme, yet is ripping $500 million from the automotive industry, which attracts direct foreign investment at a rate of $9 for every $1 of government co-investment?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:50): Sensibly, the senator got off the crocodile tears and tried another tack. I note with some
interest that automotive industry employment averaged 45,007 in the four quarters up to August 2013 down from 50,376 in the same period in 2012. I also note with some interest the appalling MPI—another example of crocodile tears dripping with insincerity—that the former minister will be speaking to this afternoon. He refers to the urgency of the crisis. I just wonder what the former industry minister can say about his decision to change fringe benefits arrangements for the automotive— *(Time expired)*

**Senator KIM CARR** (Victoria) (14:52): I note that the minister has not been able to explain why it is they are taking $500 million—

*The PRESIDENT*: No. You need to come to a question.

**Senator KIM CARR**: Does the minister support Mr Macfarlane's efforts to keep the industry in Australia or does he support the indifference radiated by the Prime Minister and the banker's friend, Mr Hockey? What action are you taking, Minister, representing the people of Victoria to secure the 30,000 jobs in that state?

**Senator RONALDSON** (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:52): Again, an extraordinary comment from a former minister. I will tell the former minister what we will be doing. We are sending this matter off to the Productivity Commission which should happen—

*Honourable senators interjecting*

*The PRESIDENT*: Order! When there is silence, we will proceed.

**Senator RONALDSON**: I just ask those on the other side from South Australia to go back and have a look at the comments of Premier Jay Weatherill, in relation to the comments made when he was standing beside Minister Macfarlane, he raised no issues with the Productivity Commission inquiry at all.

I will finish on this note, Mr President: the damage done by this former minister who both supported the introduction of that fringe benefit tax change, $100,000 unit potential reduction— *(Time expired)*

**Medical Workforce**

**Senator BOSWELL** (Queensland) (14:54): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Health—her first question—and I congratulate her on her new position on the frontbench and I say it is well deserved. Will the minister inform the Senate what plans the government has to address the doctor shortages in parts of Northern Queensland? How will the government target medical graduates to help address the maldistribution of doctors in these areas?

**Senator NASH** (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:54): I note Senator Boswell's longstanding interest in health issues in regional Queensland. The coalition has a very strong track record on investments in infrastructure, in the workforce and in training to meet the health challenges regional, remote and Indigenous Australians face. In health these have included the establishment of rural clinical schools, expanded medical training in regional and rural areas and more allied health services and medical specialist outreach assistance.

Senator Boswell would be well aware of the rural clinical school campuses in Bundaberg and Rockhampton associated with the University of Queensland and also in Mackay and
Cairns associated with JCU; however poorer access to health services persists in rural and remote areas like North Queensland compared with metropolitan areas in Australia, and not only for private sector health services.

The prediction is that, providing we maintain our current intake of overseas-trained doctors, the supply of GPs will be in balance with demand in around 2025. But of course we know there is a significant maldistribution of numbers, and that is the key area that needs to be addressed in terms of providing services for rural and regional areas.

The previous coalition government made a significant investment in new medical schools, and those medical graduates are now starting to make their way into the workforce. They will make an important contribution, but we need to make sure that we continue appropriate initiatives to address the maldistribution. As a first step in addressing the problem, the government will provide $40 million over the forward estimates to support up to 100 additional intern places each year in private hospitals and non-traditional settings during the current period of growth of student numbers. I note in contrast the previous Labor government had a severe detachment from what was needed in our regional communities.

Senator BOSWELL (Queensland) (14:57): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question: can the minister advise the Senate what plans the government has to provide training and professional development opportunities to medical students, GPs and health workers as other incentives for them to stay in Northern Queensland and other regions across the country?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:57): On this side we certainly recognise that encouraging medical students to both study and later work in rural areas has immediate benefits not only for the local communities but in the long term it is likely to encourage more graduates to practise outside the cities.

We are going to commit $13.4 million to provide an additional 500 scholarships for nurses and allied health professionals, to expand to 600 scholarships provided each year to allied health students and allow more rural allied health workers to take leave on top of the 100 allied health locum placements provided each year.

The government also undertook to invest $119 million to double the Practice Incentive Program teaching payment for GPs who provide teaching opportunities, with rural and remote GPs receiving an additional benefit. We will also provide $52.5 million for infrastructure expansion for medical practices, which is particularly helpful in our rural and regional communities.

Senator BOSWELL (Queensland) (14:58): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Will the minister inform the Senate how the government intends to address poor health and poor life expectancy in the more remote areas, particularly in Indigenous communities in Northern Australia?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:58): The health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians is a key priority for this government as we recognise that many factors intersect to produce poor health and poor life expectancy for Indigenous people. That is why we are taking a new approach to Indigenous disadvantage, moving most of the responsibility for Indigenous
programs into the Prime Minister's own department, with some health policy and service delivery remaining with me.

This approach will ensure Indigenous affairs has the full focus of the Prime Minister and across-government implementation. The Prime Minister has also appointed a Minister for Indigenous Affairs—my very good colleague Senator Nigel Scullion—at cabinet level, reflecting this government’s commitment to making real improvements to the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians.

We will endeavour to break the cycle of disadvantage by working closely with the states and territories, Indigenous communities and other organisations, including health stakeholders. I look forward to playing a key part in this new approach.

Asylum Seekers

Senator STERLE (Western Australia) (15:00): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. I refer the minister to media reports of the arrival of a boat with Somali asylum seekers on board on Monday evening in Darwin. Can the minister confirm this latest arrival of asylum seekers in Australia?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (15:00): I thank Senator Sterle, a fellow senator from Western Australia, for this question. On 7 September this year, the Australian people voted overwhelmingly for the election of an Abbott government. They voted overwhelmingly in relation to a number of policies and one of those policies was the failure of the then—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! When there is silence on both sides, Senator Cash, continue.

Senator CASH: As I stated: the Australian public voted overwhelmingly on a number of policies, but in particular they sent a very clear message to those who now sit on the opposition benches that they had failed when it came to protecting Australia's borders. The Australian people therefore gave the Abbott government a very clear mandate when it came—

Senator Sterle: Mr President, I rise on a point of order: the minister has not even gone anywhere near my question. What I asked was: can she confirm there was an arrival of asylum seekers on a boat in Darwin Harbour Monday evening?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The minister has been addressing the question for 54 seconds. The minister still has a minute and six seconds remaining. I am listening closely to the minister's answer. The minister needs to address the question. I call the minister to answer the question.

Senator CASH: In relation to the mandate that the Australian government has now been given, it is to implement our policies—our strong and proven policies—in relation to border protection. And in that regard—in relation to Operation Sovereign Borders—both the minister and the Prime Minister have made it very, very clear that, to this end, we will be conducting weekly briefings in relation to Operation Sovereign Borders. Unlike those on the other side—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! When there is silence we will proceed.
Senator CASH: Unlike those on the other side, as evidenced by their complete failure in this policy area, we understand that the more information in relation to operational matters that you provide to the people smugglers—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Wait a minute, Senator Conroy. You have not got the call, and you have colleagues who are trying to call over you. It does not help.

Senator Conroy: Mr President, I rise on a point of order going to relevance. It is absolutely contemptuous of this chamber to hide behind the defence that they are not going to admit whether or not a boat arrived in the harbour on the basis of operational matters. It is a contempt and it cannot be allowed to stand as an excuse for not answering a question to the chamber and to the people of Australia who are demanding to know, 'What is that large piece of wood in Darwin Harbour?'

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am listening to the minister's answer. The minister is addressing the question but I cannot instruct the minister how to give a particular answer and I have said that consistently in this chamber over a long period of time.

Senator CASH: Unlike those on the other side, this government understands that it is our role as a federal government to make the job of people smugglers a lot harder and not sell out Australia to people smugglers. In that regard, the next briefing in relation to the status update will be provided on Friday, consistent with— (Time expired)

Senator STERLE (Western Australia) (15:05): Mr President, I do have a supplementary question; I do not expect an answer after that performance but I will give it a go. Can the minister confirm that there were 19 asylum seekers on board the boat which is reported to have arrived at Fort Hill Wharf in Darwin Harbour and that these asylum seekers have been transferred to the Blaydin Point detention centre?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (15:06): As I stated in my previous answer, this government has a policy whereby it will be providing weekly briefings in relation to boat arrivals. The next briefing on behalf of this government will be this Friday.

Senator Kim Carr: Mr President, I rise on a point of order. I appreciate that you cannot tell a minister how to answer a question, but it is clearly a contempt of the Senate to refuse to answer a question.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is no point of order.

Senator STERLE (Western Australia) (15:07): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Why is the minister providing Australians with less information about this latest arrival than is available through the media?

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! When there is silence we will proceed.

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (15:08): In relation to the supplementary question I can report to the Senate that to date the government in the reporting period to 8 November has conducted eight weekly media briefings. As required, we have
provided additional information in relation to specific incidents. But if the senator is so interested in information, let me give the senator some.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! On both sides! I am listening to the answer that Senator Cash is giving.

Senator CASH: In the 51 days prior to the start of Operation Sovereign Borders, 2,311 people arrived in Australia illegally by boat. Since the commencement of Operation Sovereign Borders under this government on 18 September 2013 there has now been a 76 per cent reduction in the number of illegal arrivals coming to Australia—a 76 per cent reduction. We do not resile from the strong policy stance that we are taking.

Senator Abetz: Mr President, I ask that all further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Superannuation

National Commission of Audit

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (15:10): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answers given by the Minister for Employment (Senator Abetz) to questions without notice asked by Opposition senators today.

If we ever needed to be reminded it was confirmed again today from the answers that Senator Abetz provided to the opposition in question time: the government are not the government they said they would be. We saw a very clear set of examples in question time today of that fact. First, in relation to health and education, which the Prime Minister assured Australians were definitively absolutely ruled out for cuts, when the Leader of the Government in the Senate was asked to rule out again here in this chamber as a minister he declined to do so. He hid behind the weasel words of 'intention' and 'we will keep our commitments', but he declined to rule out the most important issue on which he was asked: 'Will you rule out any cuts to health and education programs during the term of this government?' The answer was that he could not.

The facts are that, as we know from the Treasurer's own mouth, as we know from the terms of reference to the Commission of Audit, as we know from the answer given today by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, it is absolutely and patently clear that the government have no intention whatsoever of delivering on their commitment not to cut programs in health and education.

The Leader of the Government in the Senate was also asked a question about the 3.6 million Australians earning up to $37,000 a year that this government is imposing a tax grab on. This is at the same time as they are giving a tax break to some 16,000 Australians with around $2 million in their superannuation balances. Remember, this was the Prime Minister who said that he would not leave anyone behind. Clearly there are 3.6 million Australians for whom that does not apply. It seems that people who will not get left behind are those with a couple of million dollars in their superannuation balances, but 3.6 million Australians—hardworking Australians—who earn up to $37,000 a year are expected to front up and pay
more tax. What sorts of priorities do the government have? More importantly, this is not the sort of Prime Minister that the Prime Minister told Australians he would be.

Then, of course, we come to debt and deficit. You couldn't move before the election without bumping into images of Mr Hockey—and you do tend to bump into images of Mr Hockey—going on about budget emergencies and drowning in debt; telling everybody that the sky was falling in; failing to recall that in fact under Labor we had a AAA credit rating from all three credit-rating agencies, something even Peter Costello never managed. Then, after the election, all of a sudden the man who said that we were in a debt crisis and we had to manage debt bowls up to the parliament and says: 'By the way, I want a couple of hundred billion dollars more on the debt limit.' It is the largest low-doc loan application in history! He rocks up to the parliament and says: 'We want a couple of hundred billion dollars more on the debt cap, and—you know what?—we are not even going to put before the parliament what the current budget numbers are. We are not even going to tell you what the budget numbers are.'

This is not the government they said they would be. They told Australians that they were going to reduce debt, they were going to get the budget under control. Yet the first act as Treasurer that he engages in in the new sitting of the parliament—from the bloke who was going to get the budget under control and debt and deficit under control—is an application for a $200-billion increase to Australia's debt ceiling.

In the short time since this government was elected we are already seeing that they are not the government they told Australians they would be. I predict that that will get worse. I predict that after the Commission of Audit, which is able to look at everything—including cuts to health, education and co-payments—it will be even worse. (Time expired)

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales) (15:15): I note the comments of Senator Wong that the government are not doing something they said they would and that they are not the government they said they would be. Let us have a look at what Prime Minister Abbott said before the election. Where would his first trip overseas be? Not to Geneva, but to Indonesia. Where did he go? He went to Indonesia to clean up the mess that those now in opposition—where you justifiably should be—made for things like our cattle industry. Go to the Northern Territory and have a look at the flow-down for the cattle industry and the crash in prices because of your response of cutting off the supply to Indonesia. What sort of relationship did that help build with our nearest neighbour? You did that, and Prime Minister Abbott has honoured his word to go to Indonesia as his first port of call.

I would like a dollar for every time Prime Minister Abbott said before the election, 'Our first piece of legislation will be to abolish Labor's carbon tax.' What has been introduced in the other place, the House of Representatives, today? Legislation to clean up this tax that you said you were never going to bring in. Remember what Julia Gillard, the former Prime Minister, said prior to the 2010 election? She said, 'There will be no carbon tax under a government I lead.' She was backed up by the then Treasurer, Mr Wayne Maxwell Swan, who was talking about 'this hysterical idea out there that we will introduce some carbon tax'. We have immediately honoured our promise that the first piece of legislation would be to repeal that tax.

We know the Labor Party's history on border protection. The then Prime Minister, Mr Kevin Rudd, did away with the very effective border protection policies of the Howard era, only to see more than 50,000 people arrive here at a cost of billions upon billions of dollars to
the taxpayer and, sadly, more than 1,100 lives. In the 51 days before the election on 7 September we saw the thousands of people arriving on boats. We have seen a 76 per cent reduction in that number, as my colleague Senator Cash said in the answer to a question today.

Now we get to the budget. People like Senator Conroy may not be aware of it, but the Treasurer, Mr Joe Hockey, has not delivered a budget. That will come next May. We inherited your financial mess. The Labor Party leaving a legacy of a financial mess is part of your DNA. I have said that here before—and I see Senator Conroy is nodding his head, agreeing with me. Perhaps it is all about the five per cent rollout of the National Broadband Network over five years—one per cent a year at a cost of billions. At that rate it will be rolled out in a hundred years. Good luck to future generations who might have benefited from Senator Conroy's NBN, but the plan is for a 100-year rollout at the cost of who knows what—ninety-six hundred billion dollars? We have inherited your financial mess.

In the late eighties to early nineties, the state of Victoria was sent broke under a Labor government. The states of South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania were the same. The so-called 'world's greatest treasurer', Mr Paul Keating, was sending this place into financial borrowing and debt. It is part of your DNA. We inherit the financial mess and we have to make the hard decisions to clean it up. Prior to the election, former Treasurer Mr Swan said on radio, 'The debt limit is going to extend past $300 billion.' But you did not put that in your budget legislation. 'That will be someone else's problem,' Mr Swan said. 'We've just blown the budget, let someone else clean up the mess.' This is what you are about.

You are saying that the Abbott coalition government is not keeping its word. You are wrong. The Prime Minister has kept his word on his first visit to Indonesia. He has kept his word on the first piece of legislation to abolish the stupid carbon tax—the very tax that will take our emissions from 578 million tonnes last year up to 637 million tonnes by 2020. Emissions would be up by tens of thousands of millions of tonnes, and you say the carbon tax is working. Senator Milne is also saying that this is what causes typhoons. Your policy is wrong. We are here to clean up your mess, and that is exactly what this government will do. We will clean up your financial mess, honour our promises and build a better future for all Australians, because that is what government is about—protecting the future of Australians.

(Time expired)

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (15:20): I rise to speak on the motion that the Senate take note of answers given today in question time. This was the first question time in the Senate for this new government. It was the first time that opposition senators have had the chance to ask legitimate questions of the government. This is an important part of parliament's role, and that is to provide scrutiny of the government of the day.

Today's question time fell very far short of meeting that benchmark. We had questions of Senator Abetz that went to the fairness of superannuation charges. Was it fair that 16,000 Australians will in fact be richer as a result of this government's changes? The 3.6 million
people are people who are on very low incomes in this country—under $36,000—and the 16,000 people who will get more money under this government are millionaires. They are people with millions of dollars in their superannuation funds. Did we get an answer? I did not see one. I did not get an answer about fairness to that question.

The second question that Senator Wong asked of Senator Abetz was to give an assurance to the Senate that there will be no cuts to education and health over the term of this government, and we got those very interestingly selected words 'every intention'. That will give no comfort to people in Australia who are planning for the education of their children or who are thinking about the provision of health care to their families, and to their children in particular. The government have 'every intention', hand on heart. Well, I am sorry: you need a lot more than that to make Australians feel confident that the programs that were put in place under the good Labor government policies will be delivered.

But then we got to the final question of today, where Senator Cash was asked by Senator Sterle about a boat in Darwin: was there a boat in Darwin Harbour? We got a lot of words but we got no reference at all to whether or not there was an asylum seeker vessel in Darwin Harbour that she could respond to as part of the role of question time to provide clarity about what is happening. So the theme that is developing is one of secrecy—a theme of limited disclosure of information and selective sharing of what is happening out there. What we saw today was avoidance, rhetoric and a lot of bluster—a lot of non-telling of the answers to questions that we asked.

We have two things happening at the moment. We have, on the one hand, this Commission of Audit. I am from Queensland. I have heard about commissions of audit before. We have had a commission of audit in Queensland, and that saw deep, deep cuts to both our health sector and our education sector—deep cuts right across the state. We were told that no front-line services would be touched. Doctors and nurses were cut out of hospitals right across the state. Mental health workers in Cape York Peninsula lost their jobs; they were not 'front-line workers'! I do not know how much more front-line you can get than providing mental health services in Cape York Peninsula. So we know what a commission of audit will do, and I say to Australians: look to Queensland, because that is what you can expect out of this Commission of Audit. At the same time, we have the speech last week from Maurice Newman, chairman of the Business Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, who tilled a field to say that we need to wind back the costs of need-based funding and—this is close to my heart—DisabilityCare Australia. We are watching. (Time expired)

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (15:25): Poor old Senator McLucas—trying her very best there to confect up a great furore of concern about what is going on. But this government is not going to play the class warfare game, and we are committed to assisting low-income workers across the board by reducing the tax burden for them.

Senator Conroy: By reducing their income.

Senator BOYCE: We will be retaining the current tax threshold, Senator Conroy, and that means that any person in Australia will earn $20,500 a year on which they pay no net tax whatsoever. The rest of it, of course, is trying to fix the mess that we have been left by the Gillard-Rudd government. On the confected concerns that the Labor opposition has regarding the fact that we will not be taxing people who earn more than $100,000 a year on their superannuation, that is because the bill that the past Labor government put through is
unworkable—undoable. It cannot be done. If it were in fact to be done, it would be at such a huge expense to the system that it would cost more to administer than it would reap. Of course, that is not something new or different for this Labor opposition—the fact that it was very good at putting through legislation where what it got back was less than what went out. That is clear in many of the bills that it put through. The other issue is that we, through our paid parental leave, will be increasing the amount of superannuation that parents, and particularly women, will receive over their lifetime. The miserable little Paid Parental Leave scheme that the opposition put through does not include superannuation.

Most important, when we get down to the concerns of the government for families and low-income earners compared to those of the opposition, is the question of the carbon tax and the effect that that has on families. If you look at it, households in Australia will save an average of $550 a year when the carbon tax is abolished. But, of course, again we have to rely on the Labor-Greens coalition to behave (a) as the Australian people asked and (b) as the Australian economy requires to get the system through.

It was quite amusing to listen to the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator Wong, talk about low-doc loans. My god! If any government ever tried to fix up and con its way through a system, it was the past Rudd-Gillard government. But we are not going to play the game that Senator McLucas seems to need to be played, whereby there is an announcement every 20 minutes about something or other. We are going to methodically, seriously and calmly go about fixing the economy, and we will do that by including things like lifting the current deficit level to $500 billion, because that is what we need it to be to deal with the problems that have been left for us by the Labor opposition. There is no way that we can continue with the unfunded, unaffordable propositions that the previous government put together. When we are in a stronger budget position, as we have outlined, we will proceed to undertake whatever we can to assist people. To suggest that a commission of audit is in some way a cuts mission is just ridiculous and typical of the Labor opposition.

Productivity is never going to go out of fashion. The amount of money that this government will invest in health and education will be the same. Is the Labor opposition seriously suggesting that what we should be doing is just leaving money inefficiently where they put it so that cuts do not happen in particular small programs? (Time expired)

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (15:30): I rise to take note of answers given by Minister Abetz to questions asked by Senator Wong on the government’s plans to scrap the low-income superannuation co-contribution. This nasty measure will affect over 3.6 million low-paid Australians. Sales assistants, cleaners, food and hospitality workers, carers and labourers as well as nearly all part-time workers are in this conservative government’s firing line. They are in the firing line, despite comments from the Prime Minister after the election of ‘no adverse changes to Australia’s superannuation system’. On 26 September, just a week after being sworn in, Mr Abbott made the pledge: The assurance that I give the superannuants and the superannuation savers of Australia is there has been no adverse changes to their superannuation arrangements under this government.

Yes, the new Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, assured the Australian people just a week after being sworn in that there would be no adverse changes to their superannuation. He just forgot about the 3.6 million Australians that he planned to slug by removing their tax rebate on their superannuation savings. Barely one week into his term of supposedly governing for all
Australians, the Prime Minister simply forgot about the lowest-paid workers in our community, forgot about his plans to end the much needed boost to the superannuation savings of low-paid Australians. This boost enables workers to save an extra few dollars a week for their retirement, and without such an incentive most could not afford to do so.

Yesterday the backpedalling was in full flight. The Prime Minister's previous assurance of 'no adverse changes' was replaced with a guarantee of 'no negative unexpected changes' in the Governor-General's address. Yes, low-paid Australians now have to cop it sweet that this conservative government will be making changes to the superannuation system. This conservative government, who so espouse the virtue of private individuals supporting themselves and caring for oneself in retirement, are so willing to bluntly pull the rug from under low-paid Australians and slap them with this unfair tax, a tax that penalises one section of the workforce—our lowest-paid workers—for saving for their retirement. These workers will receive no tax break on their contributions, paying more tax than if the money were part of their take-home pay. This regressive slug typifies the new brand of class warfare those opposite plan to wage on our working Australians.

The conservative government will scrap Labor's 15 per cent concessional tax rate on earnings above $100,000 in superannuation income streams. This measure that sought to level the playing field in superannuation would affect only about 16,000 people with superannuation assets typically over $2 million. They will of course maintain their generous 30 per cent tax concessions on the super contributions of high-income Australians. This is an unjust policy that typifies the class warfare that the new conservative government seek to wage on our low-paid Australians and workers more generally.

It is a policy that in particular hurts working women. Around 2.1 million of the affected workers are working women. We all know that female workers face many other barriers to saving for their retirement. Women continue to be paid, on average, four-fifths of their male counterparts. Women face more breaks from the workforce. They continue to be overrepresented in lower-paid industries where their wages are suppressed because the work is seen as 'women's work'. A significant percentage of low-paid working women are mothers working part time while looking after young children. This is exactly the part of a woman's career where an additional $500 a year will be of most benefit in building savings, and yet this conservative government are quite content to penalise those low-paid workers, the overwhelming majority of whom are women, to provide tax cuts for those who need them the least.

It is obvious from the answers provided today that tax concessions are fine for the haves but too onerous on the budget bottom line to be extended to low-paid Australians who need them most. I call on the government to listen to the community, to listen to the experts and not to proceed with this regressive class warfare. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

Climate Change

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (15:35): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Finance (Senator Cormann) to a question without notice asked by Senator Milne today relating to climate change.
What is very interesting is that every time there is an extreme weather event the government comes out very strongly denying the link between the intensity of that extreme weather event and climate change. It has happened now with regard to the Philippines with supertyphoon Haiyan, and yet in the meeting in Warsaw right now the delegate from the Philippines, Mr Yeb Sano, has said quite clearly that it is a climate related event. It is 'climate madness', and he has called on the rest of the world to step up. He has said very clearly:

If not us then who? If not now, then when? If not here, then where?

That is precisely the point, and yet what we had from the minister was what the Abbott government is going to do every single time climate change and the extreme weather event connection is raised: deny it and move straight onto cost of living. The fact of the matter is that when Senator Cormann talks about cost of living and carbon pricing he is failing to talk about the cost in the Philippines. There are 10,000 people dead, if not more, and there is millions of dollars worth of damage as a result of that extreme weather event. This is on top of extreme weather events in Australia. Senator Cormann said that when the carbon price is gone, pensioners will be $500 better off. During the extreme heat emergency at the time of the Victorian bushfires, more people died of heat exhaustion than as a result of the fires—it was hundreds. It got to the point where a temporary morgue was set up in Adelaide because the morgue could not deal with the number of deaths as a result of heat-related illness. Often, people had illnesses exacerbated by the extreme heatwave conditions.

The point is, you cannot keep talking about climate change and refuse to deal with the science. You cannot say you believe the climate science and then say you will only do a five per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in a country like Australia and give the go-ahead to massive coalmines. These mines will increase the level of emissions globally to the point where the International Energy Agency has said overnight that the golden age of Australia's economy, which will come from massive increases in the export of coal, is going to be a huge hit on the climate and will cost us all dearly. It is time the government acknowledged that link instead of pretending that Australia is some kind of separate thing from the rest of the planet and that we do not have a responsibility to engage on this issue.

That is why I asked the minister whether a future in which supertyphoons become a way of life a future acceptable to him and the Abbott government. I said that because that is precisely what the Filipino delegate at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change said. He went on to point out that we have to act. He in fact said that this is a climate emergency and that we have to find an emergency climate pathway. He also went on to talk about the Green Climate Fund. Again, this is the mean-spiritedness of the Abbott government. Part of the global negotiations is for Australia to put money into the Green Climate Fund, because it is that fund that will be used for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries like the Philippines. How can we stand up in Australia and say, 'We are terribly sorry because of the typhoon in the Philippines, but we do not intend to do anything to reduce the risk of it happening again and we are not going to put money into the Green Climate Fund to allow for mitigation and adaptation in the future at the very same time as the conditions exist for yet another typhoon which could develop and hit the same areas again in coming weeks'?

This is a moral imperative. This is a serious emergency. This is not about the cost of living in a rich country like Australia. It is about recognising the connection between extreme weather events, the intensity of those events and what is happening with global warming. We
are living in a warmer, wetter world and we are all going to suffer as a result of more extreme weather events. We are therefore all accountable and responsible because we know. Wilful blindness is a climate crime—to be wilfully blind in the face of the science. It will condemn many people to misery in the future.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS

Consideration of Legislation

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:41): I give notice that, on the next day of sitting, I shall move:

That the provisions of paragraph (5) to (8) of standing order 111 not apply to the Commonwealth Inscribed Stock Amendment Bill 2013, allowing it to be considered during this period of sittings.

I also table a statement of reasons justifying the need for this bill to be considered during these sittings and seek leave to have the statement incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The statement read as follows—

STATEMENT OF REASONS

Commonwealth Inscribed Stock Amendment Bill

Purpose of the Bill

This bill seeks to amend Section 5(1) of the Commonwealth Inscribed Stock Act 1911 to increase the legislative limit on Commonwealth Government Securities (CGS) on issue.

Reasons for Urgency

- The Government cannot legally issue additional CGS under the Commonwealth Inscribed Stock Act 1911 beyond $300 billion unless the limit is increased by the Parliament.
- On current estimates, CGS subject to the legislative limit are expected to reach the limit in December 2013.
- Additional CGS will be required from December 2013 onwards in order to ensure sufficient financing to continue the ordinary operations of government.

Royal Assent on the bill will be required by the end of November 2013.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senators Stephens and Mason to move:

That the Senate—

(a) pays tribute to the Irish poet and Nobel laureate, Mr Seamus Heaney, who died in Dublin on 30 August 2013 at the age of 74;

(b) notes that:

(i) he was the author of more than a dozen collections of poetry, as well as critical essays, translations and works for the stage,

(ii) he held lectureships at some of the world’s foremost universities, including Oxford, Harvard and the University of California, Berkeley,
(iii) as a Catholic native of Northern Ireland, he repeatedly explored the deep ethical conundrums that have afflicted Ireland, but that while much of his work concerned the strife and uncertainties of the ‘Troubles’, he avoided polemics and wrote poetry that was meditative and uplifting,

(iv) throughout his work, Mr Heaney was concerned with morality, but was never pompous; he was enraptured, as he once put it, by ‘words as bearers of history and mystery’, and his accessible, lyrical poetry made him one of the most widely-read poets in Australia and the world,

(v) he visited Australia in the early 1990s and was anticipating a return visit, and

(vi) he expressed a deep interest in our Indigenous and colonial history and found the experiences we all share are more inspirational than our differences, and at the close of his Nobel address, he spoke of ‘the power to persuade that vulnerable part of our consciousness of its rightness in spite of the evidence of wrongness all around it; the power to remind us that we are hunters and gatherers of values, that our very solitudes and distresses are creditable, in so far as they, too, are an earnest of our veritable human being’;

(c) acknowledges that the Irish community in Australia, the lovers of the thoughtful phrase, and all those who share Heaney’s fascination with the possibility of a world beyond the visible, are suffering the loss of a poet who had, above all, the human touch; and

(d) extends its deep sympathy to his wife Marie, sons Michael and Christopher and daughter Catherine.

Senator Fifield to move:
That the temporary order of the Senate relating to consideration of private senators’ bills, which applied until 30 June 2013, be adopted to operate as a temporary order until 30 June 2014 with effect from 2 December 2013.

Senator Waters to move:
That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) recent reports in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the Prime Minister personally promised Tara resident, Ms Debbie Orr, that nobody should be forced to have a gas well on their property,

(ii) the Coalition’s election platform that access to prime agricultural land should only be allowed with the farmer’s agreement—the farmer should have the right to say yes or no to coal seam gas exploration and extraction on their property, and

(iii) that there are no constitutional limitations preventing the Federal Government from giving Australian landholders the legal right to say no to coal seam gas; and

(b) calls on the Government to follow through on these statements by giving landholders the legal right to say no to coal seam gas mining on their land under federal law.

Senator Xenophon to move:
That the following matters be referred to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 11 December 2013:

(a) the overall performance, importance and role of Australia Post in Australian communities, and the challenges it faces in the immediate and longer term;

(b) the operations of Australia Post in relation to Licensed Post Offices (LPOs), with particular reference to:

(i) the importance and role of the LPO network in the Australian postal system, with particular reference to regional and remote areas,

(ii) the licensing and trading conditions applicable to LPOs, including the Community Service Obligations, and any effects these may have on operating an LPO business, and

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CHAMBER
(iii) marketing, retail and trading arrangements between Australia Post and LPOs and other entities;

and

(c) any related matters.

**Senators Gallacher, Farrell, McEwen and Wong** to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that the car industry contributes $21.5 billion to Australian gross domestic product and that the loss of the car industry would see the loss of 33,000 jobs in Melbourne and 6,600 jobs in Adelaide by 2018;

(b) congratulates South Australian Premier, Mr Jay Weatherill, and the South Australian Government on its ‘More than Cars’ campaign which seeks to create public consensus across the country for national investment in the car industry; and

(c) urges the Abbott Government to immediately announce a financial package to attract private investment in the car industry which will ensure that we secure the future of the industry for the long term.

**Senator Madigan** to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) in 2010 the Australian Bureau of Statistics published the Agricultural Land and Water Ownership survey (December 2010), which indicated that 11.3 per cent of Australian agricultural land was foreign-owned,

(ii) according to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s Vote Compass, a significant majority of Australians want to ‘further restrict foreign ownership of Australian agricultural land’, and

(iii) Australian agricultural land is a national treasure and should not be treated as a global commodity; and

(b) calls on the Government to table an updated Agricultural Land and Water Ownership survey, outlining foreign ownership of Australian agricultural land as at June 2013.

**Senators Rhiannon and Moore** to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) 15 November 2013 is the 75th anniversary of the start of industrial action taken by waterside workers to stop pig iron being loaded on the Dalfram and shipped to Japan,

(ii) the strike was called in support of growing community opposition to Australia shipping resources that could be used as war materials,

(iii) the shipment was part of a contract for 300,000 tons of pig iron to be supplied to Japan Steel Works, which was producing military materials,

(iv) the Federal Government accused the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) of dictating foreign policy, arguing that, as the elected government, it had the sole right to decide what relationships were to be established with foreign powers, and

(v) on 24 January 1939, WWF General Secretary, Mr Jim Healy, met with government representatives and was informed that no more pig iron would be shipped to Japan; and

(b) congratulates the workers involved in the dispute in taking a stand for peace and acknowledges the sacrifices they and their families made during the nine week dispute when they were not paid.
Senator Milne to move:
That the following matter be referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for inquiry and report by the last day of sitting in March 2014:

The legislative proposals to reform the Senate voting system to abolish group voting tickets and introduce optional preferential above-the-line voting.

Senator Milne to move:
That the Senate—
(a) acknowledges the rights of global citizens to free assembly and peaceful protest;
(b) notes:
(i) with deep concern, the ongoing detention of two journalists and 28 crew of the Arctic Sunrise from 18 different countries who have been detained by Russian authorities since 18 September 2013 after peacefully protesting in the Pechora Sea,
(ii) that the arrest of the Arctic 30 occurred in international waters in apparent violation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and
(iii) with disappointment, the absence of meaningful Australian support at the ministerial level for the 30 people detained, including one Australian citizen, one Australian permanent resident and an Australian dual national, while government leaders of the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Brazil and Germany have all made forceful representations to Russia; and
(c) urges the Prime Minister (Mr Abbott) and Minister for Foreign Affairs (Ms Bishop) to be in continuous, direct contact with the Russian Government to seek the urgent release of Australian citizen, Mr Colin Russell and the other 29 individuals detained.

Senator Whish-Wilson to move:
That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Trade and Investment:
(a) the current draft text of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) plurilateral free trade agreement, by 5 December 2013;
(b) any revisions to draft texts of the TPP plurilateral free trade agreement, within 5 days of the revision; and
(c) the final text of the TPP plurilateral free trade agreement, within 5 days of the conclusion of negotiation.

Senators Ludlam and Lundy to move:
(1) That a select committee, to be known as the Select Committee on the National Broadband Network, be established to inquire into and report on the Government's reviews of the National Broadband Network (NBN) and the governance of NBN Co, with interim reports as the committee sees fit and a final report on or before 10 June 2014, with particular reference to:
(a) the establishment of the Government’s strategic review of the NBN including:
   (i) the adequacy of the terms of reference,
   (ii) the selection of personnel and expert advisers to the review,
   (iii) the data provided to the strategic review, in particular, any variation between that data and data used by NBN Co in preparing its annual report and corporate plan, and
   (iv) the impact of the strategic review on the operational effectiveness of NBN Co;
(b) the outcome of the strategic review of the NBN, including:
   (i) the extent to which the review fulfilled its terms of reference,
(ii) the reliability of assumptions made in the review, including, inter alia, the cost of alternative network equipment, the revenues of NBN Co under alternative scenarios, construction requirements and access to Telstra's copper network;

(iii) the implications of any alternatives considered for the long-term structure of the industry, in particular, the structural separation of access networks from retail operations, and

(iv) any other matters arising from the strategic review;

(c) the establishment and findings of the Government’s cost benefit analysis;

(d) the conduct and findings of the Government survey of the availability of broadband in Australia; and

(e) any related matter.

(2) That the committee consist of 7 senators, 3 nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 3 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, and 1 nominated by the Australian Greens.

(3) That:

(a) participating members may be appointed to the committee on the nomination of the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate or any minority party or independent senator;

(b) participating members may participate in hearings of evidence and deliberations of the committee, and have all the rights of members of the committee, but may not vote on any questions before the committee; and

(c) that 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee.

(4) That the committee may proceed to the dispatch of business notwithstanding that not all members have been duly nominated and appointed and notwithstanding any vacancy.

(5) That the committee elect as chair a member nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and as deputy chair, a member nominated by the Leader of the Government.

(6) That the deputy chair shall act as chair when the chair is absent from a meeting of the committee or the position of chair is temporarily vacant.

(7) That the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, may appoint another member of the committee to act as chair during the temporary absence of both the chair and deputy chair at a meeting of the committee.

(8) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(9) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members, and to refer to any such subcommittee any of the matters which the committee is empowered to examine.

(10) That the committee and any subcommittee have power to send for and examine persons and documents, to move from place to place, to sit in public or in private, notwithstanding any prorogation of the Parliament or dissolution of the House of Representatives, and have leave to report from time to time its proceedings, the evidence taken and such interim recommendations as it may deem fit.

(11) That the committee be provided with all necessary staff, facilities and resources and be empowered to appoint persons with specialist knowledge for the purposes of the committee with the approval of the president.

(12) That the committee be empowered to print from day to day such documents and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public.
Senators Madigan and Xenophon to move:
That the following matter be referred to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee for inquiry and report by the first sitting day in March 2014:

The current ratio of Australian goods and services versus imported goods and services utilised by the Commonwealth through procurement procedures, with particular reference to:

(a) the current policies and procedures for procurement in Commonwealth departments and agencies, including:
   (i) the current effectiveness of procurement policies and procedures,
   (ii) the effectiveness of any policies or procedures designed to preference Australian goods and services, and
   (iii) the operation of procurement divisions of departments and agencies, including oversight and scrutiny, cost, and requirements relating to transparency and information-sharing;
(b) the current policies and procedures for procurement for major Commonwealth-funded capital projects currently underway or foreshadowed in the budget, including:
   (i) the current effectiveness of procurement policies and procedures for these projects,
   (ii) the effectiveness of any policies designed to preference Australian goods and services, and
   (iii) the transparency and accountability of project management;
(c) the economic, social and environmental benefits of utilising Australian goods and services; and
(d) any related matters.

Senator Moore to move:
That the Senate condemns the Government for its failure to rule out cuts to health and education programs, instead making it clear, when the Commission of Audit was announced by the Treasurer (Mr Hockey), that no area of the budget was ruled out, declaring that there are ‘no restrictions’ for the work of the commission.

Senators Rhiannon and Milne to move:
That the Senate—

(a) notes:
(i) that the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr Stephen Harper, the Indian Prime Minister, Mr Manmohan Singh, and the Mauritius Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, will be boycotting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Sri Lanka due to concerns about human rights violations,
(ii) that the British Prime Minister, Mr David Cameron, has said that he will attend CHOGM in Sri Lanka and communicate directly to President Rajapakse that if Sri Lanka does not deliver an independent investigation, the world will need to ensure an international investigation into war crimes is carried out,
(iii) the recent remarks by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Navi Pillay, about the huge levels of insecurity, fear and surveillance of the Sri Lankan population, and
(iv) that the Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, and Deputy Prime Minister, Ms Bishop, have said they will be attending CHOGM in Sri Lanka; and
(b) calls on Prime Minister to:
(i) follow the lead of the British Prime Minister and tell President Rajapakse if Sri Lanka does not deliver an independent investigation, the international community will need to ensure an investigation into war crimes is carried out, and
(ii) raise issues of freedom, failure to uphold the rule of law and human rights violations with President Rajapakse while he is at CHOGM.

Senator Siewert to move:
That—
(a) the inquiry into the ownership arrangements of grain handling in Australia of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee of the 43rd Parliament be re-referred for inquiry with the same terms of reference, granting the current committee access to all inquiry submissions and documents of the preceding committee; and
(b) the committee report to the Senate by 13 December 2013.

Senator Ludlam to move:
That the Senate—
(a) notes:
(i) the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi reactor site is progressively deteriorating,
(ii) that Australian uranium was in each of the reactors at Fukushima on 11 March 2011, and
(iii) the nuclear utility TEPCO is embarking on the risky removal of more than 1 500 highly irradiated fuel rods from Unit 4 of the reactor complex; and
(b) calls on the government to:
(i) provide an assessment of the likelihood of success, and consequence of failure, of fuel recovery operations;
(ii) inform the Senate of whether or not it has evaluated the contamination risks to Pacific Ocean ecosystems, fisheries and communities in the event of a fire or other accident during fuel recovery operations, and
(iii) regularly advise the Senate of the progress toward the removal of fuel from Fukushima Daiichi Unit 4 and subsequent progress toward reducing the flow of radioactive water into the Pacific Ocean.

Postponement

The following items of business were postponed:

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 3 standing in the name of Senator Hanson-Young for today, proposing the disallowance of the Migration Amendment (Temporary Protection Visas) Regulation 2013, postponed till 2 December 2013.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (15:42): by leave—I move:
That general business notice of motion no. 5 standing in the name of the Leader of the Australian Greens (Senator Milne) for today, proposing an amendment to standing order 18, be postponed till 2 December 2013.

Question agreed to.
BILL

Australian Capital Territory Water Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2013

First Reading

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:43): I move:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to the management and regulation of water resources by the Australian Capital Territory and for related purposes. Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 to grant exemption from income tax of certain income from savings accounts.

Question agreed to.

Senator FIFIELD: I present the bill and move:

That this bill may proceed without formalities and be now read a first time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:44): I table the explanatory memorandum and move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

The Australian Capital Territory Water Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 (the Bill) demonstrates the Government’s commitment to delivering the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in full and on time.

Key policy objectives of the Bill

The Bill is another step to improve the management of Murray-Darling Basin resources by making the appropriate level of government responsible for managing water in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) on a day to day basis. The ACT is part of the Murray-Darling Basin. Under current arrangements, the management of water on National Land in the ACT is a Commonwealth function. The ACT Government manages water on Territory land. The Bill will remove this dual management and streamline arrangements by providing the ACT Government with authority to manage all water abstraction in the ACT.

This legislative change will also enable the ACT, and Commonwealth water abstractors in the ACT, to fulfil their obligations under the Basin Plan.

The Bill further facilitates the implementation of the Basin Plan by enabling the ACT to fully manage surface waters of the Googong Dam. Under the Basin Plan, the ACT is required to prepare a water resource plan that covers all the Territory’s water resources, as well as the Googong Dam. Googong Dam water resources, while managed by the Territory for the purposes of supplying water to the Territory, are a Commonwealth water resource located on NSW land. Through amendments to the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988 (PALM Act), the Water Act...
2007 and the Canberra Water Supply (Googong Dam) Act 1974, this Bill provides the appropriate legislative backing for the ACT to prepare a Basin Plan compliant water resource plan.

Broader policy strategies

The Basin Plan was adopted in November 2012, recognising the importance of restoring health to the Murray-Darling Basin and providing certainty to communities. The Basin Plan provides a national strategy to ensure integrated and comprehensive water resource management throughout the Murray-Darling Basin. The ACT surface and ground water resources discharge into the Murrumbidgee River. Water resource management in the ACT has ecological and hydrological impacts and changes the volume of water that is available to other water users not only in the ACT but also in NSW, Victoria and South Australia. Therefore it is important that the ACT is able to prepare the water resource plan required of it under the Basin Plan. The Bill provides the necessary legislative backing for this process.

What the Bill will do

When the legislative changes commence, the abstraction of water in the ACT will be managed by the ACT government under the ACT’s Water Resources Act 2007. This will be achieved by amendments to the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988 and associated Commonwealth legislative instruments. This change will allow the ACT to cover all of the Territory’s water resources in its water resource plan, in accordance with its obligations under the Basin Plan.

The Bill will also provide appropriate legislative backing for the Googong dam area to be included in the ACT’s water resource plan area. Under the Basin Plan, the ACT is required to prepare a water resource plan that covers the Googong Dam as well as all of the Territory's water resources. This outcome will be achieved through the amendments to the Water Act 2007.

Finally, the legislation will ensure that the ACT executive has the necessary powers to fully manage the surface waters of the Googong Dam under the ACT’s Water Resources Act 2007. This outcome is achieved through the amendments to the Canberra Water Supply (Googong Dam) Act 1974. The aim of this amendment is to ensure that all water resources under ACT control are managed under a consistent framework.

The combined effect of these changes is that the ACT, and Commonwealth water abstractors in the ACT, will be able to comply with their obligations under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

This change will not affect any agreements reached by the Commonwealth, New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory governments on the supply of water to Queanbeyan.

Cooperative, consistent and efficient management arrangements of water abstraction within the ACT will have long-term benefits on the sustainability of water resources within the ACT.

I commend this bill to the Senate.

Debate adjourned.

Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2013

First Reading

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (15:44): I move:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000, and for related purposes—Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2013.

Question agreed to.

Senator SCULLION: I present the bill and move:

That this bill may proceed without formalities and be now read a first time.
Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (15:45): I table the explanatory memorandum relating to the bill and move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION (TARGETED ASSISTANCE) AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2) 2013


The IETA Act enables targeted education funding to provide valuable additional support to Indigenous students.

All children, but particularly disadvantaged Indigenous children, need access to a proper education. This Bill ensures the Government can continue to deliver targeted education programmes to Indigenous student through IETA programmes, including programmes that have a clear focus on supporting the Government's priority of increasing school attendance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The Bill addresses changes from the 2013-14 Budget resulting in IETA being administered as an Annual appropriation rather than a Special Appropriation. This change to the funding mechanism better aligns IETA programmes and payment with other similar payments and provides greater transparency and accountability.

This amendment enables me, as Minister for Indigenous Affairs, to enter into funding agreements with service providers from 1 January 2014 for targeted education programmes delivered under the IETA Act.

The Australian Government is committed to working with states and territories to ensure that right around Australia, Indigenous children go to school. This Bill reaffirms our commitment to increasing school attendance and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and communities through the delivery of targeted programmes.

Debate adjourned.

Ordered that further consideration of the second reading of this bill is adjourned to 2 December 2013, in accordance with standing order 111.

DOCUMENTS

Reserve Bank of Australia

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator CAMERON (New South Wales) (15:46): I move:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister Representing the Treasurer, by no later than 2 pm on Thursday, 14 November 2013; all documents relating to the decision to grant $8.8 billion to the Reserve Bank of Australia Reserve Fund, including, but not limited to, documents produced by and/or for, and communications to and/or from the following:
(a) the Treasurer;
(b) the office of the Treasurer;
(c) the Treasury;
(d) the Prime Minister;
(e) the office of the Prime Minister;
(f) the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet;
(g) members of the board of the Reserve Bank of Australia; and
(h) the Reserve Bank of Australia.
Question agreed to.

BILLs
National Integrity Commission Bill 2013
First Reading
Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (15:46): I move:
That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to establish the National Integrity Commission, and for related purposes—National Integrity Commission Bill 2013.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (15:47): I present the explanatory memoranda and move:
That this bill be now read a second time.
I seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in Hansard.
The speech read as follows—
This bill was introduced by the Australian Greens in both the 42nd and 43rd Parliaments. Since the original introduction by former Senator Bob Brown, all the states have now developed and implemented independent anti-corruption commissions. The overwhelming evidence of these culture-changing institutions has reinforced the necessity for such a body to be established at the commonwealth level.

The federal Parliament cannot end the 44th session remaining as the only jurisdiction left unchecked against the very real threat of internal corruption or maladministration across the federal public service.

This bill will provide the infrastructure to challenge corruption by establishing the National Integrity Commission as an independent statutory agency. It establishes three co-dependent offices; the National Office of Integrity Commissioner, based largely on the successful NSW Independent Commission against Corruption model. It would absorb the existing Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity (ACLEI) and create a new Office of the Independent Parliamentary Adviser to advise MPs and Ministers on entitlements claims and the ethical running of their office that the public rightly expects. The adviser will also be tasked with developing a legally binding code of conduct for MPs for the Parliament to adopt.

The National Office of Integrity Commissioner will actively prevent and investigate misconduct and corruption in all Commonwealth departments, agencies, federal parliamentarians and their staff. This will fill the largest gap in our country's anti-corruption framework. Its powers are based largely on provisions in the Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner Act 2006.
It will focus on corruption in relation to public officials and Commonwealth agencies and has full investigative powers, including conducting public and private hearings and summoning any person or agency to produce documents and appear before the Commissioner. It can conduct investigations, apply for and execute search warrants and hold public inquiries. Importantly the bill provides the capacity for the Commissioner to investigate cases where corrupt conduct is foreseeable, making the Office’s role proactive in addressing corruption.

The National Integrity Commission will operate in the federal jurisdiction and will not replace or over-ride state legislation. The Bill provides for the ACT and Northern Territory to contract the National Integrity Commission to operate in respect of their territories, in the same way that the Commonwealth Ombudsman acts as the ACT Ombudsman.

The second office in the National Integrity Commission is the Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner focusing on federal law enforcement agencies in accordance with the Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner Act 2006. It will continue to have the functions and powers conferred under that Act.

Finally, the Parliamentary Adviser will put an end to the current shambles surrounding the claiming of electoral entitlements for personal benefit. Even with the recently announced minor adjustments, an MP is still required to navigate the ambiguity. An independent third party is best placed to ensure consistency of entitlements claims. As we have seen, the advice from the Department of Finance leaves it largely to the discretion of the politician. The continuing lack of clarity, now with a 25% loading penalty means that impartial assistance for parliamentarians is even more necessary to restore public respect and confidence.

In summary, this Bill provides the legislative framework for comprehensive prevention of corruption and misconduct in the federal public service. It fills the most glaring defects of our governance framework and it will provide the public with an institution it can rely upon to ensure the highest standards of public administration now and into the future.

I therefore commend this Bill to the Senate.

Debate adjourned.
(a) notes:

(i) the important contribution the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC) makes to promoting the rights of girls, highlighting gender inequality and addressing the various forms of discrimination and abuse suffered by girls around the world, and

(ii) that YWCA Australia, Girl Guides Australia, the Australian Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the United Nations Women National Committee Australia and the International Women’s Development Agency have played a leading role in promoting IDGC and that they are calling for cross-party support for:

(A) a focus on developing the capacity and skills of girls,

(B) a Gender Goal and mainstream gender targets in other Goals in the Post 2015 Development Agenda,

(C) providing meaningful opportunities for girls and young women to determine their own and their community’s future, and

(D) developing an evidence base that clearly demonstrates the contribution that women and girls make to the economy and a peaceful society; and

(b) calls on all political parties to consider how they can support these goals.

Question agreed to.

World Sight Day

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (15:49): I seek leave to amend general business notice of motion No. 8 standing in my name for today relating to World Sight Day, before asking that it be taken as a formal motion.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Is there any objection to this motion being amended prior to being taken as formal?

Senator Fifield: It would be good to lay eyes on it. I am sure it is as agreed.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Do you want to defer this until you actually sight it, Senator Fifield, or are you prepared to continue with the motion?

Senator Fifield: Or if Senator Rhiannon could read out the amendment.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Rhiannon, would you care to read the amendment out to the chamber? It appears there is an issue with it not being circulated.

Senator RHIANNON: The amendment is to replace the current (c) with:

(c) calls on the Australian Government and partner countries to continue efforts to eliminate avoidable blindness in the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean region, including through Vision 2020 Australia.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Are senators clear with the wording of the amendment?

Senator Fifield interjecting—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Could I suggest we defer this motion until a little bit later. I will deal with it just prior to getting to motions that may be a bit more contentious.

COMMITTEES

Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee

Senator MARSHALL (Victoria) (15:52): I move:
That the Senate modifies the order of 28 October 2009 relating to Fair Work Australia and estimates hearings to read as follows:

When the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee meets to consider estimates in relation to Fair Work Australia, (now the Fair Work Commission), the Senate expects that the President appear before the committee to answer questions should his or her presence be required by the committee.

Question agreed to.

**BUSINESS**

**Consideration of Legislation**

**Senator MADIGAN** (Victoria) (15:52): I move:

(1) That so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent this resolution having effect.

(2) That the following bills be restored to the Notice Paper and that consideration of each of the bills be resumed at the stage reached in the last session of the parliament:

- Health Insurance Amendment (Medicare Funding for Certain Types of Abortion) Bill 2013
- Fair Trade (Workers’ Rights) Bill 2013

Question agreed to.

**BILLS**

**Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Amendment Bill 2013**

**First Reading**

**Senator XENOPHON** (South Australia) (15:53): I move:


Question agreed to.

*Senator XENOPHON:* I present the bill and move:

That this bill may proceed without formalities and be now read a first time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

**Senator XENOPHON** (South Australia) (15:53): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

*The speech read as follows—*

As politicians, we are constantly under scrutiny from the media, our political opponents, and our constituents. That is how it should be, because we are rightly held to a higher standard.

There are already specific protections in place through parliamentary privilege, which shields members of parliament against legal action relating to anything said in either chamber. This is vitally important, and it should be maintained and not abused.
But there are other protections in place to control the broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings through the Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings. Established under the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946, the committee’s role is, in part, to determine conditions under which proceedings can be re-broadcast.

These conditions, which have not changed since 1994, specifically prohibit the re-broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings for the use of satire or ridicule.

This is, in itself, deserving of ridicule. It is both pompous and precious to expect to be above reproach, and it also demonstrates an unwillingness to own up to mistakes, gaffs or just plain stupidity.

The aim of this bill is to prevent the joint committee from making conditions preventing the re-broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings for satire or ridicule. The reasons behind this are more than just a belief that politicians should not be above reproach: it is also based on the fact that satire has become a valid source of news and information for many people.

Programs like *The Chaser*, *Gruen Nation* and *The Project* use humour, satire and even ridicule to examine political issues. But they do not have access to broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings, which limits their activities.

In the United States, however, where no such limitation exists, host of *The Daily Show*, Jon Stewart, was named America’s most trusted newsman in a 2009 online poll for *Time* magazine. This demonstrates the vital role satire can play in informing public debate, and highlights how obsolete Australia’s rules in this area have become.

This bill does not impact on the joint committee’s ability to create other conditions or enforce those that already exist in relation to context, fairness and accuracy. Broadcasters wishing to re-broadcast parliamentary proceedings for satire will still have to ensure these requirements are met, which will ensure this new access cannot be abused.

Quite frankly, it is time to lighten up and open our parliament to the sharp knives of satirists everywhere.

Senator XENOPHON: I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

**Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013**

First Reading

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (15:54): I move:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, and for related purposes. Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013.

Question agreed to.

Senator XENOPHON: I present the bill and move:

That this bill may proceed without formalities and be now read a first time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (15:54): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*. 

---

CHAMBER
Leave granted.

_The speech read as follows—_

We are incredibly fortunate in Australia to have an electoral system that is the envy of many other countries in the world. All Australians are able to take it for granted that our elections are rigorously monitored and that our system will stand up to scrutiny.

However, the most recent 2013 Senate elections have left many voters disillusioned. Setting aside the issues with the recount in Western Australia, the complex preference deals exchanged between parties left voters unsure of where their votes would eventually end up. Equally, the significant number of candidates in each state made it difficult for people to cast their vote below the line.

Voters, already confused and disheartened, lost further faith in the system once the results came in. For the first time, the system revealed the extent to which it can be manipulated through preference deals, with two candidates being elected with less than one per cent of the primary vote. It was this so-called 'gaming' in New South Wales in 1999 that led to the overhaul of the state electoral system for Legislative Council elections, a model on which this bill is based.

In a recent panel discussion as part of the Third Biennial Electoral Regulation Workshop in Brisbane earlier this year, Michael Maley of the ANU raised the following two points regarding preference deals:

"First, the exchanges of preferences in a preference harvest are basically pragmatic, rather than reflecting an ideological alignment of the cooperating parties. Secondly, there would appear to be a widespread sense (backed by considerable anecdotal evidence) that many (though not all) of the parties which take part in preference harvesting have little underlying substance, and exist merely to get onto the ballot paper a slogans party name which it is thought might attract a small but potentially useful contribution to the harvest."

The current voting system can lead to complex and unexpected outcomes that do not reflect the overwhelming will of the voters. The solution outlined in this bill is relatively simple.

The aim of this bill is to reform the current system to remove group voting tickets for the Senate—essentially preference deals—and make it easier for voters to demonstrate their democratic will.

The bill establishes an optional preferential system above and below the line. It maintains the structure of the existing ballot paper, with group squares above the line and individual candidate squares below the line. Voters will be able to number either one or more squares above the line, or at least as many squares as there are vacancies to be filled below the line.

Candidates wishing to register as a group will still get a square above the line, and will be able to determine the order in which their candidates appear on the ballot paper. As such, when a person votes above the line, it is taken that the voter has assigned their preferences to the candidates in the order in which they appear on the ballot paper. The voter will also be able to number any further squares above the line that they wish, assigning further preferences to other groups.

So, for example, if a voter numbers three squares above the line, their vote will be counted as follows:

- Firstly, to the first candidate listed on the ballot paper for the group voting square the voter has numbered 1;
- Secondly, to any other candidates listed under in the group voting square the voter has numbered 1, in the order those candidates appear on the ballot paper;
- Thirdly, to the first candidate listed on the ballot paper for the group voting square the voter has numbered 2;
- Fourthly, to any other candidates listed under in the group voting square the voter has numbered 2, in the order those candidates appear on the ballot paper;
• Fifthly, to the first candidate listed on the ballot paper for the group voting square the voter has numbered 3;
• Lastly, to any other candidates listed under in the group voting square the voter has numbered 3, in the order those candidates appear on the ballot paper.

Alternatively, if a voter chooses to number candidate squares below the line, they must number at least as many squares as there are vacancies to be filled. Therefore, the voter will be required to number at least 6 squares on a state ballot paper for a half Senate election, 12 for a full Senate election, or the corresponding numbers for territory elections. The voter may also number as many squares beyond that minimum as they wish; they do not have to number all the squares for their vote to be valid, although they may do so if they choose.

The votes will be counted according to the current system. However, as a voter does not have to indicate a preference for all candidates (as exists under the current system, either through numbering all the squares below the line or by indicating the desire to follow a group ticket through voting above the line), votes are more likely to 'exhaust'; that is, all preferences may be allocated without enough candidates achieving the required quota. If this is the case, the remaining candidates with the highest votes will be elected to fill the remaining vacancies.

This system has already been tested in New South Wales for the Legislative Council elections and has proven to be successful, with 15.6 per cent of voters directing more than one preference above the line.

I would like to acknowledge ABC election analyst Antony Green, Professor Clement Macintyre of Adelaide University and Professor Dean Jaensch, formerly of Flinders University, for their invaluable assistance.

Australian voters find it incredibly difficult to cast a vote according to their beliefs for the Senate, and this must change. We must remember that our voting system should be equally accessible and understandable to someone with limited English or a visual impairment as it is to someone with a degree in political science.

Ultimately, I believe candidates and parties should have to campaign to win votes, not count on a confusing and labyrinthine preferencing system to win a seat. As Antony Green says, the system should reward those who campaign for votes, not deal in preferences.

Senator XENOPHON: I seek leave to continue my remarks later.
Leave granted; debate adjourned.

MOTIONS

World Sight Day

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (15:55): Senator Rhiannon, are we ready to come back to your matter? I am getting an indication that that is a 'yes'.

Senator Rhiannon: Yes, thank you.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: We got to the stage where you sought leave to have the amended notice of motion taken as formal. I think we will start there—is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (15:55): I move:
That the Senate—
(a) notes that:
(i) on World Sight Day, held on 10 October 2013, the Global Action Plan to reduce avoidable blindness and vision impairment by 25 per cent by 2019 was promoted, and

(ii) more than $80 million from Australia's aid budget has been allocated to blindness prevention work in low-income countries since 2007;

(b) congratulates Vision 2020 Australia for its work to focus global attention on taking action to prevent blindness and vision impairment; and

(c) calls on the Australian Government and partner countries to continue efforts to eliminate avoidable blindness in the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean region, including through Vision 2020.

Question agreed to.

**Wheat Exports**

**Senator SIEWERT** (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (15:56): I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that Archer Daniels Midland's proposed acquisition of GrainCorp will reduce competition in the wheat exporting market and hurt Australian growers; and

(b) calls on the Treasurer (Mr Hockey) to reject the takeover bid of GrainCorp by Archer Daniels Midland.

**Senator Fifield:** I seek leave to make a short statement.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Leave is granted for one minute.

**Senator FIFIELD** (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:56): In the view of the government it would not be appropriate for the Senate to prejudge the Treasurer's decision on the Archer Daniels Midland company's proposed acquisition of GrainCorp Ltd. Parliament has enacted a clear process for reviewing foreign investment proposals. Under the legislation the Treasurer is responsible for making decisions on foreign investment proposals that raise national interest concerns.

The Treasurer has extended the deadline for his decision to 17 December 2013, and will make a decision after all the relevant issues and advice from the Foreign Investment Review Board have been considered. The foreign investment review framework is a well-established process that has served Australia well for decades, and the process should, in the opinion of the government, be allowed to run its course.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** The question is that the motion moved by Senator Siewert be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [16:01]

(The Deputy President—Senator Parry)

Ayes ....................11
Noes ....................47
Majority ...............36

**AYES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Di Natale, R</th>
<th>Hanson-Young, SC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ludlam, S</td>
<td>Madigan, JJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milne, C</td>
<td>Rhiannon, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siewert, R (teller)</td>
<td>Waters, LJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whish-Wilson, PS</td>
<td>Wright, PL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Question negatived.

**Great Barrier Reef**

**Senator WATERS** (Queensland) (16:05): I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) the concern shared by Great Barrier Reef dive operators, charter boat companies, tourism operators, scientists and the community at large, and the World Heritage Committee, about the destructive dredging and offshore dumping for the proposed Abbot Point coal port expansion, planned to be the largest coal port in the world, and

(ii) the withdrawal of BHP Billiton from the proposed T2 terminal at Abbot Point, citing lack of need for additional port capacity; and

(b) calls on the Government to listen to the community and our scientific experts and reject the Abbot Point dredging and dumping application and save the reef's waters, our coral reefs, fishing grounds and seagrass meadows from another 3 million tonnes of smothering dredge spoil.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD** (Queensland) (16:06): Mr Deputy President, I seek leave to make a very short statement.

The **DEPUTY PRESIDENT**: Leave is granted for one minute.
Senator IAN MACDONALD: I had indicated to the Greens that I would be denying formality on the basis that the premise of the motion is erroneous, and maliciously erroneous, and I thought the matter should go to a full debate. I have been persuaded that it might be better to allow a vote to be had on the motion at this stage, so I just want to explain that to the Greens, to whom I had indicated I would be denying formality.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion moved by Senator Waters be agreed to.

[The Senate divided. [16:08]

(The Deputy President—Senator Parry)

Ayes ...................... 9
Noes ...................... 47
Majority .................. 38

AYES

Di Natale, R
Ludlam, S
Rhiannon, L
Waters, LJ
Wright, PL

Hanson-Young, SC
Milne, C
Siewert, R (teller)
Whish-Wilson, PS

NOES

Bernardi, C
Birmingham, SJ
Brown, CL
Cameron, DN
Collins, JMA
Dastyari, s
Eggleston, A
Faulkner, J
Fierravanti-Wells, C
Furner, ML
Groger, H
Ludwig, JW
Macdonald, ID
Marshall, GM
McEwen, A (teller)
McLucas, J
Nash, F
Payne, MA
Pratt, LC
Seselja, Z
Smith, D
Sterle, G
Tillem, M
Williams, JR

Bilyk, CL
Boyce, SK
Bushby, DC
Carr, KJ
Conroy, SM
Edwards, S
Farrell, D
Fawcett, DJ
Fifield, MP
Gallacher, AM
Lines, S
Lundy, KA
Madigan, JJ
Mason, B
McKenzie, B
Moore, CM
Parry, S
Peris, N
Ruston, A
Singh, LM
Stephens, U
Thorp, LE
Urquhart, AE

Question negatived.
MATTERS OF URGENCY
Australian Automotive Industry

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (16:12): I inform the Senate that at 8.30 today Senator Moore and Senator Siewert each submitted a letter in accordance with standing order 75 proposing a matter of public importance or urgency. The question of which proposal would be submitted to the Senate was determined by lot. As a result, I inform the Senate that the following letter has been received from Senator Moore:

Dear Mr President
Pursuant to standing order 75, I give notice that today I propose to move:

That, in the opinion of the Senate, the following is a matter of urgency.

The failure of the Government to acknowledge the urgency of the crisis facing the Australian automotive industry, or act to avert it, and the anxiety this is causing for tens of thousands of Australian workers and their families about the future of the auto industry and their jobs.

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

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I understand that informal arrangements have been made to allocate specific times to each of the speakers in today’s debate. With the concurrence of the Senate, I shall ask the clerks to set the clock accordingly.

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (16:12): At the request of Senator Moore, I move:

That, in the opinion of the Senate, the following is a matter of urgency:

The failure of the Government to acknowledge the urgency of the crisis facing the Australian automotive industry, or act to avert it, and the anxiety this is causing for tens of thousands of Australian workers and their families about the future of the auto industry and their jobs.

I move this motion to bring the attention of the parliament to an emerging but preventable social catastrophe in this country. I speak here of the imminent demise of the Australian automotive industry. This has come about as a result of the government's inaction to meet the fundamental question about co-investment in the automotive industry.

What we do know is that the General Motors Investment Committee has been meeting for some time about the future investment of $1 billion for the Australian automotive industry. This is investment which would help modernise the plant and ensure the production of two new models and secure production for General Motors through to the middle of the next decade.

What we also know is that in October after the election of this government, the General Motors board met in Detroit to consider the decisions that the government in Australia had indicated it was prepared to make. My understanding is that the international board members looked upon the announcements, the public statements of members of the newly-elected government, as somewhat bizarre because nowhere else where General Motors produces motor cars—and there are over 20 countries in the world, over 168 plants across the globe—is there a discussion about whether or not those countries actually want an automotive industry. But in Australia that seems to be the case.

In the last few days the Executive Vice President Consolidated International Operations of General Motors, Mr Stefan Jacoby, has been in Australia to discuss with the local
management the decisions and actions of the government in Australia. Along with Daniel Akerson, the CEO of General Motors, he is charged with making a recommendation to the board of General Motors to consider whether or not they proceed with the $1 billion investment in the General Motors plant and whether or not General Motors actually makes the decision to cease production in Australia. Those board discussions are underway on a monthly basis but the decision in terms of the actual investment may well be made as soon as December.

This is according to timetables that are well known in the industry; well known to the Liberal Party; well known to the Labor Party. Before last Christmas, the Liberal Party in opposition was fully briefed on the investment plans of the company and fully briefed on the business model that the company was preparing; as was the government. The government took those investment plans through, with some rigorous analysis, and made the decision that we would as a government reach a settlement with General Motors about the future investment, and we did announce before the election a new car plan for the 2020s to secure the investment in Australia for the future of the automotive industry. We made those decisions based on a very careful analysis of the social and economic consequences of not investing. What is very clear in this industry is that it actually costs you more to let the industry collapse than it does to sustain the co-investment.

So, when we look at the situation the way it is now, it is not some Mexican stand-off; no-one is holding a gun to anyone's head—as government ministers have been stating. The coalition's theatrics have in fact sought to obscure some simple facts. The international automotive companies are bound by the investment decisions they make at an international level. But competition for investment capital is actually very scarce within the automotive industry. Automotive companies make decisions not only in competition with one another but against other countries. The decisions made with respect to the global production schedules are made on the basis of international decisions, not on the basis of meeting some local parochial concern, like a provincial election, such as we have in the state of South Australia.

These are schedules that dictate the critical decisions which are made to underpin the new investment, to bring the new technologies, to secure the new jobs for Australia. That timetable has been set down with plenty of knowledge and with the full knowledge of the current government and with the full knowledge of the current opposition.

Over 12 months the coalition has been fully advised of the schedules. Two months ago, the new government would have also been advised by the new department—the Department of Industry—as to what those schedules would be. They would also be fully briefed on the business case that had been put forward and the analysis that had been undertaken to support that business case. Yet this government fails to act. They fail to appreciate the urgency of the situation, because the government is in the business of playing chicken with the international automotive industry. They risk billions of dollars in foreign investment in this ideological witch-hunt, because some elements of the government think this is the time, this is the opportunity, to walk away from the automotive industry.

We know in this city, particularly amongst the bureaucracy, there is a school of thought that says industry policy is bad. But when it comes to the automotive industry there are people in this bureaucracy who happen to believe that there is something evil about the automotive industry. It is a deep ideological divide within the bureaucracy. That division is also reflected
throughout the editorial pages of our newspapers, but it is particularly reflected within the
corner. The merchant banker mentality of the North Shore of Sydney, as reflected in Mr
Hockey's position, of course is at one end. Mr Macfarlane's views, representing in many
respects people who have some experience of the realities of international investment and the
realities of the way manufacturing works, show an appreciation of what is actually required.

The right-wing ideologues have been spurred on by the Institute of Public Affairs, by the
editorial writers at the Financial Review, by the editorial writers at The Australian, by the
'New Right' agenda, which of course is now a very 'Old Right' agenda, about withdrawing
government support from manufacturing. What we are seeing here is a position being taken
by the government which is, in fact, by proxy no action. The result of that is to threaten the
future of hundreds of Australian businesses; tens of thousands of Australian workers; tens of
thousands of people across every state and territory of this Commonwealth. Every region of
this Commonwealth would be affected by the loss of the nearly 200,000 jobs which would
come if this industry were allowed to fail. The anxiety which is being created by the inaction
of this government while they play out their ideological games means that decent
hardworking Australians are being thrown in to a period of great uncertainty.

The simple question is: if the manufacturing industry—which of course is dependent upon
automotive componentry and production, which is at its core—fails in this way, where will
the jobs be found? Where will the new investment be found? We know for instance that over
13,000 people are employed in the automotive industry in South Australia. There is 6.6 per
cent unemployment in that state at the moment. What would the consequences be for the
collapse of General Motors? And not just General Motors; what about the 33 prime
contractors that underpin General Motors, and the 1,700 subprime contractors. The
implications in South Australia are huge.

But in the state of Victoria, which I represent in this chamber, the situation is even worse:
33,000 workers in my home state would be lost; 1.4 per cent of gross regional product would
be lost. The gross regional product would not recover—if this industry falls over—for almost
two decades. Employment losses would of course take much longer to recover; they would be
equal to the loss of 33,000 jobs by 2018.

So we know what this government is facing. We know that this government is not prepared
to face up to its responsibilities and we know that the cost to the budget in terms of lost taxes,
increased social security and lost investment would actually be much, much higher than any
co-investment arrangement which we are currently providing. Any co-investment
arrangement would be much, much less than the social and economic costs to this nation if
the automotive industry fails as a result of the inaction of this government in their desperate
bid to get past the South Australian election in March next year. (Time expired)

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales) (16:22): I find it amazing that the former
industry minister Senator Kim Carr is here expressing his concerns about the motor vehicle
industry. I have one simple question: who was it that brought in that luxury car tax? Who was
that? That was Minister Kim Carr when he was in government. What a terrible situation if a
couple work hard and, instead of buying a basic Holden Commodore, they might want to
upgrade to a Holden Statesman. What a terrible thing that they worked hard and could afford
a bit more luxury. You cannot have that in our nation. Put a tax on that Holden Statesman.
What did that do to jobs? This is socialism at its best, and now we have got these people crying about the industry that they did so much damage to.

A simple question: who was in government when Ford Australia announced that they would be shutting down their industry in 2016? Who was the minister? Was it Minister Kim Carr from the Australian Labor Party, industry minister, beating his chest about what he was doing for the car industry? In the meantime under his watch Ford Australia shut down after decades and decades and announced they will be closing down manufacturing in Australia.

There is no denying that the Australian automotive industry is facing a number of significant challenges as it adjusts to the high value of the Australian dollar and highly competitive and fragmented markets. Let's look at the high Australian dollar. There is a continued tie with interest rates and the exchange rate: the higher the interest rate, the higher the exchange rate. Remember the previous Labor government when they were borrowing money and stimulating the economy in 2009? They did it so much that in November 2009, the Reserve Bank started raising interest rates.

Speaking of cars, who drives their car with one foot on the accelerator and one foot on the brake at the same time? No-one, but this lot in government were pouring money into the economy trying to stimulate it, wasting so much borrowed money while the Reserve Bank were raising interest rates to slow the economy. Of course with interest rates in many of the OECD countries down around zero, it made it very inviting for foreign investors to say, 'Let's grab a bit of this high-interest rate, this 4.75 cash rate in Australia.' Hence the upward pressure on the dollar, the exchange rate, that is the key issue which is hurting the automotive industry in Australia.

It gets worse. We talk about transparency, consultation. I wonder what consultation the previous Labor government had when they announced their $1.8 billion fringe benefits tax on the car industry. We saw immediate results. This is why the government overturned Labor's proposed changes. The new government is getting on with the job and overturning those proposed changes to the fringe benefits tax on cars. The changes were ill-conceived from day one. There was no consultation.

I wonder if then Minister Kim Carr was very proud of the fact that they were going to slam a $1.8 billion fringe benefits tax on the motor vehicle industry. And then he stands up here and says, 'The new Abbott-Truss government is not giving enough attention to the motor vehicle industry,' when he was the minister who had oversight causing the damage in the previous government to the very industry we are talking about.

The leasing industry was blindsided and almost immediately hit with job losses. We read all about it in the papers. We got all the emails.

Senator Kim Carr: No effect on the sales figures!

Senator Williams: No effect on the motor vehicle industry at all. Just throw $1.8 billion worth of fringe benefits tax on motor vehicles and then they say—

Senator Kim Carr: On imported cars.

Senator Williams: I will take the interjection: so it wasn't on Australian vehicles? Of course it was on Fords, Holdens and Toyotas. Most of those people using those benefits are what we would call medium-income earners; they weren't the people on a million dollars a
year—the very battlers that the Australian Labor Party used to once represent and that were forgotten about years and years ago.

You are more interested in going along with your signed alliance partners here, the Greens, and when are you going to learn? You know what the Greens did to your reputation. When are you going to learn? The vote you just got on September 7 was the lowest primary vote for the Australian Labor Party since 1903. One hundred and ten years go by and you get the lowest primary vote ever and now you are here with your political partners, the Greens. You got the lowest vote in 110 years. When are you going to learn that the Australian people are not silly. They are aware of what you are about. They are aware of the crazy policies you introduced, including on the motor vehicle industry—your $1.8 billion fringe benefits tax—and you say you did not lose any car sales. As they say, the first thing you learn in life is you cannot educate idiots. How true that statement is. It does not end with the fringe benefits tax.

Another ill-conceived idea developed by Labor of course was the carbon tax. What did it cost to produce every car in Australia in extra electricity prices because of that carbon tax that you were never going to introduce, where you deceived the Australian people prior to the 2010 election and you added some $400 a vehicle cost in energy—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Williams, address your remarks to the chair.

Senator WILLIAMS: With pleasure, Mr Deputy President. They introduced the cost of around $400 a motor vehicle for each and every one made in Australia, a tax they promised the Australian people they would not introduce. You wonder why. You get the lowest vote in 110 years when you misled the Australian people on taxes such as that and you hurt the very industry that you are standing up here trying to defend. Eight minutes is not long enough today.

I doubt there is a manufacturer in Australia that has not lamented the impact of the carbon tax on their business. It raises energy prices without reducing greenhouse gas emissions—just amazing. When they were in government, that lot over there, they were going to take emissions from 578 million tonnes per year in Australia to 637 million tonnes. That is not a reduction. Those are the previous government's figures. They go and tax manufacturing in this country, and now they stand here and cry crocodile tears about the very industry that they, in government, did so much damage to.

The coalition has long been committed to ensuring Australia has a competitive manufacturing industry, including a sustainable automotive manufacturing sector. That is why this government has asked the Productivity Commission to examine the best way to ensure the ongoing viability of the automotive manufacturing industry. The industry has seen enough of the big promises made by the previous government. Think of the Green Car Innovation Fund— (Time expired)

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (16:31): I cannot do justice, in the limited time I have, to this debate, but it is important that as a nation we do justice to the automotive manufacturing industry and the tens of thousands of jobs that rely on it: in my home state, 16,000 jobs; in Victoria at least 33,000 jobs—plus the multiplier effect and the flow-on effect for the small businesses that rely on this industry. I have spoken to the component manufacturers and in South Australia they would be devastated by the loss of General Motors. If General Motors goes that will be the end of our automotive industry in this nation, because
I cannot see how the supply chain will not collapse. It could mean that Toyota, a very fine manufacturer of motor vehicles in Victoria, will also go with it.

I want to say at the outset I have been working very constructively with federal industry minister Ian Macfarlane, South Australian industry minister Tom Kenyon and South Australian Premier Jay Weatherill. We all want the same thing, I believe, and it is important that we look at the consequences of what happens if we do not have an automotive industry in this nation. It will be devastating and we will not get these jobs back. The dry economic rationalist thinks that somehow, magically, these jobs will be created somewhere else. It does not work like that in the real world.

Free trade is not fair trade, when you look at some of the consequences of what we are up against here in Australia. I will give you one example: it is contained in the Allen Consulting Group report prepared for the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries and released just a few days ago. That report makes a very telling point. We have a free trade agreement with Thailand. That means we are supposed to be sending our goods to Thailand with no duties or tariffs, and vice versa from Thailand. Well, Thai-made cars come here; but if you want to buy a Ford Territory—a very fine Australian car—in Thailand, what does it cost? Not $38,000 or $40,000, the recommended retail price here in Australia. It will cost $100,000 because of non-tariff barriers. I do not know how on earth we got ourselves into that position but we are being treated like mugs when it comes to these so-called free trade agreements. It is not a level playing field and that must be acknowledged.

I also want to acknowledge at this stage the great assistance and advice I have been getting from Robert Debelle who is an expert on these issues in Adelaide and has worked very closely with the automotive industry. I am very grateful for Mr Debelle's assistance and for his innovative approach.

We also need to acknowledge what happens if we lose automotive manufacturing in this country. Information given by Goran Roos, the manufacturing expert and adviser to the South Australian government who is well regarded internationally, is this: the automotive industry can serve as an example. It is an industry that has been and is under the highest pressure to continuously increase its productivity. Hence it has not only achieved, and is achieving, astonishing results but is also an industry that has driven productivity growth in other areas of the manufacturing sector. If we lose this industry, we lose that cutting edge; we lose that innovation. If you look at what other components manufacturers are doing—SMR in Adelaide to give you one example, with some of their technology in terms of mirrors for vehicles—it is simply outstanding. In conjunction with R&D and universities, this is the future of our industry. If we lose it there will be nothing to replace it. It will be, as Allen Consulting Group has said, a $21½ billion hit to Australia's economy.

To think that we are competing on some sort of level playing field with the rest of the world is incredibly naive. My plea to this government—and I say this in a constructive way—is: does this government want to be the government that presides over the demise of our automotive industry? Without this industry, in the next three or four years every week people will be laid off, factories will close, families will be devastated and large parts of the northern and southern suburbs of Adelaide will be turned into industrial wastelands. We need to fight for this industry. We need to be smart about it and we need to acknowledge the enormous flow-on benefits of this industry. I will continue to work constructively with Minister
Macfarlane, who I believe is passionate about this industry, and with the South Australian government. I hope that the Victorian state government picks up on this issue, which I am sure Senator Madigan will talk about shortly.

The simple message is: once this industry is gone, it will not come back. We will be left with absolute devastation in the suburbs of Australia if we lose this critical industry.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi): Thank you, Senator Xenophon. Senator Farrell.

Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (16:35): Thank you, Mr Acting Deputy President.

Senator Brandis: Hear, hear!

Senator FARRELL: What are you hear, hearing? My contribution?

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Farrell, ignore the interjections.

Senator FARRELL: Thank you for protecting me once again, Mr Acting Deputy President. I would like to carry on where Senator Xenophon left off. This industry, the automotive industry, survived the global financial crisis. It survived the global restructuring. It survived the record high dollar. The question that now has to be asked by the Australian people and all those people who have an interest in the car industry is: can it survive the Abbott government?

I do not think we can underestimate the importance of this industry to the people of South Australia. Obviously it employs lots of South Australians, as Senator Xenophon said. People in both the north and south are employed, directly and indirectly, in the industry. All of those people rely on this industry for their living. It also provides job security to those people and to the people in the state of South Australia. And, of course, it provides lots of spin-offs to other industries. As Senator Carr indicated, something like $1.3 billion of gross state product would be taken out of South Australia in the event that this industry were to collapse.

I have had some personal experiences, and I know that Senator Xenophon has, with what happens when companies teeter on the edge. We had the circumstances at the start of the last decade of the company of Harris Scarfe. It was a great, iconic South Australian company which got into financial trouble. We went to the state government and the state government came to its support. That company continues to employ thousands of South Australians and Australians more broadly across the country. I think that this is one of those industries where we simply have to say that we cannot afford to let this industry fail. As a South Australian, we cannot afford to let this industry fail; as Australians we cannot afford to let this industry fail.

But there do seem to be question marks over the approach of the new government to this industry. We have heard from Senator Carr about how passionate he was about this industry. I cannot go into as much detail as Senator Carr as to the exact nature of all of the discussions and negotiations that have gone on in this industry, but you can see from Senator Carr how passionate he is for the industry and how passionate this opposition is to ensure that this industry remains not only viable but, more importantly, a vibrant industry for Australia. As Senator Carr said, no other country in the world is having a debate about whether or not to continue with an auto industry. But Australia is. We are having a debate, I think, because we find that there is only one cabinet minister in the new Abbott government from South Australia.
Senator Brandis: But what a cabinet minister!

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi): Order!

Senator FARRELL: Let's see, Senator Brandis, how good this sole cabinet minister is—whether he can come to the rescue of the automotive industry. Because it is now on his shoulders, Senator Brandis, as to whether or not the auto industry survives or fails under this Abbott government. I think there are lots of people in South Australia who are concerned that there are not sufficient voices being raised in the new government—

Senator Gallacher: There are none here today.

Senator FARRELL: That is true—there are no speakers yet from the government.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Address your remarks to the chair, Senator Farrell.

Senator Brandis: What about Senator Briggs and Senator Birmingham?

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator FARRELL: Well, let us see what they do. I know that you, Acting Deputy President Bernardi, are from South Australia and would love to speak on this issue, but you are in the chair. Like all South Australians you would be concerned, I imagine, that this government has not made the sorts of noises that the people of South Australia want to hear about the support for this industry.

I have had some dealings with some of the union officials who have had the very difficult job of dealing with the amount of media coverage that this issue has been given because of the question marks over the future of the industry. I put on the record my congratulations to Mr John Camillo, the secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union in South Australia, but, more particularly, a person who comes out of the auto industry. This union recognised the problems that occurred post the GFC and they sat down very responsibly with Holden in South Australia and negotiated provisions that ensured that, during that very difficult period of economic instability in the world economy, this company continued to operate, people continued to be employed, and we continue to manufacture cars in Australia.

More recently in the most difficult of circumstances Mr Camillo again sat down with the company to work out a strategy to ensure that, from the point of the workers, they were doing absolutely everything in their power to ensure that this company continued to survive in this country. Now, having done all that work, of course what we were expecting to see before Christmas was a Productivity Commission report that would, we hoped, say, 'Look, for national security reasons as well as a whole lot of other reasons we need to build cars in this country.' What has happened? That report has been delayed until after the state election in South Australia. I think what is now worrying all of those workers in the car industry in South Australia is that that report is not going to be favourable to the continuation of the car industry in this country but is not going to be released prior to the state election so people can make some judgement about it. I think it is a matter of very great regret that this Productivity Commission report has been delayed.

The fact of the matter is that under the Labor Party government we had a strategy for the survival of the car industry. We understood the importance of the car industry and we understood why working Australians need to have that job security. We understand why
Australia has to be a country that actually built things but, more particularly, builds vehicles in this country. We had a plan that I believe, certainly under former Minister Carr, was going to lead to a situation where we continued to build cars in this country. The concern that South Australians now have—all of those workers who rely for a living on the car industry, all of those spin-off companies that rely on the support of the auto industry—is that this government is not committed to the ongoing survival of the vehicle industry. What South Australians now want to hear from the government—and certainly from their South Australian representatives—is that there is a commitment to continue to build cars in this country. We need to do it.

Holden is a great company. I do not know enough about the history of Holden with regard to why Ben Chifley was so keen to ensure that we had an automotive industry. My guess is that one of those reasons was national security. It was just after the Second World War and he was determined that this country was going to build vehicles. I think we need to come out very clearly and very strongly and make a commitment that we continue to build cars in this country. That is what the people of South Australia want to hear, that is what the people of Australia want to hear and we want to hear this government come out and say, clearly and strongly, 'We support the car industry, we support the workers in the car industry and we are not going to let this industry die.' (Time expired)

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (16:46): This Senate always works best when senators are passionate about individuals, the people in their own states, and I congratulate all those who have spoken so far on their passion for looking after the jobs of people in the states they represent. I can tell you that Senator Sean Edwards from South Australia, who will follow me in the debate, will be equally passionate.

I am one of those who hate to see government decisions costing people their jobs. As good as it is to see Labor Party people so passionate about this now, I might, as an aside, ask those Labor Party senators where those passions were for the people of my state when they introduced a mining tax and a carbon tax that destroyed the jobs of many hundreds and thousands of workers in the mines? The Collinsville coalmine and the Collinsville power station in my state of Queensland recently shut down because of the perverse decisions of the government to introduce a carbon tax—when they promised they would not—and a mining tax which made overseas investors in the mining industry very cautious with their investments. Jobs were lost then, but did we hear these Labor Party senators caring one iota at that time? In fact, Senator Carr, who gave a very impassioned speech about workers' jobs, did not seem to worry when it was workers' jobs in my state that were put on the line because of decisions made by his government. I might ask Senator Carr, who was so passionate about workers' jobs and the industry continuing, what did he do when his government—by a criminally stupid decision—banned live cattle exports from northern Australia with no consultation and no warning? It destroyed the jobs, livelihoods, businesses, homes and family lives of many Queenslanders, Northern Territorians and northern Western Australians. Did those opposite worry about those jobs? No, of course they did not. I admire them looking after the people they represent, but they have to be a little bit consistent with their passion for workers' jobs.

That decision to ban live cattle exports from my state of Queensland has destroyed so many jobs, but all we get from the Labor Party today are catcalls of derision. They simply do not
understand. It is okay if you are looking after workers' jobs in what I might call the 'rust bucket' states in the south-east and south of our country—and I know my colleagues from those states will be angry with me for using that term. For years now, Australia has continued to function because of the wealth of my state of Queensland, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and, to a lesser extent, New South Wales. The Labor governments in particular—and our government as well, I might say—could always find the billions of taxpayer dollars to prop up General Motors-Holden's, one of the biggest commercial entities in the world. I am pleased that it has created employment in those two southern states, but, when you ask for a little bit of money for the northern beef cattle industry, where is the Labor government? Missing in action. In fact, they were introducing—I will keep repeating this—a criminally stupid decision to ban live cattle exports overnight without consultation. All of us in this chamber remember how Senator Ludwig, the then agriculture minister, was defending the live export trade on the Monday at question time. Overnight he was told by Ms Gillard—that wonderful Prime Minister that we had at the time—that he had to change his mind, and the next day he was telling us that he was shutting the industry down. Did we hear all this passion from Labor Party senators for the jobs, homes and livelihoods of those people, or is it just selective concern when it affects their voters? Senator Carr has the hide to start this debate and blame the Abbott government, which has been in power for 1½ months, for the problems of an industry which was failing in the six years that Senator Carr was the minister. We hear all of this passion now that Senator Carr is in opposition, but if the industry has problems and difficulties why didn't he do something about it? He and his government had six years to set the motor vehicle industry on what he now understands is the right path. It is great to hear all his wisdom today. I ask Senator Carr through you, Mr Acting Deputy President: why didn't you use some of that wisdom in the last six years? Why didn't you do something about it then instead of blaming a government that has been in power less than two months for ills that are occurring.

Senator Kim Carr: Ever heard of the Australian dollar?

Senator IAN MACDONALD: If the industry has problems, why didn't Senator Carr do something about it in the last six months? He had 10 minutes to tell us why he did not do that, but he tries to shout me down when I ask him those simple questions now. You had your opportunity, Senator Carr, to explain what you did not do and why you did not do it, and now you are blaming a government that has been in power less than two months for ills that are occurring.

I am glad that we have subsidised industries in Victoria and South Australia, and I am glad that they have created jobs and small business, but I simply ask: what about some assistance for industries in other states that desperately need it—industries that are failing because of criminally stupid decisions of the Gillard and Rudd governments? Why is there one set of rules for a union-dominated industry in Victoria and South Australia and a different set of rules for an industry which is not as unionised? You hear a lot from Mr Paul Howes of the AWU, but not much when it comes to the jobs in the northern beef cattle industry or, indeed, jobs in the mining industry. Was there any concern from the Labor government at that time for those jobs? Were there any compensatory job-creating projects initiated when the carbon
tax and the mining tax were brought in without warning? Of course there were not. It makes you realise just how hypocritical the Labor Party continue to be, carrying on in the way they did when they were in government in those six sad years for Australia.

I, like all of my colleagues, have a lot more I would like to say on that. The Abbott government is very keen to continue industries in Australia. But there is no denying that the automotive industry is facing a number of significant challenges as it adjusts, as it must, to the high value of the Australian dollar and a highly competitive and fragmented market.

I conclude by asking Senator Carr again a question he has been asked on a number of occasions but so far has not bothered to answer: where were you, Senator Carr, when that decision was introduced by your government on the fringe benefits tax that effectively cost the Australian car industry 100,000 cars a year? You are here crying crocodile tears today about a decision by a government that has been in power for less than two months when you presided over a particular public policy area which cost Australian industry 100,000 cars in a year. Next time you get to your feet, just answer that. (Time expired)

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (16:56): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on an issue that is a particular passion of mine. The people in the automotive industry—the employers, the manufacturers and the people who work there—wish to God you people would play the issue and not the person. They are not interested in your petty ideologies. They are not interested in your playing the blame game. They are interested in actual results, and this issue has been bounced around and around this chamber through successive governments of all persuasions time and time again. It is about the future of an important industry. More importantly, it is about people, communities and skills in our nation. It is about national security. It is about companies having the ability to amortise the costs of high-tech machinery that the automotive industry brings and the R&D that it brings.

Time and time again, people in this house make ill-informed decisions and insulting comments about our manufacturers and tradespeople and their ability to produce world-competitive products. On this point I commend the South Australian government for its recent launch of the More Than Cars website, which delves into the wider implications of abandoning the car industry. In direct contrast to the South Australian government's approach, in my home state of Victoria the Napthine government is asleep at the wheel. Victoria's decision makers need to understand the full ramifications of the loss of such an important industry. Hopefully the FCAI report will wake them up to these wider implications.

Further to this point, I would like to relay an experience I had last week when driving home from Melbourne, going over the West Gate Bridge, when I called into Socobell at the side of the West Gate Bridge in Spotswood. Socobell is a family-owned business with almost four decades of experience. It has 350 workers across three plants in western metropolitan Melbourne. It has state-of-the-art facilities. It is at the cutting edge socially, economically and environmentally. Socobell is an Australian-owned company specialising in the manufacture of high-quality precision plastic components and complex assemblies for the auto industry. The future of Socobell, like that of many similar companies, is entirely dependent on the future of the automotive manufacturing sector.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate a key point made in the FCAI report: continued support for the Australian automotive manufacturing industry should not be thought of as just a defensive measure to prevent the loss of national output and welfare that would occur if the
industry were to shut down. If barriers to Australian exports could be lowered, the Australian industry would make a further significant contribution to the Australian economy.

Debate interrupted.

FIRST SPEECH

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi) (16:59): Order! It being nearly 5 pm, I will interrupt the debate. Pursuant to order, I now call Senator Seselja to make his first speech and ask honourable senators that the usual courtesies be extended to him.

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (16:59): I am not the first person with a Croatian heritage to be elected to this place, but I believe I may be the first person who has two parents born in Croatia to be elected to the Australian parliament, and it is to my parents Loui and Kate that I sent my first and deepest thanks. I will be forever grateful to my parents for all the sacrifices they made, the opportunities they created and the support they provided.

My parents left their native Croatia in search of freedom and a better life for our family. They found those things here in Canberra. My father, Loui, worked a number of jobs before going to night school to study photography. He then worked in the National Library's photographic section, becoming an accomplished local photographer who helped chronicle the life of our region and our nation. Mum looked after the kids and did an amazing job in tough circumstances.

Raising six kids on one modest income was not easy, but it gave me the guiding principles and support that have led me to this place. They gave me an appreciation of the value of hard work, perseverance and the art which many large families know about: getting a lot from a little. We did not have a lot, but we did not waste a lot either. My parents gave me love, support and a deep sense of right and wrong. Most of all they gave me opportunity. They gave me the opportunity to receive a good education at St Thomas the Apostle in Kambah, Padua Catholic High School in Wanniassa and St Peter's Catholic College in Isabella Plains. I also had the opportunity and privilege of studying at the Australian National University and University of Canberra, and I am glad to see with us today the Vice-Chancellor of UC, Stephen Parker, who I believe has done so much to turn around the fortunes of the University of Canberra. I had the opportunity to work in the Australian Public Service and later the opportunity to serve my community in the ACT Legislative Assembly.

The opportunities given to me by my parents all those years ago have led me here to the highest parliament in the land. I now take this opportunity from the floor of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia to say thank you to Mum and Dad. You are both my heroes.

My parents also taught me manners, so I would like to continue with some other thank yous before talking about other matters. I would like to thank the people of Canberra first for endorsing me to serve for nearly nine years in the Legislative Assembly and now for the significant additional privilege of serving in the Australian Senate. It is an amazing honour. I pay tribute to those who have gone before me in this role: John Knight, Margaret Reid and Gary Humphries. All made significant contributions to this place and in service of the people of the ACT and the nation.

I would like to thank the men and women of the ACT division of the Liberal Party for giving me the honour to represent the party and so many who worked so hard for my campaign. Election successes are only possible because of the hard work of thousands of
volunteers, and here in Canberra we have some of the best. My party gave me the honour of leading it in the ACT for more than five years and at two elections. I thank them for that. During those five years, hard work, discipline and unity of purpose in the parliamentary party were central to us achieving a record number of seats for the Liberal Party in the ACT. I believe that these principles are as true in large parliaments as they are in Australia's smallest parliament.

I would like to congratulate Tony Abbott on his election as Prime Minister. Changes of government are rare in federal politics, and the fact that it has happened just six years after the coalition lost office is, I think, testimony to the amazing leadership that Tony Abbott has displayed over the last four years. Might I also congratulate Senator Eric Abetz on becoming Leader of the Government in the Senate—a worthy honour for a great servant of the Liberal Party, Tasmania and our nation.

I would like to recognise the Croatian-Australian community, of which I remain a very proud part. I am pleased we have with us here in the gallery today the new Croatian ambassador, Dr Damir Kusen, as well as the consul general, Mirjana Piskulic. As for a former member of this place, Natasha Stott Despoja’s Croatian heritage is well known, and I believe we have with us here today Mario Despoja in the gallery. I first met Mario whilst doorknocking during the 2004 ACT election campaign. I knocked on his door in Farrer, and he excitedly told me to wait there while he ran to get a photo album which showed a picture of him at my parents’ wedding back in 1971. He was very excited and obviously very proud of his daughter. I pay tribute to Mario. I later found out that he had in fact established a Croatian embassy in the late 1970s during a time when the Croatian people were struggling for independence, so I acknowledge his work.

As a son of immigrants fleeing oppression, I would like to speak about our multicultural nation. People from many nations have made great contributions to Australia. We are all the richer for it. But it also must be said that it is a mark of what a great nation we live in—that a big-hearted nation—that Australia has opened itself to immigrants from all over the world and allowed them to make their homes here. I reject the view that Australia should not continue to grow. Does anyone really believe that Australia is not a vastly more prosperous nation now, with 23 million people, than it was when it have five or 10 million people? I believe that growing our population in a steady manner is the key to our prosperity. In order to do this we need a well-managed immigration program and sensible and strategic infrastructure investment.

We are and should remain a nation built on diverse cultures united by common values. Among those values are the protection of the great freedoms: freedom of speech, enterprise and religion. For me and my family, this issue is personal. One of the reasons my family left Croatia was because freedom of speech and religion in particular were curtailed under a harsh communist regime. My uncle Stipan spent several years in a Yugoslav prison for daring to challenge the communist regime and assert his rights to speak freely and freely practise his religion.

I take the opportunity to congratulate the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis, for placing these great freedoms at the centre of government policy and for successfully leading the charge against the previous government’s proposed media laws. These freedoms are truly central to who we are as a nation, and constant vigilance is required to protect them.
I reiterate my personal commitment to the protection and support for the family as the basis of prosperity in society and stability in the home. I believe the institution of marriage between a man and a woman is a special one deserving special recognition and protection. Many people who voted for the Liberal Party did so on the basis that this is our long-held position.

As a proud Canberran Tuggeranong born and bred, I have several things to say about Canberra. First, I am and will remain a staunch defender of my home town no matter what other matters are before us, and there are very good reasons for doing so. Canberra is a great city. Its people are doing great work for and on behalf of our country, and it makes a contribution to our nation as substantial as any other city in the country. Canberra bashing diminishes those who engage in it and is an attack on our nation. All Australians should be encouraged to be proud of their national capital, not just because of what the city is but also because of what it represents—not just this building, the meeting place of the nation, but the suburbs which are the home to hundreds of thousands of ordinary Australians.

While most Canberrans are not politicians—contrary to popular belief—many do contribute to our nation through the public service, a privilege which I enjoyed prior to going into politics as did my father and many members of my family. This contribution should be recognised and honoured. As the coalition government goes through the difficult task of fixing the budget mess it has inherited, I urge my colleagues to treat public servants with respect, to give as much clarity and certainty as possible and to honour the promise to ensure reductions in public service numbers are achieved through natural attrition.

The National Capital Authority plays an important role in protecting the national capital character of Canberra. However, the size of its remit and its limited resources make it difficult for the authority to properly perform this role. The time has come for the NCA to be allowed to focus on its core role of protecting and promoting the national capital and allowing the ACT government to get on with the other aspects of planning Canberra. I am putting some suggestions on how this can be achieved to Minister Jamie Briggs, which will more clearly delineate the roles of the NCA and the ACT government. I look forward to working with the ACT government to bring about positive changes in how the responsibilities of the NCA and the ACT government interact.

In Canberra, we also have a vibrant private sector which looks to government to spend money wisely and cut red tape and overregulation in order for it to prosper. As well as all of the trades and first-class retail, hospitality and professional sectors, Canberra has growing and vibrant ICT, tourism, education, property and defence industry sectors with great future potential. Much of this private sector activity provides services to or acts in partnership with the federal government. Innovative thinking on the part of the federal government has the potential to benefit both government and these parts of the private sector. One simple step to help facilitate this would be to re-establish the Capital Region Ministerial Business Roundtable, and I commend that suggestion.

Canberra has an active sporting, artistic and cultural sector. We are home to great national sporting teams such as the Brumbies, Raiders, Capitals and Cavalry—occasionally, even GWS. We have produced great Australian sports stars such as Lauren Jackson, Ricky Stuart, Ned Zelic, Caroline Buchanan, George Gregan and Joe Roff to name but a few. I acknowledge that Joe Roff is here with us today. We will soon welcome back one of those great Canberra sports stars in Glenn Lazarus when he comes to this place. Might I cheekily...
suggest that we have already welcomed back another sports star who has a strong connection
to Canberra in Nova Peris. I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Senator Peris, on your
election. I know it is not just a significant thing for the Indigenous community in our nation,
but it is a significant thing for our nation as a whole. Congratulations.

Canberra's cultural sector is vibrant and growing, not only thanks to national institutions
such as the National Gallery but also through local initiatives such as the Multicultural
Festival, the Canberra International Film Festival and the Canberra theatre precinct. Canberra
has also produced renowned authors such as Alan Gould and A.D. Hope. I would like to note
that in two weeks time the Canberra International Film Festival is sponsoring the Virgin Ball
with legendary film producer Harvey Weinstein in the Great Hall of parliament—I will give it
that plug here.

Our academic institutions are world-class. The ANU lays claim to six Nobel prize winners
in its history, including most recently Brian Schmidt of Mount Stromlo Observatory. As we
celebrate Canberra's centenary this year, we celebrate the great contribution these people, and
many more like them, have made to Australian life. But as we move into Canberra's next
century, there is still more to do. Those in this place who missed the centenary should know
that there was a lot more to it than the Skywhale, which did seem to get most of the attention.

A particular project the business community in Canberra is very eager to see is the
Australia Forum—a national meeting place and convention centre for the national capital.
This can only be achieved through a partnership between the federal and ACT governments. I
commend this project to the government. I also commend my former colleague in the
assembly, Brendan Smyth, for his tireless advocacy of this project. I believe its time has
come. The Australia Forum would be a piece of national infrastructure befitting the nation's
capital. Such an investment would build on the great tradition of Liberal governments
building Canberra. This is most true of the government of Sir Robert Menzies, but it was also
true of the Howard government. It should not be forgotten that the Howard government built
the National Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the joint defence headquarters, ANZAC
Hall at the War Memorial, the Centre for Christianity and Culture, Commonwealth Place and
Reconciliation Place and started the new ASIO headquarters, among other achievements.

Another area of policy where there is plenty of room for improvement is our building
industry. There is still far too much union intimidation of small, medium and even large
builders. I commend the policy of re-establishing the Building and Construction Commission
and I would urge the minister to ensure that it is properly resourced and supported to bring
back the rule of law to building sites. This reform, along with reducing some of the green and
red tape as it applies to the building industry, in partnership with more sensible land use
policies from state and territory governments will help to bring the cost of infrastructure,
commercial buildings and homes down. This is a worthy goal for the coalition government to
work hard towards.

Another area critical to improving productivity is workplace relations more generally.
While I commend the government for its steady and cautious approach to workplace reform,
it is time we again had the conversation about workplace reform without simplistic claims of
resurrecting Work Choices being bandied about. I am often hearing from constituents about
the growing number of restaurants, bars and cafes closed on a Sunday in Canberra. I believe
this is a nationwide issue, and we as a nation need to ask ourselves the question: is it pro-
worker for thousands of restaurants, bars and cafes to be routinely shutting down on Sundays due to prohibitively high penalty rates? When this occurs no-one wins—not the small business owner who has the viability of their business affected, not the consumer who has their choice restricted and certainly not the worker denied the opportunity to work their desired number of hours.

I would like to put on record today my rejection of the nanny state. I think I speak for many Australians when I say that government has gone too far in regulating and instructing us to within an inch of our lives. Those of us who live in the ACT, and there are many in the gallery, are particularly familiar with the nanny state. We have seen in recent years the government declare war on the great scourges of plastic bags, fireworks, puppies sold in pet stores and most recently the humble community sausage sizzle. I trust that the coalition government will stand for freedom, not just in the big things but also in working against the many small areas of government intrusion which combine to make life a little less pleasant and a little less free. The coalition's policy to devote days in parliament to getting rid of regulations is therefore very welcome.

The coalition's paid parental leave scheme has copped some criticism, particularly from our political opponents. However, let me make this point. Here in Canberra around 50 per cent of the workforce is in the public sector. They currently have access to a taxpayer funded, wage replacement paid parental leave scheme. This is bipartisan policy. The vast bulk of workers in the private sector, and almost universally in small business, do not have access to such a scheme. The government's paid parental leave scheme is therefore not just pro working woman, but also pro small business; and that is particularly true here in Canberra, where small business struggles to compete with government. Let me also make this point. Given that the paid parental leave scheme is a government funded scheme for people in paid work who have children, I believe it is important that those women who have children but are not in the workforce are also supported by the government.

Before concluding, I would like to thank all in the gallery who have come to support me. There are too many to mention here, but each of you is here because you have played some role in my journey or in promoting the Liberal cause. And I thank you for that. I have had a little bit to say about family today, but I can also reveal to the Senate that I do in fact have a member of my extended family, so to speak, in this place, though. I do not believe he is in the chamber at the moment. I was reminded of it when I walked past Senator Conroy in Aussies today and he yelled out, 'In-law, in-law!', My wife's sister recently married Stephen Conroy's little brother. So he and I are related, but obviously that was not enough for him to come down and watch my speech! So it is not a particularly close relationship at this stage, I assure you, Senator Abetz. But you know what they say: 'Blood is thicker than water!'

There are some people who have played a particularly important role in my political journey: Steve Doyle, Ian Hagan and Tio Faulkner have formed an amazing and formidable political team. To the campaign manager, Brigitte Morten; to my wonderful staff, Josh Baker, Emily Hicks and Sam Mullins; to members of the ACT Assembly, particularly Jeremy Hanson and Alistair Coe; and to staff who gave up their own time to assist, I say thank you. To those who have supported me in my personal journey—particularly John and Jan Kennedy, Bob O'Heir, Adam and Cushla Morris, Jonathan and Karen Doyle, Dave and Katie Ellis, and Nick Medway—I say thank you.
And finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my family. To my parents, Loui and Kate, who did such an amazing job raising six kids in difficult circumstances; to my sisters, Branka, Katarina and Lidia; and to my brothers, Nick and Zvonimir, I love you all very much. To my children, Michael, Tommy, William, Olivia and Grace—we are doing our bit for a big Australia!—I love you, I will always want the best for you, and I will fight in this place to ensure Australia remains a wonderful place to live in, prosper and raise a family. You are always in my thoughts and my prayers, even when I am not with you as much as I would like to be. And lastly, and definitely most importantly, to my beautiful wife Ros: you are amazing and I love you. You are the best thing that has ever happened to me—and you should never let me forget that!

I am truly honoured to stand in this place; I am humbled by those who have trusted me to do so, and I will never forget the reasons why they have chosen me to be here. Prime Minister Tony Abbott said in his maiden speech that 'there is no limit to what Australia can achieve'. I agree with that statement. We have already achieved so much. We have achieved one of the most peaceful and prosperous nations on earth—and this has not occurred by accident. It has come through the hard work and initiative of our people, the sacrifice of our service men and women, and a commitment to democracy and freedom guided largely by good government. It has come through treating all with respect, supporting family, valuing and protecting human life, and protecting those in need.

In striving to uphold these values, I will always work to protect and represent my constituents, as it is they who I am ultimately answerable to. They are why I am here. Much as I am here to tackle the great debates of the day, I will do so with the people of Canberra foremost in my mind. I am here as a local, and as a Liberal, to ensure Canberrans always have a voice—and not just the great and mighty, the ministers and ambassadors, the business leaders and community elders. It is about giving a voice to people like me, a son of immigrant parents from the suburbs of Tuggeranong. I am here for those people and, while I am here, I will work to ensure they have a voice in this great parliament. Thank you.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Pursuant to order, I now call Senator Peris to make her first speech, and I ask honourable senators that the usual courtesies be extended to her.

FIRST SPEECH

Senator PERIS (Northern Territory) (17:24): Thank you, Mr President. I acknowledge the traditional owners, the Ngambri and the Ngunnawal people on whose country we meet today. I pay my respects to my elders, past and present, and to our future leaders.

I am Nova Maree Peris. I was born in Darwin in the Northern Territory and I retain my strong cultural and spiritual ties to my country, to Mother Earth. I am a member of the oldest continuous living culture on the earth. I am proud that this hill that we meet on here today is culturally significant to the Ngambri people as representing the womb of the 'Woman' on this Country. It is very significant to me to be the first Aboriginal woman elected to the federal parliament of Australia. Through my mother, I am a descendant of the Gija people of the East Kimberley and the Yawuru people of the West Kimberley. I am also Iwatja from Western Arnhem Land through my father.

Through my life I have come across many people from all walks of life who have inspired me; some through their wisdom and some through their courage and their ability to overcome
adversity. But no-one has inspired me more than my grandmother, Nora Peris, a proud Gija woman. She was torn from her mother's arms and lived on the Mission of Moola Bulla in the East Kimberley. 'Moola Bulla is a long, sad and painful story,' she used to say. This was home to her for 12 years. A river separated her and her traditional Aboriginal mother who was still living on country. She used to always say they were so close—yet so far apart. My Nanna's clothes on the mission were made from stitched-together hessian bags. When the Second World War hit, the kids were released from the mission and for two years she walked and lived off the harsh Eastern Kimberley land. These conditions and her will to survive shaped her, and it was where she met my grandfather, Johnny Peris.

Johnny Peris was a Yawuru Man, a Beagle Bay mission survivor who was also a proud stockman. They met and had 10 children. Four of their children were taken away and sent to the Garden Point mission on the Tiwi Islands in the Northern Territory. One of the four children who was taken—and is here today—is my mother, Joan Peris. She lived on the mission for eight years. She worked every day and never received a cent in pay. Mum became like a sister to many of the other children that were forcibly taken to the Garden Point mission.

Over the years, people have said to me that it's incredible what I have done in sport. I have competed at some of the biggest sporting events on the planet. Accolades, achievements and celebrations have been part of my life. But in my heart, I know that that part of my life is virtually meaningless compared to the ability to survive shown by my grandparents and my mother. I cannot imagine or comprehend how it must have been to live life during those days.

These stories are part of the truth of Australia's history. It is what it is. The past is the past and no matter how hard we try we cannot change that history. But let's start to undo the wrongs with what is right and just. I urge all my parliamentary colleagues to become champions for the recognition of Australia's first nation people in our constitution. To Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, this has always been part of our story of struggle, injustice and heartache. But we are here today—and I am here today—because of this history.

Aboriginal Australians are symbolic of triumph over adversity. We represent knowledge and wisdom held in land and country, because in our hearts we know that we do not own Mother Earth; the Earth owns us.

As a child growing up, I dreamt big. Most people would have looked at an Aboriginal girl from the Territory, where the statistics of alcohol abuse, youth suicide, domestic violence, imprisonment rates and substandard education point to every reason why I should not succeed. But I was determined to be successful. And yes, I am a product of that history, and I continue to live in a society whereby the odds are stacked against Aboriginal people.

I have always been inspired by those around me, and my sister, Venessa Peris, has undertaken an incredible journey of her own. She has lived an amazing and accomplished life serving Australia. She was a corporal and served for 10 years in the Australian Army. And last month she completed 10 years with United Nations Peacekeeping operations. Venessa served for seven years in the Ivory Coast and survived a West African civil war, and at one stage was involved in evacuating more than 4,000 people. She is currently carrying out her duties and resides in Monrovia, Liberia.
I say this to all of my Indigenous brothers and sisters and to all people: within every one of us lies the ability to reach deep inside ourselves and draw upon our inherited strength that our ancestors have given us. There lies a spirit that needs to be awakened.

Whilst I am obviously very proud of my Aboriginal heritage I want to make it clear that I do not consider myself an expert when it comes to finding solutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's particular predicaments. For too long we have all heard too many people say they have the answers for Aboriginal Australians and claim the moral high ground. If the answers were as easily provided as the questions are posed, we simply would not have a problem. In fact the answers are difficult and complex; but they do not lie in absolute positions and simplified slogans. Just delivering another government program will not end the appalling rates of youth suicide in our communities, for example. These are uncomfortable issues but they must be confronted.

But I have always been someone who has tried to do things, not just talk about them. I build things up; I don't tear things down, and I have lived by the view that, 'As much is given, much is expected.' I have always been humbled and honoured to serve. That is why I established the Nova Peris Girls Academy. I wanted to try to make a real difference to young disadvantaged Indigenous girls. Of course, I have now ceased active involvement in the academy, but I remain the patron.

Like many before me, for too long, I have watched Aboriginal Australians and our plight be used purely for political purposes. I have seen some totally unscrupulous people try to use the misery of some of our people's circumstances to promote their own cause and agenda. Should I see this happen, I will call it for what it is. It is racism—and I know that is confronting—but I will not stand by in silence. How we change things—that remains the challenge, but I know from my heart that nothing can be achieved without total determination and a gut-busting effort.

I have been fortunate enough to achieve at the Olympic levels of sport in hockey and athletics. I have experienced the total joy of winning gold medals for my country. And I have lived the exciting life of an elite athlete—fussed over and entertained—in more than 50 countries around the world. But I would swap all of that in a heartbeat—I would forgo any number of gold medals—to see Aboriginal Australians be free, healthy and participating fully in all that our great country has to offer.

It is my dream to see kids from Santa Theresa, from Gunbalanya, from Kalkarindji and from the Tiwi Islands all with the same opportunity as the kids from the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney. That is one of the reasons I am a fierce advocate for Aboriginal people being taught to be able to read and write English. We cannot and should not be denied these basic tools. Of course, we should never be forced to renounce our culture. Our beliefs sustain our spirits, they nourish us; but at some levels they can restrain us too—that is the collision point that confronts Aboriginal people.

I make the simple point that in spite of difficulties like those I have described we are seeing some positive health benefits through the dedication of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health professionals. We can make a difference, whatever our differences are.

The Northern Territory is currently the only jurisdiction in Australia that is on track to meet the Closing the Gap target on life expectancy. This improvement comes from people who
have sought evidence and put that evidence into action. They have not acted on any fixed ideology but out of dedication and commitment. This evidence based method of approach is, in my view, a real road sign for the future and points the way to dealing with so many other areas of Aboriginal life that have seemed so intractable for so long. This is why I will be seeking to work not only with my colleagues in the Labor Party in holding the government to account but also with the current government to ensure we build on successes in primary health care—and to extend those successes into other areas of our lives.

Education remains the major foundation for self-improvement. And although education is a basic fundamental right of every child in this country, irrespective of their race, the fact remains we must work hard to convince people of the value of education.

I acknowledge I am a senator elected to represent all Territorians, and I fully intend to discharge this duty to the best of my ability, and I will always put our concerns—the concerns of Territorians—first and foremost. I believe it is my duty and the duty of all members elected to the parliament to answer questions and deal with issues honestly and openly. One such matter that is a very contentious issue is the location of Australia's proposed nuclear waste facility.

Recently my Larrakia uncle, Eric Fejo, who is also here today, spoke about the previous government's decision to locate the proposed nuclear waste facility on Muckaty Station in the Barkly region of the Northern Territory. He reminded a public forum that during the apology to the stolen generations it was stated that governments were wrong to make laws and policies that inflict profound grief, suffering and loss on Aboriginal people. That is what the Muckaty decision is currently doing. It is dividing a community of traditional owners. This policy is inflicting grief. I strongly urge my fellow parliamentary colleagues to reconsider their support for the current location of this facility. Of course Australia needs a nuclear waste management facility, but its location must be based on science, not politics.

I do intend to finish my speech on a positive note. The art of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is stunning. It is truly a gift to Australian culture. The outfit that I am wearing today is made in the Northern Territory. This beautiful gold silk fabric featuring dancing brolgas was printed at Injalak Arts in Gunbalanya in Western Arnhem Land. It was made by my Dripstone High School friend Sarina Cowcher in Darwin. I also wore a Gracie Kumbi Merrepen printed design for my official swearing-in yesterday.

I am a Territory girl. I am immensely proud of who I am and where I hail from. It is majestic. The Northern Territory's very talented musicians, our artists, our sports men and women, our culture, our iconic and diverse landscape that boasts a number of World Heritage listings—there is certainly is no other place I would rather call home.

I want to thank the members of the Australian Labor Party and particularly those members of the Northern Territory branch. In particular I thank party president Matthew Gardiner and party secretary Kent Rowe.

I acknowledge all of my family and friends here today: my mother Joan Peris, my aunty Tanya and my bunyi Jimmy Cooper from Minjilang who walked me into the chamber—actually, he blessed me before walking me to the chamber; thank you. Also here today are Aunty Eileen Hoosan and Aunty Pat Anderson.
To my children, Jessica, Destiny and Jack and my little grandson Issac: we may often find life difficult and challenging, but we always stick together, knowing wherever our journey leads us we will always be true to ourselves.

To my husband, Scott: I thank you for your unconditional love and support over the past few years. As they say, beyond each storm you will find the rainbow. Maybe today is that rainbow. I thank you. Viva la vida.

I want to acknowledge Dr Ric Charlesworth, also a former parliamentarian, one of the greatest hockey players in the world, and now coach; he was one of my life mentors. In the Hockeyroos team we had a mantra that took us to the gold medal. This was loosely based on JFK's famous space program speech:

We choose to go to the Olympics. We choose to go to the Olympics in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organise and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.

I also want to mention the legendary Muhammad Ali. I was lucky enough to spend a day with him, and after several hours I worked up the courage to ask him: 'What makes millions of people around the world love and admire you so much?' He simply replied: 'Never look down upon those who look up to you.'

These are the people who taught and continue to teach me the right values that have enabled me to achieve so much in life. I also particularly thank the former Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, from the bottom of my heart for her faith in me and for giving me the chance to become involved. My duty now is to work hard and make a real difference.

Mr President, when Dr Martin Luther King spoke of his dream in Washington, it inspired millions across the world. I believe everyone has the capacity to dream—we all have the capacity to believe—but very few get the actual opportunity that I have before me. I urge everybody, particularly young people, to pursue your dreams. In this next stage of my life I hope to give all those who have had faith in me every reason to continue to believe in the power of those dreams.

I would just like to close today with a story that has stayed in my heart for many years. At the 2000 Sydney Olympics there were hundreds of very excited and enthusiastic volunteers. An elderly man amongst them at the athletics track greeted me each and every day and wished me well. On the evening of the semi-finals of the 4x400m he did not wish me well, he just handed me a piece of paper and said, 'Read it just before you enter the stadium.' I put it in my pocket and proceeded to the check-in and then walked with my team-mates, Tamsyn Lewis, Susan Andrews and Jana Pitman. We were without Cathy Freeman that evening, and we had to finish in the top two to reach the Olympic final. We all felt the weight of Australian expectation resting on our shoulders, our adrenaline was pumping and we did our best to stay cool. We walked into the stadium to be greeted by 110,000 screaming sporting enthusiasts.

I reached into my pocket and read the words on the paper: 'NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE TO THOSE WHO SEE THE INVISIBLE. I did not really know what it meant, and I did not have much time to reflect on it. But it seemed to inspire me, those words written by a kind, elderly man. The four of us went out that evening and ran the race of our lives. I anchored the team and we broke a 23-year-old Australian record. And we made it into the Olympic final. I returned to the warm up track where he greeted me with a big hug. And I asked him: 'What
does it mean?’ He simply replied: ‘It was my ticket to freedom, I thought about it every day that I was held captive.’ It turned out he was a former prisoner of war!

Ma, Bor Bor.

MATTERS OF URGENCY

**Australian Automotive Industry**

Senator GALLACHER (South Australia) (17:45): It is my pleasure, following those two great first speeches by Senators Seselja and Peris, to return to a very important matter for South Australia. I return to an absolutely critical matter for South Australia. It is a matter which should have had every South Australian senator in this chamber ready to participate in its discussion. Instead, we had Senator Williams and Senator Macdonald going off on tangents, telling various stories. They talked about anything but the matter before us.

There are 6,600 manufacturing workers who are going into the Christmas period with more uncertainty. The government says, 'Let us go to the Productivity Commission. Let us see if we can get it past March. Let us see if we can save the electoral bacon of Steven Marshall and the Liberals in South Australia.' There is nothing here about the hardworking South Australian manufacturing workers. There is nothing here about the critical suppliers of automotive parts. The industry is in its infancy. Those in this industry are working incredibly hard to diversify. They supply parts not only to the motor vehicle industry but also to other sectors of the manufacturing industry. They need a critical decision. They need a decision that the former Labor government was prepared to make and put on the table.

This government appears racked by division in a lot of areas, and one of them is in the manufacturing area. The economic rationalists are saying, 'Let it go. Let Playford's creation'—a former Liberal premier's creation for a vehicle building workforce and plant in South Australia—'wither on the vine either by inattention or by delay by referring the matter to the Productivity Commission.' I do believe that, in their heart of hearts, all South Australian senators agree on the critical situation confronting us. The fact is that we cannot allow such a significant portion of our workforce to be put in a situation of ongoing stress.

As Senator Carr said, global capital is scarce; there is plenty of competition for it. I am sure that an offer of $1 billion worth of investment in Thailand would interest a few politicians in that democracy. In this coming month, we need to have the security of knowing that further investment will be attracted to the motor vehicle industry. We need a decision which will allow those global decision-makers to further invest in this industry to take it forward into the 2020s.

Senator Farrell mentioned that no-one has worked harder than this workforce and its representatives in trying to make ends meet, in bringing about competitive outcomes to secure the longevity of this tremendous workers base and in bringing together a situation which will allow us to be one of only eight countries in the world that can design a car and take it to market.

I thought in some respects we had a useful contribution from Senator Williams about the Australian dollar. I can well remember the shift that went on in South Australia when an additional 1,000 people were employed in exporting Camaros to the US. That was off a very low Australian dollar. We have not been in that type of fortunate economic position for a very long time. But who knows where the floating dollar will end up? But I tell you what, if it goes
down 10c and we have no manufacturing industry at all, we will know the answer then: it will be of no benefit to us.

What about the subsidies that are in place around the world? When you consider that currently Australia's direct budgetary support for the car industry is about $18 per person per year, the UK is $28, Germany is $90, Canada is $96, France invests US$147 and the United States is subsidising its manufacturing workforce by about $265, we do not look too bad. I think Senator Xenophon's comments about fair trade with Thailand stood out. (Time expired)

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (17:51): I come to this debate with a great deal of cynicism following the argument put by the other side. It is the height of hypocrisy for a Labor senator to put forward an MPI accusing the coalition government of not acknowledging the urgency of the crisis in the auto industry. Senator Gallacher did talk of Father Christmas. Perhaps he could dress up the former minister for manufacturing, Senator Kim Carr, and take him out to Elizabeth to spray some more money around like confetti.

As you well know, on 7 September this year, the Australian people, including the people of South Australia, voted as a majority to change the government, to stop this recklessness and to approach industry and manufacturing in a way that was methodical and credible. That is why the Productivity Commission has been asked to report on this valuable industry.

As a South Australian senator, I know firsthand how important an auto industry is to Australia and how important Holden is to South Australia and the northern suburbs of Adelaide in particular. The latest report completed by the Workplace Innovation and Social Research Centre at the University of Adelaide suggests the closure would mean $1.2 billion and 13,200 jobs. So I understand. That is why we have the Productivity Commission involved—to try to protect those jobs, to do something meaningful and to have a plan for longevity and not just what—

Senator Cameron interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Fawcett): Order! I remind senators on my left that senators have the right to be heard in silence.

Senator Cameron interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Cameron, I have just pointed out that senators have the right to be heard in silence.

Senator EDWARDS: Labor were in government for the past six years, and we saw thousands of jobs lost in all sectors of manufacturing, not just in the auto industry. You should stay here, Senator Gallacher. I know it is hard for you to stomach that all those jobs have been lost—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Edwards, I will remind you to address your remarks through the chair.

Senator EDWARDS: In 2005 Holden employed 5,700 people at Elizabeth, working three shifts a day. Today Holden's workforce has shrunk to 1,700 people working single shifts. That is 4,000 jobs lost since the Abbott-Costello government. Labor threw $215 million at Holden at the start of 2012. The member for Wakefield, Mr Champion, claimed that this would secure the future of Holden and its workers until 2022. He sent it out in his postal vote application note for the election in September just gone, saying that he and the Labor Party had secured
the future of Holden until 2022. What a blatant misrepresentation. This claim by the member for Wakefield and the former Labor government ripped at the heart of the 400 workers and their families who believed it but then found themselves out of work early in 2013. All of this added to the 170 workers who were laid off before Christmas in 2012.

These figures are made worse given the backdrop in the northern Adelaide suburbs of unemployment of seven per cent. Youth unemployment, as the leader of the opposition in this chamber would know, is a whopping 40.2 per cent in that region. Again, that is a crisis that Mr Champion and the former Labor government created.

While on the one hand Labor threw money at Holden, they took it with the other. Labor’s proposed changes to the fringe benefits tax would have seen $1.8 billion ripped out of the industry. After the FBT changes were announced, sales of new cars came to a standstill. I remember taking calls from the Holden dealers in Adelaide, who were wringing their hands with disbelief that a government that claimed to be pro-industry could overlay such a poor policy for growth. An analysis by the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries showed that there is likely to be a 10 per cent slump in overall new car sales in Australia as a direct consequence of the FBT changes as well as an almost 20 per cent decline in sales of vehicles made locally by Toyota, Holden and Ford.

All of this was to fill a budget shortfall. Labor’s chaotic budget mess was going to be filled by the loss of more manufacturing jobs in South Australia and Australia generally. Up to 550,000 individuals and their families would have been affected by this tax policy move by Labor. Again, Labor’s member for Wakefield, Nick Champion, went one step further, audaciously labelling those South Australians who accessed the fringe benefits tax as ‘tax dodgers’—people like nurses, firemen and police. These reckless tax changes would have seen many people paying more in tax—in some cases, up to $1,400 a year more—at a time when Labor allowed the cost of living to soar.

The Australian government is now committed to the auto industry and has swiftly taken action to assist the industry to make it more competitive, with strong policy settings. We have announced that we will abandon Labor’s FBT changes, leaving $1.8 billion in the pockets of Australians and the auto industry. Secondly, the government is moving quickly to repeal the carbon tax, as we saw earlier today. The carbon tax on car manufacturing increased sector costs by over $460 million and was acting as a reverse tariff.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion moved by Senator Carr on behalf of Senator Moore be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [18:02]
(The President—Senator Hogg)
Wednesday, 13 November 2013

AYES
Gallacher, AM
Hogg, JJ
Ludwig, JW
Marshall, GM
McLucas, J
Moore, CM
Pratt, LC
Siewert, R
Stephens, U
Thorp, LE
Urquhart, AE
Whish-Wilson, PS
Wright, PL

Hanson-Young, SC
Ludlam, S
Madigan, JJ
McEwen, A (teller)
Milne, C
Polley, H
Rhiannon, L
Singh, LM
Sterle, G
Tillem, M
Waters, LJ
Wong, P

NOES
Bernardi, C
Boswell, RLD
Brandis, GH
Cash, MC
Edwards, S
Fawcett, DJ
Fifield, MP
Kroger, H
Mason, B
Nash, F
Payne, MA
Ruston, A
Scullion, NG
Smith, D

Birmingham, SJ
Boyce, SK
Bushby, DC (teller)
Cormann, M
Eggleson, A
Fieravanti-Wells, C
Heffernan, W
Macdonald, ID
McKenzie, B
Parry, S
Ronaldson, M
Ryan, SM
Sinodinos, A
Williams, JR

PAIRS
Bishop, TM
Faulkner, J
Lines, S
Lundy, KA
Peris, N

Abetz, E
Seselja, Z
Colbeck, R
Johnston, D
Back, CJ

Question agreed to.

DOCUMENTS
Tabling

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (18:06): I move:
That the following reports tabled on Tuesday 12 November 2013 be printed:
Department of the Senate—Report for 2012-13 (received 29 October 2013).
Department of Parliamentary Services—Report for 2012-13 (received 31 October 2013).
Parliamentary Budget Office—Report for 2012-13 (received 1 November 2013).
Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Membership

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Fawcett) (18:07): The President has received letters from party leaders requesting changes in the membership of various committees.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (18:07): by leave—I move:

That senators be appointed to committees as follows:

Appropriations and Staffing—Standing Committee—
Appointed—Senators Fifield, McKenzie and Parry

Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings—Joint Statutory Committee—
Appointed—Senator Parry

Community Affairs Legislation Committee—
Appointed—Senators Boyce, Seselja and Smith


Community Affairs References Committee—
Appointed—Senators Boyce and Smith


Economics Legislation Committee—
Appointed—Senators Bernardi, Bushby and Williams


Economics References Committee—
Appointed—Senators Bushby and Williams


Education and Employment Legislation Committee—
Appointed—Senators Back, McKenzie and Smith

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Bernardi, Birmingham, Boyce, Boswell, Brandis, Bushby, Cash, Colbeck, Cormann, Edwards, Eggleston, Fawcett, Fierravanti-Wells, Fifield, Heffernan,
Johnston, Kroger, Macdonald, Madigan, Mason, Nash, Parry, Payne, Ronaldson, Ruston, Ryan, Scullion, Seselja, Sinodinos and Williams

**Education and Employment References Committee**—
Appointed—Senators Back and McKenzie

**Environment and Communications Legislation Committee**—
Appointed—Senators Fawcett, Ruston and Williams

**Environment and Communications References Committee**—
Appointed—Senators Ruston and Williams

**Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**—
Appointed—Senators Bernardi, McKenzie and Smith

**Finance and Public Administration References Committee**—
Appointed—Senators Bernardi and Smith

**Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee**—
Appointed—Senators Edwards, Eggleston and Fawcett

**Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee**—
Appointed—Senators Eggleston and Fawcett
House—Standing Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Bushby and Kroger

Human Rights—Joint Statutory Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Boyce and Smith

Intelligence and Security—Joint Statutory Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Eggleston, Fawcett and Parry

Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Boyce, Macdonald and Seselja

Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Macdonald and Seselja

Library—Standing Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Boswell, Seselja and Williams

Privileges—Standing Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Macdonald, McKenzie, Ruston and Smith

Procedure—Standing Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Bushby, Fifield and Kroger

Public Accounts and Audit—Joint Statutory Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Bernardi, Ruston and Smith

Public Works—Joint Statutory Committee—
  Appointed—Senator Ruston

Publications—Standing Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Back, Bernardi, Bushby and McKenzie

Regulations and Ordinances—Standing Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Boswell, Edwards and Seselja

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Boswell, Edwards and Heffernan

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee—
  Appointed—Senators Heffernan and Macdonald
  Participating members: Senators Abetz, Back, Bernardi, Birmingham, Boswell, Boyce, Brandis, Bushby, Cash, Colbeck, Cormann, Edwards, Eggleston, Fawcett, Fierravanti-Wells, Fifield, Johnston,
Kroger, McKenzie, Madigan, Mason, Nash, Parry, Payne, Ronaldson, Ruston, Ryan, Scullion, Seselja, Sinodinos, Smith and Williams

Scrutiny of Bills—Standing Committee—
Appointed—Senators Bernardi, Macdonald and Ruston

Senators' Interests—Standing Committee—
Appointed—Senators Bernardi, Bushby and Ruston.

Question agreed to.

Environment and Communications References Committee
Reference

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (18:08): by leave—I move:

That—

(a) the following matter be referred to the Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry and report by the first sitting day in March 2014:

An inquiry into the Abbott Government's 'Direct Action Plan', including:

(i) its capacity to deliver greenhouse gas emissions reductions consistent with Australia's fair share of the estimated global emissions budget that would constrain global warming to Australia's agreed goal of less than 2 degrees,

(ii) its capacity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions adequately and cost effectively,

(iii) the technical issues that arise for measuring abatement under 'Direct Action', including addionality and establishing emissions baselines for emitting entities,

(iv) the absence of policy certainty in 'Direct Action' to encourage long term business investment in the clean, low carbon economy,

(v) its impact on, and interaction with, the Carbon Farming Initiative, and

(vi) any other related matters; and

(b) in undertaking this inquiry the committee must have regard to the Climate Change Authority's Reducing Australia's Greenhouse Gas Emissions—Targets and Progress Review: Draft Report, dated October 2013.

This is a critical inquiry for the Australian parliament, and it is critical that it is agreed to right now because the whole world is meeting in Poland and talking about the challenge that faces the world in trying to constrain global warming to less than two degrees.

By any way that you look at it, what is happening is that emissions are such that we are actually way off track to achieving that. We are actually on track for more than four degrees. The executive officer of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Christiana Figueres, who our Prime Minister has referred to as 'speaking through her hat', made it quite clear at the opening plenary that the world is seriously challenged by this. We are on track to reach that two degrees and send ourselves into unknown territory in terms of the climate. That is effectively a climate emergency.

You do not have to look very far to see what is already happening with less than one degree of warming. Less than one degree of warming and we are having extreme weather events here and around the world. We have just been through horrendous bushfires in New South Wales. Those, of course, are beyond the floods that we have had in Queensland. We
had Cyclone Yasi as well, we had the Black Saturday fires in Victoria, we had the heatwave that cost lives in South Australia and we had the fires in Tasmania. Australia is one of the continents most vulnerable to climate change and extreme weather events, and that means loss of life and loss of infrastructure.

That is why, when we hear talk of cost of living it is actually the cost of staying alive that we are talking about when you talk about climate change. It is a huge cost to the planet and it is a huge cost to countries—developing countries—that for the most part have had very little to do with the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to date. So it becomes a global social justice issue.

That is why we have to talk about Direct Action, because the overwhelming failure of Direct Action—before you even get to the technicalities—is that it cannot be geared up beyond five per cent. I do not think that it can even achieve five per cent. The Prime Minister himself acknowledged that by saying during the election campaign that if they spend the money they have allocated, well, too bad—they have spent the money and they are not going to do any more. That indicates that even they know that they have not set aside enough money to actually achieve five per cent.

The Climate Change Authority brought out its report recently and said quite clearly that the minimum unconditional 2020 target of five per cent reduction from 2000 levels is inadequate on a number of grounds. They have recommended two scenarios: a 15 or a 25 per cent reduction as being the sort of thing that Australia should consider if we are to recognise that we play a fair share in the global emissions task. There is a limited global emissions carbon budget and we have already used up a fair percentage of that budget already. That is all we have out to 2050, and that is the fundamental problem with Direct Action. It is a competitive grants scheme that cannot achieve emissions reduction to the level that is required.

If you want to talk about climate change you have to accept the science. Secondly, you have to accept it is a global problem and Australia has responsibilities in that context. Thirdly, you have to have a scheme that is capable—a legislative framework that is capable—of being scaled up to a level that will achieve the ambition you want to achieve. Direct Action cannot do that and will not do that.

Its capacity to do it cost effectively is the next thing. Of course, we have had all kinds of claims from the coalition government as to what Direct Action can do at what price. But we have also had Treasury look at that, and everybody is in agreement that you are likely to have beyond $50 a tonne as being what it will actually cost to reduce emissions. What is more, with the way the legislation is structured currently, the polluters pay for their pollution. Interestingly, today you heard from the coalition: they say that they support the market mechanisms and they say they support the free market, but when it comes to this they do not. They want to take the money out of the taxpayer's pocket and pay the big polluters. What sort of sense does that make? That is why we need an inquiry to expose the incredible hypocrisy of institutions like the Business Council of Australia or the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who come out and say that they want effective policy, efficient policy, and then turn around and say they will back direct action, which they know is inefficient, is not a market based mechanism and is going to cost a fortune. I suspect the only reason that they support it is they think that the taxpayer will pay for it and that their constituency, big business in Australia, will get off scot-free and it will proceed with its competitive grants scheme.
On the technical issues of additionality and establishing emissions baselines, let's go to additionality first. You get to the point of an industry saying, 'I'm putting up my hand, I want to grant.' Okay, you want to grant, but how do we know that you wouldn't have taken that action anyway? How do you prove that it is additional to what would have occurred previously? The Grattan Institute looked at the coalition's plan in a study that it has done and said that grant tendering programs show that they cannot reduce emissions at the necessary scale or speed and that, based on experience, government would need to announce an abatement purchasing fund of $100 billion to meet the 2020 emissions reduction target. Treasury, as I indicated, looked at the costs previously and pointed out that it was huge expense to the taxpayer. But, of course, those people who want to support big business in its capacity to pollute for free do not see that as a problem.

In terms of establishing emissions baselines, how do you establish the baseline and will there be penalties above the baseline? Or are we going to go for offset mechanisms? For example, if you establish an emissions baseline and people exceed the baseline, are they going to be charged a penalty? You could argue that a penalty is therefore a carbon tax, a carbon price. Is a penalty above the baseline a carbon tax or price, or are we establishing a baseline and saying, 'Actually, there will be no penalty for exceeding the baseline'? No, in fact, we are going to say, 'Providing you go off and buy a certain amount of renewable energy, or whatever else, that will be achieved.'

What we have here is a situation where the coalition has failed to make the case for direct action. Let's face it, direct action was always a slogan to take into the 2010 election. It has no modelling behind it. It has no detail. It is only a green paper, white paper process. It is a bandaid that the coalition has put up in order to persuade some people that it has a policy on global warming, which it does not. It is the climate deniers policy of choice. That is the fact of the matter.

Why we need an inquiry into it, and need that inquiry right now, is because the community needs to see that when under pressure, when asked to explain themselves, the coalition will not be able to do it. They will not be able to put any detail behind this policy position. People will see that it is incapable of achieving even five per cent, let alone, in my view, the more than 25 per cent emissions reduction that is necessary by 2020 and then to go beyond 2020, when you get even steeper requirements in terms of emissions reductions in meeting that global budget. Direct action will not cut it, and that is why you need an inquiry into direct action.

In this context, I want to say that the reason the Greens want this inquiry is because we want the focus to be on why the coalition's policy is a failure. We know that the existing framework that was worked on and developed by Labor and the Greens under former Prime Minister Gillard is working. Emissions are coming down, particularly in the energy sector, in the electricity sector, as was designed. In the covered sectors, emissions are coming down. Where you have the emissions now scaling up is in areas that are not covered—deforestation, for example. Land clearing is a major emitting industry and it is not covered currently under the scheme. There are sectors like that. How is direct action going to deal with this and how is it going to link with the carbon farming initiative? Nobody actually knows that.

That is why we need to expose just how hollow any kinds of claims that the coalition make about direct action actually are. Nobody who is serious about global warming, not an
economist anywhere, not a scientist, nobody who has any credibility is saying anything other than that the only way you are going to get the kind of emission reductions we need at the cheapest price is a market based mechanism. That is what is required.

There are to be two debates here. One is about why you would want this inquiry into direct action, and it is pretty clear why you would want to do that. The other question is: why would you not?

Honourable senators interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Fawcett): Order! Senator Milne, could you resume your seat. I remind senators on my right and across the chamber that senators have the right to be heard in silence. Senator Milne.

Senator MILNE: Thank you, Mr Acting Deputy President. We passed the legislation for carbon pricing for making the polluters pay. There was a compensation program worked out and delivered. This is a working strategy, it is a working framework of legislation, and it gives certainty. I want to say to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Business Council of Australia and the like: you are not going to get certainty with direct action because how can you have certainty with a policy that supposedly only goes to 2020—a grants scheme to 2020? Let me tell you: if you succeed in repealing this package it will be back again—only next time that the market mechanism will be back again the cap will have to be so much more severe. The dislocation in the economy will be huge because you failed to act early and appropriately, and the longer you leave it the more expensive and the more dislocating it is going to be. To the likes of Peter Anderson and others, and BHP who are now trying to weasel out of actually paying a price on pollution, let me tell you: when the market mechanisms return, in the event this was ever repealed, it will be a more severe regime. You have got certainty right now. You have certainty with this legislation, you have a price curb, and that is what you need to be considering.

The reason the Greens will not be supporting an inquiry into the current legislation is that we do not want to avoid a vote on this. It is time to take it straight up to the coalition government. It is time to say: this legislation is working. We are not going to cast doubt; there is going to be no equivocation on this. If the coalition says they want to tear down the only thing that is working to bring down greenhouse gas emissions, we are going to say: no, on the contrary, you are not. We are going to protect the Climate Change Authority. We are going to protect the legislation we have and we are not going to stand by and let you vandalise action on climate change at a time when the globe is considering how to actually respond to this global challenge. That is why we want the action on Direct Action now. We will focus on that over the summer with no equivocation and take it straight up to the Abbott government, saying, 'No, you bring it on. We will not stand by and have it repealed. We are going to stand by the thing that is working and we are going to send that message to Warsaw, to every government there, that the Australian Senate will not stand by and watch you tear down an effective market mechanism which the world recognises is working.'

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (18:23): Let me just say upfront that the coalition government will not be supporting either this motion by the Greens or the subsequent motion by the opposition. What we have just heard from Senator Milne was an attempt to re-litigate the last two elections. Direct Action has been widely canvassed in the lead-up to two elections. It has been widely canvassed across the Australian community and
the Australian people passed judgement on what they thought the Australian Senate should do when it comes to the Labor-Green carbon tax and to Direct Action. The Australian people voted for the Senate to scrap the carbon tax and for the parliament to support the coalition government's approach, which is to reduce emissions through Direct Action.

In the interests of time and just very quickly, again the Greens' leader quite inappropriately, quite outrageously, sought to politicise tragic events that have happened in Australia in recent times by establishing a link which scientists say cannot be made between climate change and individual events. Senator Milne would be well aware that across Australia since time immemorial there have been floods, there have been droughts and there have been bushfires, and to make the link for political purposes to scare people across Australia in the way she did again today is quite outrageous. She knows it is inaccurate and she is just doing it for political purposes.

As for an inquiry into Direct Action, Senator Milne would be quite aware that the coalition government right now is undertaking an extensive consultation process on our direct action policy. We have released terms of reference for the Emissions Reduction Fund on 16 October. The government is encouraging business, community groups and organisations to make submissions in response to those terms of reference. Those submissions will be considered as part of the development of a green paper, which will be released in December. So we are acting quite swiftly in implementing this very strong and very sound policy to reduce emissions by five per cent by 2020. The white paper outlining the final design of the Emissions Reduction Fund will be released early in 2014. If the Greens were genuine in wanting to have an inquiry into what the government is actually doing, they would await the outcome of that consultation before pressing ahead with this particular inquiry which is a political exercise. The Emissions Reduction Fund will provide incentives for companies to reduce their emissions to achieve that five per cent reduction in emissions by 2020. It will be market based by its mechanisms designed to simply and efficiently source the lowest cost abatement.

I have just a quick newsflash for the Greens: a tax imposed by the government is not a market based mechanism. The Labor-Green carbon tax is a tax which comes with massive government red tape to boot—or should I say, red and green tape to boot. Whether it is a fixed price tax or a floating price tax, to describe it as a market based mechanism is just ridiculous and we completely reject that characterisation. Unlike the carbon tax, the Emissions Reduction Fund will actually reduce our domestic emissions by five per cent by 2020 and, unlike the Labor-Green $9 billion a year carbon tax, the cost of the Emissions Reduction Fund will be capped at $300 million in 2014-15, $500 million in 2015-16 and $750 million in 2016-17 over the forward estimates.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (18:26): I will speak very briefly because I intend to make most of my remarks in relation to the motion I also have on this matter. I will make just a few points in response to Senator Cormann and to Senator Milne. Direct action is a slogan, but it is a slogan that as yet has not been exposed as the fraud it is, and we need to ensure that it is exposed as the fraud that it is in the context of the proposed repeal of this legislation.
The second point I make is that in order to do that we are going to have to do more than lecture people and we are going to have to do more than talk to people who already agree with us. We are going to have to methodically go through what the alternative policy is that the government is putting forward. It was interesting that when Senator Milne was making her contribution she said why she opposed the opposition's motion. I was interested to hear over on this side all of the coalition members saying, 'Good on you.' On the issue of whether or not the bill should actually be the subject of a proper inquiry, it appears that the government is at one with the Australian Greens, and that is probably indicative of what the government's view is of the strategy. But I will leave most of my remarks to the motion that I have before the chair subsequently.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Fawcett): The question is that the motion moved by Senator Milne be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [18:33]

(The Acting Deputy President—Senator DJ Fawcett)

Ayes ......................10
Noes ......................49
Majority ...............39

AYES

Di Natale, R
Ludlam, S
Rhiannon, L
Waters, LJ
Wright, PL

Hanson-Young, SC
Milne, C
Siewert, R (teller)
Whish-Wilson, PS
Xenophon, N

NOES

Bernardi, C
Birmingham, SJ
Brandis, GH
Cameron, DN
Cash, MC
Conroy, SM
Dastyari, s
Eggleston, A
Fawcett, DJ
Fifield, MP
Gallacher, AM
Groger, H
Ludwig, JW
Mason, B
McKenzie, B
Moore, CM
Parry, S
Polley, H
Ronaldson, M
Ryan, SM
Singh, LM
Smith, D
Sterle, G

Bilyk, CL
Boyce, SK
Bushby, DC
Carr, KJ
Collins, JMA
Cormann, M
Edwards, S
Farrell, D
Fierravanti-Wells, C
Furner, ML
Heffernan, W
Lines, S
Marshall, GM
McEwen, A (teller)
McLucas, J
Nash, F
Payne, MA
Pratt, LC
Ruston, A
Scullion, NG
Sinodinos, A
Stephens, U
Tillem, M
Question negatived.

Environment and Communications References Committee
Reference

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (18:37): by leave—I move:
(a) the following matter be referred to the Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry and report by the first sitting day in March 2014:

The Government’s approach to addressing carbon pollution including the provisions of any bills introduced into the House of Representatives in the remaining sittings of 2013 which repeal the carbon tax, with particular reference to:

(i) the impact of the Carbon Tax Repeal Bills on Australia’s ability to systemically address climate change,
(ii) the impact of the bills on Australia’s carbon pollution cap,
(iii) the ability of the Government and the Australian people to receive expert independent advice following the abolition of the Climate Change Authority,
(iv) the fiscal and economic impact of the Government’s ‘direct action’ policy,
(v) the capacity of the Government’s approach to meet the carbon pollution reduction target of 5 per cent,
(vi) the impact of the Government’s approach on any consideration of the full target range of 5 to 25 per cent,
(vii) the effectiveness of the Government’s approach to deliver carbon pollution reductions consistent with Australia’s international commitments,
(viii) the capacity of the Government’s approach to reduce carbon pollution adequately and cost effectively,
(ix) the technical issues that arise for measuring abatement under the Government’s approach, including additionality, establishing emissions baselines for emitting entities and long-term monitoring and reporting arrangements,
(x) the ability of the Government’s approach to encourage long-term business investment in renewable energy,
(xi) the impact on, and interaction with, the Carbon Farming Initiative, and
(xii) any other related matters; and
(b) in undertaking the inquiry the committee must have regard to the Climate Change Authority’s ‘Reducing Australia’s Greenhouse Gas Emissions – Targets and Progress review: final report’, due in February 2014.

I make the following points in relation to that. We have an important opportunity in this motion to do what the Senate has traditionally done, which is to ensure proper scrutiny of legislation. The reason we are moving this as the opposition is twofold. Firstly, we do want to expose direct action for the fraud that it is. It is a fraud. It is a slogan and, whilst Senator
Cormann might say that it has been canvassed thoroughly at the election, it has been a slogan and a pamphlet and even then you still cannot be consistent on it. Already you are changing what you say it will do and how it will work.

It is ridiculous to suggest that the Australian people have been provided with full and frank details of what direct action would be. In fact out of Senator Cormann's own mouth we heard that because he read out of his little brief the process of a discussion paper and a green and a white paper in relation to direct action that the government was proposing. That is actually where they will demonstrate the detail of what their policy will mean. But they want the Senate to vote on the legislation that removes all of the architecture around an effective response to climate change before they tell Australians what the alternative is. We think that is a fraud. That is an utter fraud not only on the Australian people but also on the processes of this place.

I have been here for a number of years now and I have participated in committees both in opposition and, as minister, had to deal with committees whilst in government and can I say this: we have had a number of bills only introduced yesterday—eight or nine—and magically we have the government saying they want the package passed before Christmas. It is, I think, incumbent upon the Senate to ensure that there is proper consideration of this very large and complex package of legislation and the alternative that is proposed to replace it before the Senate is asked to vote on it.

It is patently clear from the contribution of Senator Milne that on this issue the opposition and the Greens do not agree, and I want to put on record why it is we would like our motion supported and the bills and direct action referred to a committee. It is because they deal with the same issue. It is because the issue that the Senate has to consider is what is the appropriate and effective response to climate change for the nation. The Senate should not be asked to consider one side of the coin, one side of the equation—that is, the passage of the legislation on the government's timetable—without knowing what the alternative policy is that the government propose to put in place and that the government have not even issued detail on.

They have not even been prepared to put forward the detail of their policy. They are still going through a process of developing it. It is frankly ridiculous, inappropriate and undemocratic for the Senate to be asked to vote on legislation before the government is prepared to be transparent and upfront with the Australian people about what they will replace it with.

I also note that the Australian Labor Party's position is consistent with the position of a number of the environmental groups and I note, for example, the WWF has said how important it is for the government to present its alternative climate policy to Australians, how important it is for the alternative to be repealed. I note, for example, that the Climate Institute calls on the parliament to put the repeal legislation as well as the government's alternative through full and rigorous parliamentary scrutiny, including Senate committee investigation, before making any changes.

The motion before the chair moved by me on behalf of the opposition is consistent with the views expressed by many environmental stakeholders, but I make a more important point: it is absolutely consistent with the approach this Senate has taken time and time again. We have not in this Senate—
**Senator Cormann:** You want to send it to the references committee.

**Senator WONG:** Senator Cormann wants to interject—how many inquiries did Senator Cormann have on the carbon pollution reduction scheme? How many inquiries did he have? And now he wants to ensure that there is no inquiry in relation to this legislation and its alternative and he wants a vote before Christmas after having—was it two years of inquiries? Two years of inquiries, they had, in relation to a price on carbon. The hypocrisy is dripping off the walls of this chamber.

But I come back to the salient point: this Senate has never allowed a government to put legislation through without the Senate having proper opportunity to consider it. Everyone in this chamber knows that if this motion is not passed, what the government will seek to do is have a quick and dirty inquiry, if one at all.

I urge senators, including the crossbench, to consider that precedent. It is an important principle that the Senate for many years has adhered to, and that is we apply proper scrutiny to legislation. These bills and direct action being the flip side of the legislation being absolutely germane to the decision to repeal or not repeal should be referred for proper scrutiny to this committee in accordance with my motion.

**Senator CORMANN** (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (18:42): Just very quickly in the interests of time, as Senator Wong just said the Senate has had many, many inquiries into the carbon tax and the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. As such the Senate is very well informed on the flaws of the carbon tax and the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and of course we will have one more inquiry. That inquiry appropriately will be through the Senate legislation committee, which is the usual process to consider government legislation, so it is not right for Senator Wong to say that there will be no inquiry into the legislation the government is putting forward to scrap the carbon tax. That will be an opportunity available to the Senate through the proper way the government will be opposing this particular motion.

**The PRESIDENT:** The question is that the motion moved by Senator Wong be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [18:48]

(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes .....................27
Noes .....................36
Majority ...............9

AYES

- Bilyk, CL
- Cameron, DN
- Collins, JMA
- Dastyari, s
- Furner, ML
- Hogg, JJ
- Ludwig, JW
- McEwen, A (teller)
- Moore, CM
- Pratt, LC
- Stephens, U
- Thorp, LE
- Brown, CL
- Carr, KJ
- Conroy, SM
- Farrell, D
- Gallacher, AM
- Lines, S
- Marshall, GM
- McLucas, J
- Polley, H
- Singh, LM
- Sterle, G
- Tillem, M
AYES

Urquhart, AE
Xenophon, N

Wong, P

NOES

Bernardi, C
Boswell, RLD
Brandis, GH
Cash, MC
Di Natale, R
Fawcett, DJ
Fifield, MP
Heffernan, W
Ludlam, S
Mason, B
Milne, C
Parry, S
Rhiannon, L
Ruston, A
Scullion, NG
Sinodinos, A
Waters, LJ
Williams, JR

Birmingham, SJ
Boyce, SK
Bushby, DC
Cormann, M
Eggleston, A
Ferravanti-Wells, C
Hanson-Young, SC
Kroger, H
Macdonald, ID
McKenzie, B (teller)
Nash, F
Payne, MA
Ronaldson, M
Ryan, SM
Siewert, R
Smith, D
Whish-Wilson, PS
Wright, PL

PAIRS

Bishop, TM
Faulkner, J
Lundy, KA
Peris, N

Colbeck, R
Seselja, Z
Johnston, D
Back, CJ

Question negatived.

BILLs

Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Amendment Bill 2013
Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013

Explanatory Memorandum

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (18:51): by leave—I table explanatory memoranda relating to two bills I introduced this afternoon, the Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Amendment Bill 2013 and the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013.

DOCUMENTS

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (19:01):

That the Senate take note of the document.

I rise to speak on the report for 2012-13 of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Firstly, I congratulate the former Labor government—and
the former minister, the Hon. Jenny Macklin MP—for the great and innovative work of the department under her leadership. This report demonstrates the breadth and depth of the work Labor undertook across a range of important portfolios and is in stark contrast to the government's lack of commitment or focus on communities, families and individuals doing it tough.

Under Labor, to ensure our success and to keep a clear focus on matters of critical public interest, we allocated portfolio responsibilities to three ministers and two parliamentary secretaries. The report acts to further highlight that under the Abbott government, housing, community services and Indigenous affairs have been downgraded or there is little or no commitment to them. Housing, homelessness and social housing have no dedicated minister. Disability reform, disabilities and carers have no dedicated minister or parliamentary secretary. These are very important portfolios which now no longer have dedicated ministers and are instead all lumped together with a range of other important social service portfolios across ministers Andrews and Payne.

As we know, the Prime Minister has with great fanfare taken personal responsibility for the full range of legislation and issues around Aboriginal Australians. What we now know is that the Prime Minister has promptly contracted out those matters to Messrs 'Twiggy' Forrest and Noel Pearson. Who will be taking responsibility, for example, for the Indigenous Land Corporation, the Northern Territory Land Council or the Indigenous Business Council—to pick a few at random? Will these organisations with proven track records be disbanded, defunded or simply handed over to Twiggy and Noel? Or will they be giving the responsibility to Senator Scullion? I would certainly question how the Prime Minister of Australia, with all of his other domestic and international responsibilities, has the time to give proper focus and respect to Aboriginal people.

I recently attended the AHURI conference in Adelaide. More than 800 housing and homeless NGO representatives attended and Minister Andrews gave his first speech on housing—an opportunity to present the government's agenda and excite the sector. Instead, the sector left feeling deflated and unsure of the Abbott government's agenda, with the only firm commitment coming from the minister being to disband the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness.

I express my deep concern about the government's approach to this range of portfolios, and I question the government's ability to give the same detailed response and make the positive impact that Labor made in this area. I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

DOCUMENTS

Consideration

The following government documents tabled earlier today were considered:


The following orders of the day relating to government documents were considered:

Gene Technology Regulator—Quarterly report for the period 1 January to 31 March 2013. Motion to take note of document moved by Senator Boyce. Debate adjourned till Thursday at general business, Senator Boyce in continuation.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade—
Australia in the Asian Century: towards 2025—Country strategy—
China.
India.
Indonesia.
Japan.
South Korea.
Motion to take note of document moved by Senator Macdonald. Debate adjourned till Thursday at general business, Senator Macdonald in continuation.


Australian Postal Corporation (Australia Post)—
   Statement of corporate intent 2013-14 to 2016-17.
Motion to take note of documents moved by Senator Boyce. Debate adjourned till Thursday at general business, Senator Boyce in continuation.


Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)—Report for the period 3 December 2012 to 30 June 2013. Motion to take note of document moved by Senator Boyce. Debate adjourned till Thursday at general business, Senator Boyce in continuation.


Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs—Report for 2012-13, including reports of the Aboriginals Benefit Account and Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, and financial statements for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Account. Motion to take note of document moved by Senator Stephens and debated. Debate adjourned till Thursday at general business, Senator Lines in continuation.


NBN Co Limited—

Letter to the Chairman of NBN Co Limited (Dr Switkowski) from the Minister for Communications and the Minister for Finance, dated 24 October 2013.


Motion to take note of documents moved by Senator Pratt. Debate adjourned till Thursday at general business, Senator Pratt in continuation.


Australian Public Service Commission—Report of the Australian Public Service Commissioner for 2012-13, including report of the Merit Protection Commissioner. Motion to take note of document moved by Senator Pratt. Debate adjourned till Thursday at general business, Senator Pratt in continuation.


General business orders of the day nos. 1, 3, 6 and 7, 11 and 12, 17 to 25, 29 to 33, 35, 37 to 39, 41 to 43, 46 and 47, 50 and 51, 54, 56 and 57, 59, 64 and 65, 67, 69, 72, 74, 76, 78 to 80, 83, 85 to 87, 92 and 93, 95, 98 and 99, 103 to 106, 108, 110 and 111, 113, 117, 122 to 126, 128, 130 to 132, 137, 140, 143 to 146, 153, 160 and 161, 163, 165 and 166, 168, 170, 173, 175, 177, 179, 181 to 184 and 188 to 192, relating to government documents were called on but no motion was moved.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (19:14): Order! I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

Remembrance Day

Senator FAWCETT (South Australia) (19:14): As the Senate would be aware, we recently had Remembrance Day, when we remember those who have served our nation and the cause of peace around the world. I also spoke on the adjournment last night about the unveiling of the first war memorial to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel—people who have served since the Boer War but have not been remembered. Tonight I wish to briefly make some remarks about another group of Australians who have served this nation who are often not remembered on official memorials here in Canberra or elsewhere and who are often overlooked when people talk about the conflicts that Australians have fought in. The two conflicts I wish to mention are the Malayan Emergency and the Indonesian Confrontation.

The Malayan Emergency was declared in June 1948 after three estate managers were murdered in Perak in northern Malaysia. The guerrilla movement that had grown out of the Malaysian Communist Party was disgruntled with the current government and sought to overthrow that by force. A state of emergency was declared and, over the next 12 years, the British, Malayan and Commonwealth armed forces fought against the insurgency led by that Communist Party. The state of emergency was not lifted until 1960, some three years after the Federation of Malaysia had received its independence.

Australia's emergency began in 1950 with a number of RAAF aircraft and personnel—the 38th Squadron deployed on cargo runs and Lincoln bombers which, in the end, delivered the majority of ordnance that was dropped during that campaign. By October 1955, the 2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment arrived. Over the period of the conflict, not only were the 1st Squadron and 38th Squadron of RAAF involved, but between 1955 and 1962 the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment rotated through Malaya. There were
also members from the corps of artillery, engineers and signals specialist troops as part of Australia's involvement. The Royal Australian Navy had a number of ships, including HMAS Anzac, Arunta, Melbourne, Quadrant, Queenborough, Quiberon, Quickmatch, Sydney, Tobruk, Vampire, Vendetta, Voyager and Warramunga. Some 250 Australian personnel were either killed in action, killed as a result of accidents or wounded in that conflict—a sizable contribution in sacrifice by Australia. At 13 years, the Malayan Emergency was in fact the longest continuous Australian commitment in Australia's history at that time. Some 39 Australian servicemen were killed, although only 15 of these were directly as a result of operations.

The Indonesian Confrontation was a small but undeclared war fought between 1962 and 1966 predominantly along the border between Indonesia and Malaysia, including Borneo. There were a number of cross-border raids into Malaysia against the Malaysian Peninsula itself, and Australian forces who were based there as part of the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve participated in the defence of the peninsula, particularly between September and October of 1964. By 1965, Australian troops joined British forces and New Zealand forces in Borneo, and the confrontation only ended in 1966 when Indonesia and Malaysia signed a peace treaty in Bangkok. In all, Australia contributed two infantry battalions, two squadrons of the Special Air Service and artillery, Australian engineers, Royal Australian Navy ships and the 5th Squadron of the RAAF. Twenty-three Australians were killed and five wounded during that confrontation.

At the end of those conflicts, which were undeclared wars, no territory had been lost. They were victories. There were no demarcation zones put in place. The commitment and service of those men and women is as relevant as in any other conflict that Australians have served in, and yet for a range of reasons their service and sacrifice has not been recognised to the extent that it should. To quote Brigadier Alf Garland:

No one knew we went up there, No one knew we fought there, Now, no one cares, it's a disgrace.

I am glad to report to the Senate that some things have improved. There is now a national day on 31 August to commemorate the service and sacrifice of these men and women who served Australia. I am pleased to report that some steps have been taken to initiate a memorial in Canberra at the Australian War Memorial. It is early days yet, but dialogue has commenced with the War Memorial. Certainly the South Australian chapter of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association of Australia has been heavily engaged in that. I commend for their work Mr Brian Selby and many others who are seeking to make sure that there is a permanent memorial and that the service and sacrifice of these Australians is as recognised and valued as any.

Female Orphan School Building

Senator FAULKNER (New South Wales) (19:20): On 24 September this year 2013, 200 years to the day after the building's foundation was laid by New South Wales Governor Lachlan Macquarie, Her Excellency the Governor-General of Australia officially reopened the Female Orphan School building at the University of Western Sydney Parramatta campus after the completion of the third and final stage of its restoration. Later that day, the newly installed permanent exhibition for the Whitlam Institute, the Whitlam Prime Ministerial Collection, the institute's education facilities and a new display on the building's history were also opened to the public.
The Whitlam Institute of the University of Western Sydney unites the two great passions of Gough Whitlam: education and the delivery and development of services to the suburbs of Western Sydney, which he represented as the member for Werriwa for more than a quarter of a century. Gough Whitlam has gone down in our history as a great reforming prime minister of the 20th century and a leader of lofty ideas and wide-ranging vision. But his vision and his passion were not abstract. They were made concrete in Western Sydney. They were made concrete through his and Margaret Whitlam's experience of raising a young family in Werriwa when there was neither a single high school in the electorate nor even a single sewer line and through seeing the lives and hearing the stories of the men and women in his electorate whose horizons were narrowed and whose talents were stifled through a lack of opportunities that others took for granted.

The Whitlam Institute's association and integration with the University of Western Sydney is a fitting symbol of the concerns and causes to which Gough Whitlam dedicated his life and the continuation of them. The institute collects and preserves a significant part of our national history through the Whitlam Prime Ministerial Collection, but it also, perhaps more importantly, cultivates and fosters a crucial part of our national future through programs of civic engagement and policy discussion. Gough Whitlam's legacy is not only the iconic policy reforms of his government but also the example he has set of a lifetime's engagement in political and civic life—a dedication to cause and change.

It is entirely fitting that the institute should now find its permanent home in the nation's oldest public institutional building. The history of the Female Orphan School tells its own story of Australian administrators and governments grappling with responsibility for and solutions to disadvantage and distress. It reminds us of our own responsibility to act. It reminds us too that the obvious and popular solutions may look very different a few decades later. The building is an extraordinary piece of our early European history. It is the oldest three-storey building in Australia and one of the very few buildings of its size still standing from the early colonial period. From 1813 to 1850 the building served, as I mentioned, as the Female Orphan School, which was an institution where orphaned girls could be raised in an environment of religion and morality, I might say, away from the corrupt and immoral influences of Sydney Town.

Since 1850, the building served as the Protestant orphan school and later the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital, with many extensions and new buildings constructed over the years. In the 1980s in response to the Richmond report and new methods of treating those who were afflicted with mental illness, the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital closed. The old Female Orphan School and the surrounding buildings fell into disrepair and disuse.

The restoration of this historic building was an immense and ambitious project completed over 13 years in three separate stages. The third and final stage was made possible last year by a generous $7 million grant by the then federal government with additional funding provided by the University of Western Sydney. The achievement of saving the Female Orphan School for future generations is in no small part due to the University of Western Sydney's vice-chancellor, Professor Jan Reid, who has had an unwavering commitment to the restoration of the building. I believe that it will stand as a great legacy of Jan's time as vice-chancellor of the University of Western Sydney.
Tonight, I certainly want to acknowledge all who were involved in this project, and there were far too many to mention. It goes from the director and board members of the Whitlam Institute through to the construction workers who did the hard work on the ground of making the restoration a reality. It is thanks to all of those efforts that this magnificent building has been restored to its former glory and that Gough Whitlam's continuing legacy now has a fitting, permanent home.

If you, Mr Acting Deputy President, or any other senator or anyone who might be listening to this broadcast or reading the *Hansard* should find themselves in the vicinity of the University of Western Sydney Parramatta campus, I would thoroughly recommend a visit to this significant and historic building and also, of course, the Whitlam Institute's permanent exhibition called *A Changing Australia: The Time of Gough Whitlam*, which, as you would appreciate, highlights the legacy of former Prime Minister Whitlam to the nation. I can assure the Senate that a visit is a most worthwhile experience for anyone and I would commend it to any interested senator.

**Federal Election**

**Climate Change**

*Senator LUDLAM* (Western Australia) (19:30): I rise to make my first real contribution in the Senate since the 2013 election. It has been such an extraordinarily long period of time since this parliament last sat, I was starting to think that perhaps the government was enjoying the respite from transparency. But here we are and it is great to be back, but nonetheless we are holding quite a degree of apprehension about what is to come and the work that is ahead of us. This is the first opportunity that I have had to thank my team who carried me through an extraordinary election campaign. Felicity and Chantal were here with me during the sitting week, and, back in Fremantle Ray, Trish, Giovanni and Eloise are the people behind the scenes. If ever we sound across our brief and eloquent in here you know it is because we have good staff. The extended Greens WA team—in particular Irma, Katrina, Nina, Jane and Harrison—really threw everything that they had into mobilising a wonderful Greens WA campaign for season 2013. There is my dear colleague Rachel Siewert and her team—I worked for Senator Siewert in this place before taking up my own position here in 2007—and of course Christine Milne and the larger team. This is also my first opportunity to congratulate the once, future and current member for Melbourne, Adam Bandt. It was a hard-fought and difficult campaign.

After 7 September, those in the House of Representatives got on with life, or with packing up their offices, and for those of us in Western Australia—noting my West Australian colleague, Senator Louise Pratt, is here in the chamber as well—the journey appeared to be only just beginning. We spent a week in appeals; we had a very, very close count and, on appeal, we won a recount in Western Australia. Many votes were found, obviously not just by Greens scrutineers but by those who turned up for the Labor Party and a handful for the Palmer United Party. It was a 2½-week recount. I want to thank my former state parliamentary colleague, Giz Watson, in particular, for marshalling up a remarkable scrutineering team. There was a razor thin change in the order of the fallout of the West Australian count. Of course everybody was baffled and immensely frustrated to discover that a batch had been lost on the way through the recount, which was the first Senate recount since, I think, 1980, and probably the most serious breach of this sort of thing in the Electoral
Commission's history. Now I suspect we are in hands of the courts and more than likely there will be another ballot in West Australia next year.

It occurred to me during the late stages of the recount that we had a number of friends and allies from the eastern states who made their way to WA to help the huge scrutineering team. One of them, a friend and former intern here, Alix, and others who came to scrutineer for WA, gave us an opportunity to show off our gorgeous state to people from across the country who lent a hand to the very hardworking locals. In one of the brief moments of respite that we gave her, Alix took time to have a swim off the coast of WA and was hit by a species of stinger very rarely seen in WA and certainly not this early in the season. Apart from needing to apologise that West Australia's beaches are obviously a little bit more dangerous than they look from the shoreline, it brought home to me and others the reason why we do this work in the first place: the vast amount of heat that is being absorbed by the atmosphere and sunk by the ocean is warming the currents of the west coast of Australia. It is warming the Leeuwin Current. We are seeing extraordinary and quite atypical oceanic warming, which is bringin subtropical marine species—fish and others—much further down the coast and certainly much sooner in the season that we are used to.

Gary Jackson, who is a principal research scientist with the Department of Fisheries, has been monitoring changes in fish distribution off the south coast of WA. He spoke to the ABC earlier this month and he said:

We've got a whole portfolio of reports coming through in the last two to three years of some pretty unusual fish occurring south of Geraldton, off Perth and as far around as the Capes on the south coast. So strange things are happening and we're only really starting to scratch the surface now on what is going on.

It brought home to me the human impacts of climate change. One visitor, one guest to Western Australia's found through direct personal experience that things are changing in our part of the world. Things are changing no matter where you are from. One of my favourite things about working in this chamber is that we get to meet people from all over the country who bring these diverse perspectives to bear. Things are changing in your states and territories as well. If you thought to, you could bring direct stories of direct personal experience of what it means to live in the age of global warming. Your constituents will be telling you and the fingerprints are everywhere.

If we get further 0.5 degree rise in temperature, which was modelled for WA, we get the disappearance of 26 of the 92 dryandra species in the south-west of WA. We lose two-thirds of dryandras upon a two-degree temperature rise and we lose all the acacia species. By 2030 the climate in Margaret River will become much closer to that of Perth, as Perth is starting to get Carnarvon or Geraldton's climate regime. There will no white wines coming out the Swan Valley anymore. These are things that we can see approaching, and we can map these onto the things that we can see occurring right now.

West Australia's crayfish industry is one of the best-managed fisheries in the country. Senator Macdonald will know a little of this, as a former fisheries minister. A well-managed fishery—a good local and community support—has been hit very, very hard by changes to the marine environment and changes to the way that our oceans are responding to that massive sinking of heat that they are having to absorb. That is something that actually has the potential to wipe that fishery out completely. We are already seeing severe impacts.
We know, and I know as a West Australian through direct experience, that map is what the scientific community is telling us about how the climate is changing around us. It does not make much sense to try and wind the clock back and prevent these things from happening, because they are with us now. What we are able to do, of course, is look forward and say, 'What can we do?’ If we listen to those we trust who have the scientific expertise—the people who spend their lives hoping to goodness that they are wrong about what is coming down the line—they tell us, 'Change course now. Not in 2030, not in 2050, not in 2060: change course now.’

Again, one of my favourite things about this job is the people we get to meet and deal with, including representatives from the US based firm Solar Reserve. They started business in 2007. They now have 25 projects coming on stream, with a potential output of 3,000 megawatts. That is a substantial fraction of the whole south-west grid.

Solar Reserve builds solar thermal power stations—utility-scale power stations that can run 24/7, after dark. They are as responsive as a gas fired power station but running on sunlight. They are building one of the largest solar power plants—a 110 megawatts plant in the Nevada desert—and they are shopping around Western Australia, looking at potentially opening an office. I suspect that will go to the wall now because of policy changes that are afoot in this building this week to turn their backs and slam the door on the sunrise industries of the 21st century. This is something that might actually give us a chance, not of dealing with the existing changes to our climate that are washing through, but the catastrophic impacts of the near term, those things that are still avoidable. These clean technology companies have the ability to offset the kind of holocaust that we are driving our economy, our society and our environment towards.

We know as well, of course, that solar is not just for the big guys, because some of the biggest advances have been made at the household level. On a good day—on a sunny day at peak—more than 130,000 solar PV installations on Western Australian homes can generate 10 per cent of the electricity running through the south-west grid. Premier Barnett, of course, realising that the game is up for the black power generators, is pumping nearly $400 million into trying to resurrect the obsolete Muja coal fired power station—again, trying to hold back the tide.

The future is actually here, and it is becoming more widely distributed. What those householders in WA who installed PV could do with, what those large-scale solar utility developers could do with and what people wanting to put in public transport, preserve their urban bushland and protect our fisheries could do with is some leadership from this building—for those in the coalition who have the blindfolds on, or perhaps those whom I can speak to who know that climate change is real, have a quick word with the boss and see if we can avoid some of the worst of the catastrophic damage that is bearing down upon us. I thank the chamber.

Cardwell and Mission Beach Reconstruction

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (19:40): A terrifying climatic event which impacted on the coast of North Queensland in the early hours of Thursday 3 February 2011 had its much happier sequel last Saturday, when I, on behalf of the federal government, and others were able to officially open the Cardwell reconstruction project and the jetties at Clump Point on Mission Beach and on Dunk Island.
Senators will remember that Cyclone Yasi developed as a tropical low north-west of Fiji on 29 January and started tracking on a general westward track. It became a category 2 cyclone on 31 January and a category 3 cyclone by 4 pm on that same day. It continued to intensify over the next 24 hours and was upgraded to a category 4 cyclone on 1 February.

It continued to move towards the Queensland coast. I well remember it. Those of us living in the north were all fearful. We were all, in a selfish way, concerned about our own safety and hoping it would hit somewhere else and not our community. The cyclone actually crossed the coast as a category 5 cyclone, the most intense cyclone that is recorded, between Mission Beach and Cardwell between midnight and 1 am on 3 February.

That cyclone caused damage estimated at $3.6 billion and there was one indirect fatality. Many thousands of people who live in that area have had two years of difficulties in reconstructing their houses and re-establishing their businesses, many seeking medical advice for the trauma that they suffered as a result of this terrifying cyclone.

Having heard Senator Ludlam now, can I just point out, digressing slightly, that whilst it was a terrifying cyclone it was of about the same intensity and terror as Cyclone Mahina, which struck Princess Charlotte Bay in 1899 and the one which struck Mackay and Innisfail in 1918. It was a terrifying cyclone, but it was no worse than cyclones which struck that section of the coast a hundred years before. I am sure Senator Ludlam and Senator Milne will still blame man-induced carbon emissions for those cyclones which occurred with equal intensity back more than 100 years ago. But I digress.

The openings on Saturday of the reconstructions were very happy events. As I remarked in my speeches at both openings—at Cardwell and Mission Beach—it was almost as if Mother Nature, knowing that she had done the wrong thing two years ago, turned up on Saturday with the most magnificent day that you could see anywhere in the world. For those of you on Facebook, I urge you to have a look at my Facebook photos of the day in that marvellous part of Queensland. Cardwell is a magnificent tourist town, a seaside resort where the road runs along the beach for about five kilometres. It is one of the most scenic roadways anywhere in Australia. Mission Beach is renowned as a tropical paradise where the rainforest meets the reef and where cassowaries roam supreme and are protected by all the locals. It is a magnificent part of the world. Certainly, if anyone listening to this is looking for somewhere to go for a holiday at any time in the future, you could not better a stay in Cardwell, Mission Beach or in that general locality.

The event at Cardwell on Saturday was the culmination of a couple of years of work by so many people to reconstruct Cardwell. The main road through Cardwell, the Bruce Highway, had been partly washed away. The beaches had been destroyed. All of the beach infrastructure had gone. The two jetties that I mentioned, on fabulous Dunk Island and at Mission Beach, had been destroyed. Over the last two years a lot of people had put a lot of work into the reconstruction of those localities. I pay credit to the designers, the workers, the contractors, the Cassowary Coast Regional Council and all those who have played a part in the wonderful reconstruction that we opened officially on Saturday. In line with a very sensible decision of the Queensland government, the reconstruction has been done at a higher standard than it ever was before, so future events will not cause the same sort of destruction.

I want to pay tribute particularly to Councillor Bill Shannon, the Mayor of the Cassowary Coast Regional council, for his leadership over the time of Cyclone Yasi and ever since. It is a
very, very difficult job. As you can imagine, when you are dealing with distressed people it is not always easy for the mayor and his assistants, but Bill has done a magnificent job. It was great to see on Saturday that his neighbouring mayors, Councillor Bob Manning from the Cairns Regional Council, and Councillor Rodger Bow from the Hinchinbrook Shire Council, were both in Cardwell and Mission Beach to join in the celebrations. I also want to congratulate the local member of parliament, Mr Andrew Cripps, who is a senior minister in the Queensland government, for his leadership and the role he has played. The reconstruction works were expensive: the Commonwealth government put in some $27 million and the Queensland government put in about $14 million for the Cardwell reconstruction and another $5 million or $6 million for the rebuilding of the two jetties, at Dunk Island and Clump Point. That money has been well spent.

Cyclones, as I mentioned, are not new in that area. We had Cyclone Winifred in 1986, Cyclone Justin in 1997, Cyclone Larry in 2006 and, of course, Cyclone Yasi two years ago. Whilst some people are terrified by these events, most North Queenslanders can deal with these things in their stride. They are regular events and if you prepare properly you can withstand them. Notwithstanding that, Yasi being one of the biggest cyclones in 100 years meant the damage to buildings and infrastructure and to people's being was immense. The openings on Saturday were, as I said on the day, a monument to the resilience and courage of the people of the communities of Cardwell and Mission Beach. It shows how these communities can fight back, how they can ensure that nature will not defeat them and that they will be back, bigger and better than ever. Those of you who at some stage in the future see the work at Cardwell and Mission Beach will understand what I am saying. I do not underestimate the terror for those in the path of Cyclone Yasi. I have been through a couple of cyclones myself and I know what it is like. But the work that has been done—the fabulous reconstruction and the look of the town—is just magnificent. It is a real credit, a real monument, to the resilience and courage and determination of the people of those communities. I congratulate them and I wish them all the very best for the future.


document

Senate adjourned at 19:50

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The following documents were tabled by the Clerk:

Legislative instruments are identified by a Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (FRLI) number. An explanatory statement is tabled with an instrument unless otherwise indicated by an asterisk.

Acts Interpretation Act 1901—

Acts Interpretation (Substituted References—Section 19B) Amendment Order 2013 (No. 2)—Select Legislative Instrument 2013 No. 236 [F2013L01920].

Subsection 34C(6)—Statements relating to extensions of time for presentation of periodic reports—


CHAMBER

Broadcasting Services Act 1992—Broadcasting Services (Events) Notice (No. 1) 2010 (Amendment No. 16 of 2013) [F2013L01923].

Commissioner of Taxation—Public Rulings—

Class Rulings CR 2013/78-CR 2013/82.


Migration Amendment (Temporary Sponsored Visas) Act 2013—Migration Amendment (Temporary Sponsored Visas) Commencement Proclamation 2013 [F2013L01915].

Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973—Remuneration Tribunal (Members' Fees and Allowances) Amendment (Fees) Regulation 2013—Select Legislative Instrument 2013 No. 240 [F2013L01926].

Tabling

The following government documents were tabled:


ASC Pty Ltd—


Statement of corporate intent 2013 to 2016.


Australian National University—Report for 2012.

Broadcasting Services Act 1992—Digital television transmission and reception—Reports for the periods—

17 April to 30 June 2013, dated July 2013.
1 July to 31 August 2013, dated October 2013.


Final budget outcome 2012-13—Report by the Treasurer (Mr Hockey) and the Minister for Finance (Senator Cormann).

Migration Act 1958—Section 486O—Assessment of detention arrangements—Personal identifiers: 795/12, 860/12, 874/12, 964/12, 1026/12, 1104/12, 1108/12, 1111/12, 1115 and 1116/12, 1120/12, 1127/12, 1129 to 1131/13, 1133 and 1134/13, 1137 and 1138/13, 1150 and 1151/13, 1167/13, 1198 and 1199/13, 1214/13, 1358/13, 1367/13, 1371/13, 1373/13, 1376/13, 1382 and 1383/13, 1396/13, 1398 and 1399/13, 1402 and 1403/13, 1406/13, 1422/13, 1444 to 1451/13, 1453/13, 1456 and 1457/13, 1468/13, 1477/13, 1485 to 1487/13, 1490/13, 1492/13, 1498 to 1500/13, 1503 to 1505/13, 1507 and 1508/13, 1509 to 1511/13, 1519/13, 1540/13, 1560/13, 1567/13—

Commonwealth Ombudsman's reports.


Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA)—Report for 2012-13.

Wet Tropics Management Authority—Report for 2012-13, including State of the Wet Tropics report.

Departmental and Agency Appointments

Tabling

The following documents were tabled pursuant to the order of the Senate of 24 June 2008, as amended:

Departmental and agency appointments and vacancies—Budget (Supplementary) estimates—Letters of advice—

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Environment portfolio.