COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

SENATE

Hansard

TUESDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2020

CORRECTIONS
This is a PROOF ISSUE. Senators may suggest corrections to their own speeches within 15 non-sitting days by contacting the Hansard office

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

PROOF
### INTERNET


### SITTING DAYS—2020

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### RADIO BROADCASTS

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

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Governor-General
His Excellency General the Hon. David John Hurley, AC, DSC, FTSE (Retd)

Senate Office Holders
President—Senator the Hon. Scott Ryan
Deputy President and Chair of Committees—Senator Susan Lines
Temporary Chairs of Committees—Senators Askew, Bernardi, Bilyk, Brockman, Brown, Faruqi, Fawcett, Fierravanti-Wells, Gallacher, Griff, Kitching, Polley, Sterle and Stoker
Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Kristina Keneally
Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston
Deputy Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator Jonathon Duniam
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator Katy Gallagher
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator Kimberley Kitching

Senate Party Leaders and Whips
Leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann
Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham
Leader of The Nationals in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie
Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Matthew Canavan
Leader of the Labor Party in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
Deputy Leader of the Labor Party in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Kristina Keneally
Leader of the Australian Greens in the Senate—Senator Larissa Waters
Deputy Leader of the Australian Greens in the Senate—Senator Nicholas McKim
Chief Government Whip—Senator Dean Anthony Smith
Deputy Government Whips—Senators James McGrath and Slade Brockman
The Nationals Whip—Senator Perin Davey
Chief Opposition Whip—Senator Anne Elizabeth Urquhart
Deputy Opposition Whips—Senators Raff Ciccone and Malarndirri McCarthy
Australian Greens Whip—Senator Rachel Siewert

Printed by authority of the Senate
### Members 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.

**Australian Capital Territory**

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**Northern Territory**

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[2] Chosen by the Parliament of South Australia to fill a casual vacancy (vice N Xenophon), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
[3] Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice S Dastyari), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
[5] Chosen by the Parliament of Tasmania to fill a casual vacancy (vice D Bushby), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.
[7] Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice A Sinodinos), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party;
CA—Centre Alliance; CLP—Country Liberal Party; IND—Independent;
JLN—Jacqui Lambie Network; LNP—Liberal National Party;
LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;
PHON—Pauline Hanson's One Nation

Heads of Parliamentary Departments
Clerk of the Senate—R Pye
Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic
Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson
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<td>The Hon. Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Coulton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Australians</td>
<td>The Hon. Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon. Ben Morton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon. David Littleproud MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government</td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Coulton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport</td>
<td>The Hon. Scott Buchholz MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew Gee MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories</td>
<td>The Hon. Nola Marino MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Sukkar MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Housing</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Jane Hume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Zed Seselja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture (Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham</td>
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<td>The Hon. Alex Hawke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Trade and Investment Minister</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>The Hon. Christian Porter MP</td>
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<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
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<td>Minister for Youth and Sport</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Home Affairs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>**Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural</td>
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<td>Disaster and Emergency Management**</td>
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<td>Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and</td>
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<td>Multicultural Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural</td>
<td>The Hon. Jason Wood MP</td>
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<td>Affair*</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Dan Tehan MP</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and</td>
<td>The Hon. Steve Irons MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apprenticeships*</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Industry, Science and Technology</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Karen Andrews MP</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Resources and Northern Australia</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Angus Taylor MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<td>*Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
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<td>The Hon. Alex Hawke MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel (Deputy Leader of the</td>
<td>The Hon. Darren Chester MP</td>
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<td><em>Assistant Minister for Children and Families</em></td>
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<td>*Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and</td>
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Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases. Ministers are sworn to administer the portfolio in which they are listed under the ‘Minister’ column and may also be sworn to administer other portfolios in which they are not listed. Assistant Ministers in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the **Ministers of State Act 1952.**
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Tuesday, 4 February 2020

The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. Scott Ryan) took the chair at 12:00, read prayers and made an acknowledgement of country.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance, Leader of the Government in Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (12:01): by leave—I can advise the Senate that Senator McKenzie has resigned her position of Minister for Agriculture and Minister Canavan has resigned his position as Minister for Resources and Northern Australia. The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister McCormack, has been appointed Acting Minister for Agriculture, and Minister Littleproud has been appointed the Acting Minister for Resources and Northern Australia. I will advise the Senate on revised ministry arrangements in due course.

I can also advise the Senate that Senator Birmingham will represent the Acting Minister for Agriculture. Senator Reynolds will represent the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management. Senator Cash will represent the Acting Minister for Resources and Northern Australia; the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development; the Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government; and the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology.

PARTY OFFICE HOLDERS

National Party of Australia

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria) (12:02): Following my resignation as Senate leader, the National Party Senate party room has appointed me as Senate leader and Senator Canavan as deputy leader.

Australian Greens

Senator WATERS (Queensland—Leader of the Australian Greens in the Senate) (12:02): I seek leave to make a short statement relating to party arrangements for the Australian Greens.

Leave granted.

Senator WATERS: I advise the Senate that I am the leader of the party in the Senate, that Senator McKim is the deputy Senate leader, that Senator Siewert is our party whip and that Senator Rice is our deputy whip.

STATEMENTS

Canavan, Senator the Hon. Matthew

Senator CANAVAN (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (21:39): I wish to place a matter on the public record today in relation to a membership I’ve not previously declared. I currently have a supporters membership with the North Queensland Cowboys. This membership entitles me to the membership of the Cowboys Leagues Club. In November 2019, the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility provided notice of an investment decision to the Cowboys Rugby League Football Ltd. Investment decisions are a matter for the independent NAIF board. My membership at the leagues club provided no interest in the management of the football club. As the former minister for Northern Australia, I note that the NAIF Act only provides limited criteria for which the minister for northern Australia may reject a decision. None of these criteria were triggered by this decision. I have sought further advice about this failure to declare a membership. I do not believe at this stage it was a breach of the Statement of Ministerial Standards, and I’ve taken the first available opportunity to place this matter on the record. I’ll do the same in the Senate for the Senate registrar in due course.

Senator WATT (Queensland) (12:03): I seek leave to make a short statement.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator WATT: It’s very disappointing that it has been necessary to hear from Senator Canavan on this matter on a day that is supposed to be devoted to the victims of the bushfires, but we need to be clear about how serious this matter is. Senator Canavan has confirmed that he had an undeclared membership of a club which received a loan from an agency within his ministerial responsibility. The Prime Minister has made it clear that failure to declare membership of a club that received a grant under a program within her ministerial responsibility was a breach of her ministerial standards and the very reason that Senator McKenzie had to resign from the cabinet. The same standard must apply consistently to all ministers. If Senator McKenzie was not able to return to cabinet for breaching ministerial standards, Senator Canavan should not be able to either. We will take the opportunity at another time, a more appropriate time, to discuss this matter in more detail. We should note that Senator Canavan
also has disclosure obligations to the Senate as well as to the Prime Minister, and it appears he may have failed to meet these obligations as well.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Tabling**

The Clerk: I table documents pursuant to statute and returns to order as listed on the Dynamic Red. 

Full details of the documents are recorded in the Journals of the Senate.

**COMMITTEES**

Foreign Interference through Social Media: Select Committee

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Joint Committee

**Meeting**

The Clerk: Proposals to meet have been lodged as follows:

Foreign Interference through Social Media—Select Committee—private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) on Tuesday, 4 February 2020, from 12.30 pm.

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade—Joint Standing Committee—private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1)—

Tuesday, 4 February 2020 from 5.30 pm.

Wednesday, 5 February 2020, from 9.30 am.

Thursday, 6 February 2020, from 9.45 am.

The PRESIDENT (12:05): I remind senators that the question may be put on any proposal at the request of any senator.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Tabling**

The PRESIDENT (12:05): I wish to advise the Senate that I have received a number of letters and messages from presiding officers on behalf of their respective parliaments—in particular, senates and other upper chambers—expressing their sympathies to Australia in relation to the bushfires. I table the letters for the record of the Senate.

**NOTICES**

**Presentation**

Senators Bilyk, Brown, Polley, Urquhart, McKim and Whish-Wilson to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) the devastating impact of the Tasmanian bushfires during the summer period,

(ii) the burning of land and damage to property, and the impact on the livelihoods and communities of Tasmanians and our natural environment including flora and fauna, and

(iii) the extraordinary character, strength and resilience of these communities and emergency service personnel in responding to fires on the East Coast, Central Highlands and Southern Tasmania;

(b) acknowledges the immense risk taken by our heroic firefighting personnel, both paid and voluntary; and

(c) particularly acknowledges the Tasmanian firefighting personnel from the Tasmanian Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timbers Tasmania; and the work undertaken by these personnel to keep Tasmanians safe at home and Australians safe in mainland states.

Senators Green, Watt and Chisholm to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate notes that—

(a) one year ago, flood waters peaked in Townsville in one of the worst natural disasters to have impacted the region;

(b) five people lost their lives due to the flood and 3300 homes were damaged;

(c) more than 30,700 insurance claims have been lodged, with hundreds of people still waiting to move back into their homes;

(d) Emergency Service personnel, Australian Defence Force personnel and volunteers worked tirelessly during the peak of the flood waters and in the rebuild efforts afterwards;

(e) the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) inquiry into northern Australian insurance that found insurance premiums rose by 130% in northern Australia over the past decade, compared to just over 50% in the rest of the country;

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CHAMBER
(f) the ACCC found that the number of homes with no building insurance in Townsville has more than doubled from 9% in 2011 to 20% in 2019;

(g) the ACCC has made 28 recommendations aimed at making insurance in north Queensland fairer, and more transparent; and

(h) the people of Townsville urgently need affordable and fair insurance to ensure they are protected from future weather events.

Senator Carr to move on the next day of sitting:
That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Attorney General, by 10.00 am on 10 February 2020, all unanswered and overdue questions that were taken on notice by the Attorney General's Department in the 2019-20 Supplementary Estimates round.

Senators Kitching and Hanson-Young to move on the next day of sitting:
That the Senate—
(a) notes that:
   (i) the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has covered more than 850 emergency broadcasting events in the 2019-20 reporting period so far,
   (ii) this represents more than double the number of emergency broadcasting events covered by the ABC for all of 2018-19, and triple the year before that,
   (iii) in times of crisis, Australians turn to the national broadcaster for trusted news and information, and
   (iv) the ABC is a lifeline for at-risk and impacted communities, particularly when other lines of communication are affected by extreme weather events; and
(b) expresses its support for the work of the ABC in providing these essential services to all Australians, especially to those in regional areas;
(c) recognises that:
   (i) the whole of agency impact of the unprecedented bushfire season requires a significant commitment from the ABC,
   (ii) the cost of the ABC's emergency broadcasting comes out of its funding, and
   (iii) more frequent and intense climate events mean there will be increasing need for emergency broadcasting by the ABC;
(d) congratulates the ABC on the vital role it plays in the daily life of Australians and in Australia's democracy; and
(e) affirms the indispensable place of the ABC in the fabric of our nation.

Senator Kitching to move on the next day of sitting:
That the following matter be referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 13 August 2020:
Opportunities for strengthening Australia's relations with the Republic of France, with particular reference to:
(a) increasing bilateral trade and investment, including future growth areas for exports and imports, and opportunities in the mining industry;
(b) enhancing political, security and defence cooperation, including through initiatives such as the Joint Statement of Enhanced Strategic Partnership between Australia and France signed in 2017, and the Strategic Partnering Agreement signed in 2018 for the Future Submarine Program;
(c) options for enhancing strategic cooperation, including in the Indo-Pacific region and through multilateral fora;
(d) Australian engagement with intergovernmental organisations headquartered in France including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO);
(e) opportunities to build on shared historical and cultural values and promote tourism, with specific reference to Commonwealth War Graves, cultural exchanges and people-to-people ties; and
(f) any related matters.

Senator Patrick to move on the next day of sitting:
That the Aviation Transport Security Amendment (Security Controlled Airports) Regulations 2019, made under the Aviation Transport Security Act 2004, be disallowed [F2019L01656].

Senator Griff to move on the next day of sitting:
That the Senate—
(a) acknowledges that 27 January 2020, marked the 75th anniversary since the liberation of Auschwitz and is universally acknowledged as the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust;
(b) recognises Auschwitz, the largest concentration and extermination camp during World War II, was a world in which people were robbed of their human dignity;
(c) pays its respects to the more than 1.1 million men, women and children killed at Auschwitz and the 6 million people of Jewish faith killed during the Holocaust;
(d) supports Pope Francis' condemnation of a "barbaric resurgence" of anti-Semitism across the globe, including Australia; and
(e) acknowledges that what happened during the Holocaust should serve as a reminder to all Australians not to be indifferent, to practise acceptance and show compassion for others.

**Senators Griff and Hanson-Young** to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) thanks the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) for its service in delivering vital emergency broadcasts and comprehensive coverage during the catastrophic fires;
(b) acknowledges the dramatic rise in emergency broadcasts - from 256 in 2017-18, to 371 in 2018-19 and 673 already this year, which have been delivered without additional funding to cover the resources which have been poured into the emergency broadcast effort;
(c) recognises that, since Boxing Day, as bushfires raged across Victoria (VIC), New South Wales (NSW) and South Australia, the ABC handled more than 100 emergency broadcasts in a single week, receiving widespread praise for the practical, life-saving information and the professionalism on display;
(d) notes heavy damage sustained to the ABC's radio and TV networks infrastructure during the bushfires, particularly at Bateman's Bay in NSW and East Gippsland in VIC;
(e) commends the ABC for mobilising to restore local radio stations as the priority because of their critical role in providing information to communities during disasters;
(f) acknowledges that the ABC should not be put into a position of having to economise on its emergency broadcasting due to Government funding cuts; and
(g) calls on the Federal Government to reverse the $83.7 million paused indexation funding, as a matter of urgency.

**Senator Griff** to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) acknowledges the sentiment expressed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in her Christmas message 2019, in which she praised new generations "who have brought a sense of purpose to issues such as protecting our environment and climate";
(b) joins with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in praising the efforts of young people across the nation and the globe who are advocating for action on climate change and protecting our increasingly vulnerable environment; and
(c) recognises that, as Australia is on the frontline of the climate crisis, we must also be a world leader in climate action.

**Senator Griff** to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) congratulates all finalists and recipients of the 2020 Australian of the Year awards;
(b) further congratulates eye surgeon and blindness prevention pioneer, Dr James Muecke AM, for being honoured as Australian of the Year for 2020;
(c) recognises Dr Muecke's work on preventing the leading cause of blindness in adults – type 2 diabetes;
(d) notes that:
   (i) type 2 diabetes is a very serious and progressive condition with many serious complications including eye damage and blindness, foot problems and amputations, kidney damage and dialysis, heart attacks, heart failure and strokes,
   (ii) there are now over 1.1 million Australians who have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes,
   (iii) Diabetes Australia estimates there could be another 500,000 Australians with "silent" undiagnosed type 2 diabetes, and
   (iv) there are about 2 million Australians with pre-diabetes and these people are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes;
(e) acknowledges that according to Diabetes Australia there is strong evidence that we can help to prevent type 2 diabetes in up to 60% of cases but we are not doing this in Australia;
(f) calls on the Federal Government to develop a National Prevention Program to meet the goals of the Australian National Diabetes Strategy helping to prevent people developing type 2 diabetes that includes:
   (i) risk assessment to identify people at high risk,
   (ii) evidence-based lifestyle behaviour change programs for those at high risk,
   (iii) whole of community change to promote healthy eating, increased physical activity and healthy weight,
   (iv) public education campaigns, and
(v) public policy initiatives including reducing marketing and promotion of unhealthy food to children, reducing sugary drink consumption, reducing added sugar, fat and salt in the food supply, and reducing the cost of healthy food options for the poor and disadvantaged.

**Senators Bilyk, Brown, Polley and Urquhart** to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate acknowledges and congratulates:

(a) the 46 worthy Tasmanians who were recipients of the 2020 Australia Day honours on 26 January 2020 for their outstanding achievement and services to Tasmania, and Australia more broadly;

(b) Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) recipient: Ms Gillian Margaret Groom;

(c) Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) and the Australian Police Medal (APM) recipient: Commissioner Darren Leigh Hine;

(d) Member of the Order of Australia (AM) and the Public Service Medal (PSM) recipient: Mr Robert Harold Annells;

(e) Member of the Order of Australia (AM) recipients; Mr John Charles Batten, The late Mr Daniel Leo Reardon, Ms Constance Kimberly Seagram and Mr Richard Ashton Warner;

(f) Order of Australia Medal (OAM) recipients; Mr Richard Palmer Bennett, Ms Helen Rosemary Connor-Kendray, Mrs Dallas Antoinette Cooper, Ms Susan Margaret Cure, Ms Glenise Gale, Mr Neil Laurence Hirt, Mr Colin Horace, Mr Gregory Reginald Jackson, Dr Stephen Jeffries King, Dr Thomas William Langston, Dr Robert Lavis, Ms Sarah Jane Lloyd, Mr Peter John McDermott, Dr Jennifer Ann McMahon, Ms Janelle Mary McMillan, Mrs Janette May Miller, Mr James Ingle Nicholson, Mr Ian Mead Paterson, Mr Douglas Alan Renshaw, Dr Kim Frances Rooney, Ms Patricia Noeline Sabine, Mrs Joan Rosemary van Bibra, Mrs Jocelyn Yvonne Watson, Dr John Milton Wettenhall, Mr Paul Clifford Wilson, and Mrs Lexie Eileen Young;

(g) Australian Police Medal (APM) recipients: Detective Senior Constable Sharee Simone Maksimovic and Commander Ian John Whish-Wilson;

(h) Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) recipient: Mr Mark Henry McDermott;

(i) Emergency Services Medal (ESM) recipients: Mr William James Folder, Mr Vincent Holthouse and Mr Neil Geard Van Veldhuizen;

(k) Australian Corrections Medal (ACM) recipient: Ms Elizabeth Moore;

(l) Conspicuous Service Cross (CSC) recipient: Lieutenant Colonel Darryl Robert Bridgeman; and

(m) Conspicuous Service Medal (CSM) recipient: Lieutenant Colonel John Charles Sayers.

**Senators Polley and Marielle Smith** to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) recognises that in Australia:

(i) ovarian cancer is the eighth most common disease, and it is the fifth highest cancer-related death in women,

(ii) ovarian cancer is more common in women aged 50 and over,

(iii) however it is not isolated to women over 50 – ovarian cancer can also affect young women, which is why it is vitally important to raise awareness of the disease in all women and girls, and

(iv) around 1,600 women will be diagnosed with the disease each year, with around 1,047 women dying from the disease;

(b) notes that:

(i) February is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, which aims to ensure the voices of women living with ovarian cancer are heard,

(ii) it is important that more action and awareness is given, so that all women can be educated to know the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer,

(iii) in the past 30 years, other cancers have been able to achieve amazing improvements in awareness, funding and survival rates, and

(iv) this needs to happen for women with ovarian cancer; and

(c) calls on the Australian Government to recognise that more resources are needed to help educate and find a cure for ovarian cancer so we can give hope to women and reduce the number of women who die from this disease.

**Senator Rice** to move on the next day of sitting:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister for Youth and Sport, by no later than 2 pm on 13 February 2020:

(a) all communications from the Australian Sports Commission or Sport Australia to the Prime Minister's office or the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, in relation to the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program;

(b) all communications from the Australian Sports Commission or Sport Australia to the former Minister Sport or their office, regarding the role of the Prime Minister's office in relation to the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program; and
(c) a comprehensive list of all applications for funding under the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program, including the score the applications received, which were assessed by the Australian Sports Commission or Sport Australia as having a score of 74 or above, but which did not receive funding through the program.

Senator Waters and Rice to move on the next day of sitting:
That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Prime Minister, by no later than 2 pm on 13 February 2020:
(a) Any communications, advice or reports from the Prime Minister's Office or the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to the office of the former Minister for Sport in relation to the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program;
(b) the report or advice prepared by the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in relation to the former Minister for Sport's management of the grants program (the 'Gaetjens report');
(c) any communications, advice or reports from the Prime Minister's Office or the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to Sport Australia in relation to the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program; and
(d) any advice received from the Australian Government Solicitor in relation to the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.

Senator Rice to move on 6 February 2020:
That the Senate—
(a) notes that:
(i) sport and physical recreation are essential elements of the culture of many Australians,
(ii) sport and physical recreation are necessary for the maintenance of good mental and physical health and wellbeing,
(iii) participation in sport plays an important role in the development of social, organisational and communication skills,
(iv) community-based sporting clubs and associations are an integral part of our society,
(v) Government has a responsibility to ensure equitable access to affordable sport and physical recreation facilities and services, and
(vi) the integrity of sport should be encouraged by sound and transparent governance structures; and
(b) calls on the Federal Government to provide additional funding of $48.9 million to fund the applications under the Community Sport Infrastructure Program which were recommended by Sports Australia but not approved by the Minister.

Senator Wong to move on the next day of sitting:
That the Senate—
(a) notes:
(i) the death on 2 February 2020 of Mr Mike Moore, the thirty-fourth prime minister of New Zealand, third director-general of the World Trade Organization, and diplomat,
(ii) the significant contribution made by Mr Moore to domestic politics in New Zealand and to the international community,
(iii) that in international trade, both as a minister in New Zealand's Fourth Labour government and subsequently through the World Trade Organization, Mr Moore promoted the development of multilateral trade, including by:
(A) ensuring the majority of the world's population came within the rules-based trading system, and
(B) giving particular attention to helping developing nations participate effectively in the multilateral trading system; and
(iv) that Mr Moore's legacy of public service will continue to guide others for many years to come; and
(b) expresses its sympathy to his widow Yvonne and all those in New Zealand and across the world who are mourning the loss of this eminent statesman. (general business notice of motion no. 381)

Senators Farrell and Rice to move on the next day of sitting:
(1) That a select committee, to be known as the Select Committee on Administration of Sports Grants, be established to inquire into and report on the administration and award of funding under the Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program, with particular reference to:
(a) program design and guidelines;
(b) requirements placed on applicants for funding;
(c) management and assessment processes;
(d) adherence to published assessment processes and program criteria;
(e) the role of the offices of the Minister, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, and any external parties, in determining which grants would be awarded and who would announce the successful grants; and
(f) any related programs or matters.
(2) That the committee present its final report on or before Tuesday 24 March 2020.
(3) That the committee consist of 5 senators, as follows:
(a) 2 nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate;
(b) 2 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate; and
(c) 1 nominated by the Leader of the Australian Greens.

(4) 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; and

(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.

(c) a participating member shall be taken to be a member of a committee for the purpose of forming a quorum of the committee if a majority of members of the committee is not present.

(5) 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.

(6) That the committee elect as chair one of the members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and as deputy chair the member nominated by the Leader of the Australian Greens.

(7) 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.

(8) That, in the event of an equality of voting, 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 consider.

(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 and 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 papers and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public.

Senator Brown to move on the next day of sitting:
That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) that 6 January 2020, was the 45th anniversary of the collision of the ANL vessel Lake Illawarra with the Tasman Bridge, and

(ii) that twelve people lost their lives that day, including seven crew members of the Lake Illawarra and five occupants of the four cars that plunged into the Derwent River following the collision; and

(b) records its thanks to the crew members that lost their lives whilst at work, and sends its condolences to the families and friends of all of those who died as a result of the tragic accident 45 years ago.

Senators Brown and Ciccone to move on the next day of sitting:
That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) the vital role played by Australian coastal shipping and their crews in the provision of relief supplies and emergency evacuation from isolated communities following the bush fires – in particular the emergency assistance provided by the Far Senator, Far Saracen, Kangaroo Island ferries, Eden tugs and the MV Sycamore,

(ii) that the Far Saracen supply vessel, along with its Australian and New Zealand crew, was tasked by the Victorian Government to deliver relief supplies to 4,000 people stranded in Mallacoota – which it undertook 24 hours prior to the arrival of Australian Defence Force (ADF) support and personnel,

(iii) that part of the assistance provided by the Far Saracen was the supply of diesel to power generators and fuel for Country Fire Authority fire trucks,

(iv) the vital role played by the crew and operators of Kangaroo Island ferries in transporting relief supplies, assisting with evacuation and ferrying ADF equipment and personnel assisting with fighting the fires, and

(v) that Eden tugs and their crews provided emergency shelter while moored at Eden Wharf, while pilot boats provided emergency assistance and protection to other vessels throughout the night; and

(b) records its recognition, appreciation and thanks to the crews and operators of all of the civilian vessels that were involved in the emergency relief effort.
**Senator Lambie** to move on the next day of sitting:

(1) That there be laid in the table by the Minister representing the Prime Minister, by no later than 3:30 pm on 6 February 2020, the final report provided by the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Mr Phillip Gaetjens, to the Prime Minister in relation to the application of the Statement of Ministerial Standards to the former Minister for Sport, the Honourable Senator McKenzie's, award of funding under the Community Sport Infrastructure Program.

(2) In the event the Minister fails to table the report, the Senate requires the Minister representing the Prime Minister to attend the Senate either immediately prior to government business being called on, or at 3:00 pm, on 10 February 2020, whichever is earlier, to provide an explanation, of no more than 10 minutes, of the Government's failure to table the report.

(3) Any Senator may move to take note of the explanation required by paragraph (2).

(4) Any motion under paragraph (3) may be debated for no longer than 60 minutes, shall have precedence over all business until determined, and any senator may speak to the motion for not more than 10 minutes.

**Senator Hanson-Young** to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) condemns the Government's continued attack on the arts sector, which contributes $111.7 billion to the Australian economy annually;

(b) calls for the Federal Government to restore funding to the arts, which has been continually devalued and neglected since the Coalition Government was elected in 2013; and

(c) acknowledges the deep and valuable contribution of the arts to the Australian spirit and sense of community, which is in desperate need of repair after this summer of devastating fires.

**Senator Farrell** to move on the next day of sitting:

That:

(1) That there be laid on the table by the Minister for Youth and Sport, by no later than midday on Tuesday 11 February 2020, the spreadsheet colour-coding the over 2,000 grant applications under the Community Sport Infrastructure Program according to the party that held the electorate as referred to in media reports and in the Auditor-General report No.23 of 2019-20.

(2) In the event the Minister fails to table the documents requested in paragraph (1), the Senate requires the Minister for Youth and Sport to attend the Senate at 9.30 am on Wednesday 12 February 2020 to provide an explanation, of no more than 10 minutes, of the Government's failure to table the documents requested in paragraph (1).

(3) Any senator may move to take note of the explanation required by paragraph (2).

(4) Any motion under paragraph (3) shall have precedence over all business until determined, and senators may speak to the motion for not more than 15 minutes.

**Senator Farrell** to move on the next day of sitting:

(1) That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Attorney General, by no later than 12.00 pm on 11 February 2020, advice provided to the Attorney-General, including by the Australian Government Solicitor, in relation to the legal authority of the former Minister for Sport to undertake an approval role for funding decisions under the Community Sport Infrastructure Program.

(2) In the event the Minister fails to table the documents requested in paragraph (1), the Senate requires the Minister representing the Attorney-General, to attend the Senate at 9.30 am on 12 February 2020 to provide an explanation, of no more than 10 minutes, of the Government's failure to table the documents requested in paragraph (1).

(3) Any senator may move to take note of the explanation required by paragraph (2).

(4) Any motion under paragraph (3) shall have precedence over all business until determined, and senators may speak to the motion for not more than 15 minutes.

**Senator Farrell** to move on the next day of sitting:

(1) That there be laid on the table by the Minister for Youth and Sport, by no later than 12.00 pm on 11 February 2020, all communication between the current and former Offices of the Minister for Sport and both the Office of the Prime Minister and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in relation to the three grant rounds under the Community Sport Infrastructure Program.

(2) In the event the Minister fails to table the documents requested in paragraph (1), the Senate requires the Minister for Youth and Sport to attend the Senate at 9:30 am on 12 February 2020 to provide an explanation, of no more than 10 minutes, of the Government's failure to table the documents requested in paragraph (1).

(3) Any senator may move to take note of the explanation required by paragraph (2).

(4) Any motion under paragraph (3) shall have precedence over all business until determined, and senators may speak to the motion for not more than 15 minutes.

**Senator Faruqi** to move on the next day of sitting:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Health, by 12 pm on 11 February 2020, any emails or any other form of written correspondence between the former Minister, Senator McKenzie, or the former Minister's
office, in any of her former capacities, and the Department of Health, or any person working for the Department of Health, concerning either of the following matters surrounding the report 'Economic and social impacts of recreational hunting and shooting', released in September 2019:

(a) the funding of the report; or
(b) the commissioning of the report.

Senator Faruqi to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that in New South Wales (NSW):

(i) the bushfire crisis has wrought havoc and destruction, with the Bush Fire Danger Period starting early and winter fires plaguing the state's north as early as August,

(ii) since last winter, fires have burnt at least 5.5 million hectares,

(iii) 25 people have lost their lives to bushfires and hundreds of homes have been reduced to ash,

(iv) more than 800 million animals, birds and reptiles have been killed, pushing some species to the brink of extinction,

(v) Regional areas and parts of the state dependent on tourism are experiencing devastating economic impacts,

(vi) 74% of people living in NSW have been impacted by the bushfires and smoke in some way, and

(vii) an estimated 2.8 million adults have had smoke-related health impacts, with shops running out of breathing masks and an increase in hospital visits for smoke-related illnesses;

(b) expresses its solidarity with the people of NSW who have been impacted by the worst of the bushfire crisis; and

(c) thanks firefighters and emergency services for their extraordinary courage, resilience and commitment in the face of this unprecedented bushfire season.

Senator Dean Smith to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) acknowledges the following Western Australians who received Australia Day Honours on 26 January, 2020, for their exceptional service to our community:

(i) Officer of the Order of Australia (AO): Emeritus Professor John Bloomfield; Mr Ronald Dullard; Mr Peter Hood; Dr Geoffrey Boughton; Mr Bruce Brown; Mr Lyndon Brown; Mr Shane Colquhoun; Mrs Sara David; Dr Ian Fairnie; Mr Murray Lampard; The late Mr Eric Lumsden; Mr Graham McKenzie-Smith; Ms Patricia Murray; Dr Anthony Mylius; Hon. Fredrick Riebeling; Mr Gary Roberts; Dr Errol Seymour; Mr Keith Slater; Emeritus Professor Vivian Sunderland; Mr Robert Torrance; Mr Daniel Tucker;

(ii) Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM): Mr Glenn Baker; Mrs Jahnna Cedar; Mr James Clarke; Mr Andrew Coad; Mr Lief Cocks; Mr Simon Cubitt; Mr Ivo Davies; Ms Kira Fong; Mrs Eileen Giles; Mrs Pamela Hamence; Mr David Hicks; Mrs Mary Hutton; Mrs Julie Keamy; Mrs Bronwen Keighery; Mr Gregory Keighery; Mr David Kerr; Mr Richard Kidd; Mrs Daliah Moss; Mr Glenn Muskett; Mrs Margaret Owen; Mr Maxwell Page; Ms Patricia Powell; Mrs Donna Prytulak; Mrs Marjorie Quinn; Mrs Joanna Randell; Mr Graeme Robertson; Mr Malcolm Small; Mr Arthur Stanton; Ms Christine Thompson; Mr John Thornton; The Reverend Dr Jennifer Turner; Mr Adam Voges; Mr Michael Zekulich;

(iii) Public Service Medal (PSM): Ms Pauline Bagdonavicius; Mrs Noelene Jennings; Mrs Lee Musumeci;

(iv) Australian Police Medal (APM): Deputy Commissioner Colin Blanch; Superintendent Dario Bolzonella; Senior Constable Michelle Jesney; Sergeant David Johnson;

(v) Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM): Mr Mark Bowan; Dr Neil Burrows; Mr Richard Lawrey;

(vi) Ambulance Service Medal (ASM): Mr Christopher Oakes; Mr David Saunders; Mr Austin Whitehead;

(vii) Emergency Services Medal (ESM): Mr Ronald McPherson;

(viii) Australian Corrections Medal (ACM): Mr Samuel Dinah; Ms Cassandra Gilbert; Mr Benjamin Leadbeatter; Mr Gregory Little; Ms Leith Thomas;

(ix) Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM (M)): Warrant Officer Anthony O'Riley;

(x) Conspicuous Service Cross (CSC): Captain Daniel LeRaye; and

(b) acknowledges that these deserving Western Australians have made a significant contribution to their communities and ultimately Australia.

Senator Watt to move on the next day of sitting:

That the following matter be referred to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee for inquiry and report by the last sitting day in 2021:

Lessons to be learned in relation to the preparation and planning for, response to and recovery efforts following the 2019-20 Australian bushfire season, with particular reference to:
(a) advice provided to the Federal Government, prior to the bushfires, about the level of bushfire risk this fire season, how and why those risks differed from historical norms, and measures that should be taken to reduce that risk in the future;

(b) the respective roles and responsibilities of different levels of government, and agencies within government, in relation to bushfire planning, mitigation, response, and recovery;

(c) the Federal Government's response to recommendations from previous bushfire Royal Commissions and inquiries;

(d) the adequacy of the Federal Government's existing measures and policies to reduce future bushfire risk, including in relation to assessing, mitigating and adapting to expected climate change impacts, land use planning and management, hazard reduction, Indigenous fire practices, support for firefighters and other disaster mitigation measures;

(e) best practice funding models and policy measures to reduce future bushfire risk, both within Australia and internationally;

(f) existing structures, measures and policies implemented by the Federal Government, charities and others to assist communities to recover from the 2019-20 bushfires, including the performance of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency;

(g) the role and process of advising Government and the federal Parliament of scientific advice;

(h) an examination of the physical and mental health impacts of bushfires on the population, and the Federal Government's response to those impacts; and

(i) any related matters.

CONDOLENCES
Australian Bushfires

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance, Leader of the Government in Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (12:05): by leave—I move:

That the Senate:

(a) acknowledges the devastation across our nation occasioned by the bushfire season including the loss of 33 lives, the destruction of over 3,000 homes, the unimaginable loss of so much wildlife and the devastating impact on regional economies across Australia;

(b) extends its deepest sympathies to families who have lost loved ones and to those who have suffered injuries or loss;

(c) places on record its gratitude for the service of David Moresi, Geoffrey Keaton, Andrew O'Dwyer, Samuel McPaul, Bill Slade, Mat Kavanagh, Ian McBeth, Paul Hudson and Rick DeMorgan Jr, firefighters who lost their lives during the fires and extends its deepest condolences to their families;

(d) recognises the contribution of thousands of volunteer and career firefighters and the dedication of emergency services personnel across Australia;

(e) honours the contribution of 6,500 Australian Defence Force personnel, including 3,000 ADF reservists, and the work of Emergency Management Australia throughout the summer;

(f) recognises the generosity of individuals, families, schools, churches and religious groups, service clubs and businesses from across Australia and elsewhere in the world during the evacuations and following the fires;

(g) expresses its gratitude to Australia's friends, allies and neighbours who provided or offered support;

(h) recognises the unceasing efforts and close cooperation between state and local governments, demonstrating the strength of our Federation;

(i) commits itself to learning any lessons from this fire season; and

(j) pledges the full support of the Australian Parliament to assist affected areas to recover and rebuild.

This summer, our great nation has faced unimaginable adversity and trauma. Uncontrollable and devastating bushfires have challenged us to the core, bringing death and destruction to communities around our wide brown land. But through such terrible adversity and trauma we have seen the courage and spirit of the Australian people soar higher than any flames. What we have seen is that when the people of this nation are challenged they rise to that challenge and overcome it. They show the sort of spirit, perseverance, bravery and desire to prevail that defines Australia and all Australians.

This is not the first time, nor will it be the last time, we have faced such challenges. But what we have seen shows that, as a nation, as a people, we will always come together in times of crisis. This nation mourns the loss of 33 people, the destruction of over 3,000 homes and the devastation of wildlife, parts of our environment, and farmlands. Nine brave firefighters made the ultimate sacrifice while battling these blazes. They were loved and admired by those closest to them, their families and friends, and are now revered by an entire nation. Many members of the families of the Australian firefighters who died are in this building today, welcomed by the Prime Minister in the other place. They've been joined by the Ambassador of the United States, Ambassador Culvahouse, representing the three American families who have also lost loved ones.
Geoffrey Keaton and fellow volunteer Andrew O'Dwyer from the Horsley Park brigade died alongside each other fighting the Green Wattle Creek blaze. They were mates and both were also new dads. We lost a husband, father and grandfather, David Moresi, fighting a fire in East Gippsland when the vehicle he was travelling in rolled over. We lost Samuel McPaul, who was just 28 years old and married to Megan for just a year and a half. Megan is expecting their first child. Devoted father of two Mat Kavanagh had been a member of Forest Fire Management Victoria for 10 years and was extinguishing unattended camp fires on the day he died. We also lost Bill Slade, who had been involved in fire management for 40 years. He’d fought Ash Wednesday fires back in 1983. And we honour three American friends who were lost to us when their C-130 Hercules aircraft crashed while defending precious lives and homes. They were: Captain Ian McBeth, First Officer Paul Hudson, and flight engineer Rick A DeMorgan Jr.

The members of all nine families now know that they have been embraced by this nation. We grieve with them and today offer them comfort and support. Some of those family members are just children—too young to understand why their dads have not come home—but we know that one day a young boy or girl will want to know what their father was like. They will come to learn that their dad was among the best of us. They will learn that their dad was willing to put his life on the line and pay the ultimate sacrifice to protect his community. They will learn that their dad was honoured by a grateful nation.

I have been informed that all nine firefighters will be nominated for the National Emergency Medal, and I can confirm that Her Majesty has agreed to amend the criteria for the national medal to be awarded posthumously. The national medal recognises the long and diligent service by members of eligible government and community organisations who risk their lives to protect or assist the community. It is awarded after 15 years of service. The change agreed to by Her Majesty will allow the national medal to be awarded to those who died in service and who would have reached 15 years of service if not for their death. This amendment will be retrospective to the creation of the medal in 1975, meaning that others who have died in service will also be eligible.

As well as the nine firefighters, we also acknowledge and remember the 24 other Australians who were tragically killed during these bushfires. Many of them were killed trying to defend their homes or helping defend their communities. Some were just trapped in the wrong place at the wrong time. They no doubt were loved and cherished by their family and friends and will leave their own legacies within their communities.

The remarkable actions this summer have not, of course, been confined to those who have lost their lives. We have seen courage, vigilance and exemplary service by tens of thousands of firefighters and other volunteers. Ordinary Australians have stood up in the face of adversity and have done extraordinary things. They were joined by over 6½ thousand ADF personnel, including 3,000 reservists, who were called out to assist in difficult and dangerous work. They have all acquitted themselves magnificently, and we can be so proud of their efforts.

People have travelled half the world to help us in our time of need. Offers of support have flown in from around the world—from governments, private organisations and individuals. In total, 70 nations offered us assistance. We have welcomed to our shores over 300 firefighters from the US, Canada and New Zealand. Military assistance was sent from Korea, Singapore, Japan, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. Australians are eternally grateful, but none of us more so than those directly affected. People whose homes are no longer standing have had their spirits lifted and hope restored by the generosity of our global peers: financial aid, firefighting support, defence personnel, aircraft and other specialist equipment. We have received these offers of assistance and more. We owe so much to those who have travelled from afar to help protect our communities, our towns and our people. Additional offers from more of our international partners remain on the table. It has been comforting and reassuring to know we are not alone in this. Our overseas posts are working actively with foreign governments and business organisations to provide them with an accurate picture of the bushfire situation, guiding them on how best they can help.

Support has also come from within our own community. Firefighters travelled from all around our nation, including my home state of Western Australia. Our charities have been overwhelmed by donations—the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, wildlife groups such as WIRES, and so many more. Indeed, Australians have felt the warmth and generosity of so many. It has come from the wealthy, the famous, and big and small business. But, most importantly, generosity has come from everyday Australians—mums and dads and their kids—giving whatever they can to help their fellow Australians in their time of need. That is what our country is all about. And we also know that the people who have been directly affected by this devastating summer of fires need all of us to stand with them for the long haul.

We have a long road ahead of us. The priority across all levels of government in Australia continues to be the emergency response and to ensure the safety of affected communities. The fire season in Australia is still ongoing, and we expect that there will be challenging periods in the coming months. Australia's a resilient country, but the challenge of rebuilding following these fires will be significant. It will take time, and we need the same courage
and spirit we have seen so far to continue into the future. We need Australians and our international friends together on this.

The government has allocated an initial $2 billion under a national bushfire recovery fund to undertake recovery, rebuilding and resilience activities. The fund will be coordinated by the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, which will coordinate a national response to rebuild communities and livelihoods. The money will go to families and their children, small businesses and our tourism sector. It will help primary producers affected by the fires. Funding will drive mental health initiatives and support rural financial counsellors. Local governments and charities will be supported. And programs will be funded to support our wildlife in their recovery from these fires. None of this will be easy, but we will stay the course. We will stand with those who are suffering and help them rebuild their lives and their communities.

We will also heed the lessons from these natural disasters. We know that climate change is making our summers longer, drier and hotter. We know that we have to be better at adapting to this changing climate and become more resilient and responsive to it. Draft terms of reference for a royal commission will be released in coming days. The royal commission will shine a light on what needs to be done to make our country safer and our communities more resilient. We must learn the lessons from these fires. We must do everything in our power to protect ourselves from similar conditions in the future. The best way we can honour and remember the Australians who perished this summer is by heeding those lessons.

As I speak in this place today, fires still burn in various parts of our country. We know that the danger of this summer has not ended, but we know from what we have seen of the Australian spirit so far this summer that those dangers will be confronted with bravery and endeavour. We know that Australians will continue to come together to help each other in their time of need.

Today we come together to mourn, to honour, to remember and to reflect on the devastation this summer has brought to our nation. We embrace those who have lost so much, and we commit ourselves to helping them rebuild their shattered lives and communities. We commit ourselves to honouring the courage and the spirit of the Australian people.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (12:20): Since we last met in this place, our nation and our people have faced and are facing an unprecedented trial. Today, in this national parliament, we acknowledge the dread, devastation and loss of this summer. We honour the courage, humanity and resilience of our fellow Australians. We honour them in the words we say, but, more importantly, we must honour them by our deeds and by our decisions.

What we have been going through as a nation must be a catalyst for doing things differently. Poignantly, as we meet today, and reflect on the catastrophic fires that took lives, destroyed homes, livelihoods and habitats, the nation's capital—where we meet right now—is engulfed in smoke and may yet be further threatened by fire.

I begin by acknowledging the unfathomable loss so many of our fellow Australians have suffered. I want to pay my deepest respects, and I know those of all of us here, for the profound sacrifice of our emergency workers—so many volunteers foregoing their work, putting their lives on the line, day after day, day and night, to protect the families and communities they love. So, to you all, the thanks of a grateful nation.

The numbers are stark and the human toll is crushing. Across the country: 10½ billion hectares burnt; tens of thousands of livestock perished; an estimated one billion animals have been affected, killed by fires, or indirectly by lack of water, food, shelter and related threat of predators; and, as-yet-untold, damage done to our already struggling economy; over 3,000 homes destroyed; and, most tragically, 33 people have lost their lives—25 in New South Wales, five in Victoria, three in South Australia. Three of those who died were volunteer firefighters, and three were the American crew of a Coulson C-130 Hercules large air tanker.

It's difficult to know what to say in response to those facts. We know we can never repay those who gave their lives fighting these fires. We can but honour, we can but mourn, and we can but offer our heartfelt sympathies to all who loved them.

In my home state of South Australia, some 185 houses have been confirmed destroyed this season. The fires have burned through more than 300,000 hectares, businesses have been devastated, extensive road closures remain across Kangaroo Island, and, most tragically, three people have died. Ron Selth was a well-known and much-loved member of the Charleston and greater Adelaide Hills community. They found his body at his Charleston property in the aftermath of the Cudlee Creek bushfire. I know how much he is missed and I know he was a much loved grandfather.

The Lang family lost their father, Dick, and youngest son, Clayton. Dick Lang was an experienced adventurer, tour operator and bush pilot—larger than life. Clayton Lang was one of Adelaide's most respected plastic surgeons. Both were adored by family and admired by their communities. They died on the Playford Highway in
the centre of the island where they had been trying to get to safety. I offer, again, my condolences to all their loved ones.

It was the selfless commitment of our firefighters, our volunteer firefighters, and our emergency personnel, who risked everything, and, in doing so, saved hundreds—perhaps thousands—more lives. Last month, I was privileged to visit the Cudlee Creek CFS brigade at their station—a brigade which, like so many others across our nation, have spent their summer, their holidays, battling blazes for weeks on end. The brigade captain was the first responder and quickly realised the scale of what they were battling. The benefits of investment by state governments in state-of-the-art equipment were clear, their appliances equipped to protect the crew in the event of a burnover, with pumps that can be operated from within the cabin and curtains to protect occupants from the extreme heat of the fire, and oxygen masks to keep the crew breathing as the fire passes. But it's also clear that our volunteers make do with substandard tools and facilities, more generally.

The appliance at Cudlee Creek is too high for the 60-year-old station. They use a broom handle to prop up the garage door to get the truck out. The crew's lounge is a small room fixed to the side of a station that is a shipping container, purchased using funds they raised themselves. The air-conditioner that keeps them cool on the extraordinarily hot days is so loud they have to turn it off when they want to talk to each other. But they didn't complain. In fact, they made it clear they weren't asking for personal financial assistance, but they wanted to be able to do their job. So our selfless volunteers shouldn't have to make do without the tools and facilities they need to keep us safe. As Mr Albanese has said, we must be ready.

We know that bush businesses and producers have been hit hard also by the bushfire crisis. In the Adelaide Hills Jan Siemelink-Allen's Barristers Block winery is just one example. It came close to complete destruction. The cellar-door facilities were saved by a neighbour and the CFS, but pretty much all of the vineyards are gone. Jan, as tough as ever, has vowed to rebuild. And on Kangaroo Island the grief is deep. The time line to recovery will be a long one. The island is home to the world's purest population of Ligurian honey bees, but the trees that feed the bees won't flower for seven years. Tourism infrastructure—recently upgraded through private and government investment—has been destroyed, thousands of livestock gone. It's a small community isolated from the mainland, and the scale of destruction and loss at times must feel insurmountable.

I do want to recognise in this place the great work of my colleague and the state member for Mawson, Leon Bignell. He's been on the island pretty much throughout the bushfire emergency, and he's demonstrated the leadership Australians expect of politicians. He's been on the ground with his community, he's grieved their losses with them and he's gone in and provided practical help—because communities do come together and are coming together and looking out for each other. Kaytee, a bank branch manager on KI, devoted herself to helping not just her customers but anyone on the island needing advice or assistance. Adam, a local businessman in Lobethal, swung into gear at the height of the crisis in the hills and pulled together a team of volunteers to run a relief centre in his town. Maree and Bec at the Kangaroo Island Community Centre are helping out with the daily essentials and providing support, a hug and a chat for locals coming to terms with their loss. And there's the army of volunteers giving a helping hand. There are our many public servants, hardworking, ensuring victims have the services they need, and, of course, our ADF personnel and reservists provide so much support and boots on the ground. We thank them all.

What I saw throughout my state is the grit, resilience, generosity and compassion that is intrinsic to the Australian identity. As the opposition leader remarked, 'In response to the worst of mother nature, we have seen the best of human nature.' Speaking of Mother Nature, we, of course, have to acknowledge the reality of climate change because, if we're going to be honest, we have all seen this coming. In the Senate on 26 November 2009 I said this:

… we are also likely to see an increase in very extreme fire weather days. That is one of the effects of climate change that was documented again by the Bushfire CRC, the Bureau of Meteorology and the CSIRO in 2007, when they said that very extreme fire weather days now occur on average once every two to 11 years at most sites, by 2020 they may occur twice as often and by 2050 they may occur four to five times as often.

You see, we have been warned time and again. But instead of acting responsibly too many have played short-term politics. The price on carbon, which was reducing emissions and driving investment in renewable energy: abolished. Climate Commission: abolished. Funding to prepare Australia to adapt to the climate change we couldn't avoid was cut. As the Climate Council said, 'As a result, Australia's less prepared to cope with the impacts of climate change.'

At times of national crisis, Australians look to their national leaders. They don't expect government to fix everything, but they want government to be informed, to be prepared and to act. Australians expect leaders to have compassion for their struggle and empathy for their losses, and they hope that their leaders stand with them. There has been understandable disappointment with the government's response. Today isn't the right day to deal
with and to chapter and verse all the ways in which Australians feel let down by Mr Morrison, but we know they have been.

What Australians want is real sincere and honest leadership. So I hope that we in this place can all demonstrate the sort of leadership and selflessness we have seen time and again from our emergency services personnel, from our volunteers and from all those who have come together in this tragedy. Today we can acknowledge the heroism and grief of Australians in our words and our contributions, but the truest acknowledgement will be in what we do. The Australian people have once again shown their courage, their integrity and their humanity in this crisis. Let us all show them the same.

**Senator WATERS** (Queensland) (12:31): Our hearts break for the tragedy that our nation has just endured over the summer. This devastating fire season, which started just days out of winter, has demonstrated the reality of the new normal—the climate emergency that Australia is now facing. Summer, which used to be a time of joy and relaxation, has become a time of terror and great loss.

Our deepest and sincerest condolences go to those who have lost their lives and to the loved ones that they've left behind. Our hearts go out to the families of Bob Lindsey and Gwen Hyde, Vivian Chaplain, George Nole, Julie Fletcher, Barry Parsons, Chris Savva, Geoffrey Keaton, Andrew O'Dwyer, Sam McPaul, Robert Salway and Patrick Salway, David Moresi, Mick Roberts, Fred Becker, Mat Kavanagh, Bill Slade, Ron Selth, Dick Lang and Clayton Lang, 10 more people who are yet to be identified and, of course, the three American aerial firefighters, Ian McBeth, Paul Clyde Hudson and Rick A DeMorgan Jr. We offer condolences to everyone who's lost their home, who's lost their business, whose communities have been ravaged over and over again and who continue to carry that mental and emotional devastation as they now try to rebuild their lives. It's right that we recognise them today and that we redouble our efforts to support that community recovery.

The Greens also wish to pay tribute to the phenomenal efforts of our paid and volunteer firefighting and emergency services personnel. They have worked tirelessly for months on end to defend life, property and land, and it is only because of their bravery and courage, showing the best of what Australians can be, that these fires and the results of them have not been much worse. They are heroes. We support the granting of the National Emergency Medal that the Leader of the Government in the Senate has flagged. That is appropriate. More needs to be done to support these heroes.

The best way to pay tribute to those lives that have been lost and to all of that emotional and physical toil and effort of those who have spent their whole summer fighting these fires will be to start in this parliament tomorrow working on a real plan to reduce emissions and to transition to a coal- and gas-free future. These fires were unprecedented, but they weren't unpredicted. Scientists, economists, community leaders and emergency services experts all warned the government of the risks and the need for action many, many months before the crisis began to unfold. This government ignored them and it now offers thoughts and prayers. That is not enough. Communities are anxious and they are angry. They are struggling with what the climate emergency means for them and their future, and they are feeling despair at the government's inaction and lack of compassion.

A survey released today shows the majority of Australians recognise the serious threat climate change poses to their future and they want this government—this parliament—to show leadership. And yet we have government members who don't accept the evidence. It was on TV again last night. I would like to remind the Senate of what the evidence actually is. The first serious fires of this season broke out in September in my home state of Queensland. We've had almost continuous fire warnings since then. That is five months of devastation. The physical toll is great, but the emotional and mental toll is crippling. We've had 33 people killed, and this fire season is not done yet. We've had more than 11 million hectares of our country burnt. We've had more than 3,000 homes destroyed. We've had hundreds of thousands of people evacuated and then re-evacuated. We've had hazardous air quality that has kept people inside and put many vulnerable Australians at risk. Some of us smelled the smoke last night. Canberra has not yet been devastated like other parts of our nation, but we can feel that this is happening. Now is the time to do something about it.

This government wants us to adapt. It wants us to adapt to this being the new normal. Well, we cannot adapt while there are plans to open new coalmines, keep coal-fired power stations open longer and extract more gas. How can that be the government's answer to what this nation has just endured? We cannot protect Australia's communities from more summers like this without serious climate action. Throughout this entire fire season, we Greens have been criticised for raising coal and the role that coal and fossil fuels are playing in making these fires worse. But, if now is not the time to talk about what the emergency service personnel and the climate scientists are saying is making this situation worse, when is going to be the time? If not now, when?

The world's watching, and the community is begging for genuine action from this government. Australians deserve better. This government needs to act on the climate crisis and, if it won't, it needs to get out of the way.
We saw yesterday, in fact, the reason why we won't get real climate action—people in this building are beholden to the donations that they get from big fossil fuel companies. It is very telling that in the lead-up to the election there was $1 million donated to the big parties by big oil, big coal and big gas. That's on top of the $8.2 million they have accepted since 2012. I can see people are feeling a bit uncomfortable about this, but we will continue to raise the fact that democracy has been sold out. That is why we have no climate policy in this country. That is why the country has just endured the most devastating fire season that we have yet seen.

It didn't escape anybody's notice that Adani and their associated boss gave almost a quarter of a million dollars to this government in the year before the election. In fact, an amount was donated to this government just four days before the Minister for the Environment signed off on the final groundwater management plan for Adani, which was needed for it to proceed. A further $100,000 was donated just in the weeks after that decision was made. Santos didn't hedge their bets. They, in fact, made large donations to both sides of politics. And—hey, presto!—now they are going to be the beneficiaries of the Prime Minister's announcement that the government want to push open the gas fields in Narrabri against the very strong community sentiment that they want their land, water and climate protected.

Of course, we know that Clive Palmer wants to open up the Galilee Basin. He made some very generous donations, but he's amidst Woodside, Chevron, the Minerals Council and APIA—and this is on top of the revolving door between ministers' advisers and industry. When politics is run by fossil fuel money, it is not hard to understand the failure to act.

Throughout the summer, the Australian community once again demonstrated their generosity and their strength of spirit. They volunteered. They donated their time and their money to assist affected communities and to support firefighting services. The value of our charity sector and the strength of our community is unparalleled. But should the community really be paying for this? Fossil fuel companies have made a lot of money creating the climate crisis. It is about time they were made to pay to clean it up.

Nobody wants us to have to start every parliamentary session like we're starting today. I hope that the horror of this fire season serves as a turning point, not just for our nation but for this government to actually listen when the community stands up and demands action. We had 23 former fire chiefs begging the government last year for a meeting. They couldn't get one. They were punted about to various other ministers. They were clearly saying that tackling climate change requires rapidly and deeply reducing greenhouse gas pollution here in Australia and around the world. And they said that we've got the solutions at our disposal; we just need the political will to get on with the job. Our party has that will. Our parliament needs that will. And we commit to honouring the memories of those lost in these fires by progressing a green new deal to ensure that we can lead on the climate emergency, that we can listen to First Nations deep wisdom on caring for country, and that we can support communities and provide hope that the future can be better.

**Senator McKenzie** (Victoria—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (12:41): Today I rise on behalf of the National Party to acknowledge the awesome contributions Australians have made in defending lives and livelihoods as this horrific bushfire season continues. Our deepest condolences are to those families who today are without their loved ones as a result of these fires. Thirty-three Australians have tragically died. Others here have spoken of the loss of flora and fauna to our nation.

The loss of life in our rural and regional communities hits home hard. They lost their lives putting themselves on the line to protect others. These men characterise the Australian spirit—loyal, hardworking, courageous; men who, as cattlemen and timber workers, appreciated the harsh environment this fire ravaged. They were good men, protecting their local patch. And all of us sympathise with their families. Over the past month, because these communities are also our communities, National Party MPs and senators have been in these communities, thanking and spending time with volunteers and emergency service personnel, sitting with the families who've lost husbands, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers. In north-east Victoria: Tallangatta, Cudgewa, Corryong, Myrtleford, Walwa. In Adelaide Hills we saw the impact on Woodside, Lenswood and Lobethal. Visiting Batlow, meeting the local IGA owners, Sam and Yin, and learning about that broader impact, I think, that the fire has had tragically had on communities and individuals. In Bega, Bemboka, Cobargo—I think it was probably a very challenging but also uplifting experience to be with the dairy farming family whose father and grandfather had perished. And, instead of being able to grieve, they had to get the cows milked that day. They had to get the fencing done. They were hardworking and generous. And the very heart of the fabric of the Cobargo community are Patrick Salway and his father, Robert. But the uplifting thing about the experience in Cobargo was what a rural community can do when it is so challenged. And, without state or federal governments, this community came together at the local showground and supported each other through a very, very tough time till real support could actually arrive. That generosity of spirit and commitment of the Cobargo locals to help their neighbours was incredibly inspiring.
I just want, I guess, to share an experience of one of these small communities, called Walwa, in the Upper Murray in my home state of Victoria. After the horror of the bushfire proper, Walwa was cut off from the rest of Australia in every single sense—no landline or mobile communications, no electricity, closed roads, no news. They couldn't receive the ABC emergency broadcast. But theirs is a story of resilience which has played out countless times across Australia over the last couple of months. It's a community built tough and practical, so they used old-fashioned UHF radio and word of mouth. They organised daily community meetings at the Walwa pub for updates, and it was a pub with literally no beer because they had no electricity. Towong is a rugged part of the Upper Murray and home to so many small communities, like Walwa, that were cut off and which seek to rebuild.

Rural farmers are also volunteer country firefighters. Like hundreds and hundreds of farmers and small-business operators across Australia, in recent months they've worked hard at preparing their properties and protecting their homes, their sheep and their cattle. Then they pulled on a uniform and worked with their local volunteer fire crew to protect their neighbours' farms and businesses, often returning to devastation at the home front, just like Walwa CFA captain, David Hanna. It is a one-unit brigade. They worked night and day for days and nights on end to protect their town. One tanker was manned by volunteers. Support crews came and went; the Walwa volunteer crew worked on and on. There were homes and lives to protect. The spirit of Australia, exhausted as it was, was there in that little town. So I salute David Hanna and his crew as examples of the brave men and women who worked so hard and saved so many lives and saved so many livelihoods as a result of their work.

We salute our volunteer firefighters and emergency services personnel. We salute the fabulous volunteers across the country for their unwavering commitment to protect their fellow Australians, the Red Cross ladies at the relief centres and the generosity of Australians in the very urgency of that disaster, even today rocking up to do fencing et cetera. We want you to come back. We're not broken. We need you to come back to our communities and help us with the task of rebuilding our economies and our communities.

There will be lessons learned so we can be better prepared and better equipped for the next fire, just as we learned and adapted when bushfires took the lives of 173 Victorians in a few hours on a ferocious Saturday afternoon almost 11 years ago. But, unlike that day in February 2009, these fires were not isolated to a region or a district; these fires were felt the length and breadth of eastern Australia, from Queensland to Tasmania and to South Australia. More than 18 million hectares burned. Here, around Canberra today, the country is still burning. Thousands of homes and buildings have been lost; millions of domestic and wild animals have been lost; businesses have been lost; incomes, livelihoods and lives have been lost. Rebuilding these impacted businesses and communities will take an intentional and coordinated approach. Just like Captain David Hanna and his Walwa crew, Australians are tough and practical. There is a job. Our government stands ready with state governments and local governments to assist those regional communities rebuild.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who've lost loved ones in this tragedy.

Senator GRiff (South Australia) (12:47): I rise to speak in support of this condolence motion honouring the many lives lost over the course of an unprecedented bushfire season—a season that will be remembered as one of the longest, most ferocious and most devastating that Australia has ever endured. As a nation, we are still counting the horrific cost of this bushfire crisis; the human cost, the economic cost and the cost to our environment and our unique landscape. Over 11 million hectares have burned and are still burning. Around a billion native animals have perished and 3,000 homes have been lost, with that number sure to grow as damage assessments continue. There have been devastating impacts to livestock, farming infrastructure and prime agricultural areas across the country. Too many businesses, particularly small businesses—the backbone of our regional communities—have perished in the fires or are very much on the brink. Workers who have lost jobs due to the bushfires and their families are also facing dire circumstances, and they very much need to be properly supported by government.

The scale of this crisis requires not just an adequate response but a response by government that allows workers, businesses and communities to recover with dignity and without unnecessary hurdles placed in their way. To do any less would only compound the trauma and mental anguish that so many are living through. The full cost to our communities won't be known for some time, and there is much rebuilding, regeneration and, ultimately, reckoning to come.

Today we pay our deepest sympathies and mourn the terrible loss of life across Australia. Thirty-three lives have been lost over this catastrophic summer, in tragic circumstances, and many more have suffered terrible injuries from the fires. Almost a third of the people we have lost were volunteer firefighters, protecting vulnerable Australian communities from the onslaught of towering walls of fire. We owe them the deepest debt of gratitude. To all the firefighters and first responders who have worked tirelessly throughout this summer: we thank you. We acknowledge the enormity of what you have had to deal with and will continue to deal with, bearing witness to scenes that can only be described as apocalyptic, long after the fires have been extinguished. While the
devastation is widespread, it could easily have been much worse if it had not been for firefighters' heroic efforts as they battled dangerous and shocking conditions to save homes and lives.

South Australia lost three of its sons in the fires that devastated Kangaroo Island and the Adelaide Hills. Today I want to pay my respects to the Selth and Lang families from my home state of South Australia, who are still coming to terms with the loss of their much-loved family members. Ron Selth died on 20 December, defending his Charleston property in the Adelaide Hills from fires that broke out at Cudlee Creek and quickly spread, in blistering heat and strong winds, to Lobethal, Lenswood, Woodside, Harrogate, Charleston and nearly everything in between. His family have described Mr Selth as a loving, optimistic and generous man who valued his relationships with family and friends more than anything else. Mr Selth built a highly successful engineering business that contributed to the design of thousands of buildings in SA, many in the Adelaide Hills. He leaves behind his partner, Suzy; his children, Johanna, Luke and Jasmine, and their partners, Lachlan, Jo and Scott; and his six grandchildren.

On Kangaroo Island we lost pioneering outback pilot Dick Lang and his son Clayton, who lost their lives helping battle the ferocious bushfire that tore through the west of the island, burning most of the pristine and world-renowned Flinders Chase National Park. It was a fire so ferocious it was described as virtually unstoppable. A well-known adventurer, Dick Lang was a beloved bush pilot—described as a modern-day Indiana Jones—who very much opened the outback to tourism in 1965, with his wife, Helen. Together they started Desert Trek, their weekend, four-wheel-drive safari business, which began with daytrips to the Flinders Ranges and grew to longer trips exploring the notorious Birdsville Track and the Strzelecki Desert. Desert Trek became the biggest four-wheel-drive adventure company in the world, with 10 Land Rovers, a large bus and two aircraft. More successful businesses followed, which saw Dick Lang embarking on tours and safaris around the world, such as his love of adventure, desert landscapes and the uniquely beautiful Aussie outback.

Dick's son Clayton Lang was a leading Adelaide plastic surgeon, specialising in reconstructive hand surgery. The highly respected surgeon worked in both the public and the private sector. Like his father, he lived life to the fullest and was described as having a larger-than-life personality. Dr Lang was a senior staff specialist at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woodville and had a private consultancy. He set up a combined clinic managing advanced melanoma surgeries and trained future plastic surgeons. He still had way more to contribute and will be sorely missed by his colleagues, patients and family. Dr Lang leaves behind his wife, Christie, and two young daughters.

The father and son are described as having Kangaroo Island in their blood. Such was their passion for the island and how entrenched they were in the local community. They died trying to protect the community they loved. We honour these men, pay tribute to them, and pay our sincere respects to their families. We will continue to honour their memories by embracing the community in which they lived and which they very much contributed to, passionately and enthusiastically as they did.

What was once farmland, forest or vineyards is now just charcoal. The swathes of blackened earth are a terrible reminder of catastrophic climatic conditions that have devastated much of Australia. We can help by not turning our backs on the fire-ravaged communities around Australia, and particularly in my home state, in the Adelaide Hills and on Kangaroo Island. Instead, we can turn out in droves to help in the clean-up, to visit and buy their famed produce at the farm gate, cellar door and elsewhere—or at the local supermarket. Each and every one of us can help in the rebuilding of fire-affected towns and communities, even in small ways. With those words, I commend the motion.

Senator REYNOLDS (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (12:55): 'It wasn't a fire. It was a monster, like a tornado.' This is how Tim Salway described the inferno that tore through the family dairy farm near Cobargo in New South Wales. The ferocious bushfire on that New Year's Eve took the lives of his father, Patrick, and his brother Robert. Patrick leaves behind a legacy larger than his life, and his 20 grandchildren will remember his generosity and also his love. Robert leaves behind his pregnant wife, Renee, and their tiny son, Harley. For Tim, Renee, young Harley and thousands of other Australians those fires have changed their life forever. Their memories have been singed with the blaze—their heavy ache of loss, the uncertainty that gnaws through the days and months that will follow, but also the hope that can surprise.

Tim Salway had been trying to convince himself that maybe it wasn't really that bad, but he figured, when the Army turned up to help, it must be pretty darn bad. The massive job of clearing his paddocks, fixing fences, getting equipment running again, finding the strength to face it all was almost impossible to think of and to tackle alone. But when a few soldiers mucked in and gave Tim a hand, they saved the Salways at least a month of work and they gave them the hope that surprises.
Over 6,500 members of our ADF, 3,000 of them reservists, have been working in Australia's fire-torn communities since early September last year, and they've been joined by our outstanding international partners. Seventy nations offered assistance, and over 350 foreign personnel are today still working to rebuild local communities across New South Wales and Victoria, shoulder-to-shoulder with the ADF. Operation Bushfire Assist is the largest ADF mobilisation for domestic disaster relief in our nation's history. Today our ADF are still out there and will be for as long as it takes, supporting the extraordinary work of our emergency services, our volunteers and our recovery teams.

Hundreds of people, many with their beloved pets, relocated to safety. Defence bases opened as temporary accommodation. Tens of thousands of meals were served. Hundreds of tankers of fuel and millions of litres of water were delivered. Thousands of kilometres of roads were cleared. The sheer volume of people and military equipment deployed across the nation says something of the magnitude of Operation Bushfire Assist. But the statistics themselves, as impressive as they are, say little of the humanity involved in every quiet helping hand and the courage, the dignity and the resilience of those whose hands they've held.

Australians elect us in this place to make laws for the common good, to reflect their values, to reflect their aspirations and to take care of the nation when big things happen beyond state and territory borders. A very big thing happened this summer to our nation and, sadly, is still happening, and Australians are looking to all of us—the government and the parliament—to take care of our nation. As Minister for Defence, my finest examples of the care are the efforts of our service men and women through these past months of devastation. It's not just the quantifiable, visible support that has been so evident across the nation; it is also the quiet thousands of random acts of kindness that have brought hope. On Kangaroo Island, Army vets are treating koala burns and Army engineers are rebuilding koala pens, and they are feeding and caring for hundreds of koalas and other native animals.

When the fires were raging on Kangaroo Island, Richard Lang and his son Clayton hooked up their trailer and water tanker and headed out to help whomever they could. When they hit car trouble on the Playford Highway, sadly, their vehicle was overcome by fire. Richard's nephew, Lieutenant Kynan Lang, is an Army Reservist in South Australia. When the call came to serve on Operation Bushfire Assist, he was there in a flash, and he's still there today, carrying on his family's work to get Kangaroo Island thriving once again. All over Australia, we've seen people pitching in, doing whatever they can to protect families, neighbourhoods, streets and their communities. Many of our service personnel themselves have been impacted over the last few months, as have their families. Still they put up their hand and continue to serve other communities. Sometimes, no matter how hard we try, how much we love, the worst still happens. Just when we feel like we have nothing left, Lieutenant Lang turns up to help us all dig deep—to remind us of what matters and what we're capable of together as Australians.

So many of us will recall the footage from Mallacoota that made international headlines, of our Royal Australian Air Force Spartan crews firing through East Gippsland skies that were stained orange and red by the choking clouds of ash, their visibility reduced to almost zero. Despite the conditions and the poor runways, our crews managed to deliver vital supplies to so many small communities that were cut off by fire and to airlift stranded tourists and townsfolk from Mallacoota and Merimbula. For children under five, our crews on the Spartans, Chinooks and Black Hawks found a way to take special care of these children and get them out to safety, reuniting them with their families. The makeshift dog pen in the hold of HMAS Choules is already something of a legend. The Choules evacuated 1,400 people from Mallacoota to Western Port Bay, along with 21 tonnes of supplies and, very importantly, beer for the local pub. MV Sycamore and HMAS Adelaide II, positioned off the coast of Gippsland and the New South Wales South Coast, provided essential support to isolated communities right up and down the South Coast.

Following the fires, the routines of daily life don't just pick back up. Things that would normally be simple become challenging, and things that would normally be challenging can become life-threatening. This was the case for Sarah Tyrrell when she went into labour on Australia Day. For three days following New Year's Eve, the fires had raged around her rural family home in Brogo, New South Wales. The Tyrrells' property had been saved, thanks to the hard work of her husband, armed with a water pump, and some favourable winds. But the roads to their property were badly impacted, and it was clear to our ADF personnel on the ground that they could get to Cobargo a lot faster than an ambulance could from Bega. Without losing a moment, medical staff Corporal Kristie Connell and Private Nicholas Brimmer were called off their task to respond. They took to the winding dirt roads, slicing through the fire-ravaged countryside to the cut-off community of Brogo. When they arrived, troop signaller Private Murray Richey set up satellite communications equipment to ensure contact with incoming medical teams. Before long, Sarah was on her way to Bega hospital in an ambulance, with Corporal Connell and Private Brimmer alongside, assisting the paramedics on their journey. Within minutes of arrival, a healthy baby,
Ivy, was born, oblivious to the drama of her birth and its poignancy and power—in the midst of utter destruction, isolation and grief, came new life and fresh hope.

Today we remember those who sacrificed all. They sacrificed all while protecting life and community in the face of catastrophic fires. We remember their loved ones, who will carry the memories, loss and uncertainty with them through the days, months and years to follow. We dearly hope for them all that hope surprises soon. We acknowledge the skill, the grit and the compassion of our emergency services personnel, our volunteers, the members of the ADF and all of those international friends who so readily came to our aid. I honour and thank all those who have served and suffered and the 33 who made the ultimate sacrifice.

As a parliament, we are here to take care of the nation when big things happen. While so many Australians have been at work for months fighting the fires and salvaging razed communities, our work here is only beginning. There is a great deal more to do over the many years to rebuild lives and livelihoods; to restore health, restore wellbeing and restore hope; and to deal with the realities of our climate and our environment. This is what Australians expect and ask of us all in this place. In conclusion, I thank everybody who has served, suffered and sacrificed.

Senator KENEALLY (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (13:06): In November, this chamber paused to reflect on the destruction caused by the bushfires in my home state of New South Wales. At that time, I noted we were facing the most dangerous bushfire week this nation has ever seen. However, those weren't my words. They were the words of the Commissioner of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service, Shane Fitzsimmons.

In the months since then, there has been no respite as we have endured the most devastating bushfire season this nation has ever seen. The summer months have been relentless for communities across Australia, for fireys, for volunteers and their families and even for our native wildlife. In New South Wales, the fire front has stretched from Timbillica near the Victorian border to Gospers Mountain and Kerry Ridge inland and from the Central Coast to Newcastle.

Every state and territory across Australia has been impacted in some way by this bushfire season. These bushfires have been unprecedented in their scope and destruction, and the images of destruction and suffering will remain etched in our memories forever: the mass evacuation in Mallacoota, the devastation of Kangaroo Island—particularly its koala population—and of course the loss of human life there. Even today, a few kilometres south-west of here, firefighters continue to battle a fire in Namadgi National Park which threatens the suburbs of Canberra.

These events have been traumatic for all Australians both at home and abroad. We have seen pictures of small holiday towns like Lake Conjola in New South Wales being splashed on the front pages of the The New York Times. Thirty-three lives have been lost as a direct result of these fires. Nearly 3,000 homes have been destroyed, more than 11 million hectares have burnt and over a billion animals have perished.

These were not normal bushfires, and we can't pretend that our lives or our world will ever be the same again. This season will be remembered as one of the worst disasters in our nation's history. The effects of these fires will be felt for years, if not decades, by our environment, by our communities and in our economy. And, regrettably, right now, there is no sign of the threat abating.

Through the devastation we continue to hear stories of bravery, generosity and empathy shown by ordinary Australians in extraordinary times. As a nation, we have opened our hearts, our homes and our wallets to support one another. I take solace in the fact that we haven't forgotten who we are as a nation. We have held onto that Australian spirit that's forged by kindness during times of great adversity. That is the definition of mateship.

Our emergency service men and women have now spent months on the frontline. Theirs is an enormous personal sacrifice, and one they have made for the safety and security of their fellow Australians. These fires are indiscriminate. They take life and property without prejudice and they have no respect for state borders. But, through it all, we've even seen people from differing walks of life and with differing faiths and political views be united. I commend former Prime Minister Tony Abbott for his ongoing time on the front line as an RFS volunteer, just as I thank every other Australian who contributed to those efforts over the summer.

As a former premier of New South Wales, I know it is a role in which one will inevitably be faced with fires, floods and drought. In December 2009, just one week after being sworn in as premier, I was inspecting bushfire-ravaged areas near Bathurst. And while I may adamantly disagree with Premier Gladys Berejiklian when it comes to many political issues, through this bushfire season she has shown daily the leadership that the people of New South Wales deserve.
Likewise, I would also like to recognise and thank the RFS commissioner, Shane Fitzsimmons—someone I worked with when I held the role of premier. Shane has demonstrated the clarity and the compassion that the Australian people are looking for during this time of crisis.

I also want to acknowledge my colleagues the members for Macquarie, Gilmore and Eden Monaro. Sue, Fiona and Mike were consistently and daily working with their communities, their electorates, that were significantly and, in many cases, devastatingly impacted by these bushfires.

As we return to parliament today, it's appropriate that we use this time to reflect on the lives that have been lost in this tragedy. Every single one of these 33 individuals who lost their lives leave people behind—parents, partners, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, children and mates; they have lost a great deal. It is important that their names are recorded and their lives are honoured by this Senate: Robert Lindsey, Gwen Hyde, George Nole, Vivian Chaplain, Julie Fletcher, Barry Parson, Chris Savva, Patrick Salway, Robert Salway, Laurie Andrew, David Harrison, Michael Clarke, Ron Selth, Dick Lang, Clayton Lang, David Moreni, Mick Roberts and Fred Becker. There are also six unidentified victims who've perished in these fires. I hope they can be identified quickly so that we can remember them too.

There are six brave and selfless Australian firefighters who we've lost this bushfire season: Andrew O'Dwyer, Geoffrey Keaton, Mat Kavanagh, Bill Slade, Samuel McPaul and Colin Burns. Their bravery and selflessness is beyond description.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the three American firefighters—three men who came from the country of my birth. They've travelled a very long distance to help Australia, and they ended up giving everything for us—Ian McBeth from Montana, Paul Hudson from Arizona and Rick DeMorgan Jr from Florida. They will now forever be remembered for the sacrifice they made for our country.

My deepest condolences are with the families and communities who have been and continue to be affected by this tragedy. I pray for the safety of the firefighters who continue to put themselves in harm's way to protect their fellow Australians, their communities and even their own homes. I urge all Australians to remain vigilant, to cooperate with local authorities and to stay safe. We will recover from this disaster. It will, at times, be painful. It will take time.

As part of our recovery, though, we must acknowledge that our climate is changing. As we speak here today, fires are still burning. The city of Canberra—this parliament building—is filled with smoke. Australians across the country are scared and concerned. They are fearful for what a changing climate means for them, for their children and for their communities. They are worried about the world that we are living in today. They are worried that, in a year's time, we'll be back here in the Senate again, dealing with another devastating bushfire season. We are facing longer and more intense bushfire seasons and more severe weather. We don't want to be back here in a year, in two years, in five years and in 10 years time, still talking about the death and destruction that has been wrought upon us by a changing climate.

Today is about honouring victims. But we don't just honour their lives and their sacrifices with words; we honour them with our actions. As members of the Parliament of Australia, we are elected, we are asked and we are expected by our fellow Australians to respond to their fears, to listen to their concerns, to take action and to show leadership on how we are going to prepare Australia, and the world, to deal with the changing climate. We will need leadership from everyone in this building: leadership to reduce emissions, to prepare for natural disasters and to reduce risks across the environment, the community and our economy. We should do this united as Australians. I hope and I pray that that unity and that commitment to ensuring that this type of tragedy does not become the new norm in Australia will inspire all of us across this parliament to face these questions and these challenges with that Australian spirit of mateship and that it will shine through and live on in our country stronger than before.

Senator McKIM (Tasmania) (13:16): I rise to join all in this place in offering our deepest condolences and sympathies to all of the people who've suffered so grievously because of the terrible bushfires we've seen in our country over the past few months. Our thoughts are with the communities that have been devastated by these fires. Our thoughts are with the families and loved ones of the people who have died in these fires. We offer not only our condolences but, in fact, our genuine hopes that we can rebuild the communities so devastated by these fires, and we stand ready to work with communities who've been impacted to achieve this.

We're in great debt to the courage and bravery of our firefighters—both people who are professional firefighters paid to fight fires and the many thousands of volunteers who gave up their own time, which they could be spending at work or with their families and in their communities, to fight these fires. We genuinely thank you. It is impossible to express accurately the size of our debt to these people. They are genuine heroes, and we profoundly thank them for their sacrifice and for their bravery.
All of us were also no doubt aghast to see not only so many lives lost and so many homes and communities destroyed—33 people dead, people who won't return to the arms of their partners, their children, their parents and their communities, and not just Australian people but also three brave US firefighting personnel who perished as well—but also the death of so many animals: over one billion animals dead according to some estimates. The impact of these fires is almost impossible to comprehend and to come to grips with. But we must try to do that. Every Australian must try to do that. I know every member of this parliament will not only try to do that but do everything we can to ensure that our response as community leaders and political leaders in this country reflects the hopes and desires of the people of Australia.

But words are not enough in response to these fires. Speeches in this place are not enough, in themselves, in response to these fires, because those of us that have followed the climate science know that these fires have been made more likely because of global heating. We know that these fires have been made to burn more fiercely because of global heating, and we know that, as a result, more lives have been placed in danger. Temperature records are crumbling around the world. At the moment, under a business-as-usual scenario, we are heading to about three degrees of global warming, and we are only just over one degree now. Three degrees has us heading towards catastrophe, and we need to make sure we take action according to what the science is telling us.

I know in my home state of Tasmania—and we were affected by fires over the last couple of months, along with many other places around the country—we have seen fires over the last few years where ecosystems that were not fire adapted have burned, and we have also seen ecosystems which the Fire Service believed could not burn go up in flames. Again, like around the world, we have seen our communities threatened. In Tasmania, our beautiful wilderness, precious ecosystems and far, far too many animals have been devastated by fires—again, I say, fires that were made more likely and more dangerous because of the breakdown of our climate.

We all have to understand this is just the beginning. Climate change is a continuum, and the science is telling us the more we emit, the more fires we are going to get, the more fiercely those fires will burn, the more people and animals will die and the more communities will be devastated.

We are at a moment in time when we need to acknowledge that these fires, as devastating and as tragic as they were—and as they still are, as they burn around us today—give us the opportunity to reimagine the way we do business in this country. They give us the opportunity to reimagine the far-too-close links between political parties in this place and big corporations who have business models predicated on digging up and burning fossil fuels and on strip-mining our native forests. We need to take this opportunity to reimagine that relationship. We need to break that nexus between big coal, big oil, big gas and big forestry and the parties in this place who take donations from such corporations, whose business models are predicated on increasing fire risk in our country. Unless those major parties break that nexus, we are staring down the barrel of increased emissions, and increased impacts from fire and flood in Australia.

We have to make sure that we in this place are acting for the greater good, not for the benefit of big polluters. And we need donations law reform urgently so that more of us in this place can act in the public good and more of us in this place can deliver outcomes and policy solutions that are based on what the climate science is telling us. So let's not let the corrupting influence of the big, polluting corporate donors in this place rob us, rob our children and rob our grandchildren of a future. While the words spoken in this place are no doubt well meant and genuinely spoken, the great challenge that we're all collectively facing in this place is to marry up our actions with the words that we are speaking. The Greens don't take these donations, which is one of the reasons that we've been able to develop a clear plan to phase out of coal and to embrace the jobs-rich renewable energy revolution.

The Greens' green new deal is in significant part about pump-priming a genuine, modern manufacturing industry in this country so that our country can take the place we should have in the global debate around our response to the breakdown of our climate. That place should be as a global leader, exporting to the rest of the world our expertise, our skills, clean energy and components that we need to generate genuinely renewable energy. We owe them that, because for so long—for far too long—what we've exported to the rest of the world has been our fossil fuels. So I say to the fossil fuel companies—big oil, big gas and big coal—and I say to those logging companies whose business model relies on strip-mining our native forests: be on notice. We cannot simply keep shuffling down the path of business as usual and lead our people and people everywhere around the world into a climate catastrophe.

We will work to build a coalition, whether it be in this place or whether it be on the streets, in the town halls, and in our community. We want to build a movement—the type of environmental movement that has been warning, as the Greens have, for decades about what we are facing—of environmentalists, working people and young people, whose futures are being stolen from them by the major parties and the big, polluting corporations. We will build a coalition that will change the way we do business in the country. It will be a coalition, a movement, that is built by people who are ready to embrace a clean, green, sustainable future based on respect for
nature and based on respect for our climate. That, of course, means renewable energy. It means advanced manufacturing in this country. It means universal services in this country, so that everyone gets a fair go at the opportunities in life. And it means environmental restoration, where we repair denuded, devastated landscapes with new ecosystems and new habitats for animals. We stand ready to play a leadership role in the building of that movement and its journey into the future.

The impact of these fires is so difficult to comprehend—the lives lost, the ecosystems devastated, the communities destroyed, and the animals, so many of which died in utter agony and so many of which are still starving in our denuded landscapes. We can't let this chance pass us by. We have to do business differently. We need a model of doing business that will respect nature and respect our climate. It's a model that we need to work on together constructively and collaboratively, both in this place and in our communities, to deliver for not only the people of Australia but the people of the world.

Senator MOLAN (New South Wales) (13:31): Madam Acting Deputy President, you may be relieved to know that I will speak to the condolence motion. I won't edge into the politicised climate change debate, and I won't speak about fuel loads or donations. There is another time and place for that, and I look forward to that time and that place.

It's been a summer of tragedy across Australia. The devastating bushfires have taken lives and homes and impacted on the psyche of our country. We've seen an immense outpouring of grief and emotion both in Australia and around the world. Sadly, 33 lives have been lost across Australia as part of this disaster. They include fathers and brothers, military veterans and people who were dedicated to their communities. I would like to especially mention father and son Robert and Patrick Salway, both of Cobargo, who were tragically lost defending their family farm. To Janelle, to Renee and to your families: the loss of both Robert and Patrick must be truly heartbreaking. Our thoughts, prayers and best wishes go to you both now and into the future.

I would like to pay particular tribute to the six firefighters and three aerial firefighters who made the ultimate sacrifice to defend their homes and the lives of others. As an RFS volunteer who has fought these fires, I know the type of people who offer themselves up as firefighters. They are community minded people who want to defend not only their homes but those of their neighbours, friends and communities. They are a selfless group driven by love of others. One such firefighter was Samuel McPaul. Samuel passed away when what has been described as a 'fire tornado' flipped his truck, taking his life and injuring his fellow crew members. To his wife, Megan, who is pregnant with their first child: we think and pray for you both now and into the future.

I would also like to make specific mention of our three American brothers who lost their lives when their aircraft went down near Cooma. As a former aerial firefighter myself, I know how difficult and dangerous this work is. Sadly, they fell fighting for the lives and homes of others half a world away. The captain of the C-130 was Ian H McBeth. Ian had served with the Wyoming Air National Guard and was still serving with the Montana Air National Guard. He was a highly qualified C-130 pilot who had fought fires with the US military as well as with Coulson Aviation. The first officer was Paul Hudson, who lived in Arizona with his wife, Noreen. He was a former pilot in the US Marines who had retired as a lieutenant colonel after more than 20 years service. The flight engineer, Rick DeMorgan Jr, lived in Florida and served in the United States Air Force as an engineer on C-130s. He had more than 4,000 hours as a flight engineer with nearly 2,000 hours in a combat environment. His love of flying was only matched by his love of his children, Lucas and Logan. These three men were dedicated to lives of service to their community, country and planet. Their loss, as well as the loss of our own firefighters, is particularly tragic. To their families, I say: thank you for supporting your sons, husbands and fathers in helping us. Australia will never forget their sacrifice for us.

We must also spare a thought for those firefighters who have been injured on the front lines. We have heard harrowing tales of close escapes from disabled tankers, of near misses and enormous flames. For some days badly damaged fire trucks stood as a warning outside the Queanbeyan fire coordination centre, not far from here. These tragic losses of life and injuries will never be forgotten and nor will this summer. We have seen widespread housing losses across Australia, with homes lost in multiple fires. I can identify with this loss, having lost my house in 1983 to bushfires in the Adelaide Hills. Fortunately, we were interstate at the time so did not experience the added trauma of standing and fighting unsuccessfully in front of a doomed but loved home.

These losses also allow us to reflect on the great acts of service undertaken by our volunteer firefighters, as well as by the Australian Defence Force, in supporting our communities. The firefighters in my shed, Guises Creek, south of the ACT, on the border with New South Wales, may be more urban than rural in many cases, as the majority come from the suburbs of Canberra, but dedicated and skilled firefighters they are—as dedicated as those that stood between their communities and the monster bushfires in places like Queanama and Cobargo. For the last few days ACT firefighters have once again fought for their communities, just as they did in 2003 when fires swept into Canberra taking lives and 500 houses.
The plume of smoke from the Namadgi fires that we have been able to see to the south of this place over the last week is a reminder that, unless we treat our environment with respect, it can reach out and strike us down. It is a reminder that our Indigenous people treated this landscape in a totally different way to the way we now treat it, and there is much that we can learn from them. It's also a reminder that we can mourn for the loss of those that lost their lives, their loved ones. We know what a burnt house or farm or business looks like, but sometimes it's harder to understand the mental health and other costs of the loss of your income—the inevitable result that we see now of these fires, especially for small businesses or farms, or for employees of small businesses and farms.

I know our firefighters, many of whom are volunteers, but as firefighters they are professional. They are led, at the highest level by paid staff who are also professionals of the highest calibre—especially those who are incident controllers and who run our fires, who direct the strategy to save their communities, or at least minimise the losses—and, of course, they are backed by many who do not fight fires, and by their families, who give them up often at critical times.

In recent weeks, the word 'unprecedented' has been regularly used by politicians and commentators. However, to be unprecedented does not mean to be unplanned. It has become apparent that the fire services and our government spent a great deal of time planning for this fire season. In New South Wales it is not too soon to acknowledge that, despite individual tragedy and loss, what has happened over the last few months is a significant, positive event which has lessened the appalling impact of these fires on our communities. While these successes are tempered with the feelings of loss and heartbreak for those families who have lost loved ones and who have lost homes, it is nevertheless a real achievement, even though it is far from over yet. While 3,000 homes have been lost, the New South Wales RFS estimates it has saved over 14,000 homes by their valiant efforts. By comparison, the Californian wildfires in 2018 saw over 18,000 homes lost—a dramatic difference in the impact of wildfires on lives and communities.

We must support those who have had their lives shattered, but it could have been so much worse. So to Commissioner Fitzsimmons and the New South Wales RFS, I thank you for your leadership and your valiant efforts. Although, for historical reasons, I serve as a member of the ACT RFS, I serve beside the New South Wales RFS every deployed day. Of course, the bushfire services in all our states are of high value, because that is what Australians do. We produce such groups and we have produced them for a long time—particularly in the early days.

I want to commend the efforts, particularly, of the Australian Defence Force troops. While travelling on the South Coast I was fortunate to see them in action as they deployed to rebuild their lives and the lives of those impacted by fires all over Australia. They're clearing roads, helping reinstall fences and undertaking dozens of different community tasks to support our communities, as the Minister for Defence has described. The ADF has been involved in these events since September of last year, with numbers that range from 900 to, currently, 6,500.

It was also a pleasure to meet with reservists who are supporting our communities from all over Australia. In one tent at Batemans Bay I met in uniform a schoolteacher, a civil engineer and two university students, each bringing their skills and experience to the mission they were carrying out. They were handing out items donated to evacuees. They not only performed a service necessary until local shops opened but they also gave great confidence to the people, that someone from outside the local community cared. This was very, very important, particularly in the early days.

As someone who has had extensive experience with the ADF and disaster zones, I know only too well the support that our armed forces can bring to disaster relief. Our ADF brings both confidence and unity to our communities. The confidence of seeing our troops in disaster-stricken communities, ready to help locals, provides a much-needed morale boost to areas desperately needing it after disasters. They also bring a sense of unity, of our nation pulling together to help those of us who need it.

While travelling around the South Coast I witnessed a convoy from the 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment of the Army. These were soldiers, from Brisbane, delivering fodder donated from Western Australia, carried in trucks with 11 volunteer drivers—organised by Ingrid Bridges, Joe and Belinda Hall, and Brett Catalano—travelling 4,000 kilometres to Cooma, transhipped to ADF trucks, who then delivered it to Bega and Eden on the New South Wales South Coast. What a great way to show just how our nation can come together to support victims of a disaster.

This unity has also been seen in the charity of Australians not impacted in fire zones. Our community has been incredibly supportive in those areas impacted. Some have been major organisational efforts, like the work of the Business Council of Australia in setting up BizRebuild to support small businesses in impacted areas. Others have
been small but no less important, such as Ryder Grierson, who donated all his pocket money to support victims and got his family to donate its campervan to someone who lost their home in Cobargo. I want to thank all Australians for their generosity in supporting those who have been impacted.

In speaking to this condolence motion I would also like to focus on the impact this has had on my part of the world, in southern New South Wales. Not only have we lost lives but we have communities heartbroken and struggling in the wake of this massive disaster. In the Snowy Mountains we have seen both tourist and forest industries, critical to local communities, suffer significant damage. The Snowy Valleys shire is heavily reliant on forestry manufacturing, and the damage to their economy will not be easily recovered, due to the serious damage to the plantation forests. On the South Coast, from Nowra to Eden, we have seen damage to forestry and tourism as well. Last week I met with locals in Merimbula and they emphasised how damaging these fires were to the South Coast economy. January is the most important month of the year for hotels, restaurants and retail stores in the Bega Valley and through Eurobodalla, and we must continue to support small businesses throughout impacted areas.

Many of these impacts are affecting businesses that, in theory, have been untouched by fire. They haven’t had buildings burnt or people injured. But the lack of trade, the closure of roads—and today the Princes Highway actually opened—and the fear created by the fires have badly impacted economies. Their confidence has been rattled and they need our support to refocus tomorrow. It is not uncommon to meet business owners who have lost 80 per cent of their normal summer holiday turnover, and the summer holidays have now finished. It’s not uncommon for such businesses to rely on this period for most of their annual income, and that has now been lost.

We must understand the mental health implications of such a loss. That mental health impact may manifest itself immediately or might take a long while to come out, and it will be disproportionately impacting on the children.

Last weekend showed the bushfire season is not over. My own home, just south of Canberra, sat very close to the impact zone last Saturday, and we prepared to evacuate. Other areas in the Monaro, including Michelago and Bredbo, saw significant threats. But as the fires pass and our communities begin to recover we must support them to become more resilient and to rebuild in ways which suit their way of life.

Finally, again: thank you to all those who serve on the fire fronts and in support of the families. We as a nation continue to grieve with you and we continue to think of you in our prayers. (Time expired)

Senator WATT (Queensland) (13:46): I rise to support the motion of condolence in relation to the recent bushfire crisis. I speak today both as a senator for Queensland, which has experienced our share of bushfires unusually this season, and as Labor's shadow minister for natural disaster and emergency management. As other speakers have made clear, the length and scale of this bushfire season has been unprecedented. Its impact has been devastating and its effects have been widespread. As Australians, our hearts break for the hardship our mates across the country have had to endure. I would like to join other senators in extending my sincere sympathies to the many who have lost loved ones, homes, farms and livestock due to the terrible bushfires we have seen around most of the country in recent months.

Tragically, 33 people have lost their lives in bushfires this season, including nine firefighters who so bravely put others above themselves. They made the ultimate sacrifice. We owe them so much. Many died helping the communities they loved so dearly, including Victoria’s Bill Slade, who had been a firefighter for 40 years, killed by a falling tree while battling a blaze at Omeo. Father and son Robert and Patrick Salway—Patrick was aged only 29—both died on New Year's Eve protecting their property in Cobargo in New South Wales.

We need to remember that these fires have been going for some time, back into last year, when towns were affected by bushfires as early as September and October. That includes Wytaliba, near Glen Innes in northern New South Wales, which lost two larger-than-life characters when flames swept through in early November. The 85-year-old George Nole was a genius electrician who was so good with circuits he had worked on NASA’s Apollo program. Born in Greece, George moved to Australia after tossing a coin. If it had fallen the other way, he’d have moved to Zimbabwe. Sadly, George's body was found inside a car on the fireground in his town. Nearby, village director and grandmother of six Vivian Chaplain also perished, protecting the home and animals she loved. They are, of course, only some of the tragic stories of people we have lost this fire season. Our sincerest sympathies are with their families, their loved ones and their communities today, as they are with all who have lost loved ones over this summer.

As well as the terrible loss of life, Australians have also lost more than 3,000 homes, and over 11 million hectares has burnt. No doubt those numbers will rise as the scale of the damage continues to be fully realised. There has also been irreparable environmental damage to our native flora and fauna. The country's iconic landscape has been forever changed by the horrific conditions we've seen. Ecology experts estimate that more
than one billion animals perished during the fires. It's a figure that is truly hard to fathom, but we're told it's a conservative number. It could be higher. Of course, despite the massive losses we've seen to date, fires still continue to threaten parts of the country—in fact, including not too far from here, where we stand, today. Today, conditions have eased across southern New South Wales, the ACT and Victoria, but people need to remain vigilant. It's worth remembering that, ordinarily, the fire season would have only just begun in much of the country, so we still need to keep a very close eye on things in coming weeks.

In the past month, I visited a number of places that have been badly affected by bushfires: Kangaroo Island, Shoalhaven and the South Coast of New South Wales, the Blue Mountains, the Sunshine Coast, the Scenic Rim and Central Queensland. With the member for Gilmore, Fiona Phillips, I stood alongside residents at Lake Conjola on the New South Wales South Coast, on the ashly remains of what had been beloved family homes. That's something I'm not going to forget in a hurry: an absolutely idyllic scene of forest and homes overlooking an absolutely gorgeous lake, but everywhere you turned you saw homes decimated. It was truly unforgettable. I can't imagine the terror facing those families that were affected. With the member for Macquarie, Susan Templeman, in the Blue Mountains I saw burnt orchards alongside charred World Heritage listed forests. Around 80 per cent of the iconic Blue Mountains World Heritage area is thought to have been lost in the fires. On Kangaroo Island, in South Australia, where father and son Dick and Clayton Lang lost their lives, I joined state MP Leon Bignell to meet with a community still coming to terms with all that they had lost. They were just beginning the journey to recovery. Last year, in Central Queensland, I joined Mayor Bill Ludwig to hear from community organisations on what they needed to help their communities recover.

Across much of the country, tourist operators watched as their businesses were brought to their knees by holiday cancellations. Cafes and small-business owners, who were looking forward to the busiest time of the year, have been left with empty tables and empty tills. Despite that, you hear amazing stories from some of the businesses that have been affected. On Kangaroo Island, I visited one coffee shop which, despite the fires having a dreadful impact on their own turnover, decided to bring in a program of pay-it-forward coffees, where people who came to their coffee shop could purchase another one for someone else—someone who was in more need than themselves. All of these businesses and all of their workers, many of whom have lost shifts and lost their jobs, will need our support and will need their government's support in the months and years ahead.

I've seen for myself the long road to recovery that many of our fellow Australians face, but what was clear in every place I went was the incredible community spirit and the mateship that is so firmly instilled in our Australian culture. Amid all the heartbreak, we stick together to rebuild. I've lost count of the number of times that I spoke to someone who might have lost a home, whose business might be damaged or who might have lost their job and they told me they were okay and that someone else was doing it much, much worse. I've heard from many locals that they're ready to get back on their land and rebuild once they're given the green light to do so. It's going to take time for these areas to recover physically, emotionally and economically, and we must ensure we do all we can to help them in that recovery.

Amidst the heartbreak, there are so many we need to thank. Thank you to the emergency personnel and the volunteer and career firefighters. The bravery that has been shown by these people, who've put their own lives in danger to protect their fellow Australians, is absolutely extraordinary. Thank you to the Australian Defence Force, including the reservists, who continue to assist with recovery efforts. Thank you also to the community groups and community leaders who have worked tirelessly on the ground in recent months to feed our firefighters, to raise funds for affected communities and to help our wildlife recover. I want to personally thank the Minister for Natural Disaster and Emergency Management, David Littleproud, his staff and officials, Emergency Management Australia and the Department of Home Affairs for their generous willingness to share information with the opposition over this bushfire crisis. The bipartisan approach that they took in that regard enabled the opposition to communicate with affected communities and pass on extremely important information in a timely fashion. So, again, I really recognise the efforts of the minister and his staff.

We continue to face a terrifying situation in much of Australia at the moment, and many have commented that these bushfires are unprecedented in nature—in their scale, their intensity and their timing, and starting earlier and going for longer than anything we've seen before. I spoke twice on the bushfires before the summer break, and, as I mentioned on both occasions, the science is unequivocally telling us that we are likely to see more extreme weather events, whether they be bushfires, floods or cyclones, in future due to climate change. The government's own scientific advisers, the CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology and emergency leaders are all telling us this. This is a serious national threat that we face, and we have known this for some time.

As leaders, we have a responsibility to listen to this advice and to act. Today is not the day for a lengthy critique of the government's policies and actions with regard to the bushfires or climate change. Suffice it to say...
Australia deserves to have a government that can act swiftly and effectively in an emergency, a task we have sadly seen the Morrison government fail to live up to during bushfire planning, response and recovery in recent months.

In speaking with people in fire affected regions, it's clear that what they're most concerned about right now is making sure that the government's recovery effort gets on track and actually gets them the support that they need. Obviously, when we face events of this kind on this scale and frequency during such a long bushfire season, they raise serious questions for this parliament about the impact that climate change is having on our environment and our communities.

The Labor Party has made it clear on a number of occasions that the risk we face to our economy, our environment and our lives is so great that real action is desperately needed on climate change. This is a challenge this parliament and this government cannot ignore any longer. We hope that there is no further loss of life or loss of property as this bushfire season continues, and we will stand beside those communities in their time of need.

Senator PATRICK (South Australia) (13:57): I rise in sombre circumstances to support the motion, to pay tribute to the victims of the bushfires of recent months and to acknowledge the tireless work of the many thousands of firefighters, emergency service personnel, ADF personnel and volunteers who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to protect and support our communities through this terrible fire season.

It has unquestionably been a terrible summer. It's been a fire season that started long before summer began, and it hasn't finished yet, as demonstrated by the fires still burning, by the smoke that shrouded Canberra last night and by the haze that lingers today. Thirty-four people have died—three in my home state of South Australia. Among the dead are nine firefighters: three New South Wales Rural Fire Service volunteers, three aerial tanker crew from the United States, two Forest Fire Management Victoria employees and one employee of the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. All lost their lives in efforts to fight the fires and to protect lives and property. They made the ultimate sacrifice for a community purpose and should be honoured, as foreshadowed by Senator Cormann this afternoon.

Across the country we've seen some 11 million hectares burnt, and nearly 10,000 buildings have been destroyed, including more than 3,000 houses. In my home state of South Australia, the fires began in mid-November with a large bushfire near Port Lincoln on the Eyre Peninsula. That was followed by a large fire on the Yorke Peninsula that threatened Yorketown and Edithburgh. Then we had fires break out near Cudlee Creek in the Mount Lofty Ranges. One person died and more than 70 houses were destroyed, as well as over 400 outbuildings and 200 cars. Then, in early January, fire broke out in the Flinders Chase National Park on Kangaroo Island. By the time that enormous fire was brought under control, nearly half the island was burnt and another two lives were lost.

I might just point out the role of local MPs in responding to the tragedies that have taken place. They have given tirelessly. I know that in Mayo, which was affected by the fires on Kangaroo Island and in the Adelaide Hills, Rebekha Sharkie worked long hours, connecting people to resources and assisting people in difficulties. And I know that other MPs around the country gave their time, to good effect. Overall in South Australia some 300,000 hectares have been scorched and over a thousand buildings destroyed, including 185 homes. The damage to unique ecosystems, to world-class tourism facilities, to critical infrastructure, to homes and to agricultural property has been tremendous.

The economic cost of these fires is yet to be calculated, in terms of destruction, damage and disruption of industries, especially agriculture and tourism. It will most certainly far, far exceed the $4.4 billion cost of the 2009 Black Saturday fires. It cannot be said, however, that there were no warnings about this. Well over a decade ago, in 2008, The Garnaut climate change review noted that, over the previous quarter of a century, there had already been a general increase in the Forest Fire Danger Index across the east and south-east of the country. Drawing on climate change research produced in 2007, the Garnaut report observed that:

Recent projections of fire weather suggest that fire seasons will start earlier, end slightly later, and generally be more intense. This effect increases over time but should be directly observable by 2020.

This trend is indeed directly observable now, and it was clear to many observers through the course of the last year.

As is well known, in April last year a group of 23 former Australian fire service chiefs warned that Australia was not fully prepared for the upcoming fire season. They called on the federal government and opposition to recognise the need for national firefighting assets, including large aircraft, to deal with the scale of the fires. They called on the Prime Minister to meet with former emergency services leaders, who proposed to outline how climate change risks are rapidly escalating. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister declined to meet with the former fire chiefs. The government had no desire to engage on the issue of climate change and the bushfire threat.
Indeed, last year the government, including coalition senators in this chamber, went out of their way to lambaste anyone who linked the bushfire threat—already then a reality—with climate change. Unfortunately, politics, not community safety, was at the forefront of the government's thinking. Although the Australian Defence Force began to provide modest assistance to state and territory authorities as early as September last year, the federal government displayed no sense of urgency about the emerging fire threat. It was in that context that the Prime Minister departed on his overseas holiday. He felt no sense of emergency. Indeed, the government's position on climate change could not admit the possibility of any emergency. This summer was to be business—or rather, holidays—as usual.

Well, it wasn't 'holidays as usual' for many thousands of Australians. In the end, as much of the south coast of New South Wales and eastern Victoria exploded into flames, the Prime Minister was obliged to cut short his holidays and fly home. For that failure of judgement and for his initial performance upon return to Australia, the Prime Minister has already paid a political price. No matter how unfair he thinks it, many Australians have looked at him and found him wanting. Many have judged him to be not up to his job, and that judgement will be hard to shake. And fair enough, because the Prime Minister did fall well short of the national leadership that people were looking for at a time when homes were burning and communities were besieged by flames and smoke.

Since that political leadership debacle, the government has done a lot of good work. The Australian Defence Force was deployed on a large scale, providing much-needed logistical and engineering support for firefighters and isolated communities. The government has kicked in substantial funds for relief and recovery efforts. Major effort has been made by federal agencies to help communities and individuals facing great hardship.

But in the midst of the good work there has also been much politicking as the Prime Minister has laboured hard and rather all too obviously to re-establish the image of leadership and distract from the policy failures that occurred at the start. The Prime Minister was very quick in raising the idea of a federal royal commission. Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia have already initiated their own inquiries with a view to rapidly reviewing data to learn lessons and implement changes before the next fire season. The Prime Minister has now announced that he has written to the states seeking their support for a royal commission to be led by former Chief of the Defence Force Mark Binskin. The federal royal commission may be worthwhile but will also be expensive and time-consuming. There are a number of inquiries that have been conducted into bushfires in Australia—into the tens—where recommendations were largely ignored. What will be important here will be the terms of reference of any royal commission and the need to have recommendations, interim if necessary, released and acted upon prior to the next fire season.

The Prime Minister has also made much of the idea of bringing in legislation to allow the deployment of the ADF in response to national disasters without a request from a state or territory. This may be necessary, but in reality state and territory emergency services will always be the first responders, and any ADF support must be coordinated very closely with them. The fact that the New South Wales Rural Fire Service was not properly informed when the ADF employment announcement was made last month suggests the government needs to work on its internal processes first. The government's proposed amendments to the Defence Act will not properly inform the ADF employment announcement was made last month suggests the government needs to work on its internal processes first. The government's proposed amendments to the Defence Act will need to be examined on the merits, but one does have a sense that this is mainly driven by the Prime Minister playing catch-up politics.

In any case, royal commissions and other inquiries aside, we already know many things that need to be done. In the midst of the current relief and recovery efforts, the fact that many people are being offered the equivalent of the Newstart allowance woefully underestimates the needs of people attempting to rebuild their lives and businesses from scratch. At the very least, the government should be making relief payments equivalent to the national minimum wage—a level of support that would provide much greater assistance to individuals and families and would help support local businesses. I urge the government to consider this.

With regard to the next fire season, there has already been much work and analysis done in relation to the utility of large aerial firefighting assets. There is a very strong argument for the federal government to join with the states and territories in organising national aerial firefighting assets, including large aircraft, being acquired or leased with long-term contracts. Given the clear trend towards longer, drier and hotter fire seasons, this is no longer an ad hoc, seasonal need but a long-term permanent capability requirement.

I also note that the government has had quite a bit to say about hazard reduction burns and the idea that the federal government should somehow play a central role in setting up and presumably enforcing national minimum standards. Fuel build-up and hazard reduction are obvious parts of any discussions about future bushfire management, but that's just one issue. Fire chiefs in New South Wales and Victoria have rightly pointed out that the bigger problem is the extremely dry tinderbox conditions produced by climate change. Just what sort of national standard would be involved is unclear, given the great variability of the Australian landscape, climate and
ecosystems. Moreover, much of the fire and land management expertise is to be found in the state and territory governments, not the Commonwealth.

In any case, one can't but feel that this sudden focus is being run as something of a distraction to cover up the government's continuing reluctance to acknowledge the role of climate change in producing the circumstances of this fire season and future seasons. In this regard, the government would do well to quietly back off on its rigid, ideological position on climate change—something that is now being maintained in defiance of overwhelming evidence.

This week, more than 270 of our best scientists—experts on climate, fire and meteorology—have signed an open letter calling on us, the members of this parliament, to abandon partisan politics and take action on climate change. As University of New South Wales climate scientist Professor Katrin Meissner put it:

The thick, choking smoke haze of this summer is nothing compared to the policy smokescreen that continues in Australia. We need a clear, non-partisan path to reduce Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions in line with what the scientific evidence demands, and the commitment from our leaders to push for meaningful global action to combat climate change. Our scientists have been warning for decades that climate change would worsen Australia's fire risks. These warnings can no longer be ignored. The cost to our communities and our fragile continent and its rare and wonderful wildlife is already too apparent. We are yet to understand the cost of these fires to our economy and our people. We should see these recent terrible fires as a final warning and take action accordingly. Time is up.

**Senator BIRMINGHAM** (South Australia—Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment) (14:10): Ron Selth, Dick Lang and Clayton Lang—three South Australians, contributors to their community and much loved by their families—tragically lost their lives in this year's fire season. Ron Selth, a 69-year-old engineer and a resident of Charlton in the Adelaide Hills, lost his life in the Cudlee Creek bushfire. He's survived by his partner, Suzy; his children, Johanna, Luke and Jasmine; and his six grandchildren. He was described and remembered in the most moving way for his 'incredible hugs', hugs that apparently were so tight and so firm as to squeeze the air out of his loving family—a family that would just wish that they could have one of those hugs yet again.

Dick Lang, 'Desert Dick', was 78, a pilot, a pioneer and an incredible South Australian who opened up so much of Australia, Papua New Guinea and other parts of the world to tourists. He pioneered his work in terms of the establishment of a business, which I hope and trust continues on bearing his name, supporting our great tourism industry and giving South Australians and people from all over Australia and the world the opportunity to enjoy incredible experiences.

Clayton Lang was aged 43. I didn't know Clayton—or Clarrie, as he was known—but I do know many who studied alongside him in medical school and who worked alongside him at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital. They spoke so fondly of Clarrie, who shared the adventure-loving spirit of his father, Dick. He was driven to help others, and his work as a plastic surgeon was dedicated in part to working alongside those treating cancer patients and helping to ensure that especially those facing skin cancer treatment had the support and assistance of world-leading plastic surgery to help them through their journey. I attended Dick and Clarrie's funeral, where Dick's three remaining sons, Justin, Derek and Lachlan, spoke about their father and the little brother they had lost. They, along with Dick's longstanding wife, Helen, and Clarrie's two young daughters, Sophia and Madeline, mourn the loss of two family members—two family members who loved the Kangaroo Island community so much and who fought to save their property and other people's properties as those bushfires raged on Kangaroo Island.

Those three South Australians, tragically, were among 33 people who lost their lives in bushfires this season, including nine firefighters who so bravely served the Australian community. Three were working as United States firefighters, as part of aerial contingents, and volunteered to come to Australia. We acknowledge their particular service and the spirit of mateship in which they as Americans came to help support Australia during this terrible period. More than 3,000 homes have been confirmed as lost across Australia. Eleven million hectares have been burnt, with significant impacts to livestock, to farming, to ecology and to environment.

These bushfires have been troubling and upsetting and have had an impact on us all. As a government, we must act, and are acting, to support our communities and our nation now, and we must continue that effort into the future to help them to rebuild, to help them to recover better and stronger, wherever possible.

As a South Australian senator, I've seen firsthand the impacts of these fires in the Adelaide Hills and on Kangaroo Island—devastating for these communities. I've seen and spoken to some of those firefighters who've given up their time to help and defend homes, to save properties, to save lives; the emergency services; the other volunteers who've helped in the rebuild; and our Defence Force and Defence Force reservists, who have stepped in to open roads, to clear trees, to assist in so many ways that are so valuable to those communities.
It's estimated that more than 300,000 hectares have been burnt across fire grounds in South Australia this season, primarily Kangaroo Island and the Adelaide Hills, but also the Yorke Peninsula and the south-east. Up to 185 houses have been lost, with many other outbuildings, farm machinery and property as part of that. In the Adelaide Hills, numerous properties have been devastated, with fire tearing through vineyards and leaving a trail of destruction, not only to homes but also very much to businesses. On Kangaroo Island, approximately 300 firefighters and other agencies are still on the ground, working alongside many others in the community. There are approximately 60 tankers. Notably, as we focus often on those who've lost life, there are also 22 firefighters who have been injured on Kangaroo Island. There would be many more across the rest of the country who have injuries and wounds that they have sustained, and they, of course, also need the support of communities in their recovery.

The Kangaroo Island community stands out amongst this bushfire season because it is an island community. It's a small community, with incredibly resilient island folk who live there on KI. But they are heavily dependent, almost exclusively dependent, on the tourism industry, agriculture and to some extent the fishing sector. Kangaroo Island is an ecological wonder as well, home to a unique bee population, to a chlamydia-free koala population and to many other species. And I especially acknowledge the work of the many wildlife volunteers, people from the Adelaide Zoo, and other experts who have come to help and assist as part of the wildlife recovery that is a key part of our response to these bushfires.

Despite all that is lost, it is important that we also remember all that remains. In these South Australian communities, the Adelaide Hills, Kangaroo Island, we still have businesses and communities who are strong, who are resilient, and who also have much to offer and enjoy. As tourism minister, I am particularly conscious of this. The perception, whether it's in Australia, about fire-affected communities not being worth visiting now, or internationally, that potentially Australia is not worth visiting now, is an incorrect perception. It's a falsehood spread by misunderstandings, sometimes even by misleading information or maps that have circulated internationally. And it's a falsehood that has the potential to further hurt communities and compound the economic harm to those who are already hurting as a result of these bushfires.

The Adelaide Hills is a much-loved tourism destination. The region welcomed 210,000 overnight visitors from Australia and the rest of the world in 2018-19, and, due to its proximity and ease of access from Adelaide, around 1.3 million domestic daytrippers. Thankfully, people have been going back to support the Hills community. The recent Crush Festival over the long weekend saw tourists come and visit many businesses, as they have been, such as Barristers Block, which Senator Wong spoke of—and, in fact, which we bumped into one another at as we were both engaged in visiting and talking to local Adelaide Hills businesses. Jan from Barristers Block makes a great drop, which I and many others have bought to share with friends and family.

I know people who have similarly been supporting fire-affected wineries in the Adelaide Hills. I would also note and encourage that, when doing so, people should remember that those who were not burnt also face consequences and impacts, and to spread that support as far and wide as they possibly can, in terms of those communities—grapegrowers like Simon Tolley, in the Adelaide Hills, who lost much of his vineyard but is showing resilience by replacing some of the less profitable varieties of wine with alternative varieties that better meet his business planning. People are moving on and getting on, as they should, with the support there to help them do so.

Perhaps most visibly I recall, in visiting those Adelaide Hills vineyards, fire-affected vines that had been cut off, at ankle height, right across the vineyard—a devastating sight to see—but then, only a couple of weeks after the fires, poking out of those little stumps sitting in the ground were the green shoots of regrowth and regeneration. It was an indication that the vines will grow back, just as the communities will rebuild.

I was there on Kangaroo Island, a community that has had some 186,000 overnight visitors, when the first cruise ship arrived after the bushfire—such an incredible symbol for that community. It is crucial to remember that, for the loss and devastation on KI, more than 90 per cent of accommodation beds still remain there. Yes, iconic tourism properties were lost. Yes, much land was burned. But, equally, businesses go on. They need people to support them. I can say that incredible, amazing environmental destinations on KI are still there to be seen, completely untouched by fire. This is before, of course, we reach the latter parts of this year and start to see, after winter rains, the incredible recovery that will come in the many wildlife areas of the Kangaroo Island community.

It's critical, despite all that is lost, that we remember what remains and work to support those communities in what remains. It's not just the fires in my home state of South Australia but across New South Wales and Victoria, in particular, and Queensland earlier in this fire season, and WA and Tasmania. They all have impacts on communities. In New South Wales and Victoria it has been long and devastating for many communities. Businesses on the South Coast of New South Wales that I visited, classically, like so many coastal communities around Australia, have an influx of city folk over the summer period. They tell me that 60 per cent, and 70 per
cent in cases, of their annual revenue comes from a six-week period. For most of that six-week period they have been empty, as people were evacuated, roads were closed and people were urged to stay away. Yet for many of these same businesses, and right across Australia's tourism industry, people have stepped up. Airlines have transported volunteer firefighters, in cases, for free. Accommodation has been offered. Coffees have been given. Meals have been made. People who have lost have been generous in their giving. That is so crucial, in acknowledging the fact that Australians have stepped forward with their very best.

Government has sought to step forward as well with its $2 billion recovery package, with support for farms, for small businesses, for mental health, for wildlife recovery and—yes, in my portfolio area—for our tourism industry. The $76 million package that we have brought forward of initial investment in our tourism industry is even more important than it was when we envisaged it just a couple of weeks ago, as our tourism sector now faces the additional hit of the coronavirus and associated downturn in global travel and, in particular, travel from China. We will stand with the industry and help it through this tough time. I have confidence that just as our industries rebounded in the past, just as other nations have rebounded from natural and other disasters, we will do so here in Australia once again.

I know that this summer has focused attention on many policy questions around land management, climate change, firefighting capabilities and planning decisions. This is the place to debate many of these issues. But today's motion is not the time to do so. I trust the reviews that will occur will rightly consider questions of how we adapt to a changing climate, how we build better resilience for the changes that are already occurring and how we minimise those future changes. I acknowledge the crucial role Australia has to play in reducing our emissions as quickly as we can as part of a consolidated global effort of emissions reduction, but also that we must continue to do so in ways that protect Australian jobs and ensure the transition of the Australian economy to that lower emissions future.

This has been a tough experience for many Australians. It's shown the best of the Australian spirit in many ways. We've banded together; we've donated time, money, food or support; and we are a resilient nation made up of many resilient communities. Those communities, I am confident, will get through this, will come out stronger than even before and should have the confidence that not only the government but, I know, everyone in this parliament stands with them in support of them as they rebuild.

Senator CICCONE (Victoria) (14:25): I too join my Senate colleagues and colleagues in the other place in offering my condolences to every Australian who has been impacted by the bushfires in recent months. This morning, I attended the ecumenical service to commemorate the commencement of parliament for the year 2020, and we prayed for those grieving loved ones and those whose lives have been turned upside down. To those who have lost their homes, their livelihoods, their businesses and their possessions: I am deeply sad that you have been forced to live through this awful experience and I do hope that your recovery is swift.

Watching the devastation sweep through across the southern and eastern parts of Australia and hearing the stories of terror from those who have experienced the raging flames firsthand has been nothing short of heartbreak. For many weeks, our news has been filled with horrifying descriptions of the fires. On Monday 30 December in East Gippsland, locals stopped to take pictures of a tower of smoke rising 12 kilometres into the sky—a black, acrid bloom that had the power to generate its own weather system. The next day, a ferocious blaze whipped through Mallacoota on Victoria's eastern coast. One eyewitness account described 30-metre flames. There were sounds of explosions. Homes were alight. Flaming red skies were followed by the dark of night in the middle of the day. Families were taking shelter—eyes stinging, throats burning. It was a struggle simply to breathe.

When those who had evacuated eventually returned, they found that their windows had melted and formed hardened puddles of glass, cutlery had been welded together and garden rocks had split from the heat. One television news report showed a silvery snake of aluminium and steel that had made its way from a vehicle parked metres away and was dripping down the side of a gentle slope and re-forming as a shiny, hard trickle.

We have heard the disturbing reports of wildlife loss—millions upon millions of helpless animals unable to flee their habitats fast enough to escape the flames. There have been koalas so desperately thirsty that these shy and sleepy creatures were willingly drinking from human hands. But our news reports have also been filled with remarkable stories of the human spirit, of the Australian spirit.

The staff of our emergency services continue to inspire us with their bravery and fortitude. They have been joined in their work to make the community as safe as possible by thousands of volunteer firefighters. They have been battling bushfires for months now in Victoria, over the border in New South Wales and in South Australia. I recognise them for their extraordinary service.
Community organisations—such as Lions, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Rotary and countless others—have established and staffed evacuation and relief centres. I want to recognise and thank every single volunteer who has made a contribution. But there are a number of remarkable stories that have not made it into the news quite so widely, and I'd like to share a few of them today. Very early on in January, a group of former service men and women from the Hawthorn Returned Services League and a handful of other sub-branches formed Operation Veteran Assist, a community based and veteran led response to the bushfire crisis. They commenced work in Gippsland in my home state of Victoria. It was born out of an email sent on New Year's Day from a veteran to a few mates saying, 'We have to do something.' Seven days later, Operation Veteran Assist was ready to go, with gear and personnel. By the 11th day of January, 125 veterans were in Bruthen and helping to clear the properties of fellow veterans who had lost everything in the bushfires.

During their work the volunteers in the operation assisted serving Defence Force personnel, helping the Royal Australian Navy conduct evacuations, the Royal Australian Air Force to get much-needed supplies to bushfire affected communities and the Australian Army with a range of tasks that it had been undertaking in Gippsland. They helped a local brewery to clean up and get back in production. They assisted a dairy farmer, felling trees and clearing up around his land. In one case a team from the operation helped a CFA volunteer firefighter who'd lost his home, clearing up his property.

Although they came from as far afield as Darwin, Cairns and Tamworth, these veterans and community volunteers were not paid. They were often not supplied with food or equipment. Mostly, they brought their own. They got stuck into work using their own resources, finding their own meals and sleeping arrangements and paying for their own fuel, water and even toilet paper in some instances. Donations from the RSL Victoria and others helped make their work possible. On social media, countless individuals shared their experience with the team, it having delivered 4,000 litres of water, 1,000 litres of diesel and a load of livestock feed to the communities past Bairnsdale. One individual summed up this Australian spirit. He said: 'We can do a lot of good for our mates and locals who are just as affected. Roll up your sleeves, lads, and let's get a little dirt under our fingernails to help this community out.'

It really is true that from little things big things grow. From one veteran to hundreds of volunteers on the ground, Operation Veteran Assist really did grow into a remarkable veteran led community organisation in a matter of days. I'm honoured to place on the record of the Australian Senate my grateful thanks to this organisation and the many volunteers and veterans who made this program possible. In particular, special acknowledgement must go to Operation Veteran Assist's leader and organiser, Dave Petersen, for initiating the program and to Hawthorn RSL, led by their president, Lucas Moon, for supporting Dave and his team.

As we all know, the Defence Force was deployed to Mallacoota to assist those who were unable to evacuate before the first fires hit. Those personnel did a fine job and should be acknowledged for their calm and well-coordinated evacuation of Mallacoota and its residents. However, what is not known is the role that the merchant seafarers played in assisting the people of Mallacoota prior to the arrival of Defence assets. Australian and New Zealander seafarers on the merchant ship Far Saracen were the first to arrive in Mallacoota. They went out of their way to provide support to the local police and to the community. Importantly, with them they also brought many supplies. The diesel they delivered helped power generators and kept CFA trucks and vehicles moving. The food and water that they delivered was received by the crowd of people stranded on the beach, taking shelter under woollen blankets to protect them from embers and wondering where their next meal would be coming from.

The merchant seafarers, along with the civilian seafarers onboard the Navy training vessel MV Sycamore, supply ship Far Senator and numerous others, deserve formal recognition for the role that they played in assisting a community of people who were stranded, cut off from the rest of the country and in urgent need of relief. Australian seafarers delivered 17 tonnes of water in just three hours, one pallet at a time—an absolutely extraordinary effort. They join a long and distinguished line of seafarers who have made significant contributions to our nation in times of war, peace and crisis.

I also want to place on the record my thanks to the many timber workers in Victoria who have helped to combat fires in a very practical way. They've put their lives on the line to support firefighters in country Victoria. Timber workers have been out there with their tractors and equipment clearing containment lines in shockingly dangerous conditions, surrounded by thick, black smoke and smouldering trees still glowing red from the recent fires. In the aftermath, these timber workers have again used their equipment and expertise to professionally remove dangerous trees and items to make sure that local residents can be safe in their communities and homes. The Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning sent these workers from Morwell to Tallangatta to help open up local roads—a potentially dangerous project, given the steep country, that could last several months, not to mention the amount of trees that have fallen on many of these roads. And some of them have even been delivering food and feed to many farmers and stock in East Gippsland, giving up time with their families to...
do so. It is right that this Senate recognise and thank these workers for the contributions that they are making to the firefighting and recovery effort in Victoria. They have supported us, so we should support them.

I am pleased to see that the Commonwealth government has established a royal commission into the bushfires in Australia. It is clear to me and many others in this place that there are significant issues in both addressing and preventing disastrous bushfire events like what we have seen in recent months. It is deeply concerning to look back and know that dozens of experienced fire experts have been trying to share their knowledge and warnings. It may be that now is the time for our government to consider formalising the processes and many arrangements around disasters to ensure that communities can continue to rely on their governments at both a federal and state level, as well as local, so that they are able to have that comfort knowing that all levels of government are working together in times of crisis.

Our community requires strong national coordination around disasters. For example, national coordination could involve establishing one national fire map. This season, many Australians, especially those travelling interstate or living near a state border, as was the case with many of my friends, have had to rely on separate state maps or apps with different symbols and warnings to indicate the level of danger near them. A national map would provide a single source of reliable, up-to-date and easily understood information when people need it most. Fires don't discriminate between state borders.

We also need strong action on the environment. Experts have made it very clear that changes in the environment are a major contributing factor to bushfires, and I expect that the royal commission will look carefully at this matter.

Before I finish, I'd like to quickly commend the work of Destination Gippsland, who have quickly shifted into gear and are running a fantastic Visit Gippsland campaign. The east of Victoria is one of the most beautiful parts of Australia, but the local economies of Gippsland heavily rely on tourism to survive. Part of the bushfire recovery effort will be supporting the many wonderful local businesses, cafes, wineries, tour operators, hotels and local guides, and they definitely do need many people to come and visit. So please donate to the recovery effort and, the next time you have a chance in Melbourne or Victoria, take a drive out to Gippsland and do your bit to help local communities recover.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia) (14:40): I, too, rise to contribute to this motion of condolence for those who have lost their lives and been affected by the bushfires. My deepest sympathies go out to those who have lost loved ones. I express my extreme grief and distress at the loss of 33 lives. My condolences to the friends and communities and, most importantly, families of those who have lost loved ones. I express my deep distress, grief and sympathies to those who have lost homes and livelihoods, and for the billion animals that are estimated to have been lost, for the extinctions that we know will have occurred and for the habitats that have been lost, many of which will take literally decades to recover, if they ever do.

A national survey undertaken by The Australia Institute found that 57 per cent of Australians had experienced a direct impact from bushfires or from smoke. But I think probably nearly every Australian will know somebody who has been affected by the bushfires or by the smoke. They'll know people whose houses were threatened. They will know, or their families will know, some of those who have lost their lives. They will know of people who have been evacuated. A former senator from this place—from watching him on Instagram—has evacuated seven times on the South Coast of New South Wales. I know there will be many others who have done the same thing. So I think it's fair to say that every Australian has been affected by this bushfire crisis and its impacts.

This summer we have all watched in horror at the scale and the ferocity of Australia's unprecedented bushfire crisis, but we cannot say that it is unexpected, because it had been clearly articulated what would happen with a warming climate. As someone who has been campaigning on the issue of climate change and its impacts for literally over 30 years, I feel profound grief for the loss that has occurred—the human loss and the natural environment loss—and for the fact that action wasn't taken earlier, that there was a failure on behalf of governments to listen to the wealth of evidence that pointed to the impacts that climate change would have. As has already been articulated in this place, these impacts were foreseen. They were predicted. The work was done, and it was ignored. I feel a deep sense of grief over the fact that we couldn't convince those who held the power to make the decisions that were necessary.

I fear still for the debate when I hear some people say, 'Oh, well, maybe we got it wrong, but we can't do anything about it now; it's too late.' It's not too late. It's not too late to stop further warming of this planet. I, my colleagues and many other people, including those who are currently on the lawns of Parliament House, in front of this place, are saying, 'We expect better and we'll continue to campaign and take action.' Conversations are happening around this country about the lack of action and the need for urgent action. We pay great disrespect to those who have lost their lives and to the thousands and thousands of professional firefighters, volunteer...
firefighters and all those other volunteers who are supporting those who have been affected by these bushfires. We pay them great disrespect if we don’t see this as the most massive call to action.

Australia will continue to face climatic conditions that we have never experienced before, including bushfires that are exacerbated by drought, high temperatures and longer summers. We’ve had to invent new colours for temperatures on our weather maps. Even through this summer, in my home state of Western Australia, it is getting hotter and hotter—as it is for the rest of the country, but particularly in WA. We still have the rest of summer and the beginning of autumn to go.

For decades we’ve been hearing from academics and experts on the ground about the impacts of climate change. Just this week, over 270 scientists who are experts in climate, fire and meteorology wrote an open letter to Australia’s leaders, calling for them to abandon partisan politics and take urgent action on climate change. The scientists warned us that extreme events such as bushfires will only grow worse in the future without genuine action to reduce global emissions and greenhouse gases. They are calling for us to take action here so we do not see further warming of this planet. Scientists and academics have been warning us for decades that climate change will worsen Australia’s fire risk, and the people on the ground know this.

Yet for decades governments of this country—and, to be fair, others around the planet—have flat-out ignored the evidence about climate change. They have been missing in action. They have been in denial. They have been affected by profit-focused major corporations, mining companies, to ignore the signs and not take action. This absolute tragedy of this summer’s bushfire crisis must mark a change in the approach. We must ensure that we take real action to prevent such loss and devastation from occurring again.

There is enough evidence to see we have a serious problem that requires urgent changes to be made. While the Prime Minister focuses on adaptation and new gas deals with the states, we know that adaptation won’t be a viable option in the future without stronger action. Climate change is here. It has been for a long time. First responders know this. People on the ground know this. Firefighters know this. They’ve been trying to tell this place that we need to take action.

If we mean the words that we have spoken in this place today and the many words that have been spoken about the bushfires outside this place, if we are to truly honour the sacrifices that have been made, we must act. We cannot throw up our hands and say, ‘It is too late.’ It is not. We’ve seen the consequences if we don’t take action. Now’s our chance to listen to the evidence, to listen to the science and to make sure that our policies are based on evidence.

Part of that means we need to also be looking at what works for recovery of the country, and part of that is that, very importantly, we also need to be listening to First Nations peoples, who have been managing this land for eons and who recently have been saying very strongly, as they have been saying for a long time, that there needs to be better land management and that they want to be able to do it. They want to be able to go back to their land management practices and manage the land. But they particularly feel a deep sense of sorrow because of the damage that has been done to the land, and we need to make sure that First Nations peoples have a fundamental role in the recovery process and the ongoing management into the future.

I want to touch very briefly on the supports that people are receiving. I am sure others have had similar contacts from people who are deeply concerned about the adequacy of disaster payments—both the recovery allowances and the recovery payment. We support ACIOSS’s call to increase those payments significantly. We Greens have been thinking about this issue for an extremely long time. We know that we need to develop meaningful climate policy that will address the issues that we are talking about today. We know that we need to keep coal, oil and gas in the ground once and for all. We know that gas is not our saviour, as some would have you believe. We need to take real action to prevent such loss and devastation from occurring again.

We Greens have a staged plan to ensure that no workers or families are left behind in the necessary transition from coal, gas and oil. Communities need to be resourced to deliver plans, with a Commonwealth guarantee of adequate funding for reskilling, income security and encouraging new industries. We’re not pretending this is easy, but, as a community, we can achieve the change that is necessary so we don’t have to continue standing up in this place and having these motions of condolence—because, if we don’t take action, that’s where we’re going to end up, and we’ll all say the same words over again. We really need to honour those who lost their lives or their livelihoods or who have had significant impact on their community by working to achieve the change that is necessary.

I feel a deep sense of grief having to stand up here, knowing very well that people knew what could happen. We were told, and it happened anyway. Let’s not repeat that history. Let’s together make a new future that addresses these issues.
Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory—Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters) (14:53): I want to lend my voice to this motion to send our condolences—in particular to those who have lost loved ones, to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf, to those who have lost homes and livelihoods and to all of those who have put their lives on the line in order to protect their communities, and our communities, right around large chunks of our nation over this devastating summer.

It has been an incredibly trying few months for people all over Australia. The scale of what has occurred is, of course, difficult for us to imagine. There's no cameraman good enough or newspaper report vivid enough to really capture the harrowing experience of so many people right around the country. From Kangaroo Island to Nymboida, Mallacoota, Moruya, Yeppoon, Malua Bay, Mogo and Mount Cotton, towns have been devastated right across our vast nation. Even now, as I rise to speak, fires still burn across New South Wales and right here in the ACT, not very far from our southern suburbs, which many of us who live in Canberra are particularly conscious of right now. Over a normal summer it's often said that you will find more Canberrans down at the New South Wales South Coast than you will find in Canberra. It's an extension of us and a second home for many Canberrans. We have deep community ties to the area. Unfortunately, this summer was very different, as our South Coast was particularly hard hit by those devastating fires. It has been heartbreaking for people all around the country, but also for many of us here in Canberra, to see the scale of destruction of an area loved by so many of us. For me, the South Coast is one of the most beautiful parts of our nation, and if you go down there, as I did recently, subsequent to the fires, they have some of the most beautiful beaches, I think, in the world. One of the things that makes them so beautiful is that you are surrounded by nature. If you go down to places like Rosedale, Lilli Pilli, Durras, Merry Beach, Pretty Beach, Pebbly Beach, Broulee and so many others, it is the stark beauty that makes so many Australians so fond of this part of the world. Of course, when I had the opportunity to visit recently, I saw some of the devastation that had come through in some of those areas, and often in quite random ways. We saw it in touring places like Malua Bay, where there had been a significant amount of devastation and we'd seen homes lost and the bowling club lost, in places like Rosedale, and it was well documented in places like Mogo, not far away. So it does bring home the devastation, not just on the South Coast, unfortunately, but also in many other parts of the country.

Nationwide, we've seen the loss of more than 3,000 houses and nearly 7,000 outbuildings, and more than 11 million hectares burnt. We've also, tragically, seen the loss of 33 lives, including nine firefighters, three of whom were from the United States, who volunteered to come here and help us in any way they could. So, to all of these people, of course, our thoughts and our prayers are with your families and your loved ones today, tomorrow and in the tough times ahead.

The fire season, of course, is not over. As I said, there are still many active fires around the country, and many towns are on high alert, should the weather change again or the fires flare up again. Over the weekend, we saw some pretty challenging fire conditions here in the ACT. The Orroral Valley fire, just a few short kilometres from where we are now, has grown to more than 63,000 hectares in the ACT—that's over a quarter of the ACT's landmass—with another 10,000 hectares from fires just over the border. Predicted fire spread maps released late last week showed that, based on conditions at that time, we could've seen this fire hitting the southern suburbs of Tuggeranong over the weekend. Thankfully, that did not come to pass, of course because of the heroic efforts of many of our firefighters and emergency services personnel, and some favourable winds. But the threat is still very real and it has not gone away. These fires to the south of Canberra, just like those all around the country, may burn for a long time. It may take some significant rain, some of which is forecast later on this week, and we are very hopeful that that will significantly slow or indeed put out the fires. But those of us in Canberra have seen, unfortunately, devastating fire conditions in the past. Many of us remember 2003, when day turned to night, on 18 January. I remember it well. We lost four lives in Canberra and almost 500 homes as a devastating fire came through our region.

While on the issue in the ACT, I did want to take a moment to just congratulate and commend Georgeina Whelan, the ACT emergency services commissioner. I think at a time when many Canberrans are being reminded of the real fear and grief they faced during the 2003 bushfires, the commissioner has been a constant, calm and reassuring presence. During the peak of the Orroral Valley fire activity last week, it was reported that the commissioner had her own son rushed to hospital after he experienced a hypoxia seizure triggered by a heart condition. Even with this pressure at home and concern for her own child, the commissioner has not faltered and has continued to provide advice and warnings in a way which makes sure Canberrans are alert—not alarmed—and always well informed.

I've had the opportunity to make contact with a number of our rural landholders in the path of the fire in the southern part of the ACT. I pay tribute to their efforts, because their expertise—and they have experienced some of these fires, including the 2003 bushfires—and the feedback they give to our RFS and our emergency services
do help in the fire effort. I had some conversations with some of those people over the weekend. I know they were feeding that back, and they were very grateful that some of the suggestions were taken on board by the RFS and those others fighting the fires. So I commend those people. They are a big part of it. We need to listen to them and not just when the fires are being fought. We need to listen to them. Just as we learned from our Indigenous Australians about ancient practices, we should also listen to those in rural and regional areas, including those rural landholders here in the ACT who have so much expertise in land management and, of course, in fighting devastating fires. Bushfires are not just a challenge for regional Australia, of course; we see them right around the country, particularly on the urban edge.

As Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters, I've been fortunate enough to see some of the work being done by our charities on the ground. When I visited the South Coast, I had the opportunity to visit the recovery centre there in Batemans Bay and spend some time talking to some of the extraordinary volunteers. I think these recovery centres are a great example of cooperation. There are local government, state government and federal government agencies there. There are the insurance companies and others. There are many representatives of charities, churches and other parts of the community who are all putting in.

I had the opportunity to speak to a lady, Jacqui, from the Red Cross. Jacqui is part of the SES, so she has been responding in all sorts of ways to the emergency but then also volunteering her time with the Red Cross. As I spoke to Jacqui, the emotions were still very raw. But one of the things that struck me about the conversation was that, whilst I was commending her on the work that she had been doing for her community, she was talking about how relatively easy she had it because she hadn't lost her home, as many others had. But she, like so many other Australians, was doing her bit. I met volunteers for St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army, some of whom had come from Brisbane and some of whom had come from Sydney. Some of the St Vincent de Paul volunteers had come from here in Canberra. Some of the local chapters sprang into action.

This is the other thing when we think about the charitable efforts. There are the headline numbers of the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been generously donated by Australians and, indeed, people overseas. Some very high-profile people and many large companies are donating huge amounts of money, and we thank those large donors such as Andrew and Nicola Forrest, who made a $70 million donation. But also millions of Australians, in fact, have made small, medium and large donations. I saw a survey recently that showed over 50 per cent of Australians have actually donated to the bushfire effort. Of those, I had some conversations with some of whom had come from Sydney. Some of the St Vincent de Paul volunteers had come from here in Canberra. Some of the local chapters sprang into action.

While it is right that we hold charities to account, that we have accountability mechanisms when there are hundreds of millions of dollars being donated, that we ask how that money is getting out and that the money gets out quickly, it is also important to note that, yes, there is a great need now—and the government, the charities and other parts of the community are responding to that—but the need will not go away in three weeks time, a month's time or in six months time in many cases as these communities rebuild. The government will be there in the short term, the medium term and the long term, and I know, from speaking to a number of the groups responding, that many of these organisations and many of these great charities that are on the ground like the Red Cross, the Salvos, Vinnies, Anglicare, the RSPCA and so many other great ones want to be there for the long haul as well. So we need to make sure that we work on that balance.

In closing, I again commend those who are responding to the recovery effort right now, be they parts of government, the community sector, the charities sector, churches, other community organisations or people on the ground. I also want to join with Senate colleagues in paying my respects, expressing my sincere condolences and the condolences of my community who are all putting in.

Senator McALLISTER (New South Wales) (15:06): From the Blue Mountains to the Southern Highlands and from Batemans Bay up to the Northern Rivers and Northern Tablelands, this bushfire season has been devastating for my home state of New South Wales, with 4.9 million hectares of land having been burnt. In
September last year, well before we expected the bushfire season to begin, there were reports that fires were tearing through northern New South Wales. Having grown up on the North Coast, I know that these communities face floods, fires and severe drought, and they've done that for many years. But it was clear, really clear, that this time was different. The word we all used was 'unprecedented'.

It's difficult to put aside the image that appeared all over the news later in the season of a young boy in a breathing mask being evacuated from a beach in Mallacoota surrounded by thick smoke and a dark-red sky. The bushfires across the South Coast of New South Wales, by that stage, were out of control. The roads in and out of the area were closed, and many locals were forced to flee to the beach. These fires have had a devastating impact on the communities of New South Wales: 25 people have died defending their homes and towns; thousands of properties have been destroyed; and over 800 million animals have been killed.

The response to the bushfires has demonstrated the strength, the resilience, and the compassion that define our community. Local businesses, like a motel in Grafton, turned their premises into evacuation centres, providing food and shelter for people fleeing the fire. Community organisations have helped people and families access the services and financial assistance that they need to rebuild lives. Knitters across the country have been making pouches for the koalas, kangaroos and possums whose habitats have been destroyed by fires. In Lismore, locals have been donating backpacks, lunch boxes and pencil cases to kids going back to school in fire-affected areas. And every day for the past five months firefighters—many of them volunteers—have risked their lives to protect people and their homes from the fires. We are deeply thankful for their work, and we honour those who lost their lives defending their communities.

Australians are grieving. They are grieving for their homes, their towns, their families and their neighbours. They are grieving for pets and livestock. They're perhaps also grieving for the quiet places in our forests, in our creek beds and in our scrublands that, in so many ways, define who we are.

We ought to acknowledge that many Australians are also angry. They are angry because they feel they have been left to fight these fires on their own. People living on the North Coast and the Northern Tablelands have battled disaster after disaster for years, and they are exhausted, they are heartbroken and they are financially depleted. The question today is: how best do we respond, here in this parliament, to this grief and to this anger? I think the best way is to acknowledge this tragedy, to learn from it, to engage deeply with affected communities, to truly listen and to hear the voices of the people who've lost so much. Of course, the listening can't just be over this summer or over the next few months, because for these people rebuilding lives and communities will take years, and communities need to know that we will be with them for the duration. Sadly, in parts of northern New South Wales, including on the Northern Tablelands, where the fire season began four months ago, I know from conversations with my friend the local member, Janelle Saffin, that many feel already that they are being left behind.

We also need to prepare for the future and to take steps to shape our future. We all have a stake in a safe climate. For decades, climate scientists have been warning us of longer and more intense fire seasons caused by climate change. Well, these warnings are now a reality, and it is well past time for serious climate action, not denial of our reality and not denial of our obligations. No child should have to witness what that little boy from Mallacoota did. The next generation should be excited about their future, not scared of it.

Senator ROBERTS (Queensland) (15:11): 'It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly.' These are the words of the late American president Teddy Roosevelt in his capacity as a servant to the people of the United States, and they bring us to a stark reality. Many of us can never know what it is like in the arena of firestorms, which have been a relentless presence in many Australian summers. These people faced walls of flames soaring hundreds of metres high, which threatened to engulf the firefighters, neighbours, children, property, much-loved farm animals, our treasured native bush and human communities. Only the people in the arena can know. Only they know the desperation to protect their property, community and kin while others choose to be the critics from the comfort of the stands.

I can only imagine the enormity of feelings these people must have been through: the overwhelming fear and terror; the confusion and fog from unrelenting tiredness; the depth of grief and gnawing of profound loss of life and property; the elation of success on one day and the anguish from losing the fight on another; the tears of others and the tears welling up within; the exasperation of defeat from hot days and changeable dry winds; the gratitude and love from those unknown, met for the first time and never seen again; and, each morning, the sense of hopelessness and despair for many on how to rebuild. The human spirit that built your families and communities will build them again. Please pause to appreciate the huge reserves of courage, strength and tenacity.
We are in awe of humanity's mettle. These wretched fires, as with many catastrophes, show us the depth and breadth of humanity, some of which we marvel at and some of which leaves us in despair.

As I stand in our national parliament today as a servant to the people of Queensland and Australia, I applaud our men, women and children across many communities who are in that arena, one of Mother Nature's most extraordinary events—an unrelenting and horrific firestorm. It is these people that we honour today. Your exhaustion, sadness and perhaps anger now must be compelling and overwhelming. My heartfelt condolences go to the families who have lost their loved ones. The heartbreak must seem all-consuming. To all these people, there are no words adequate enough to convey my deepest sympathy to you and your communities, yet I know that what we do now as a nation will matter the most in showing you our genuine support, our solidarity, our care and our dedication to helping you rebuild your lives. We know that we cannot rebuild upon condolences alone; we must also find that which we can honour—indeed celebrate. We have countless tales of courage, bravery and tenacity to celebrate.

To the men and women of these communities: what you have spent decades building has been destroyed in a few minutes by a fire you may never forget. I can never know how it felt to face the walls of fire that reached—according to one friend in the Snowy—a harrowing 500 metres above the ground. Your survival shows you would have reached deep into reservoirs of true courage, grit and determination. It is the extraordinary nature of the human spirit that soars to heights greater than any fire wall that shows us what we are truly capable of when the situation demands it. You honour our humanity. You inspire and uplift us all. Like the radiant heat that is so intense it ignites cars 300 metres from the flames, the human spirit is invisible. Yet, like the radiant heat, the human spirit can be felt and it carries with it enormous energy. The human spirit cannot be quantified. It is imbued, it is resilient, it connects, it encourages, it overcomes, it restores, it re-energises.

The Australian bush breeds and trains firefighters like nowhere else in the world. As a nation, we rightly have faith, respect and pride in our firefighting brigades. The iconic Australian eucalyptus trees that find their way into our poems and stories as simple gum trees, with their frequent shedding of oily leaves and long streamers of bark acting as conduits for fire upwards, are masters of creating the fast-spreading crown fires in the upper storey. This year, as in years past, many people have witnessed the roar through our forests. If that weren't enough, the flammable oil combined with the tinderbox of litter can turn a small ground fire into a terrifying firestorm of exploding gums in just a few minutes. Many have shared with us firsthand accounts of this happening. This is the nature of the beast that our valiant Australian firefighters face when they front up every day. We come to sit at our desks while they face infernos, defend properties and protect life, and in some cases go home to find their own property reduced to ashes. These selfless acts keep us indebted to our firefighters. They also share in the deep pain and loss when colleagues do not make it back.

I honour the work of our Defence Force personnel, who have been eager to complement the work of emergency services in all communities. You are a treasured resource of our nation and we all rest easier knowing of your dedication and loyalty to our country's wellbeing. To our international colleagues who have come thousands of kilometres to face these infernos with us: thank you. My deepest condolences go to your families, who have lost loved ones fighting alongside our own. I pay tribute to the many children who have witnessed not only a firestorm but how a community can galvanise in the face of tragedy. These children have their own tales of loss, survival and bravery. They have been most vulnerable to the feelings of fear and psychological trauma. They need to feel safe again. Let us remember always that it is our children's stories that are carried forwards for future generations of Australians to listen to as a poignant reminder of the nature of this land we all love so much. During this harrowing summer, there have been many examples of extraordinary generosity, including businesses that have given freely to their communities; donations of money, accommodation and household essentials; and our wonderful wildlife rescuers.

As we start our own rebuilding, so is the bush regenerating. Right now the seeds of our gum trees, having been roused by the fire, will be nurtured by the ashes, rise like a phoenix and out-compete all else. Fresh, tender shoots are already emerging, and we will have our eucalyptus forests back, because this is Australia. The loss of wildlife has been devastating, and, as they have done many times over millennia, our fauna and unique ecosystems will regenerate alongside the rejuvenating bushland, because this is Australia, and it has a long history of natural weather extremes and devastating bushfires.

We owe it to the Australian people to chart a steady but swift course for recovery. We must recognise that our landowners, our farmers and our Indigenous communities have the most knowledge of our country and its weather. These people are the best custodians, the best and genuine environmentalists, and the best ones to listen to. We must listen to them because the fires will return again and again and again, as they have done for millennia, and yet again, and it will be their loved ones and their livelihoods on the line, not ours. It is only the magnitude of the fires that will vary. It will be up to the fortitude of politicians to stand in the face of the critics and to champion
policies based on enduring knowledge, physical measurements, physical evidence, commonsense and local experience.

I acknowledge that there is an enormous weight of responsibility upon the shoulders of our leaders, from the Prime Minister through to the local mayors and councillors. Those who walk among the ashes are people who many politicians will never meet from communities they will never visit, and these people are relying on us to support their optimism and their will to wake up tomorrow, hoping they have the resources to rebuild. They can rightly demand visionary leadership that leaves them feeling emboldened, shows them compassion, nurtures unity and gives timely and practical support.

As the stories of peril and devastation slowly fade to make way for the next media story, I ask that we from all levels of government, who are the key decision-makers for rebuilding, ensure that these valiant men, women and children do not fade from our hearts and minds and be sure that we are reminded of them. Ironically, fire rages on the outskirts of Canberra as we come together here today to pay our respects. We as a nation will thrive only when we bring all those people, businesses and communities with us, and there will be time for examination and analysis later.

For all of us in parliament, the gravity of the decision-making for now and later is immense. Let no-one waste the time of these people who have fought in the arena, who are in pain and who need our support. They have not the energy nor the patience nor the personal reserves left to cope with bureaucratic nonsense. The Australian people need their servants to be unified and to be of genuine service. They want us to be fair dinkum and to give them a fair go. To all in the arena: we give our condolences, respect, support and thanks.

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women) (15:23): Like many people in New South Wales, for many, many weeks now I have spent hours poring over the Fires Near Me NSW app. Green Wattle Creek, Morton, Currowan, Gospers Mountain, Ruined Castle, Erskine Creek—these are now sadly familiar names which are indelibly imprinted on my brain. Every single one of these names represents the impact of the fires on that part of my state—on the families, the communities, the farms, the business, the wildlife, the environment and the fireys, so many from the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue New South Wales.

Many fireys have protected my own communities in Western Sydney and the New South Wales Southern Highlands, like my long-term farm manager, Alistair Wood, and his family—his wife, Lesley, and his son, Murray—who are members of the Mandemar brigade, and like a well-known character of the lower Blue Mountains, Graham Chapman, from the Llandilo brigade. They and thousands of their ilk have given all, and today is our opportunity to say thank you.

From the Myall Creek Road fire in Richmond Valley, right down past those areas I've just mentioned to the border fire in the Bega Valley, the bushfires have impacted on an unprecedented scale in New South Wales and across the nation. In New South Wales alone, more than 70 fires have burned. Many continue to do so. By the end of January, fires in New South Wales had burnt through over five million hectares.

We've seen tragedy before. Many of us remember Black Saturday, Ash Wednesday and Black Friday, to name just some. But the scale of these fires has made it likely that many more Australians have this time been exposed to the trauma, the hazard and the destruction of these blazes than ever before in this country. There are many thousands of people who have stories to tell, experiences to share and lessons to impart. The motion before us today is our opportunity to pause, to reflect and to remember.

Having visited a number of the bushfire affected communities from the Mid North Coast to the Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains to the New South Wales South Coast, I've found that many people need to have their stories heard at this time. It's true of my own community in Western Sydney. On 13 January, with Minister Littleproud, with Andrew Colvin, the head of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, and with Susan Templeman, the federal member for Macquarie, I visited Bilpin and the small township of Bell at the crossroads of the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury. Bell was surrounded by the Grose Vale and Gospers Mountain megafires in December. Thankfully and mercifully, no lives were lost. But, in a township of 15, five families lost all—their homes.

We met many of those locals at the Bell New South Wales RFS shed. It's a humble building, but it's become the natural meeting point for the community in the wake of the bushfires. It was a small refuge to the residents of Bell, who fled as the fires raged around them, to be surrounded by their local volunteer firefighters, their neighbours and their friends. What we saw together on 13 January was a natural continuation of what the residents had been doing then for months—banding together as a community in the most extreme of circumstances. Across the Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains, let me say one thing, Madam Deputy President, to you and to this chamber: this community is open for business. This community wants people and visitors to support it and to
'holiday here', as so many of the international views of our social media campaign have reminded us: 'Holiday here.' They are ready and are encouraging people to come back to their communities.

A couple of weeks ago, I brought together a roundtable of women from the community in Port Macquarie with the local member, Pat Conaghan, the member for Cowper, to hear firsthand from their perspective how bushfires have affected the Mid North Coast region, especially on top of the crippling drought. One of the people in the group described how she fled with her children to the evacuation centre when the bushland around the township of Bellbrook was ablaze. She became separated from her children. She didn't know how her husband, who stayed to defend their property, had fared. There are countless similar stories.

The people of Port Macquarie and surrounding areas were particularly affected by the drawn-out nature of the fires and the aftermath on their community and economy. On the Mid North Coast, those bushfires first took hold in July. But much of the nation's attention has moved, due to the all-encompassing focus in other areas, to other fires. While there was grief and anguish, those who met with me in Port Macquarie acknowledged—I admit sometimes through tears, potentially theirs and mine—the incredible efforts of those emergency services personnel and others who stood by them when the bushfires were bearing down upon them.

Pat and I heard of the extraordinary efforts of volunteers—the thousands of meals cooked, the beds provided and the great courage of the RFS firefighters. We heard from small businesses that just want their message to resonate. They're still standing. They are open for business. They need people to visit and to stay and to enjoy what is a beautiful part of the world.

In the Wollondilly and the Wingecarribee, where my family has lived for decades, in Wingello and Bundanoon, in Buxton and Bargo and surrounding areas: I want to also acknowledge the loss and the damage that they have experienced there and to recognise what I know will be a significant challenge to rebuild and to recover. On the New South Wales South Coast and in the Shoalhaven, the Eurobodalla and the Bega Valley there were over 1,200 homes lost. In the Snowy, fires have wrought devastation. In these communities, it has been the most terrifying time for so many. It is still a struggle to see the path to recovery and rebuilding, but I know that they will. In little Mogo, where I was a few weeks ago, and in Cobargo—places I've visited many, many times—they will rebuild. To those in Kiah, Eden and many other communities, I want to say from the Commonwealth's perspective but also from the perspective of those of us in this chamber who are so passionate about our communities that we will work with you, your families, your councils, your state government, your businesses and your community organisations to help that rebuilding and recovery process. We recognise that it is a significant task and it is a long road ahead.

I took one very special memory from my time on the coast in the last month: the Malua Bay Bowling Club, which Senate Seselja referred to. I confess I had visited before. I am no bowler, but it was a centre of the community in so many ways. It was burnt to the ground. The clubhouse and all its facilities are gone. Driving down that road on the second Saturday in January with my partner, with Andrew Constance, the state member, and with his wife, Jen, I was greeted by a very Australian sight. The club is absolutely gone—a mess of melted, twisted remains—but the bowlers were there, rolling their bowls down the green towards the jack, determined to get on with it. There is the Malua Bay Surf Club as well, the centre of community support for so many from that horrific New Year's Eve. Volunteers, all of them, opened that club day and night as a centre for their impacted community. Eleven days later, I sat with some of them as they reflected on that experience.

At times, the bravery that has been on display here in Australia has come from afar. I want to express the condolences of the government and the Australian people to the families and friends of the American firefighters Captain Ian McBeth, First Officer Paul Hudson and Flight Engineer Rick DeMorgan Jr, who lost their lives in support of fire efforts in the Snowy Mountains. We are ever grateful for the help that those brave firefighters gave to Australia. We will not forget that they lost their lives far from their loved ones and homes to protect Australian communities. We also appreciate the support of the more than 200 US firefighters who have helped us this year. That contribution is another example of the bonds and common values that join our two countries. The United States has been here for us in the same way as Australian firefighters were here for their US colleagues in the Californian bushfires of 2017 and 2018.

We are deeply grateful also for offers of support from so many around the world. Our diplomatic network overseas has literally been flooded by offers of condolence and informed of a large number of fundraising activities and donation drives to support Australian charities. My department is managing, in cooperation with Emergency Management Australia, a significant number of offers of international assistance from governments, from companies and from other entities in 70 countries, and we are very grateful. We thank those firefighters from the United States, from Canada and from New Zealand for their professionalism and support. We acknowledge the provision of defence assets and the work of defence personnel from Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore and the United States. For materials and equipment from Israel, Japan, Malaysia,
the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and the UAE, we are very grateful. And we are closely collaborating with France and the United Kingdom on options for longer-term recovery efforts.

I also want to acknowledge and thank the ADF, the work of the Defence organisation. They've done an exceptional job. To see them coming down the road has literally lifted spirits and has engendered even a small smile in the most desperate of situations. I thank the men and the women of the ADF for the contribution they have made and will continue to make to this very significant recovery effort.

Finally, I acknowledge those who have lost so much, those who have lost all, our firefighting volunteers and their families across my state, the farmers and the men and women who've lost their lives defending their homes and livelihoods.

I want to particularly commend the work of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency and its head, Andrew Colvin. We know that it will require absolute diligence and focus on the recovery to support affected Australians. We are committed to that for the long haul. We say, and we mean, that our communities are open for business and for visits, whether it's a Holiday Here This Year in Australia or 'bring an empty Esky', or the countless other campaigns that have been launched. Every single one of those means something to an individual in those communities, to the small-business owner, to the farmer, to the people supporting local wildlife, to the surf clubs, to the bowling clubs, to the restaurants, to the retail sector. Every single facet of life is looking to our country to work with them, to stand with them and to support them, and that is something that we in this chamber, every single one of us, and every single member of the House of Representatives is able to be an absolute advocate for. I look forward, in these difficult circumstances, to working with all of our colleagues from across both chambers to do exactly that.

Senator SHELDON (New South Wales) (15:37): I rise to speak on the motion of condolence and the tragic loss of life, homes, wildlife and livelihood in the 2019-20 bushfire season. As Labor's duty senator for the fire ravaged communities in the electorate of Lyne, on the New South Wales mid-north coast, and Calare in western New South Wales, I want to pay respects to those communities and all the communities across New South Wales who have endured a very stressful and challenging summer. I want to pay tribute to the bravery and heroism of hardworking members of the Rural Fire Services, State Emergency Services, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, our Ambulance Service, ADF personnel and professional firefighters, all of whom have worked above and beyond to help protect communities and wildlife.

We've heard many stories of personal sacrifice, like Paul Brown from Tuross Head, who is a self-employed carpenter, a builder and a long-term RFS volunteer. Paul volunteered way back in September last year to be part of strike teams to travel up to the North Coast fires. He signed up for seven of 10 payday deployments, away from work and income. In September, nobody thought that in February he would still be putting fires out. For Paul, and the thousands of RFS volunteers like him, there's been months constantly at the front in the heat and smoke, away from their families and sources of income, and four months of breathing particle matter through substandard face masks brought with their own money from Bunnings Warehouse.

We've all heard stories of bravery and heroism this summer, like the members of Lawson Fire and Rescue NSW Station 359, who were stranded inside their fire truck after it broke down inside the fire front during an ember attack. They were trapped with no cabin sprinkler system and no radio communication inside a massive inferno. Miraculously the four men, Adam Southers, Bruce Stuart, Aydin Phipps and Tom Doyle Byrne, were able to calmly wait out the fire front and walk to safety. Too often this summer, RFS volunteers and fire and rescue workers have sacrificed their lives in service to their communities, including in the tragic crash of the air tanker near Cooma. As of this date, at least 33 people have died, including 25 in New South Wales.

I pay tribute to the professional and volunteer firefighters who have fought these fires—people like union member Stuart Glanfield, a Jetstar baggage handler for over 15 years, who has served his local RFS for 36 years. Stuart and his wife, who is also a volunteer with the local RFS, are raising their two children in Engadine and giving back to the community they love so much. Stuart volunteered on the recent bushfires, leading a truck in Buxton and Balmoral as the smoke made it impossible to see. Stuart and his team went from home to home, saving the ones they could. Sadly, these fires took so many homes. Six million hectares of land have been burned. Over one billion animals have died, driving many species to the brink of extinction. Thousands of people are out of their homes or have lost their businesses.

But throughout this tragedy there have been some genuinely miraculous stories. A family in Batlow thought that everything they had worked so hard for was to be lost in the bushfires. Douglas and Berlindie Rand moved to a 200-acre property near Batlow over 30 years ago. Berlindie worked as a nurse at Batlow Hospital and Douglas as a trained teacher at Tumut High School, while raising three children. Everything they earned they poured into building their farm. Over time, they developed a sustainable organic enterprise growing garlic, lemons and figs
and grazing sheep. They are now in their 60s and had enough of an investment in their farm that they wouldn't need the age pension. That all changed when the fire ripped through Batlow. They left their property the night before, when the town was told by the RFS that it was undefendable. Douglas and Berlindie drank for the next two days while they waited for the fire to pass. When they arrived back in Batlow, the scene was eerie. They described it as like Chernobyl. They couldn't drive straight up to their property. There were trees scattered all over the driveway. They hiked in, preparing themselves for the worst. When they got over the hill through the smoke, they could see that, miraculously, the home was still standing. Douglas and Berlindie will need to spend at least the next five years getting themselves back to the position they were in. But the Rands are some of the lucky ones: they still have a roof over their heads.

As we move on from the tragedy of the fires themselves, the next step is to determine what lessons we can learn from this catastrophe and what we can do better next time. We are, after all, only eight months away from the beginning of another fire season, when we might be in exactly the same position we are in now, giving the same speeches of condolence. We need to be prepared.

The first lesson we’ve learned is about the resilience of the Australian people. It has been proven yet again that Australians are brave in the face of disaster, compassionate towards their communities and able to display the very best of themselves when enduring the worst of circumstances.

The second lesson is something we learn every time there is a crisis or a significant event: our systems are not perfect. These fires have demonstrated a deeper issue with volunteer firefighting across Australia. Over the past decade, we have 18,000 fewer volunteer firefighters. The volunteer firefighter associations of Victoria and New South Wales have argued that an inability to recruit and retain young firefighters has been a significant factor leading to these reductions. Other research, out of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre, backs up those changes in the economy that have made volunteer firefighters harder to find. There is also an ageing volunteer force, with only one in 10 RFS volunteers aged 25 or younger and a massive proportion of businesses which release their staff to fight fires. Workers are often required to leave without pay to attend to their duties, which hurts their employer’s businesses. The Fire Brigade Employees Union about how state governments must ensure there are enough professional firefighters to deal with a fire season that is getting longer and more intense with each passing summer. Leighton Drury, the secretary of the FBEU, has called out the New South Wales Liberal government for its failure to adequately invest in our fire services for almost a decade.

But we in the federal parliament can also work towards creating the conditions that will support people to have the time and energy to volunteer for their communities. This parliament can, in the period of reflection, consider new methods to increase the number of volunteers available in times of crisis, to help lighten the load on our emergency services. One such method would be to legislate an award system—the industrial relations system—that encourages the employment of people who volunteer, giving those that serve the communities as a volunteer with the RFS or the SES a leg-up when applying for jobs. We could apply a simple system such as where two people with the same skills and the same level of knowledge apply for the same job, if one is a volunteer firefighter, the volunteer firefighter gets the job—a preference clause. Such award clauses once existed in New South Wales, in bygone days, for defence personnel.

We also need to take the pressure off businesses that employ our volunteers. With the bushfire season growing longer and fiercer, our volunteers are spending extended periods away from their families and places of work. The more extended season hurts pay cheques and hurts businesses. We must continue to make public money available to people who take leave to volunteer in times of crisis, and we need to consider making new funds available to businesses which release their staff to fight fires, assist with evacuations and support our emergency services. We already have an efficient scheme that provides financial assistance to the employers of reservists and self-employed reservists with our armed services. The Employer Support Payment Scheme provides a weekly rate to companies whose staff are away on eligible periods of leave. Such a scheme could become a staple, supporting companies who employ our volunteer firefighters. These reforms reward selflessness and encourage volunteerism. These are reforms that should be considered in depth by the royal commission into the bushfires.

I want to leave you with a story I received in an email from a doctor on the South Coast. Dr Michelle Hamrosi from Broulee wrote to me, saying:

I'm a local GP, and we re-opened our practice last week, without power, phones or internet and operated a walk-in clinic.
Since then, I've seen many patients suffering the impacts of smoke exposure. I've seen countless patients suffering from acute anxiety, panic attacks or grief from the loss of their homes or businesses or from the stressful impact of the emergency itself.

She went on to say:

Clean air, clean water and a liveable climate underpin our very survival. These are the rights of basic health, and they're being eroded before our eyes.

Many politicians are telling us that right now is not the time to talk about climate change. I cannot think of a better time.

There is no denying the scale of this disaster. There is no denying the wake-up call it presents to governments at all levels, of all political persuasions. While I welcome the government's announcement of more funding, grants and concessional loans to businesses affected by the bushfires, many of these same businesses are still waiting on access to the government's drought assistance loans for small businesses. Announcing money is easy; delivering it is hard. Let's get on with it.

Senator RICE (Victoria) (15:48): As my flight made its descent into Canberra on Sunday night, I looked around, and most of my fellow passengers, like myself, were peering out the windows at the blankets and plumes of smoke that surrounded us. I was paying morbid attention because it was the closest that I had come to the almost 11 million hectares that have burnt across the country. Last night and today, as the smoke rolled into Canberra, I have felt even closer. I was away in Tasmania for most of January and very aware that I managed to have my summer holiday, when so many people didn't.

Our country has suffered so much—33 lives lost so far. And I say 'so far' because this fire season isn't over. Good people are no longer with us, people who'd been doing their best to fight for their homes and livelihoods, and the courageous firefighters paying the ultimate sacrifice as they tried to keep people and country safe. My heart aches for their families, their friends and their communities in the worst fire season that we have ever experienced as a country. My heart goes out to everyone who has lost their properties and their livelihoods. I salute everyone who has fought these fires and who has helped out in so many ways, donating their time, resources and money.

To the CFA, RFS and other volunteers who have put their lives on the line, day after harrowing day, during this bushfire crisis that shows no end, no signs of ending soon: all Australians owe you a massive debt of gratitude. And to the communities that are trying to rebuild from the ashes, to all the people across Australia who are trying to stay resilient during these times of physical, emotional and financial hardship, know that we are with you and we will not forget the task that lays ahead once this fire season is over.

In my home state of Victoria, five people so far have lost their lives, all in East Gippsland. I pay my deepest respects to Mick Roberts from Buchan and Fred Becker from Maramingo Creek, who died fighting the fires at their homes, and Forest Fire Management Victoria employees Mat Kavanagh, Bill Slade and David Moresi who were killed while on the job this bushfire season. I pay my condolences to their families and friends. I am just so sorry for your massive loss.

The losses in East Gippsland are almost unimaginable. East Gippsland is special. It retains the proportion of its land covered by forest, around 70 per cent, that Victoria had when First Nations people rightfully had custodianship over our land. I acknowledge the Gunnaikurnai people, in particular, who have seen so much loss and destruction of their country. Over 80 per cent of the forests of East Gippsland have been burnt. We have all been traumatised by seeing the evacuation of Mallacoota, the daytime darkness in Orbost and the fear and trauma etched into people's lives.

I spent my 20s campaigning to protect these forests. I've got to know many people in the region, including my good friend Jill Redwood who stayed and fought the fires that burnt through her place in Goongerah. Jill has been a CFA volunteer for over 20 years, and her account of fighting the fires was real heart-in-mouth stuff. She fought the fire engulfing her place single-handedly. She tells of hoses melting and pumps running out of fuel. She saved her house but had to suffer the heartbreak of the loss of some of her farm animals and the massive loss of wildlife and their forest habitat, which she has dedicated her life to protecting. Her Facebook posts about her experience in the fires ended with her saying that she was too sick from smoke to eat. But she was in a far better position than many other people, noting that beside the loss of life and property loss the biggest tragedy is the ecological Armageddon that is happening in East Gippsland. Jill is now out, with so many others, feeding and watering the surviving wildlife.

We have all lost so much—life, property, so much precious forest, so much wildlife—so much life that we are intimately part of and hold so dear, and we have lost our hope that maybe the climate crisis wouldn't be as bad as we thought it was going to be. We now know that the crisis is upon us, and it's shaping up to be as brutal as
anyone had feared. For the first time, people in our big cities have felt the effects of this crisis on their health as the smoke haze hits hazardous levels. We have children being kept from playing outside, commuters wearing face masks in the streets and people being hospitalised due to respiratory stress.

This is no way to live, and we cannot accept this as the new normal. But the really scary thing about the losses of this summer is that they won't stop here. Unlike previous bad fire years, where we had the expectation that, yes, things would return to normal and it would be decades before a fire season like this returned, we know now that things are different. This is Australia at only one degree of warming. We are heading for three or four degrees, and yet Prime Minister Morrison and the coalition want to keep their heads in the sand and continue as though this is just normal. And Labor decided in the middle of the fire season that it was time to redouble their efforts to spruik our coal industries, as though it's not a fact that if we keep polluting our world we are headed for far more death and destruction in the years to come. Every life that is being mourned today, every family that has suffered tragedy, every community that is suffering the trauma of this summer will be multiplied as our climate crisis worsens. Time is no longer on our side. We no longer have the luxury of small steps or incremental change. Now is the time for bold action because if we don't start solving this crisis this summer will be just the beginning. In fact, if we let our planet get two, three or four degrees hotter, this summer will look like a walk in the park.

This summer's fire crisis has hit me hard. I've been campaigning for the world to wake up to the dangers of climate change for over 30 years, driven by fear of what was to come if we didn't act and hope that we would still act before it was too late. Our fears have been shown to be completely justified. They are materialising, and so that hope is pretty battered. But we have to stay optimistic. We have to believe in and commit to a path through this darkness and devastation, otherwise our condolences are hollow. We have to get through and acknowledge the grief, and then learn to walk a new path. That's the only way we can do justice to the immensity of our loss.

I have learnt some things over the last month that I think are valuable in helping us to do that. I've felt this summer's massive losses deeply because they parallel my own personal loss. My wife, Penny, died in September. As well as being the love of my life, Penny was one of Australia's leading climate scientists, and she worked at CSIRO for 30 years preparing regional climate projections—the science that lays out how our climate is changing across the country, and it has laid out the increasing risk of longer, more intense, more damaging fire seasons. I've discovered that grief isn't compartmentalised. I'm grieving for Penny and I'm grieving for our precious planet, particularly the forests and the wildlife that we both loved so much and campaigned so hard to protect. And, when I think of the people who lost loved ones in the fires, I can so easily imagine their devastating grief and loss because I've experienced the same randomness of the universe that has resulted in sudden, unexpected and unfathomable death.

I'm angry that Penny's climate science and our decades of campaigning seem to have been for naught right now. Penny was so fearful of what this summer was going to deliver, and I'm mortified that her fears have come to pass, but there's a tiny sense of relief that at least she was spared seeing them play out in such a devastating way. But maybe some of the other things I've learnt over the five months since Penny died can be useful in helping us work out how to deal with the losses of this summer and how to move onto our new path. I've learnt that expressing and acknowledging loss, bawling my eyes out and sharing the emotion with others is cathartic. I've learnt that you can never have too many hugs and that people reaching out to me with a simple, 'I'm so sorry,' is profound and touching and helps me know that I'm not alone.

So to everyone who has lost people they love, lost property, had their communities turned upside down and seen the destruction of country they love: I'm so sorry. I've learnt that grief is the flip side of love. I've learnt that our relationships make up a huge part of who we are and that nurturing and cherishing those relationships is core to our wellbeing. When Penny died, I didn't just lose her; I lost a massive part of myself—that part of my identity that was the love, the connection and the interplay between the two of us. And I realised how much the other relationships I have with friends, colleagues and acquaintances matter and are part of me too. So if expressing our grief for our losses of this summer can encourage people to reach out and to connect with and reconnect with people they love that's a powerful step on this new path that we are now walking together.

I've realised that these relationships, these connections, that are part of me don't just stop at connections with other humans. We are part of nature. All is one, and one is all. The profound grief that we are feeling about the loss of nature, the damage to precious landscapes and the billions of animals lost is because they are part of us and we are part of them, and we love them as we love ourselves. We can't just let them go and be sacrificed to the gods of greed and selfishness and the blatant, wilful vandals who are overheating our planet. We can but hope that, as more people feel this loss deeply and powerfully, it will motivate more of us to work to protect the rest of nature from the ravages of unbridled neoliberal capitalism.

Community and nature have to be our solace and our support to get through our climate and fire crises. We are survivors and have to walk our new path together. It's not what we had hoped for. It's challenging. But it's the path
we are on and we just have to make the most of it. It's a new path that we have to encourage others to join us on. It's a new path that will lead us out of the sad lands, the badlands, and will honour and do justice to those and that which has been lost.

I remain optimistic. I'm grieving, I'm sad and I'm realistic about the challenges ahead—but I haven't given up. I believe in the resilience and the brilliance of humanity that we have seen so much of this summer from communities around Australia. And I believe in the resilience of nature. Surely those of us that recognise and understand the nihilistic path that we are on are going to continue to build our power so that we can share that power with all of humanity and nature to protect our future.

Australians are desperate for action to protect our climate and environment. I salute those climate activists who are in Canberra today, campaigning for a fossil-free, safe climate future and to stop our wildlife from sliding towards extinction. Together, we can achieve the sweet relief of a political cool change sweeping over us after the desiccating, hot headwinds that we are currently facing. It is never going to be too late. There is never going to be a time when we say, 'We just give up.' Yes, we are losing so much every day, month and year, and we need to acknowledge and grieve for those losses. And then we must continue our journey. Where there is life, there is hope.

I am motivated by my love for the world, my love for nature and my love for Penny to do what's necessary in my personal life, my community life and my political life to help achieve a healthy future. I know there are millions and billions of people around the world, including many in this place and in the other place, who feel likewise. We can and we must journey together on our new path until we have turned the corner and have created a brighter future for us all.

Senator RUSTON (South Australia—Minister for Families and Social Services and Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (16:03): From the worst of circumstances, I think we have witnessed the best of community spirit over the last few months. People from all walks of life have rallied together to fight these devastating bushfires but particularly to support those people in need. I think it speaks volumes for the Australian character and our national identity—neighbours helping neighbours, mates helping mates, friends helping one another and strangers supporting people whom they've never even met. Amidst this tragedy, I think it has been extraordinarily humbling to see Australians at their best.

So, today, I want to join with others in this place to put my thanks on the record to the volunteers and the emergency crews who risk absolutely everything to protect lives, property, community, wildlife and livestock. Today, they continue to be out there on the fire fronts fighting fires that are still burning and they are supporting communities as they start to rebuild now that the fires, in some places, have gone.

I also want to acknowledge our soldiers, reservists, carers, mental health workers, local community leaders and public servants engaged in all manner of practical ways to help people in these fire-strewn areas. Whether it's the Army airlifting fodder to help feed livestock or wildlife, community leaders rallying behind local families and helping out however they can, emergency service people clearing roads and making sure that the debris from the fires is removed so people can actually get access to their properties, or the wonderful multicultural communities who've been cooking up food and taking it to our volunteers who've been out on the fire effort, it has been nothing short of one of the most amazing all-of-community responses to what has been a national tragedy.

In my home state of South Australia, two particularly devastating bushfires have impacted very severely—that of the Cudlee Creek fire in the Adelaide Hills, and the Kangaroo Island fire that saw over half of Kangaroo Island completely razed. There are so many people who have shown the most extraordinary leadership and extraordinary courage during this time—way, way too many for me to possibly name. But, sadly, such courage has not been without sacrifice. Australians may not remember what we're saying here today, but the one thing that we should never, ever forget are the brave firefighters who have tragically lost their lives in the line of duty as they fought to save other people's lives, property and homes. Thirty-three people have lost their lives to these fires and tens of thousands more have felt the despair and the loss through the destruction of their homes, businesses and livelihoods. Entire communities have been stripped bare, leaving towns totally ravaged. Today, along with everybody else in this chamber, my thoughts are with those Australians.

As I said, in my home state of South Australia, the two major fires—the Cudlee Creek bushfire in the Adelaide Hills and the Kangaroo Island fire—wreaked havoc across our region. One hundred and forty homes were lost. These were in addition to other fires in our state: in the Mount Barker area, the Murray Bridge area, the mid-Murray area, the Yorke Peninsula and the south-east region, where thousands of South Australians have felt the brunt of the fires. Tragically, these fires have not been without fatality either. Today, I acknowledge Ron Selth, and Dick Lang and his son Clayton Lane, who lost their lives in the South Australian bushfires. Our thoughts are equally with their families.
We now must turn our attention to restoring our towns and our regions, our people and our communities. I'd particularly like to acknowledge the Premier of South Australia, Steven Marshall, who, throughout the time the fires were burning in South Australia, spent every single waking moment at the fire front making sure that he was reassuring South Australians who were impacted that the South Australian government was there to help them in whichever way they could. As the recovery begins, all governments must work together—the federal government, state governments and local governments—because between us we can maximise the speed with which we can help people rebuild their communities. Along with my colleague in this place, Simon Birmingham, and my other federal colleagues, I'm committed to working with my state ministerial colleagues, particularly Michelle Lensink and Corey Wingard, local members who've been out on the fire front. There are also people like Dan Cregan, Leon Bignell and Rebecca Sharkey, and of course all of the local government people who have been helping every day at the fires and, now, with the recovery.

I also acknowledge the extraordinary effort of the CFS in South Australia, who have been on call for weeks and weeks and weeks without rest. To Mark Jones and his team: it has been an absolutely amazing effort. So many people have given selflessly during this time, but none more so than Mayor of Kangaroo Island, Michael Pengilly. As a long-term resident of Kangaroo Island, Michael has become the face of Kangaroo Island and particularly the recovery effort. I just want to say, Michael, that you have been an absolute rock for all the people on Kangaroo Island.

I also particularly want to acknowledge the primary producers, the tourism operators and the small businesses that have been terribly impacted and will continue to be impacted by these fires. To stand next to a Kangaroo Island farmer who's just come back in because he's been out shooting his injured livestock is something I will never forget. Seeing vineyards in the Adelaide Hills totally blackened and an orchard charred beyond recognition, knowing that it will be years and years before those particular plantings will be back in full production, if ever, is an incredibly confronting thing for an orchardist, a vigneron or a winemaker.

The loss unquestionably has been significant, but the recovery is already well underway, and I would encourage everybody in this place, and anybody who happens to be listening: the best way that you can lend your support to these communities that have been so devastated by the bushfires is to start thinking, when you buy something or go to do something, about whether there's a way that you can help these communities. Buying local food and produce has never been more important than it is right now for our bushfire-affected communities.

Everyone can also help by holidaying in an impacted area. There are many, many areas that have been impacted by the bushfires but whose tourism products can still be used and accessed, so I would encourage everybody who's thinking about having a holiday to think about going to one of our impacted areas. There are some great campaigns out there running at the moment in my home state of South Australia. They're running a #BookThemOut campaign. What they're saying to South Australians is: 'Go and book out everybody in the Adelaide Hills. Go and have lunch up at one of the wineries. If you're thinking you'd like to get away for the weekend, get over to Kangaroo Island and support them. Book them out.' Equally, there is the national campaign, Holiday Here This Year. For those people who might have considered going overseas in the coming months: why don't you reconsider that and think about having your holiday in South Australia? Many of our regions are already open for business, and many more of them will be open for business shortly, and they really need your support. So we collectively, as a nation, need to unite behind our local communities as they rebuild now and into the future. It has never been more important that we collectively, as a nation, support each other. It'll take time, but I'm sure the Australian spirit will prevail.

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (16:11): I thank the Senate for the opportunity to speak on the condolence motion today. Since the last time the Senate met, fires have ravaged, devastated and destroyed large parts of our ancient continent. Amongst the horror of this summer, affecting hundreds of thousands of Australians, 33 Australians have lost their lives, and today we remember them all. We pay our respects to them, and we send our love to their families in their time of grief. Three thousand homes have been destroyed and millions of hectares of our beautiful bush lost to fires. Wildlife has been devastated. It's almost impossible to comprehend the extent of the loss and the ongoing impact of these fires on regional communities, on regional economies and on our ecology.

To all of those who have helped keep communities safe: we thank you. Your bravery and dedication to protecting your fellow Australians has been humbling to witness. Your work is a very powerful act of love and commitment to your families and your communities. In you, we have seen the best of Australia, and we are in awe of your efforts.

In my own home town, this summer has been like no other. Whilst we haven't necessarily endured the crisis that those over the border have, we have felt it. We have breathed it. These places are all part of our region. They are part of the fabric of Canberra life. We know and love these beautiful places. We spend a lot of time in them,
and we have witnessed in horror as the fires threaten and destroy homes, lives and habitats without mercy. Since early December, we’ve been blanketed in smoke from fires to our north, south and west. The summers of children playing outside, of barbecues and of the normal relaxing and recovering from a busy year all seem distant and impossible in the summer of 2019-20. Buying your child a mask to wear if they leave the house is a very confronting act, and checking the air quality apps just to see whether you can go outside becomes an hourly task.

For the past two weeks, the Orroral Valley fire has menaced our local community—unfortunately, accidentally started by a Defence helicopter but spread due to the tinder-dry bush from protracted drought. This fire has already burnt more than 50 per cent of Namadgi National Park, a figure which simply doesn’t capture the magnitude of the loss of this amazing national park and all the animals that live there. We are heartbroken at the loss of this. Burnt out in the devastating fires of 2003, Namadgi was just returning to its full glory when this fire struck. The people of Tharwa and south Tuggeranong have waited, and are still waiting, as this fire continues to threaten all around it. The Clear Range fire, which devastated Bumbalong on the weekend and threatened Bredbo, and the Calabash fire, which threatened Tinderry and Michelago—both fires which originated from fire behaviour from the Orroral Valley fire—continue to burn. We know that it’s not over. There are weeks yet of danger ahead for us—anxious, tiring, stressful weeks.

To the many Canberrans who have reached out to me throughout this time, I thank you. Your contributions help me to be a better representative, and I have heard you. Canberrans have told me that they are frustrated with politics and want to see greater leadership and more effort put into reaching bipartisan agreement when it’s clearly in the national interest. They want to see more action on climate change. They are angry at what they see as government inaction. They have ideas about support for volunteers and managing the land, and they want to see the Labor Party stay strong on climate change and not abandon ambitious climate policies. People have spoken to me on the street, in the supermarket and out and about and they have contacted me via email, desperate to let me know that this is not business as usual which will be resolved with a business-as-usual response.

I know we will all have more to say about this once the immediate crisis is over and so, for today, tomorrow, and until these fires are put out, let me acknowledge, in relation to the fires near me, the professional response from the ACT government and the ACT Emergency Services Agency in terms of the fires directly affecting my community. As the minister responsible for recovery after the fires of 2003, I can see just how much has changed since that time. With the lessons learnt from those fires, where we lost four Canberrans and 500 homes on 18 January, we have been preparing for this time for the last 17 years, and it shows. The preparedness, the resourcing, the communication and the advice to communities have been impressive, and we have felt safe with the leadership of Andrew Barr, ACT ESA Commissioner Whelan and ACT Rural Fire Service Chief Officer Joe Murphy. We thank them for their efforts.

To all of the ACT and New South Wales emergency service workers and recovery staff who’ve been working so hard to keep people safe; protect property, livestock and wildlife; and look after and care for those who have lost or are displaced due to the fires: we are more grateful than you could know. To the coastal communities and the beautiful Snowy Monaro: Canberrans will be right by your side as you rebuild and welcome people back to your piece of paradise.

So, as we gather to pay our respects today, let us commit to remembering what happened this summer and to doing everything within our power as senators in this place to stop this happening again. Let us remember the loss of life. Let us remember the loss of property, livestock, national parks and native animals. Let us remember the mass evacuations. Let us remember the air pollution. Let us remember the anxiety, the stress and the anger felt by those affected and by those who could only stand by and watch. Let us join today and promise that, when the fires are put out, the air pollution dissipates, the crisp blue skies return and the rain comes, we will not forget the summer of 2019-20, and let us commit to doing whatever we can in the short, medium and long term to make sure we protect our country and communities from the very real and present effects of a changing climate.

Senator FARUQI (New South Wales) (16:18): The bushfire crisis has wrought havoc and destruction on our communities and on our country. People have been lost, homes have been lost, livelihoods have been lost, and millions upon millions of animals have died and masses of their habitat destroyed. It has been a tragic and devastating time for us and, of course, for people across the globe who have been watching.

I want to acknowledge those who have lost their lives and the communities that have been devastated by the ferocity of these fires. Thirty-three people’s lives have been lost to date. Some were volunteer firefighters, who died in tragic circumstances. Some were members of the community, who were killed while defending their homes. Others were American firefighters, who died while operating those crucial aerial water-bombers. They are all heroes. Every single one of these deaths is deeply, deeply tragic, and my deepest and heartfelt condolences and sympathies go out to their families, their friends and their loved ones.
I do have a personal connection with one of the victims, Julie Fletcher of Johns River. I had the sad honour of attending her funeral in Taree last year. Julie's sister, Daintry, is a close friend of mine, and my family have known their family for almost 20 years—from the time I lived in Port Macquarie. The home that was burnt to ashes was built by their father, Brian Fletcher. My dearest friend Daintry, Julie's sister, has sent these beautiful words for me to read out:

Julie was a much loved member of the Fletcher family which has had a long and strong association with the Johns River area, and she will be sadly missed. She had a strong work ethic and was a valued team member through her roles with the Commonwealth Bank, NSW Maritime and NSW TAFE.

The farm was Julie's peaceful space. Family and friends, past and present, enjoyed this tranquil tidal reach of the Stewarts River, the finger of agricultural land bounded by river, by lake and national park estate.

Julie's death was a traumatic event—she lost her life to an apocalyptic combination of fire and wind.

We are no doubt in unprecedented times of drought-forage and water shortages, associated low humidity and related fire—which will change the way we live in our region, our state and the world as we have known it.

As individuals and leaders we need to focus on planning and resourcing to protect our natural landscape diversity, our farming lands and our communities. This is the time for proactive, precautionary and collaborative action.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the NSW Rural Fire Service and importantly the volunteer firefighters who assisted us in the Johns River area and acknowledge the invaluable work done over these harrowing past few months.

I thank Daintry for these words. Like Julie's family, the wounds left by the bushfires and families left behind are going to be very, very hard to heal.

Another of the major tragedies of these fires has been the impact on First Nations people. Two centuries of colonisation have undone millennia of management and care of country by First Nations people. Now they are on the front lines of the climate and bushfire crisis, their country burning and their sacred places lost.

In this time of crisis, communities came together and did everything in their power to help and support those in need. Saying thank you to every one of them doesn't adequately address the gratitude I feel, but I will say it. Thank you to the fireys and the emergency workers who have literally put their lives in the line of fire. Thank you to the animal carers whose homes have become much-needed refuges for wildlife. Thank you to the thousands of other people from around Australia who have sacrificed so much to protect people, homes and habitat. Thank you to those who have opened up their homes and their hearts for bushfire affected communities.

Communities across Australia from city to country and from every corner have pitched in. They've rolled up their sleeves and they've got to work. When I was on the South Coast, recently, I met with residents and people from the CWA, Treading Lightly, Bushcare, Landcare and local farms. All of them have been helping out, actively providing food, medicine, housing and wildlife care as well as communications through social media. Others have opened up their wallets, and donations have been flowing in.

There are so many amazing stories which continue to inspire hope—people like Toni Doherty and Adam Mudge, who ran into a burning forest to rescue Lewis the koala from the fires at Long Flat in the Hastings Valley hinterland. Lewis sadly died, but he became iconic and raised awareness of what was happening to the North Coast koalas. I read Kathy Mikkelsen's story about being trapped in Mallacoota and evacuating first to Tathra and then again to Bega on Christmas Eve, finding themselves with six adults, six children and three dogs and desperately camping in the basement car park of the Safeway. Trolley attendant Ibrahim, who is a refugee from Sudan, stopped them and offered to share his home. Malua Bay pharmacist Raj Gupta, having lost his own home, desperately camping in the basement car park of the Safeway. Trolley attendant Ibrahim, who is a refugee from Sudan, stopped them and offered to share his home. Malua Bay pharmacist Raj Gupta, having lost his own home, kept his pharmacy open without power or mobile service so he could continue to provide the medical care his community needed.

I want to pay tribute to some amazing Greens women who have been working day and night for their communities. Carol Sparks, the Greens Mayor of Glen Innes Severn in the New England region of New South Wales, lost her home in Wytaliba. About half the village has been destroyed, including the local public school. Writing in The Guardian, she notes:

Throughout this time, every effort has been made to prepare and defend both private and public properties in my community of Wytaliba, NSW, which last week succumbed to merciless physics that pay no heed to opinion, nor folklore, nor politics.

Members of my family are in hospital. Two community members, my neighbours for decades, are lost to us. We have lost dozens of homes beloved by hundreds of people. An entire community has been all but wiped off the map.

Further south, Shoalhaven mayor, Amanda Findley, has been a true leader of her community, along with her fellow councillors. I had the opportunity to join Mayor Findley at multiple community meetings, and I'm genuinely so impressed by her empathy and practicality in providing support in whatever way, shape or form was needed. Deputy Mayor of Albury-Wodonga, Dr Amanda Cohn, was deployed to Glen Innes just before Christmas, and then to Queanbeyan over the new year as an SES volunteer. These are just some of the stories that continue to
inspire me and give me hope. But, despite these stories of heroism, we cannot forget that this is an unmitigated disaster. The environmental impact will perhaps never be able to be calculated. The trauma to individuals and the trauma to communities will be scars that perhaps never fully heal. This will be a moment that will be long remembered in Australia's history.

I also had the chance to visit the Mid North Coast twice in December to provide whatever support I could. I also went to the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital, which is at the forefront of rescuing koalas. Some say as many as 30 per cent of the koalas in this area have been killed. What they overwhelmingly told me was that the biggest problem was finding habitat to release the healthy koalas into. There was already a huge lack of protected koala habitat, which is now so much worse. In the wake of the fires there must be an immediate stop to the clearing of any more habitat, and no more logging of native forests.

I also drove down some food and supplies for wildlife carers on the South Coast a couple of weeks ago. It was, I must say, very surreal going through kilometre upon kilometre of burnt bush. I heard from wildlife carers about the lack of suitable land to release animals into, and the sheer psychological impact of seeing so many injured animals. I went to Pointer Mountain and heard about what we can learn from this disaster to plan much better in the future. More mobile firefighting units, disaster resilient communications infrastructure and trauma counselling are all needed.

I heard again and again about the powerful role of our ABC in maintaining emergency broadcasts to keep people informed. I also heard, again and again, that there was a lack of preparedness and planning for this crisis and that there are delays now in getting support and services to the people who need them, including local businesses who have lost everything. There is no doubt that people are going through a roller-coaster of emotions—anxiety, sorrow, anger, and fear of what might come.

One of the most heartbreaking and powerful parts of this trip was meeting with Nick Hopkins in Malua Bay at the site of his burnt down home. The Eurobodalla Shire has lost 450 homes. Nick told us he was two parts shattered and three parts enraged. He said, 'This wasn't a natural disaster; it was an unnatural disaster. The intensity of the fire and the drivers behind it were all man-made.' He said, 'Please, Mr Morrison, get real; join the dots—this is what climate change looks like.' Out there, the community knows firsthand what the climate crisis looks like. They told me, many times over, business as usual is long gone. So let this be a wake-up call for all of us.

Sadly, the elephant in this parliament is the climate emergency. People are paying the price for our government's selfishness in not taking action. I know many in this place will moan and groan and say, yet again, now is not the time. Well, when is the time? This is a well-worn tactic to shut down debate. It is time to get real. What Australia has experienced, and actually continues to experience with so many fires still burning since November, is not normal. If it is this bad now, imagine how bad it is going to be in 10, 20 or 50 years time if we don't take action now. People are crying out for this urgent action on all fronts. We need to give our firefighters the pay, the resources and the support they deserve instead of ignoring their pleas. We need to be much better prepared, because, sadly, this is just the start. We need a huge investment to build climate resilience and plan for the future. We need an immediate stop to digging up new coal, oil and gas. We need to plan to phase out our existing coal, because clinging to coal while our country burns is just plain reckless. Let's support a just and rapid transition to 100 per cent renewable energy that can actually create tens of thousands of jobs for the future.

I urge the Prime Minister to stop deflecting, to stop using weasel words when talking about the climate crisis. Show an iota of leadership and call it what it is—a climate emergency—then take action on the scale that we need for this emergency. That is the very least our communities deserve. What is needed most during this time of crisis is courageous, authentic, empathetic and wise leadership, leaders who are willing to step up, to make decisions for people and the planet—not their donors; not corporations. Our community has shown exactly this type of leadership and so must we, both at home and on the world stage.

Senator DUNIAM (Tasmania—Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries and Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism) (16:30): I join with other senators in expressing my condolences to those who have been impacted by these tragic events, these bushfires, across Australia this summer, starting with those who so sadly have lost loved ones—those people who went into this summer not expecting to lose a loved family member, a friend or a relative of some description. It's a terrible event and a terrible reminder of how much impact these events can have on us as a nation. But I also express my sympathies to those Australians who've lost their homes, who've lost their communities and, perhaps also, who've lost their livelihoods through damage to property.

There's no denying that communities across our country, through many of the mainland states, have been hit exceptionally hard. It will take a great amount of time for these communities to rebuild and to grow into the future. But the key message I want to provide today, in expressing my sympathies and condolences to those
affected, is that we are here with you. That is something that applies to all of us in this place, regardless of political persuasion, and across both chambers of this parliament. We will support you—those who are affected by bushfires as these communities, these families, these individuals rebuild their lives and get through, no doubt, the tough times that lie ahead. That's what's important now.

We as a country, as we traditionally have in times where tragedy has struck on the micro, the macro, the national level, band together as we regroup and rebuild for the future. That's what our focus should be. Certainly, from my point of view, that's what my focus is. Australians expect that from us and that's what I hope we deliver as a parliament, as a government, as individual senators and as members of communities. The measures that have been announced—unprecedented support from the Commonwealth government following these bushfires—go directly to that, to the heart of what's needed by these communities as they face the task of recovering and rebuilding. The initial support package, through the Department of Social Services, outlined by the Prime Minister in weeks past of $2 billion will support families and individuals who've been impacted by these terrible events. There is support for our vital primary production industries, including fisheries and forestry—two industries I have a particular interest in, given my portfolio responsibilities—incredible job-generators and economic activity generators in regional communities that have been hit hard by these bushfires. And there is support for businesses—the loans and grants that have been announced to help businesses with the short-term hit that these bushfires have caused them as they go about their business.

It's important that we support these sectors so that we can help communities continue to tick over while they assess their damage, look to rebuild, regroup and grow into the future. Of course, as the Assistant Minister for Fisheries and Forestry, and Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism, I have been working with affected industries. Starting with the tourism industry, right across the country, we've been engaging directly with stakeholders and business operators that are in affected regions, hearing from them about exactly what they need. And I do want to acknowledge the very fine work of Tourism Australia and Austrade—the two Australian government agencies responsible for tourism in this country—who've snapped into gear in an amazing way, working with states and territories and also regional tourism organisations and businesses directly to do what they can to ensure that the measures put in place by the Commonwealth in partnership with states and territories go some way to dealing with the issues that flow from a bushfire.

The Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Simon Birmingham, my colleague, announced a $76 million support package for the tourism industry, which, on an international level, promotes Australia as still open for business. We all know that there was a great deal of media coverage highlighting the bushfires overseas, and the imagery is nothing short of scary. We know from the reports provided back to us by the tourism industry that people were making decisions not to come to Australia for fear that they may be affected by the fires, so I hope the international marketing campaign in our key markets will go some way to supporting those businesses who have been affected. As the Prime Minister said when he was visiting Kangaroo Island, 'For those who have got bookings and are looking for a refund, give these businesses a break.' They're not big multinationals; they're small businesses with limited cashflow, and we need to remember that as we work to support them.

The promotion campaign is also a domestic one—'Holiday Here This Year'—which has been referred to in a number of contributions to this debate. It's important that those who aren't in bushfire affected communities consider going and spending their money and their time in these communities that have been affected. Those dollars spent in those communities will go a long way to helping these communities get back on their feet and remain resilient into the future. One in 13 Australians works in the tourism industry. It generates billions of dollars of economic activity, and I hope this $76 million package will go some way to helping that industry continue to be the contributor it is, particularly in our regional communities.

There is the funding for the events and attraction developments in regional communities. There is the Tasmanian experience of the 2018-19 summer, where the Huon Valley, a community south of Hobart, was hit by some pretty severe bushfires. In partnership with the state of Tasmania, the Commonwealth provided around $1½ million to develop a tourism attraction. That program is rolling out, and that has had a benefit for that community when other tourism attractions were lost. So the $10 million that was announced as part of the $76 million will go some way to working directly with communities to understand what it is they need to bring visitors back in so that they, as I said before, can spend their money. All of this comes at a time when the tourism industry would be at its busiest: summer. The bookings lost are going to have a significant impact for these small-to-medium businesses moving forward.

The forestry industry has obviously been one of the hardest hit industries out of the bushfires. We only have to look at some of the stats, which I'll run through in a minute, to understand the scale of the problem faced by the forestry industry, but one I hope we can find a way to overcome. The impact, too, will last for decades. Trees don't
take a couple of years to grow; they take 30 years to grow in the case of a radiata pine, which is one of our most prolific plantation trees.

Looking at New South Wales, in the Tumut-Tumbarumba region in the South West Slopes forestry hub, over 58,000 hectares of productive forests have been burnt, which is about 40 per cent of their harvestable resource— that's on the way to half of the trees they had available in their resources for harvesting over the next few decades. The Eden mill was damaged—the ANWE mill. Of course, those things can be repaired, and I hope that that will be the case. On the North Coast of New South Wales, the timber mill at Wyong was destroyed, and we saw plantation damage there. In East Gippsland we've had considerable damage and loss to hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest, and we don't even have a proper quantified statistic on that yet because our state and territory colleagues are still assessing the damage and still trying to put out these fires.

In South Australia, as was mentioned by Senator Anne Ruston a little earlier on, Kangaroo Island lost 95 per cent of its trees, valued at nearly a billion dollars. This is a significant impact and paints a picture of just how much work we have to do in partnership with our state and territory colleagues and the industry to make sure that we help this industry grow into the future. Thousands of jobs in regional communities depend on this industry—in Tumut alone, 5,000 direct and indirect jobs. In a small community of around 8,000 Australians, 5,000 of those people are dependent on this industry. So we look forward to working with our state and territory colleagues and the industry to make sure that we can replant these trees and, of course, reach our target of planting an extra billion trees.

When it comes to resilience and rebuilding for the future, we do need to consider things like fuel reduction. It's not a silver bullet, which some have tried to claim is how it is being promoted, but it is a measure that needs to be considered when thinking about how we can tackle and minimise the risk of bushfires occurring into the future. The Chief Officer of the Tasmania Fire Service, in a briefing earlier this year, stated that, given the fuel reduction work that's occurred since the year 2014, Tasmania has a 25 per cent lower risk of bushfires occurring. That is something we need to bear in mind as we talk about action on climate and doing things to minimise our emissions. For forests, mechanical fuel reduction and low-intensity burns are some of those measures we should be considering as real climate action.

I conclude by acknowledging that Australians are a resilient people—people who get up and make the best of a situation, who work hard to rebuild and to improve the situation for the future. I want to pay tribute to the tens of thousands of fire volunteers and, of course, paid fire personnel across the country from the various agencies they work for, but also to the Australian Defence Force personnel and reserves, who have done an amazing job right across the nation in supporting our communities.

I think it's important to note point (i) of the condolence motion we're considering today: that the Senate 'commits itself to learning any lessons from this fire season'. I think that's exactly what we need to be doing. I look forward to continuing to work with communities and the industries I represent as an assistant minister in this place. As I said, my message is that we can and we will rebuild, and we are with you.

Senator AYRES (New South Wales) (16:41): The condolence motion before us today allows the parliament to do its job following this national disaster: to mourn the loss of life; to begin a full accounting of the cost of the fires; to celebrate the unceasing work of volunteer and professional firefighters, and indeed all of the other volunteers, including small community based 'mosquito army' volunteers; and to assure our fellow Australians that the parliament stands with them now and over the months and years of rebuilding that are ahead.

There were parliamentary debates in November about the bushfires then in the north of New South Wales and in Queensland; and the dry, hot bushfire season has weeks and perhaps months to go. In April and May, we might conclude that the bushfire season is finally over, but many Australians will have months and years of hardship, uncertainty and loss in front of them.

These bushfires in Australia are unprecedented, but they were not unpredictable. Of course Australia has encountered bushfires before, but the duration, ferocity and breadth of the bushfires and the scale of the firefighting and recovery efforts in 2019 and 2020 are unprecedented. But this was predicted. Reviews of climate science for Australian policymakers, including the Garnaut Climate Change Review in 2008, set out the consequences of rising temperatures, reduced rainfall and increased evaporation rates. Garnaut said: … fire seasons will start earlier, end slightly later, and generally be more intense. This effect increases over time, but should be directly observable by 2020.

Expert advice, both commissioned and from fire experts who stepped forward themselves, sounded the alarm about the intensifying bushfire risk, with drought, heat, evaporation and other factors elevating all of the factors that made this summer so dangerous. Locals, farmers, RFS volunteers and national park staff also saw the dryness
of the bush, the lack of rainfall and the consequent increased fuel, and were concerned about elevated fire risk throughout all of 2018 and 2019. Yet we are a nation unprepared for bushfire catastrophe.

All of the fine words in here will ring hollow if the parliament, after doing its job today, fails to do its job tomorrow and in the months and years ahead—that is, complex, whole-of-government work that requires national leadership of a sustained and determined effort over many years to recover from fire and to keep our communities safe. That means working to ensure that our firefighters have the equipment that they need—the most effective and safe trucks and firefighting gear in local communities, state-of-the-art aircraft ready to deploy across the country and facilities for local fire crews to meet, train and work together. It means resourcing national parks, state forests, farmers, the Rural Fire Service and professional firefighters to the extent that it is possible to reduce hazard and work to insulate communities from fire risk. We must work closely with First Nations too, to use their knowledge and expand its practice, to care for country with the same skills and knowledge that they applied to look after land over the millennia.

Of course, no bushfire response will be meaningful without a genuine approach to climate change adaption and mitigation. We must adapt to the effects of climate change that cannot be avoided. Equally, Australia must contribute and lead local and global efforts to ensure that we in the world avoid what cannot be adapted to—no denialism, no running up the white flag on climate action, just evidence based, proportionate and effective climate action so that Australia can lead efforts to reduce dangerous emissions here and abroad and lead adaption efforts to ensure that communities and properties are safe from fire risk.

It will be difficult to count the cost of these bushfires. It's impossible to do today with so many weeks of fire ahead of us and smoke from the fires still hanging over the parliament, but the cost is, and will be, immense. Bushfires so far have cost us 33 lives—25 of those are in my state of New South Wales. Nothing that's said in this parliament, no carefully-crafted words, can make much of a difference to the families and friends and communities mourning their loss and traumatised by the violence of the fires. Some of them died defending their own homes. Some were caught in their homes or perished fleeing the fire. Some heroic volunteers were killed while fighting the fires to defend the properties and lives of people they didn't know in communities they had never visited before, and of course there were those who came from the United States to lend their expertise in aerial capacity who died in that aircraft accident in the Snowy Mountains.

Many Australians who have been injured and been traumatised will struggle at work and at home and will need the support and love of family, friends, workmates and all of us over the coming months. I know farmers who have selflessly volunteered with the RFS, leaving anxious family behind day after day, week after week, only to have their own property burn and their partners and children left to cope. Commercial fishermen who've abandoned their work and incomes to fight fires far away from their own homes will struggle to recover financially. Men and women in country communities, weary and afraid—on a constant hair trigger of responding to alerts and emergency broadcasts but trying to show courage and calm to those around them, particularly the children—need government to act, to lead and to back them. We should acknowledge too the other emergency service workers—paramedics, doctors, nurses and health workers—who've looked after people in the fires, and police who've staffed roadblocks and supported the firefighting effort.

The property loss has not been calculated—fences, agricultural land, factories and 2,000 homes in New South Wales alone. Add to that the lost jobs, ruined businesses and lost business opportunities for regions who've relied upon holiday-makers over January, the lost farm income from orchards and plantations destroyed, and jobs and contracts gone because plantation forests have been obliterated—all economic and, of course, that matters deeply, but it is a kick in the guts for rural communities who are already doing it tough following years of economic hardship and drought.

Communities who have lost homes are only beginning the process of recovery. The community of South Arm in the Nambucca Valley has set up a relief centre in the local hall, where volunteers are currently providing basic necessities to 30 families, many with young children, who've lost their own homes. The fastest school construction ever has seen children return to a brand-new school in Wytaliba for the beginning of the 2020 school year, just three months after the school was destroyed by fire. Imagine how important that is to a community for their kids to feel safe and loved and valued after the catastrophe that befell their village where two longstanding locals were killed.

There are 10 million hectares of burnt country with five million in New South Wales. There is incalculable animal and native vegetation loss. Some estimates claim 1.1 billion animals perished in the fires. Some animals on the precipice of extinction were pushed over the edge. Others, whose habitat has been substantially destroyed, are now endangered. We've all seen and been horrified by that footage. Rainforest in northern New South Wales—lush, wet, green and cool forests hard fought for by environmentalists and unburnt for millennia—is now
irreparably destroyed. This is unequivocally the biggest, most extreme bushfire event Australia has ever experienced.

While we mourn the devastating losses, we must also acknowledge that our emergency services have done an outstanding job of defending lives and property. Without their courage, experience and tireless work, who knows what the consequences for our communities would have been? Also, the work of the ABC has been exemplary. By providing the emergency broadcasts that country Australians relied on for the information that they needed to know, the ABC demonstrated once again its vital role in Australian life and bringing Australians together.

Today is the condolence motion to mourn the lost lives, to comfort the victims, to celebrate the bravery and commitment of volunteers and professionals who've fought these fires, and to say to these communities, 'We stand with you.' Tomorrow and every day after that, for as long as it takes, the parliament must demonstrate all of that as we support the rebuilding of shattered communities and work to keep Australians safe.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (16:51): Flying into Canberra yesterday from Melbourne, from the south, and looking across to Kosciuszko, to Lake Jindabyne and to the coast was a haunting thing for me. Although in three of the last six summers Tasmania has been devastated by unprecedented fires, I wasn't prepared for what I saw flying in that aeroplane yesterday. I hope that every politician coming into this place witnessed what I saw yesterday: the true extent of these bushfires.

I know it's been a very difficult summer for people here in Canberra, as it has been for many communities around this country. I wholeheartedly support the 10 points in this key motion today. I probably speak on behalf of every senator and every MP who has been on summer break when I say that not a day has gone by when I haven't thought about what's been going on around the country. Indeed, I'd be lying if I said I didn't think about it multiple times during the day. It is very hard to ignore.

As we are public figures, decision-makers, role models and leaders in our community, of course people look up to us. I'm not being political here at all, but the well-deserved criticism of our Prime Minister, our commander-in-chief, for going away on holiday during this time of crisis put us all under the same microscope as politicians and as decision-makers. I'm absolutely committed to making sure that, while we recognise in this condolence motion today the terrible suffering, the tragedy and the catastrophic impact on our communities, on our environment and on our economy, we go beyond these words as quickly as possible and take action.

I note the last two points of this motion—that the parliament:

(i) commits itself to learning any lessons from this fire season; and

(j) pledges the full support of the Australian Parliament to assist affected areas to recover and rebuild.

I would hope that learning any lessons from this fire season also means we're going to act on what we have learnt. So I'd like to start with the call for a royal commission, for a full independent inquiry into this catastrophic fire season—and, when I talk about this fire season, I'm going back to winter last year. We had fires burning in the middle of winter in this country, which is unprecedented. We had fires on the beach in September last year on the Sunshine Coast in places like Peregian Springs. Of course, we had the fires in November and the debates in here in December.

I called the Leader of the Greens at the time, Senator Di Natale, on New Year's Eve. I was in Melbourne Airport trying to get home and I witnessed in Melbourne a furnace of 45 degrees and 100-kilometre winds and news of communities being evacuated from beaches. I said to Richard: 'This is the crisis of our time, mate. This is really bad. This is going to be something that defines us and our time in this place.' Of course, the images that came out of those communities affected by these fires will haunt me for a long time, as I'm sure they will for those who are directly impacted. It's incumbent on us to make sure we do everything we can to make sure this doesn't happen again.

We called for a royal commission, an independent inquiry, early in the New Year, because you can't have a catastrophe of this scale without an inquiry. Having been through campaigning for a royal commission previously for the banking royal commission, I know the terms of reference are going to be critical to the success of this inquiry. They need to be as broad as possible. They need to be collaborative. I urge the Prime Minister and this government to work with all political parties and to make sure those terms of reference are right. There is no way that we can get this wrong. We need to be collaborative with communities. We need to have a fully independent commissioner and the time and resources to get to the bottom of this. If we are going to learn the lessons which are set out in this condolence motion we're debating today, we have to have a full inquiry into the mistakes that were made, the advice that was ignored, what worked well and—one thing that I continually get asked about in relation to this inquiry—why all the recommendations from previous inquiries weren't implemented. A number of them were, from my brief look at this, but I think it's really important that any royal commission does look—as the banking royal commission did—at previous inquiries and why some recommendations weren't implemented

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and what the barriers were to the implementation of those recommendations. Were they financial? Were they political? Were they scientific? The No. 1 bit of feedback I've got back from the community is they're very sceptical about any inquiry, which makes me a bit sad, because that's actually our job in here: to do the policy work, to get the detail, and get it done in a non-political environment. This has to be taken away from politics. I dare anyone to try to whitewash this inquiry, because the emotion is very raw. Thousands of people have had their lives turned upside down by this. This must be a full, independent inquiry that gets to the bottom of this so we can actually get recommendations. That is not an excuse for them to take no action while that inquiry is underway. There are things that parliament can do to act now. While I'm sure the Australian people are happy that we're in here today debating a condolence motion, I can tell you that they are so sceptical of us—every single one of us. They are so sceptical of their politicians. I actually can't think of anything sadder than that—that we've got to the point in this country where they don't believe that we're genuine when we get up in here and talk about the grief and what we need to do about it and how we need to avoid this happening again.

There are a couple of other points I want to make in my remaining time. During this break, I made the mistake of looking at my social media regularly—my Facebook and Instagram pages and my Twitter account. I've seen a lot of misinformation campaigns around fires before—every Greens MP does—but I have never seen anything like what I witnessed this summer with the misinformation campaign that somehow the Greens or greenies or conservationists were responsible for this tragedy. It was well-resourced. It was well-organised. There were bot armies on all social media pages spreading misinformation—downright lies. We had the Murdoch press going into overdrive, doing exactly the same thing. It was shameful, absolutely shameful. There have been protests outside their office in the last week. It's okay to lie in the gutter when you're with the Murdoch press.

I'm sorry, but this has to be raised today. If we are going to implement the points in this motion and learn from our mistakes—have an open and transparent inquiry, take this away from politics, listen to the experts and listen to the science—we need to understand that this kind of misinformation campaign, which is deliberately designed to deflect blame from those responsible for failures to adequately resource fire services and for not acting on climate change after decades of warning, and which is deliberately designed to demonise the Greens and others, is only going to be an impediment to action, to getting anything done.

I am going to mention how disappointed I have been with my Tasmanian Liberal colleague Senator Abetz, who just last week wrote an op-ed in *The Mercury*, repeating the same old lies and misinformation, the same old trash, about the Greens being responsible for these fires. This op-ed deliberately conflated a policy that we have to oppose regeneration burns in industrial forestry, which is designed to grow plantation forests, and our policy supporting strategic and scientifically based fuel-reduction burns, which has been Greens policy since I have been a member of the party—over a decade. It was deliberately conflating the two in order to confuse people. It's the same old gutter politics. It is the lowest form of politics and dishonesty to spread misinformation like that in a time of crisis. It is the lowest form of politics. I would like Senator Abetz to come into this chamber and apologise for the lies that he has spread—and I know he's been saying the same thing to people who have written to him, asking him to act on a royal commission and on climate change. That's all I'll say about this for now, but I am not going to let this go.

This country is getting hotter and drier; no-one can doubt that, surely. I know there are some people in this place who doubt that it's anthropogenic—that it's man made. That really saddens me, because while you're in denial you're never going to act. I note that Malcolm Turnbull recently talked about the 'terrorists' within his own party. I hate the use of that word, and I've said that several times in this chamber, because it's always misused and it's very strong language. But he's talked about the 'terrorists' within the Liberal Party who have done everything they can to tear down any form of action.

It's just not going to cut it with the Australian people anymore. When I spoke to Senator Di Natale on New Year's Eve, I knew this was going to be a turning point for this country—for the people I've seen out there who have been affected, or know people who have been affected, by fires in their communities or who have just been so gutted by what they've seen in the media, with the loss of wildlife and biodiversity.

In my own movement, the very first forest protest in this country—one might even say the 'morning of the earth' moment for the green movement, was in the Nightcap forests, Terania Creek, which I know Senator Ayres referred to in his speech. These areas were saved for future generations. The World Heritage forests in Tasmania have been saved for future generations. The biggest risk they now face is fire from climate change, and an increasingly dry climate. My movement recognises that; the community recognise that. But they don't want to see us fighting. They don't want to see us playing gutter politics. They want to see us coming together as a parliament, putting aside any political differences and acting on this emergency, this crisis, that we have found ourselves in.
If we don't reduce emissions—and quickly—and take the strongest possible action, we are going to find ourselves in exactly the same situation. To those who think that the Greens haven't been taking this seriously: Senator McKim and I initiated a big Senate inquiry, following the 2016 fires in Tasmania, that heard from hundreds of witnesses and made very good recommendations on the kinds of resourcing and processes that needed to be acted on to give us the best possible chance.

We initiated another inquiry, in 2017, on the role of the ADF acting on climate change. It looked at scenarios like we have just seen. I'm glad the ADF was mobilised. We have been talking about this now for a number of years, but no-one has taken it seriously. Those recommendations have never been acted on. They're now being quoted in media articles, and I'm glad about that and I hope that people will see that all of us in this chamber have a contribution to make.

I would urge all senators—while we're debating this condolence motion today, while we're respecting this tragedy, and while we're honouring the suffering and the sacrifice of those who died and those who suffered—that the greatest honour we can bestow on these communities and these people is to make sure this doesn't happen again, and to put aside any political differences and come together and act. Act on properly resourcing our emergency services. Act on looking at the role of the Commonwealth and how it coordinates with the states. But, most importantly, act on climate change. Listen to the experts; listen to the science. A government's No. 1 job is to protect its citizens. That's its most important job. And, by 'government', I mean not just this government but previous governments. We've failed this summer, and we absolutely cannot afford to fail again.

Senator HUGHES (New South Wales) (17:06): The bushfires across the east coast of the country have been devastating. Australians all over our nation have seen the devastation on their television screens and across their social media feeds over the summer, shocked by what they've seen. To have seen it up close and in person is something else—to drive down the South Coast of New South Wales and see towns decimated, businesses and houses just shells, sheds and cars burnt out, nothing but twisted steel remaining where wooden fence railings once stood. For the people who lived through it, I can only imagine. It was terrifying—I know that much, because they told me. There were people who had cars packed, ready to go, and people who didn't, because it wasn't coming in their direction—until it was.

Just over a week ago I spent some time going from Moruya to Huskisson and had the privilege of meeting some families affected by the fires—families facing what, to some, would seem an insurmountable challenge of having lost their home and almost all of their worldly possessions, but families who were already facing challenges, who have children with special needs. I met with service providers who work with them—who work with them at the best of times in difficult and less than optimal surrounds but who are now pulling together to support a huge number of families facing an uncertain future, something many of the service providers are facing themselves.

A very special thankyou to Jessica Hannan from Coast and Country Occupational Therapy, Claire Price of South Coast Speech Pathology, and The Family Place, all of whom work incredibly hard for their clients every day but who have put so many families ahead of themselves lately. At times when their own homes have been under threat, they've still ensured that they could meet clients—children with significant disabilities and their families—at evacuation centres to ensure that they're as calm as they can be in a time of heightened anxiety and stress.

As the mother of a child with autism, it became very evident to me early on that, whilst every person who had to leave their home would be struggling, for people with autism, who thrive on routine, security and certainty, this would be an almost unbearable situation, filled with anxiety and fear. The call went out to corporates for sensory toys—stress balls and fidget spinners, stuff that many see as silly promotional objects but that can serve as vital sensory tools that can help reduce anxiety. I was overwhelmed by the response and would like to acknowledge all those people and businesses who answered the call: James Dore, Ems For Kids headphones, Franklin Templeton Investments, the Commonwealth Bank, Healthcare Australia, Money3, DXC Technology, Deposit Power and Autism Awareness Australia.

But it went beyond that. LaughLand Weighted Blankets are currently making weighted blankets for two children outside of Glen Innes who lost everything, kindly paid for by Teri Barnes, a retired paediatric nurse who just wanted to help a family in need. And it was Matt Doran on the ABC saw the need to cover this story. As I've said to him, I got a number of calls from mums of autistic kids who were grateful to know someone in this place got them, that understood that bouncing on a trampoline all day, every day was so important to our kids. That's something that wouldn't have happened without the ABC coverage. And, whilst we won't always agree, I know that on this one politics and journalism did good!
To the parents, too many to mention, who posted in used but still usable sensory tools, including a weighted vest amongst other things: all of these things have been delivered to the service providers who are best placed to distribute them to the families that need them most. There's Erin Riley and Find A Bed, and Kate Doak, who introduced us—seeing synergies is a particular strength of Kate's. But Erin has done some unbelievable work supporting families at a time when they are most vulnerable without praise or publicity. Erin, you are a rock star.

Finally, to the families who have let me into their lives and are letting me find trampolines for them, Mr. Men books, headphones or whatever special-interest object it might be: you are amazing. You embody everything this country is; you are truly great Australians. Faced with the worst of circumstances, never once have you not had a smile, even through tears. You've seen every silver lining, though I can only imagine how that's been possible.

Your resilience and determination is something that I know will continue to be tested but I know is something that will ultimately see you succeed in rebuilding your life. And, as I work towards sourcing these special-interest requirements and anxiety-reducing gear, such as trampolines, I must thank the property manager of my electorate office, Dexus, who recently held a bake sale in our office lobby, raising funds towards the cause.

The overwhelming generosity of so many everyday Australians via the outstanding work of our volunteer firefighters and the unprecedented monetary donations we've seen demonstrates the best of the Australian spirit—that Australians are still wanting to help each other in the face of incredible hardship and that, as a community, we're always there to help a mate. To everyone affected: please know that as a parliament and as a nation we're all here by your side, walking with you every step of the way as you rebuild your lives and your communities.

Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (17:12): I rise today to speak to this important motion which acknowledges the tragic and devastating impact that this unprecedented emergency has had and continues to have on communities across Australia. Last night and this morning Canberra was again shrouded in a haze of smoke, a stark reminder that this crisis isn't over yet. Even where the fires are out or under control, the impact of this national emergency continues to be felt across Australia. To date we have lost 33 lives to these devastating fires. The fires have burned throughout some 46 million hectares of land, and we've lost roughly 3,000 homes, along with thousands of businesses, outbuildings and community facilities, as well as fodder, feed, farm machinery and fences, all of which is likely to have cost around $5 billion to our country. The impact these figures illustrate is devastating, but none is more so than the loss of life. To the families of those who have lost someone in these fires: all of us in this place are sorry for your loss and offer our heartfelt condolences. You're in our thoughts, and all Australians stand with you during this incredibly sad and difficult time.

In 1983 I was flying into Adelaide from Perth, and the Adelaide Hills were burning. On landing I was advised by my father that the house of my uncle and aunt Joe and Josie Heptinstall, who lived in Yanagin Road, Greenhill, had been burnt to the ground. I visited the site a few days later and noticed two things: firstly, it looked like it had been snowing at the site because of the ash; and, secondly, the randomness of the fire. One house was saved, one destroyed, all along the street. Twenty-eight South Australians died in that fire.

I know that there's been loss and devastation across this country. Sadly, over the summer another two people fighting fires on Kangaroo Island have died. The devastation on Kangaroo Island has been almost unbelievable. Half of this unique island has been burnt. Dick and Clayton Lang have died. Flinders Chase National Park has been devastated. Homes, farms, animals and businesses have been destroyed in the fire, which was described by those who fought it as unstoppable. In the beautiful Adelaide Hills, the Cudlee Creek fire has destroyed houses, farms, vineyards and businesses, and Ron Selth was killed. I pay tribute to all those men and women who risked their lives to protect others in these fires. However, you can recover from these terrible events. My uncle and aunt rebuilt, and those in these communities, with our help, will rebuild their lives and their communities. In the meantime, we need to focus on how we can prevent this happening again and ensure that we never have a repeat of this fire season.

In addition, we know that for many of the impacted regions economic activity is going to be the key to recovery, and tourism will play an integral role. Tourism is vital to our economy. It builds community, drives investment and increases the quality of life for communities across Australia. We know that overwhelmingly tourism operators tend to be small or micro businesses. A lot of the money they generate stays in the local community. It's spent in local shops and on local trades and circulates through our economy. These fires couldn't have come at a worse time, with many of these small businesses relying on the summer holiday trade to sustain cash flows throughout the quieter months. For these businesses, the loss of this market over their busiest period is going to be hard to bounce back from. But all Australians can make a real difference to these communities. We can help them by visiting them. We can help these communities rebuild and recover quicker by holidaying at home. If there is a place you have always wanted to visit but, for whatever reason, you haven't managed to get there, well, go. If there is a town that you used to visit but haven't been to for a few years, go back there. If there is a place where you go every year but you had to cancel because of the fires, reschedule when it is safe to do so.
The best way we can help communities recover is to spend our time and our money in bushfire affected regions. This is not a hard ask when you consider how many beautiful destinations and amazing experiences Australian regions have to offer.

It is also very important that we remember that, while some regions have been hit hard by fires, many places across Australia have not been impacted. Those regions also rely on tourism. Many of the wonderful bucket list destinations for international tourists and, indeed, for Australians are still operating and offering the same high-quality, amazing experiences people have come to expect from visiting Australia. It's important that people know Australia is open for business and ready to welcome visitors with open arms, the usual exceptional experiences and the hospitality our country has long provided.

For those communities directly impacted, we know the effect of these fires will continue to be felt for some time. This next phase is crucially important, as we rebuild infrastructure and work towards recovery. This includes communities like Bilpin in the Blue Mountains, some of whose people I was fortunate to meet today to hear firsthand the impact of these fires on their community and for their businesses. At the roundtable organised by the member for Macquarie, Susan Templeman, these individuals detailed their experiences and expressed concern about access to support. I want to assure not only the people I met with today but all of those communities who have been impacted by these fires that everyone here and all Australians stand with you during this time and will be with you every step of the way.

The generosity of Australians in supporting fire impacted communities has been heartening, from individual donations to fundraising events and plans, including those organised by our national sports organisations. Community sports clubs, the hub of so many communities, became places of refuge in many cases but in others, sadly, were damaged or destroyed. The sector's support for impacted grassroots clubs and the communities they bring together will help them rebuild and get back to the important role they play in so many Australians' way of life.

In closing, I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who have continued to fight the bushfires this summer: firefighters, farmers, volunteers, locals, neighbouring communities and Defence personnel. They've all played a part in ensuring the impacts of this summer of emergency have not been even more tragic. Your selfless devotion has been humbling to witness and is appreciated by each and every Australian.

**Senator DI NATALE (Victoria) (17:19):** Tragically, what we have today is the third condolence motion on bushfires that the Senate has done in four months. These bushfires have been burning along the eastern half of this country the whole time, right through the period of condolence motion after condolence motion, and they continue to burn still. That's because these fires have no precedent. Let me just say that, despite what the Prime Minister says, this is not the new normal, because we don't know what the new normal looks like. Things may indeed get worse than we are experiencing right now. These fires are simply the beginning of what a climate disaster looks like if we continue on the path that we're on, if we continue with the mining and burning of coal, oil and gas.

Australians have endured a horrific summer. We've had megafires, hailstorms and flash flooding. We've had smoke blanketing our cities for days, ranking Australian cities among those with the worst air quality in the world. We still don't know what the long-term impact of that will be. We've seen grassfires, drought and dust storms, all coexisting. It's important to understand that the crisis we have confronted over the summer comes from one degree of warming, and yet all of the science tells us that, if we continue on the path that we're on, we are on track for three degrees or more. Who knows what 'normal' looks like under those conditions? It is absolutely critical now that, if we are to avert the trajectory we are on and if we're going to restrict the rise in temperatures to 1.5 degrees or less, we have to stand up and do something. Let's not forget the three US support crew who tragically died when their air tanker crashed in Cooma. They came here to help us and they lost their lives doing it.

We are witnessing an ecological catastrophe. A billion animals—I'll say that again: one billion animals—perished, pushing species to the brink of extinction. Countless more have been injured with nowhere to go. Habitat has been destroyed. We've seen the devastating loss of property, with 3,000 family homes gone. It is
destruction, it is carnage and it has wrought so much grief, so much sadness and so much trauma on the Australian people.

We offer our deepest condolences to the families of those who have died in these tragic bushfires currently raging across Australia—to all of those who have lost their family, their friends, their homes or their livelihoods. But condolences are not enough. Sympathy is not enough. Our thoughts are not enough. The responsibility we have in this place is to ensure that we do everything we can to prevent this from happening. There is one thing that we can do to help prevent this from happening, and that is to get pollution down and to get it down quickly.

We have so much power as a federal parliament to protect Australians from the ravages of climate change. The choice is up to us. We can choose the future for those families who live in regional communities and are exposed to this danger each and every day. But that requires some honesty. It requires accepting the science. It requires an acknowledgment that we are turbocharging these catastrophic fires through the burning of coal, oil and gas. We can keep on carrying on as we have, but we will be condemning so many more to the fate of the 33 people tragically killed, the billions of animals lost and the group of volunteers who have put their lives on the line and who are traumatised and exhausted.

This is not a surprise. This was predicted. Unprecedented does not mean unforeseen. Climate scientists and economists have told us precisely what was coming, and it has arrived. What was in the background is now in the foreground. We've transformed our oceans and atmosphere, and that in turn is transforming how we live our lives in Australia. The climate emergency touches everything: our mental health, our physical health, our ecosystems. It touches the meaningful and sacred sites of our First Nations peoples. It impacts on our economy. This climate emergency has cost up to $103 billion in lost private and public property. It's touched the very fabric of who we are as Australians.

The climate emergency affects us at some of the most basic levels. It affects our holiday plans with our families, which of course means it affects tourism income for regions who depend on it. It has an impact on those people who put their lives on the line, our firefighters, and their partners, who have to hope when they kiss their partners goodbye that they'll return home safely. It affects our kids. Schoolchildren are anxious. They can see things changing around them. They can see the tragedy wrought in their local communities. These are scars that will cut deep and that will be with these kids forever. So it's up to us in this place to decide whether we're going to allow these risks to escalate, to increase, or whether we in this place fulfil our responsibility, our primary responsibility, to keep people safe.

For too long, we have been confronted with the false choice that to act on the climate crisis is to compromise our standard of living. But we know that reducing pollution is critical to not just maintaining but improving the standard of living that Australians right around the country enjoy. We have to accept the uncomfortable truth that our climate crisis has been a driving force behind these tragic fires. What is so disappointing is that the motion we're speaking to refuses to even acknowledge that climate change has turbocharged these fires and ravaged our country.

It is utterly shameful that with these fires still burning the Prime Minister has been out there with his chequebook using money to bribe states to open up toxic gas fields, frack the Pilliga Forest and threaten what little groundwater is left in this drought-stricken part of the country. Gas is a fossil fuel. The extraction, transport and combustion of gas drives up pollution. Gas is part of the problem, not the solution. We cannot continue to extract gas and mine coal and to burn those resources and believe that somehow we aren't increasing the risk of fires across Australia.

What the government's actions are saying right now is that this government would rather see these natural disasters getting more intense and more frequent than to see the profits of some of the biggest donors to their political party dry up. If fires of this unprecedented scale aren't a wake-up call and if this isn't a moment of truth for the Prime Minister and this government then what will be? If an extinction crisis that has wiped out the habitat of some of our most threatened plants and animals isn't enough then what will be? If a billion plants and animals lost and gone, some of them forever, isn't a wake-up call then what will be? If the deaths of 33 people, many of them putting their lives on the line to fight these fires, aren't a wake-up call then what will be? We can't keep burying our heads in the sand.

The good news right now is that people across the country understand the scale of the crisis we're in and understand the scale of the threat before us. They are coming together like never before, demanding action on the climate crisis. We won't accept that these fires are the new normal and simply adapt and do nothing about increasing pollution, because whatever we adapt to won't be the new normal; it will be surpassed as the climate system spirals further out of control.

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I don’t want to see another condolence motion delivered in a few months time. I don’t want to see us grieving after another summer where people have died. I want us to take advantage of the opportunities that come with transitioning away from polluting energy sources like coal, oil and gas and to embrace the billions of dollars of investment and the hundreds of thousands of new jobs that will come with the renewable energy revolution. It is up to us right now. We have the power to decide. We must take action on the climate crisis if we are to ensure that Australians are safe. It is absolutely critical that, in this moment of truth, the Prime Minister understands what he needs to do.

Senator VAN (Victoria) (17:35): I too rise today to express my condolences on the tragic loss of life and the devastation caused by the recent fires right across Australia but particularly in my home state of Victoria. In this place, I offer my heartfelt grief for all of those who have lost loved ones, friends, livelihoods and homes.

There is no doubt that the extensive nature of these fires has shocked the community. The size of areas burnt, the tragic loss of 34 lives and the extent of damage to property, whilst not unprecedented, has required the brave efforts of many to combat. But, despite being tested, or perhaps because of it, we have also seen an amazing response from Australians and the international community at an operational response level and also in rallying together to support affected communities in the areas impacted by fire. Our emergency services support organisations, spontaneous community groups and Australian Defence Force service men and women have worked continuously since August responding to fires across Australia. They have worked long and hard hours to respond to these fires. The generosity of the Australian people is amazing, and in times of crisis like these that generosity is front and centre. Even today, community organisations continue to fundraise through local markets, sporting events, neighbourhood gatherings, BBQs and so on. Volunteer organisations are also the beneficiaries of this very Australian response, not only through financial donations but also through an increased interest in people looking to join and contribute their time to various causes.

I was proud to spend time last week in East Gippsland with a wonderful organisation BlazeAid. They are a volunteer based organisation that helps to rebuild the lost fences of our farmers, and this in turn helps them rebuild their lives. Volunteering for BlazeAid was an experience that utterly humbled me, and I will continue to work with them. We were in a little hamlet called Wairewa, where 11 out of 30 homes were destroyed—just near Buchan in East Gippsland. The residents had lost so much and the volunteers I was with had so much to give. Every single one of them captured the Australian spirit. True Australian characteristics of selflessness, resilience and courage abounded. The stories of the farmers who stood and defended their homes or defended their neighbours’ homes deeply moved me. Their internal strength and optimism to already be doing what it takes to rebuild showed me their strength and resilience and gave me a sense of optimism for their future.

As a parliament for all Australians, we place on record our thanks to all of those who provided donations and hours of volunteer work to supporting our fire-devastated regions. The generosity of giving and the spirit in which it has been given should inspire all Australians. As a country, we will continue to face challenges, but it is clear that we will face them together as a nation. In my home state of Victoria, sadly, four lives were tragically lost, and I express my condolences to their families.

We also thank the tireless work of many organisations in Victoria who have assisted with the response and recovery effort. This includes the volunteers and career staff of our various emergency services who continue to work tirelessly on fires around the state and to support their interstate colleagues as well. The efforts led by the Red Cross and the Salvation Army have been ably supported by many spontaneous community groups, including BlazeAid, which I mentioned earlier. They continue to assist individuals and the community to deal with the immediate effects of the fires and to start the recovery process. We also acknowledge the often forgotten roles that our local governments, media and utility companies play. They communicate information to the public, make areas safe and restore essential services as soon as possible.

As outlined by the Minister for Defence earlier and ably overseen by her work, the work of the Australian Defence Force, both full-time members and the second division reserve members, and our international partners has assisted the combat and recovery efforts of local authorities not only in Victoria but right across Australia. On behalf of all Victorians, I thank them for their dedication and their efforts to protect life, property and our environment from the destruction of this summer.

But, as we know, Australians are not unfamiliar with bushfire devastation. We have gone through this terrible process in years past. The Black Thursday fires in 1851, Black Friday in 1939 and the Central Australia fires in 1974 that burned 117 million hectares are all examples of this. Myself, I remember all too well Ash Wednesday in 1983 and Black Saturday in 2009. Fire has tested the Australian community before. In each of these fires, Australians have suffered significant personal and community losses. The stories of anguish and heartbreak were not dissimilar to the ones we are hearing now.
However, I'm confident that Australians and Australia will come back from these fires. The bush will regenerate and regrow and people will mourn and then, with our help, rebuild their lives, their homes, their businesses and their communities. This is the time that support and help from government is most critical to help people access the support they need, whether it be financial support, health and mental wellbeing services, rebuilding local businesses, providing critical infrastructure or the encouragement to bring visitors back to regional Australia. Governments at all levels will have a vital role in supporting recovery efforts and ensuring people are able to recover and move on from the devastating impact of these fires. It is important to remember that governments need to do this in consultation and partnership with local communities.

I very much encourage all members of this place and the wider community to visit regional holiday and tourist areas again, especially those in my home state such as Lakes Entrance, Mallacoota, Bright, Omeo and the greater alpine region. Your support, business and spending will be vital in helping these communities get back on their feet after this disaster.

I would also like to issue a call to action to everyone in the community, but especially to our younger generation, to follow in the footsteps of previous generations and volunteer in their communities. Australia has been built on the back of volunteers. And now more than ever I believe all who can should consider becoming a volunteer. It doesn't have to be fire related. Just give of yourself what you can. I would love to see the rates of volunteering double or more as a show of respect for the sacrifices others have made in their service. I feel very proud that two of my staff volunteer for the Red Cross Emergency Services and the ACT Rural Fire Service, and I thank them for their commitment and their service during this fire season.

Finally, again, I extend our condolences to all who have suffered destruction and loss as a result of these fires. Our thoughts are with you and your loved ones, and we will continue to support you as best as we can to recover.

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (17:43): Our deepest condolences go to the families and friends of the 33 people that have lost their lives. Our deepest sympathy goes to those that have suffered so much as a result of these fires. Through this motion we provide an opportunity to pay tribute to all those that have risked so much in the fighting of these fires and we recognise the extraordinary contribution of volunteers and the work of the ADF personnel that have been deployed to help communities in dealing with this national tragedy.

We also express our deep gratitude to those who came from many countries to share the fight with us. We acknowledge the deep trauma experienced by the fire affected communities across Australia and especially in the south-east of the continent. I have recently toured some of these communities and I'm in awe of their courage and their resilience. We know that the economic impact of the fires will be long-lasting and will impede recovery. I can't think of an industry that has not been savagely affected by these fires. I want to pay particular tribute, however, to a great Australian institution: the ABC. The ABC has provided an extraordinary service. The national broadcaster has sustained people threatened by fires and has kept them informed and connected, and I am sure it has saved lives.

I want to also pay tribute to the work of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre. This is a CRC which is not a household name like the ABC, but its work has been of crucial importance in preparing Australia for the dangers of the extended fire season. The CRC has operated in its current form for eight years. I was very pleased to be able to support its funding while in government—$47 million back in 2013. It was a successor to a bushfire CRC. I have long supported the work of this organisation because it brings together the expertise of the universities, our science agencies, our emergency services, our government departments—both Commonwealth and state—and international partners. It is of particular irony that the CRC for bushfire and natural hazards is running out of money this year. Under the rules of the CRC, under the legal requirements of the CRC, it can't be allowed to trade while insolvent, so it must actually wind up this year. To make matters worse, because of the government's policy, which has meant that public benefit CRCs can't apply for money, they are restricted. On top of that, they can't reapply for money and they can't be re-funded under the government's change to policy. So they've had a double strike in regard to their operations.

The current crisis has shown why we need organisations like the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre and why it is so important that it is able to find alternative funding sources. We've seen this situation arise in other circumstances—the Reef and Rainforest CRC, for instance. We've seen it in regard to the Antarctic. Governments have found it necessary to develop alternative funding models. I think an institute for fire research is called for under these circumstances, based on a CRC model. If you look at the maps—on Fires Near Me, for instance, by the New South Wales Rural Fire Service—which are produced for predictive ember attacks, they are produced as a result of research undertaken by this CRC. If you're actually facing the prospect of a fire front and you can predict with some accuracy where ember attacks are going to develop, it is of enormous value. The work of this type by scientists, emergency services and government agencies is just so important and should not be allowed to wither in circumstances such as this.
What we have seen, unfortunately all too often, is that the work of scientists has been disregarded in regard to the struggles against fire in this country. We've seen the circumstances in regard to the science of climate change itself. Scientists who continue to conduct research that saves lives ought to be properly funded. Research and technologies keep the death toll so much lower than it otherwise would be. Given we're facing circumstances now of fires of such unprecedented intensity—you only have to examine the consequences of what occurs on these fire grounds to understand just how intense these fires have been—we simply can't pretend that we haven't been warned. Our scientists, and the work of our fire services, have produced warnings that have been ignored. I recall, just late last winter, the Bushfire CRC produced those maps that demonstrated where the fires were likely to strike—and how accurate they were. In April last year, the former fire and emergency services chiefs from all states issued statements explaining what the effects would be of climate change increasing the likelihood of extreme weather events, and they pointed out the bushfire season was lasting longer and that each year the number of days listed at very high or catastrophic risk were increasing. They said the fuel loads were increasing because the opportunities to safely carry out fuel reduction burns were decreasing as winters were becoming warmer and drier. The former fire chief said that the higher temperatures had meant that the forests and grasslands are drier and ignite more easily and burn more readily. They noted that dry lightning storms were increasing in frequency, sparking many bushfires that are difficult to reach and control. We have to see it in this city. You see what's happening with the Adaminaby Complex fires or the Orroral Valley fires, just how intense these fires are and how difficult they are to actually deal with.

What we have seen is the fire season across Australia, and, in the Northern Hemisphere, the pattern has been repeated. They're seeing that they can't rely upon the exchange of firefighting and fire equipment, such as water bombers, the way we used to. We also understand that the fire chiefs have warned us that the increasing overlap of the northern and southern fire seasons is limiting the ability of fire services to actually help each other. This, in turn, raises questions about what we must do to provide for ourselves, the resources this country needs, and whether or not we can continue to rely upon volunteers for month after month after month, or whether or not we need to look at what actually occurs oversees with the professionalisation of firefighting services. It raises questions about just how reliant we can be on the types of firefighting practices that we have traditionally relied on in this country.

Everything the fire chiefs have predicted has happened. Everything the scientists have predicted has happened. But they've been ignored. It's almost as if, in a political sense, we've failed this community, this country. We've been overwhelmed by events. We have circumstances where the fire chiefs can't even get a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss these questions. If we were to stand with the bushfire affected communities, as this motion calls on us to do, we cannot ignore the warnings of the professionals. We cannot ignore the warnings of the experts. We owe it to everyone who has been affected by the fires to take note. We owe it to all of those who want this country to be able to do so much better and to live without the fear of fire. It has been demonstrated why it was so necessary this last summer.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (17:54): I rise today to give a contribution on this condolence motion and of course associate myself with comments by many in this place in relation to just what a devastating summer we have had—the numbers of people who have lost homes, have lost property, have lost livelihoods; individuals who have so terribly, sadly, lost their lives as a result of these terrible fires. We know that communities have been destroyed, tested; they're suffering. Our environment has been ravaged. Almost eight million hectares have been burnt across the country in those states that have been ravaged—millions and millions of hectares, much of which was so special to this country that we had given it World Heritage protection. Over a billion animals have been killed. And we know that the figures aren't even finalised on that. Many more animals are dying today because of the lack of food and clean water, because their habitats have been destroyed. We also know that hundreds of billions of insects have been lost. And this is going to have a huge impact on the ability of our environment and ecosystems to recover.

I grew up in East Gippsland. I went to school at Orbost High. My family have property about an hour up the Bonang Highway from Orbost. My parents' property was ravaged by fire on New Year's Eve. Our neighbour's property was ravaged by fire. The whole community—Goongerah, Martins Creek—faced the brunt of the fires over that week. And even just this weekend, when I was talking to my dad, as they're trying to pull their lives back together, there was another fire only 10 kilometre back down the road.

These communities knew that this season was going to be a horror season. The people who live in these areas have experienced bushfires before. I remember, as a kid living on the farm, in the middle of the heat of summer we always watched how the temperature was, how the wind was going. Dad would talk to us about whether this was a high-fire-danger day or not. Any whiff of smoke would set a bit of a chill, and you knew to watch out and be prepared to leave. In all those years, all those summers, as my dad told me on New Year's Eve, "We have never,
ever seen anything like this before.’ It’s a very similar story to what I’ve heard when I’ve visited other fire-ravaged communities in my own state, South Australia, whether that be in the Adelaide Hills or on Kangaroo Island, or last weekend, talking to locals in the Blue Mountains: while fires have always had a place and been there in the Australian landscape, particularly in the bush, these fires have been different. They have been more intense than ever before. The heat has just incinerated everything in its path.

I was talking to a group of people who were fighting the fires and protecting their homes on Kangaroo Island a number of weeks ago, when fire ravaged there over the new year period, and they were talking about the animals that were leaping out of the flames as they were trying to battle these fires. Days later, once the flames subsided and people walked and were able to check out what property had been lost, the charred animal carcasses were a stark reminder of just how brutal these fires had been. These animals had nowhere to run.

The grief that people feel in these communities right now is palpable. Some are frustrated. Many are angry. Everybody is grieving. What I continue to hear, over and over again—whether it is from individuals who have been on the front line fighting these fires, small-business owners in towns that rely on summer visitors and the tourist dollar, school teachers who are having to deal with the shock and grief and experiences that young kids in these communities have had over summer or, indeed, members of my own family—is that people are angry, and what they are angry about is that leaders were warned that things were getting worse.

Yes, these fires have been unprecedented, but they were not unforeseen. The former fire chiefs wrote to the Prime Minister and members of his government in April last year, asking for a meeting, urging him to meet with them to discuss what plans needed to be put in place. They were dismissed and rebuffed. Only at the end of last year, before we all went on our summer break, last time we were in this chamber, our Prime Minister was still refusing to meet with these fire chiefs and take their warnings on board. So people are angry about that. They're also angry that the scientists have been warning that conditions are getting worse and that climate change is getting a hold. If we are serious about confronting and dealing with dangerous global warming then we have to stop making climate change worse, and that means we have to stop the expansion of fossil fuels. You don't deal with climate change while continuing to make pollution larger and more dangerous.

Our planet is sick, and Mother Nature is crying out for our help. There is nothing more emblematic of that right now than the scenes of devastated bushland and forests and charred animal bodies, and that's just in the places where the fires were. We know communities outside the fire zones have been impacted by the devastation this summer. Here in Canberra, locals have been struggling to deal with the hazardous levels of smoke haze. In Sydney it has been the same. In small towns and communities right throughout the South Coast, people are asking: why is it that we're having to put face masks on our kids before they go to the playground? It is simply not good enough to say, 'We're sorry for your loss,' without acting and making the change that is required.

When I hear the pleas from members of the community for more action and for honesty from politicians, I totally understand why people were furious that the man in the top job, as Prime Minister, was not even here when things started to get really bad. The Prime Minister went on holidays as this disaster unfolded, after he had ignored the advice of experts, scientists and everyday people who were already choking from smoke and dealing with fire on their doorstep.

I understand why people are angry and frustrated. As we move and talk and respond to this crisis in this place now, we all have a responsibility to do better, to do more and to stop making climate change worse. I know there are still some people in this place and in the other place who continue to deny the truth, the facts and the science of climate change and its link to these extreme bushfires, but the bulk of people in this place are not that stupid. Most people elected to this parliament can see what every other Australian can see, and that is that we are in the midst of a climate crisis, an environmental catastrophe. If you can see that, if you can hear what the experts are warning us of, it is irresponsible for us not to act and not to take the necessary steps to deal with the dangers on our doorstep. Make no mistake: the fires that we have experienced over this summer are climate fires. Make no mistake: the community expect us to respond to this climate and environment emergency. Any political party or politician who fails to take on board the warning that Mother Nature is giving us to listen to the pleas for action from our community do so at their peril.

This is a moment when Australia needs to step up. The rest of the world has been watching as our country has been on fire and as our national iconic animals like the koala are being burnt or are suffering from a lack of clean water and food. As children walk down the streets with their faces covered by face masks because of the smoke, the whole world has been watching Australia this summer, knowing that this is the warning that the globe has had about the very real impact and dangers of climate change. The whole world knows that what has happened here is the very first glimpse of the climate crisis unfolding, and this is our moment—this should be Australia’s moment—to step up on the world stage and to say we need a global pact to deal with this devastating catastrophe. We need Australia to call on our allies to work with us to reduce pollution and to stop making climate change
worse. In order to do that, Australia must lead the way. We must stop pretending that we can carry on exporting more coal and fossil fuels, burning fossil fuels, continuing business as usual and pretending that this crisis simply will go away. It will not. If we are serious about responding to the crisis we have before us, we must make the change, and that is stopping the expansion of fossil fuels, restoring our environment, protecting our animals, giving a real voice to the environment and starting to listen to what Mother Nature is telling us.

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business) (18:09): I too rise to make a contribution to the condolence motion on the bushfires. This season's bushfires have been unprecedented and have, sadly, resulted in widespread damage and, heartbreakingly, in the loss of life. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of the 33 people who have lost their lives in bushfires this season, including the nine firefighters who so bravely served the Australian people. With more than 3,000 homes lost, more than 11 million hectares across our country burnt and a significant impact to wildlife and livestock, we must all come together to rebuild.

To the firefighters who have given their time and risked their lives to help their fellow Australians and to protect lives and property: you are the true heroes in our community. We also thank those who've come from overseas to help our communities. You are our true friends. And to those who are still out there fighting fires as the fire season continues: we are fully behind you.

As the minister for small and family business I have been particularly concerned about the devastating impact this bushfire season has had on Australian small businesses. As we all know, small businesses are the backbone of the Australian economy and the lifeblood of communities. These businesses supply essential goods and services to their region and also employ a significant number of people in their communities. Recovery of these small businesses will be essential to the recovery of these communities as a whole. The Prime Minister, the Treasurer and I recently held a roundtable with peak bodies and local business representatives to hear firsthand how small businesses have been affected and what we can do to assist. We recognise that tens of thousands of small businesses have been impacted by the bushfires—small businesses within the disaster declared areas and also those in surrounding areas.

From the small businesses in Bilpin that I recently visited that have lost everything in the fires to those in Braidwood that have suffered loss of income from the closure of the Kings Highway, the devastation and impact is felt right across our great country. At the roundtable we were humbled to hear from Pierre from Kangaroo Island. Pierre reminded us that, despite the fires, Kangaroo Island, like so much of those affected regions, is still open for business and welcomes our patronage. In Bilpin, which many will know is known as 'the land of the mountain apples', I can assure you that they are still making apple pies. Drop in and visit the fantastic small businesses there, sample their outstanding apple cider and take home some apple pies. The resilience of the small-business community is humbling, and we will work with you to rebuild.

As many Australians have already done, I encourage you to visit those communities who were affected by bushfires, spend some money at their local small businesses, spend a weekend enjoying their hospitality and show these communities that their fellow Australians are with them. As a government we are working hand in hand with state governments and local governments, not just in the immediate short term but in the long term. We have announced the first tranche of support for affected small businesses, including grants, concessional loans, financial advice, tax relief and, importantly, local economic development plans. Importantly, the package recognises that the recovery needs to be locally led, not Canberra led. This comprehensive package deals with the challenges we know small businesses in these areas are facing and will continue to face.

To provide immediate assistance to small businesses and not-for-profit organisations that have suffered damage from the fires, the federal government will top up disaster recovery funding arrangement category C grants from $15,000 to a nationally consistent amount of $50,000, ensuring equity in grant arrangements. We are also providing much-needed tax relief for affected small businesses by further deferring the lodgement date and payment of business activity statements, income tax returns and fringe benefit tax returns to 28 May 2020. We are also allowing businesses to vary pay-as-you-go instalments for the December 2019 quarter to nil and claim refunds for any instalments paid in the September 2019 quarter.

In partnership with state governments, we are providing generous concessional loans to small businesses affected by the fires. Impacted small businesses are able to apply for a loan of up to $500,000 to assist with their recovery. These loans can be for up to 10 years and include a repayment holiday of two years with no interest accruing during this period and then an interest rate of half the government bond rate, currently less than one per cent. This additional assistance will provide a solid foundation for small businesses in disaster declared regions, in the early recovery phase, to help them get back on their feet.
Importantly, to assist local communities to get back on their feet as soon as possible and to help them build resilience into the future, the government will work with local stakeholders and all levels of government to develop local economic recovery plans. These plans will provide a single community-led view on the priority interventions required to support the medium- and long-term economic recovery and rebuilding phases. As the Prime Minister has previously stated, these recovery processes will be locally led and will be developed at the regional level and engage local councils, state governments, tourism associations, local chambers of commerce, critical supply chain businesses and community organisations.

Financial advice for affected small businesses is so important at this time. Small businesses can contact 132846 for information about the assistance that is available to help them recover from the bushfires. We are also establishing the Small Business Bushfire Financial Support Line and we are funding additional financial counsellors. The hotline will be staffed by small business specialist financial counsellors who will be able to quickly assess needs and provide the appropriate referral to other service providers. They will be trained to triage small businesses facing hardship and distress as a result of the bushfires and to advocate and negotiate on their behalf. The hotline will offer fast, free and easily accessible advice for small businesses.

The bushfires have significantly impacted a number of communities across Australia. To those who have lost family members and loved ones in the bushfires, the thoughts of your fellow Australians are with you. Throughout the fire season we have seen some remarkable examples of human spirit. We have seen the selfless work of our volunteer firefighters, for weeks and months on end, protecting homes and lives. We have seen locals throughout fire-affected communities offering their homes as shelter to those who are stranded. We have also seen countless individuals donate their hard-earned money to bushfire relief. We can be very proud that Australians from all walks of life come together at times like these. I have been particularly humbled by the resilience and fighting spirit of small businesses affected by the bushfires. We are 100 per cent behind you as you recover and we will continue to be there as you build back better.

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (18:18): I rise to make a contribution regarding this condolence motion and the bushfire crisis that has torn through our country in the last three months. The images that we have seen have been transmitted around the globe. They are hard for us all to come to terms with. The ferocity, the force and the power of these fires has left a real mark on our country's consciousness.

Bushfires affecting an area the size of Scotland is not normal. People dying because of fires of this magnitude and species being pushed to extinction is not normal. Hearing the cries and stories of Australians during this crisis has been simply gut-wrenching. Labor stands with all of those Australians affected by the bushfire tragedy that has gripped our nation. We are resolute in our commitment to all the families affected. Unfortunately, the crisis and the consequences of the fires will be felt for a very long time.

To our regional firefighter warriors: you have done our community and the Australian people immensely proud. You are the real heroes of this natural disaster. Some have made the ultimate sacrifice during the fires, and my thoughts and prayers are with the families who have lost their loved ones. My heart goes out to the communities because they also feel, very deeply, the loss of their community members. I want to also put on record my thanks to our overseas friends who have come to our aid at this time of crisis to lend their support. As we know only too well, some of those paid with their lives as well. So our heart goes out to them and their family, and we thank those nations for coming to our aid. Words are really not enough during a tragedy like this. I believe the actions of those who fought these fires, and the generosity of those who have helped in whatever way they can to address this crisis, have displayed the best of our country in extremely trying times.

My home state of Tasmania did not escape these fires, with blazes occurring in the lead-up to summer, and then a single fire at Fingal in northern Tasmania turned into two fires during the crisis. The east coast, highlands and southern Tasmania were all affected by the fires. Thankfully, no lives were lost. The Tasmanian Fire Service began back-burning towards the fire front to reduce the intensity of the inferno. Once it reached their containment lines, although the fire burnt for weeks, it was finally extinguished.

While Tasmania has been affected by this crisis, the majority of the devastation has affected our mainland neighbours. New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia faced fires of unmatched ferocity, fires which we have never before seen in this country. I thank the Tasmanian firefighters—in particular, rural firefighters and volunteers—who travelled to the mainland states to help our neighbours fight these fires on the front line. A dangerous mix of consistently hot days, no rain and dry, windy conditions brought this country to its knees. Fire services did not have the resources to fight these fires. We on this side know, and the Australian people also know—and now, I hope, those opposite understand—that we need greater investment to ensure that we can fight these fires and this type of crisis going forward.
Consistently hot days, no rain and dry and windy conditions may well be the new norm in Australia for decades to come, and therefore Australia must be prepared. If it takes an investment of 50 Elvis helicopters to help fight fires in years to come, then that's the investment that we should be making as an Australian government. Erickson Air-Crane helitankers were first brought out to Victoria in December 1997. We have seen them fight fires, and they work. If we were equipped this summer with more resources, I believe we could have fought the fires better and we would have saved lives, property, habitat and such large amounts of land.

The ecological cost of these fires is still being measured. Our natural environment, our flora and our fauna, has been devastated. A billion animals may have lost their lives, and the land is scorched with scars from these fires. The cost to fellow Australians is significant. The emotional toll, with the heartbreaking loss of loved ones, property and livelihood, equates to truly difficult times for so many. These fires have ruined lives and livelihoods. The damage to agricultural land, viticulture and small and medium-sized businesses is devastating. Everything must be done to help our fellow Australians to rise from the ashes of these fires and rebuild their lives.

Now this arrogant government has lots of explaining to do in relation to how our country responded, which I will leave for another time. Thankfully for Australia, the New South Wales fire chief, Shane Fitzsimmons, displayed leadership and judgement in extraordinary times. He's a man of integrity who informed the public of the crisis and what people must do. He explained to people what was happening and executed his duties with diligence and professionalism at all times. He rose up against fear and misinformation and explained to the Australian people why these fires occurred and that fire services knew for months that these fires were expected, because the science told us that the conditions were atrocious and that was what we were going to be confronted with. Thank you to Shane Fitzsimmons for his leadership during this crisis and to his team behind him.

I also acknowledge again—and I know others have put this on the record—the ABC. How good is the ABC? How good is the ABC in this country at a time of crisis? How good is the ABC in ensuring that our community and members that are going to be directly affected have the information that they need? It is so important to have that information so we can have our people reacting as quickly as possible.

The Australian community is currently suffering after this bushfire crisis, and it's not over yet. Please don't be mistaken and think that it's over, because it isn't. We're a country that is still in drought. I hope that the Morrison government does everything in its power to assist people through these times, because this affects each and every one of us.

Australia deserves leadership, not arrogance. The long-term consequences for people's way of life, especially in the agriculture and viticulture industries, will not be realised until all the damage can be assessed. But we are talking about potential job losses because of the revenue lost—businesses and families on their knees. Australia's economic loss still can't be fully accounted for, but we do know that we will be taking a hit. So Australians must heal and rebuild. I hope we as a nation will learn the consequences of these fires.

What we have to do is stand together like we normally do. Australians rally and they stand together at a time of crisis. I stand with you, and I know people in this chamber have nothing but goodwill to help those communities who have to rebuild. We will be there with you. Australians do stand together, but they need leadership. They need leadership from a Prime Minister who, until now, has failed in his responsibilities. I will talk more about that at future opportunities, but now what we have to do is stand together. We have to ensure that we support those communities and small businesses and we have to think about where we can holiday to ensure that we are able to rebuild together, because this may very well happen again.

We should have been listening to the scientists. We should have been listening to the fire chiefs. We were well and truly made aware in the most strident manner that we were likely to face this type of summer, and this government failed to act. We cannot afford to do that. The Australian people are relying on each and every one of us, and it's our responsibility to help rebuild this nation.

Senator STEELE-JOHN (Western Australia) (18:28): The end of the year is a time that we all hold out for. Many of us hope that for just a moment the struggles of life will ease and we will have the opportunity to spend time with the people we love in the places we love, creating a couple of memories to help us get through whatever the new year has in store. For others, it is a time of frenetic preparation for that rush of visitors that might just mean that this month you can pay the bills on time and that that knot in the pit of your stomach loosens just a little. So many in our community so deeply needed these hopes and aspirations to be realised.

Yet, for so many of us, these hopes, these aspirations, were replaced with terror and with desperation. Instead of messages of love and celebration and excitement, our phones were filled with emergency alerts ending in those words: 'You have to act now to survive.' In that moment the only thought in so many minds was not of the opportunity to grasp a piece of time, to forget, to reconnect, to gather strength. The thought in the mind was of
survival—survival of family, of pets, of livelihood and of home as they faced that dreaded choice and were torn by the decision: defend your place of memory, of history, of community, or get out.

In the days that followed, the relief of immediate safety was replaced by the relentlessness of reality. Our towns and cities choked as millions of hectares of our precious bushland were reduced to ashes. Parents sat up through the night with their asthmatic children, counting every breath. Cars were left packed in fear that the wind might change. And thousands of volunteer firefighters took leave, often unpaid, to throw themselves on the frontlines, from the Stirling Range in southern WA to Mallacoota on the south-eastern tip of Victoria. People desperately reached out to each other, asking that same desperate question, ‘Are they okay?’ I will never forget that plunging sense of shock that I felt when I found out that Senator Hanson-Young’s brother had not been able to make contact, that he had been fighting fires in South Australia and they couldn't get hold of him. Sarah, I am so glad that he is okay. I'm so sorry for all your community has lost.

All of this is against a backdrop of excuses and self-interested spin from individuals who, after ignoring the countless pleas of our community to take action to prevent this crisis, still to this very moment dare to call themselves our leaders and act as if we should respect it, respect them for their service. There is no other word for what we are experiencing than a national crisis—perhaps the greatest in a generation. Thirty-four lives have been lost. Thirty-four families now have space where life once was. Thousands of homes have been lost. Eighteen million hectares of bushland have been burnt. That's larger than the state of Tasmania. And one million animals have perished, vanished forever.

Right across our national community, the nearly 26 million of us, there is hardly a soul who has not been affected by this crisis in some way. Together we are struggling to make sense of just what is happening to us. Sadness and grief are present within us all. The enormity of all we have lost and are still losing feels almost too much at times. I remember watching the ABC, as so many of us were doing through this crisis, and taking in the story of a woman by the name of Rae Harvey. Rae runs a kangaroo sanctuary on the New South Wales Mid-South Coast. On New Year's Eve she found herself trapped at the end of a jetty, watching her home and the bushland burn around her. She barely escaped that day with her life, helped to safety by a neighbour who came along on a boat as the jetty crashed around her. She was good at putting on a brave face. As she talked to the reporter, you could tell that she was trying to be stoic, trying to keep it together. She even tried to share a joke with him. And then you could see on her face and on her body that the realisation that the creatures that she cared for so much had perished rose up in her. Her face cracked and she began crying.

Grief is not immediate in these situations. Adrenaline powers you through until it doesn't. After the Gippsland fires, I picked up the phone and spoke to a friend of mine whom I knew had family in the area. He said that he was fine but that his grandparents had lost their home and that with it had gone many generations of memories. A wonderful woman called Wendy reached out to me and told me the story of her niece's family who had lost their home on New Year's Eve. They now had nothing but the clothes on their backs and were struggling to feed their kids and pay the rent ahead of the beginning of the new term. Their eldest son is 14 and he is struggling to process everything that has happened to him.

These are just some of the stories that we are sharing together and, amongst all the pain and the grief and the deep frustration, there is comfort at least in the knowledge that we are experiencing this together. However you are feeling, know that it is okay that you feel that way. You are not alone. The community response to this crisis has been to come together, support each other and unite in our calls for action. I had the opportunity to attend an incredible event organised by Imam Mohammed Shakeeb and the Perth Islamic community. Commencing with a powerful welcome to country and performances by Haka for Life and Corroboree for Life, the event was grounded in a powerful understanding that we were gathered on Whadjuk Noongar boodja, and that the land, so horrifically scarred, wherever it was in our country, was and always will be First Nations land. Hundreds of people came together to share space and food and to hear music, and together we raised $30,000 for bushfire survivors. This is just one of the countless events that are continuing to take place across our community. As we come together, united in our support for each other, we are also united in our understanding that this crisis is being driven by climate change and that urgent action is needed.

The very first thing I saw when I got out of the car yesterday were two women by the entrance of Parliament House. They were clutching pictures of their kids in their hands. Until a week ago, these two people did not know each other and yet they were united in a shared experience of being asked by their kids why more was not being done to protect their future. Unable to answer these questions, these two mums, Megan and Natasha, got together with many other parents of Ballarat and made their kids a promise—that they would go to Canberra and put that question to the people who were sent here, to represent them. The #YOUTELLOURKIDS campaign is just one of so many examples of grassroots activism, of people coming together to take action, often led by young people, because we understand that, when we consider the climate crisis, our very future is on the line.
Today, thousands of people gathered on the lawns of parliament in the smog that surrounds our nation’s capital to do the same—to demand climate action. It is clear that our community is united in understanding the cause of this crisis and in a desire for action. Although we are feeling pain, grief and frustration, we are also united in our support for each other—and, together, there is hope.

Senator PATERSON (Victoria) (18:41): I rise to add my voice to that of other senators to express my sincerest condolences to those Australians who were affected by bushfires this summer. There have been very many fine contributions to this debate today from all sides of the chamber. I do so as a senator for the great state of Victoria, which has been heavily hit this bushfire season.

The loss of life, property, wildlife and habitat has been particularly severe in eastern Victoria. It is a beautiful part of my state and our country. Growing up, my parents took my brother and I regularly to camp in the Croajingolong National Park in East Gippsland. The Wingan Inlet campsite near Cann River was a frequent family holiday destination. It has a beautiful river, a fantastic beach, great walking tracks, an incredible boardwalk and a small number of quiet campsites. It’s so popular that it has a ballot system in peak season for camping. I think my parents particularly appreciated the lack of electricity and mobile phone reception. I went back for the first time since childhood a few years ago to hike there with my wife and friends. I can’t wait to get back there again, but I fear what we might find. It is one of many amazing places across our country that have been hard hit and will take some time to bounce back, along with the communities that rely on them. The rebuilding process, although already underway, will likely take years. It will be our collective challenge to maintain and harness the extraordinary outpouring of goodwill from Australians for this task.

It was incredible to see over January the way in which Australians responded to this crisis. One thing that struck me particularly was the appeal from emergency services early in January for people to stop donating physical goods. People had been so generous that they were literally overwhelmed by donations of food, water, clothes and other goods. The millions of dollars spontaneously donated, too, showed how much Australians wanted to help their fellow citizens in a time of need. Sometimes in public debate in this country we hear fears about the lack of national unity or shared identity. At times there can be hand-wringing about what it means to be Australian and whether or not we really feel connected to each other. But times of crisis like this tend to prove that those fears are misplaced. They show, in fact, that we have an incredible sense of shared identity with each other as Australians.

When the immediate danger has passed and the shocking images of fire and devastation are no longer leading the evening news, we must continue to rally around and support affected communities. Those that are reliant on tourism and agriculture will especially need our assistance. Although the government has set aside $2 billion for the recovery and rebuilding process, nothing can replace the lost visitors in towns and the lost customers through cafes, restaurants and stores. The small businesses, tourism operators and farmers will need us to visit again and get behind them so that they can continue to operate viable and profitable enterprises. Initiatives like Holiday Here This Year and Empty Esky are great ways to support fire affected communities.

Of course, it will also be our duty as parliamentarians to ensure that the lessons of this experience are heeded and action is taken to best manage the risk in future fire seasons. Today is not a day for partisan debate, nor is it a day for delving deeply into the many possible policy solutions to this crisis. That is not the role of condolence motions, even if this has not been universally adhered to today. There is a healthy place for both of those things in our political system, but our purpose here today is simply to place on the record our condolences, on behalf of our constituents to their fellow Australians. It's also to take the opportunity to thank those incredible Australians who have sprung to action in defence of lives, property and wildlife; our firefighters, both paid and volunteer; our some 6½ thousand ADF personnel, including reserves; and our volunteers across civil society in local community groups and charities. Their efforts have prevented this fire season from being much worse, and their ongoing contribution will make the recovery and rebuilding task much easier. For that we say thank you, as we remember those we have lost, and commit to the rebuilding task ahead.

Senator McCarthy (Northern Territory—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (18:47): I'd like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, on whose land we speak today, in giving our condolences to the families and to all involved in the bushfire recovery right across Australia, and I note here on this country of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people the bushfires that are still burning.

It has been a summer of loss and trauma for so many. I extend deepest condolences to all families and friends of those who have lost loved ones. And to all those who have lost country, homes, treasured possessions and livelihoods: my deepest sympathies, on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory. To those who have tirelessly fought the fires, day and night, week in and week out: I salute your efforts—the people of the Northern Territory do. We are in awe of what you do. I'd also like to say a very big thank you to our firefighters and volunteers from the Northern Territory who assisted in various jurisdictions over the past five months as
individual places, communities and towns called for help across Australia. To my colleagues here and in the other place, who've spent their summer also on the front line fighting the fires, supporting their communities and constituents on the ground, lending a hand: thank you.

I've heard many say conditions such as those that we face this summer are the new normal. I cannot accept this. We will not accept it. We have to face the loss of thousands more square kilometres to out-of-control fires every summer, that families will have to flee their homes, that farmers will see livestock and infrastructure wiped out and businesses will burn down, that ancient forests that have never seen a wildfire have now gone and others are threatened and that an estimated one billion native animals have been killed. The fires have been and continue to be acute and sometimes overwhelming. Our focus is rightly on the continuing firefighting efforts, recovery in those areas where the immediate threat has eased and supporting those who have been impacted. We certainly refuse to accept that what has been going on is the future. We have to do everything we can to bring emissions down in Australia and internationally. It will get much worse if we don't.

The use of fire as a landscape management tool is not new to First Nations people. In Arnhem Land, it runs through all aspects of our lives, our spirituality and the way we interact with the ecology, and it has done so for many thousands of years. We know it's different everywhere. It's about nuance, culture, vegetation type, weather, climate and so much more. In the modern context, it's been made more complex by 200 years of settlement, new fire-promoting weeds, feral animals changing the landscape, dense settlement patterns of people and houses in many areas, and of course an increasing level of drought and drying and intense hot weather due to climate change.

We also know, and shouldn't forget, that First Nations communities are managing for those contemporary issues too. That is happening right across Australia, in particular through well-established Indigenous ranger groups and Indigenous protected areas, who all have some level of planning and capacity around managing fire. It's knowledge that we so want to share right across Australia. Burning off, for the First Nations people of the Northern Territory, even on my home country of the Yanyuwa-Garwa people, is something that has been culturally significant for generations—something we've been able to teach, and work closely on, with non-Indigenous Australians, particularly in the firefighting industry. Ancient techniques and knowledge are partnering with modern technologies to develop effective ways of using fire to manage the land.

I read a comment recently that 'a few well-placed matches like in the old days' would have somehow been an effective way of managing fuel loads and mitigating fire risk. Nothing could be further from the reality of the modern fire management practices that are being used by Indigenous rangers. Sometimes these First Nations rangers work from helicopters, working with scientists, sometimes with drip torches and sometimes not. The longer these ranger teams have been around and the better they're resourced, the more they are a key element for the entire community, for the Australian community, in managing fire. Indigenous ranger groups are working side by side with fireys, state agencies, national parks, local shires and local government. In many cases, they are the fireys.

The southern parts of Australia from Queensland to WA have been severely hit, to an extent we've never seen before—and it's not over yet by any stretch. The smoke we've seen here on Ngunawal-Ngambri country today is proof, if we ever needed it. We've watched it all summer, and we saw fires start in winter. This is not business as usual.

It's been a particularly hard season for many in the Northern Territory over the past year. Highly experienced and accomplished landscape managers like Warddeken in western Arnhem Land have sophisticated fire management techniques. They've applied cultural knowledge in combination with Western science and technology over the last 10 years, greatly reducing the severity and spread of wildfire in their region. It's knowledge they are so willing to share. But this last year has been a major test even for them. An extended and pronounced dry season has seen them applying huge effort since as far back as last June, extending into what is normally the wet season. The rangers of Warddeken all suspended their Christmas holidays to keep the fires under control. They have done everything right and have applied hazard reduction and cultural burns over a decade, but a changing climate and its impacts on our wet season and our weather have seen them spending down significant amounts of their own money and time to keep country, wildlife and property safe. In doing so, they greatly protect the flanks of our other national natural assets, like Kakadu National Park.

In Queensland, groups such as the Bunya rangers are in a different position. They aren't landowners, but they have over several years stepped up in responsibility for land management in their region. They negotiate and build relationships with local landowners, shires, parks agencies and others, and, through forging these relationships, they are making a vital contribution to their community and culture and to the public benefit of all Queenslanders. They have been working closely with other services and sharing their expertise and knowledge to prepare for and to fight fires.
In New South Wales, the Minyumai rangers work on the Minyumai IPA, south of Lismore, and the Wattleridge Indigenous protected area, near Armidale, which were both hit hard by fire over Christmas and New Year. They did everything right in terms of preparation. They did their cultural and hazard reduction burning and they worked side by side with local fireys and park rangers, but the extreme conditions meant they were heavily impacted. Thankfully, they're all okay—if exhausted—and ready to apply themselves to the long task of recovery. The task of supporting the wildlife—the impacts we have seen extensively—is a massive task. The government has finally, slowly started to respond, but this response cannot, must not, be a flash in the pan. We need to step up our land management year round to tackle fire and the associated impacts and causes, including weeds, threatened species, feral animals, cultural and tourism site protection and human safety.

Over in Western Australia, the Ngadju traditional owners have again been hit hard by fire in the beautiful landscape of the Great Western Woodlands. Ngadju country is particularly diverse. The management of fire in the landscape there is different to Victoria, which is different to New South Wales, different to Queensland and different to the Northern Territory. First Nations people understand that and our best scientists understand that now. But we need to relearn it in a new and changing climate with new risks and new conditions. In Western Victoria, the Gunditjmara people have seen fire across their World Heritage listed Budj Bim cultural landscape. Thankfully, they report no major damage, but it's another example of a well-regarded local ranger and IPA crew being able to inform better local fire management.

Sadly, in New South Wales, the Mogo Land Council, including their rangers, lost a lot of buildings and equipment over the last month. There is a lot of rebuilding to do there and they will need support. There are many other stories of individuals, of cultural places hit so hard, and of the overall sense of hurt and damage inflicted on beautiful country and, most importantly, on our families right across the country. There is grief for the loss of so much.

Along with the immediate emergency response, we need to ensure that we don't get complacent and go back to business as usual when the TV cameras have moved on. We need to step up the resourcing of our land management nationally for fire and many other connected aspects that relate to land management for fire and recovery after it. The government must increase long-term investment in establishing and supporting strong ranger programs and strong ranger teams on the ground and increase funding for our Indigenous protected areas.

Existing groups have made multiple calls to expand their ranger teams, with new jobs and increased operational funding for year round management. This needs to be ongoing, permanently. It is about jobs. It is about working on country and valuing cultural knowledge and practice that belongs to this country and the people who live here. We must commit to ensuring the programs which intersect with rangers and Indigenous protected areas like threatened species recovery, research and science, feral animal and invasive weed control, cultural heritage management and so on are supported by an engaged and technically competent federal government. Strangely, we have further distanced our environment department from supporting ranger groups and IPAs over the last six years. Prime Minister and Cabinet currently manage contracts, and I'm repeatedly given feedback from on the ground that they cannot and do not provide the engaged on-ground support that is needed. Our Indigenous community based rangers and IPAs are delivering so much and we shouldn't be reducing their support. We need to improve it and increase it. The Prime Minister told the National Press Club: 'We must learn from Indigenous Australians and their ancient practices on how to improve our resilience to these threats.' Well, Prime Minister, listen to this speech. The lesson is right here in front of you. The action you can take is right now. We have the knowledge of these rangers right across the country who are willing to give that to you.

So let's make a commitment not to simply have a response that's temporary. We have models to deliver and support Indigenous land and sea management well. Our IPAs and our ranger networks have proven successes and in fact are being looked at as models internationally. Just get serious about working with First Nations people here. It's time. It's time for all of us to come together in sharing this knowledge.

Senator BILYK (Tasmania) (18:59): I too rise to offer my condolences to the victims of Australia's 2019-20 fire season. The toll of these fires so far includes 33 people dead, over 2,000 houses destroyed, over a billion native animals killed, and thousands of Australians suffering the health impacts of the constant pall of smoke that has shrouded our towns and cities. Economists estimate that the cost of this fire season may be as high as $100 billion, or one-twentieth of Australia's gross domestic product. Every state and territory in Australia has been affected in some way.

As a senator from Tasmania, I'm grateful that my home state has been spared destruction on the scale that we have seen on the mainland. We already experienced one of our worst fire seasons on record last year. The Huon Valley community, just south of my office in Kingston, is still recovering economically and emotionally. They were hit hard by the damage to the Ta Ann rotary veneer mill and the Tahune Forest AirWalk, which were vital.
assets for the timber and tourism industries. The amount of land that has been burnt so far, Australia-wide, in this year's fires—over 10 million hectares—is more than the total land mass of my home state.

In my contribution to this motion, while offering my condolences to the thousands of Australians who are suffering from these fires I would also like to take this opportunity to give thanks. Thanks, first and foremost, to the brave men and women who have been fighting these fires for days, weeks and months on end. I especially thank the volunteer firefighters, people who are spending time away from their jobs, businesses and families and giving up their time freely in an effort to keep Australians safe. I thank the Tasmanian volunteer firefighters who are fighting fires here at home, as well as the dozens who have travelled from Tasmania to help on the mainland. Not only are these firefighters giving up their time; they're making the extraordinary sacrifice of risking their safety and their life. It is worth remembering that several volunteer firefighters have been killed and injured this fire season, in the course of their duty, so they are risking everything for their fellow Australians. I also pay tribute to a number of other emergency services workers who have made a contribution to the safety of their communities during the current fire season, including police, ambulance, SES and members of the Army Reserve.

There are a number of other volunteers who deserve our heartfelt appreciation—those who are supporting the relief effort, day in, day out. Of course, the relief effort would not be possible without Australians digging deep to fund it, and I’d like to thank all those charities and their donors for their work raising tens of millions of dollars for those in need. I'm aware, through the invitations I've received to several local fire relief fundraisers, that some local businesses have dug deep, such as Machine Laundry Cafe in Salamanca, which donated an entire day's takings while their staff worked for free and donated their wages. Another cafe, Jackman & McRoss, donated the revenue from their Christmas stock. The Republic Bar held a comedy night fundraiser, and the Hobart clothing store Smitten Merino donated $10,000. It gives me a great sense of pride to live in a country where, in times of crisis, people demonstrate such extraordinary generosity.

Australia has had fires before, but this fire season is unprecedented in its scale. As we prepare to recover from this disaster, we may also have to brace ourselves for the reality that this year's fire season may well be the new normal. That's what a number of retired emergency services chiefs have been warning for more than six months now and what climate scientists have been warning for decades. Australia's climate has changed, and we need to understand and accept that. It means our response must address more than just relief and recovery. Our words of condolence are hollow and meaningless unless we commit to doing everything in our power to face the threat of more severe fires in the future as well as trying to prevent them from happening. This means a nationally coordinated response to future fire threats, a permanent increase in our aerial firefighting capacity and a genuine contribution to the global effort to address climate change. We owe this to the people fighting the fires, to the people whose health—both physical and mental—has suffered and to the people who have tragically lost property and lives. Let's act now and never again face Australia's fire season so unprepared.

**Senator DAVEY** (New South Wales—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (19:04): I rise with mixed feelings to support this motion today, with grief for those who've lost their lives and their families—the 33 innocent people, including nine firefighters, who paid the ultimate price; with sadness for the thousands of people and families who've lost their homes; with despair for the loss of livestock and the wildlife; and with concern for the regional communities that have been impacted by these devastating fires and now face the very long road to rebuild and recover. But I'm also filled with pride at the way our nation has banded together to support each other. I'm humbled to witness the generosity and spirit shown by the communities and the volunteers and the people of Australia, and I am filled with hope for the future of the regions as they rebuild.

The support for our communities has been overwhelming and global. Indeed, just today, I received a message from my relatives in the UK. Seven-year-old Robin's Yorkshire Primary School held an Australia Day event with cake stalls, kangaroo-hopping races and a 'guess the koala's name' competition. That little school in the north of England raised 11,000 pounds for the Australian Red Cross bushfire recovery. So my thanks go to Robin and his classmates for their efforts to help us. My thanks go to all the international celebrities who have given so generously and, in doing so, have helped raise the profile of this issue, leading to further donations and support for our nation and our people. And of course I thank the thousands of Australians who have given to the multiple charities—the Salvos, the Red Cross, the Rural Fire Services' trust and all the others who are working together to help our people and our communities recover and rebuild.

Recently, I had the privilege to see this generosity firsthand, when I visited the South Coast in January. I helped unload a truck of unsolicited donations of food, water and necessities in Cobargo. This was just one truck of literally hundreds that were showing up in bushfire-affected communities right across our east coast. I spoke to people like Ange, who took it upon herself to become the carer for the horses of Cobargo region so their owners could focus on evaluating their own loss, repairing fences and whatever was needed to help them get back on their feet. And Ange reached out to her network in the horse community and got donations of stockfeed, which she then
distributed to the many dairy farmers of the region whose pastures and paddocks were burnt beyond a crisp but who still had cattle to feed and dairies to run. This includes the family who lost their own father and brother to the bushfires, who woke up the next day and had to then milk their dairy herd to make sure the business continued, but whose community came out in force with help and fence posts and wires to help them rebuild. When asked by the Deputy Prime Minister on the day, 'What can we do to help you?' their first response was, 'Help my community.' It was heartbreaking, humbling and inspiring all at the same time.

I have also seen the dedication of the service providers and professionals—people like the NBN mobile unit team, who set up by the surf club at Malua Bay to provide a charging station and free wi-fi to get people connected. Some of those they connected had not been able to contact family and friends to tell them they were safe. My thanks go to the Centrelink staff who fielded thousands of calls for emergency payments; to the vets who've been on the ground to assess livestock and wildlife; and to people like the team and students of Charles Sturt University Equine Centre who took in and treated burnt horses. This is truly an example of Australia at its finest.

The giving is not just financial or material. There have been thousands of volunteers giving their time, be it through volunteer fire crews, through the people who've set up and manned donation and evacuation centres, like those I met at Kildare Catholic College in Wagga Wagga, and those who are volunteering right now for charities like BlazeAid to help people rebuild and recover.

I also want to thank our defence forces, who've been in the field since September helping with the response and recovery. As one evacuee at the RAAF base in Wagga Wagga told me, 'The ADF personnel were like angels.' They gave them a place to stay and all the support they needed and food for their dog. Everywhere I have travelled that has been impacted by fire, when people see those uniforms they see calm. As a former Army reservist myself, I was not surprised at all by the response to the call-out last month and the dedication and commitment displayed by all of our defence personnel.

But it is really important to remember that, when the last ember is out and when the fires are gone, it will take months and years to recover. Many of these communities had already been doing it tough through drought before the bushfires. The drought has been devastating enough, and the bushfires have compounded that. I have always been an advocate for regional tourism. This year, I put out a calendar celebrating country festivals to encourage people to get out and about and spend their money in small regional communities. And now, more than ever, these communities need your support. We need to get out of the cities and we need to spend money in drought and bushfire impacted areas to help them on their road to recovery.

With over 18 million hectares of land burnt, it is vital that we work together to do what we can to prevent this level of devastation ever happening again. We must not only investigate these fires but also review recommendations of previous inquiries and commit to acting. It is not good enough to produce a report and carry on with business as usual. We must look at all of the contributing factors that made this fire season so prolonged and intense. So, yes, we need to talk about climate change. But, yes, we also need to have the conversations about back-burning, fire trails, land management, the management of our eucalyptus-heavy national parks and the fuel loads that accumulate there, and climate change. But we also must do so respectfully and with a focus on ensuring that the devastation that we have witnessed this fire season does not happen again. We must take practical steps to do so while ensuring that our economy and the economies of our regions are strong and robust and will thrive. We must do so because there are lessons to be learnt and because we owe it to those who've lost their lives and those who've lost their property, and we owe it to our own future in this land of droughts, fires and floods that we actually like to call 'the lucky country'.

**Senator LINES** (Western Australia—Deputy President and Chair of Committees) (19:13): I too rise this evening to offer my heartfelt and sincere condolences to the Australian families and, indeed, the American families who've lost their loved ones in these catastrophic Australian bushfires, this climate emergency that we are now experiencing. I can't imagine what it has been like and continues to be like for those families who are mourning their loved ones—fathers, husbands and sons—who won't be returning home. It is an absolute tragedy—that loss of life. For those Australians who lost their lives fleeing from the fire, or who've been found in their properties, that was a horrific experience. Again, my heartfelt condolences go to their families.

Many years ago as a young woman I too was a volunteer firefighter in Byford in Western Australia. I was in the Byford volunteer fire service. I can say that, sometimes when we were doing back-burning or we were out saving property, it was scary. But the fires that we dealt with were nothing—nothing—like the fires that we've seen over this summer, over the last several months.

The other thing that concerns me is that we're now changing our language. When I used to fight fires, we were able to put them out, but now in this season we've seen these megafires which are almost, seemingly, impossible
to put out. We've seen the unprecedented use of equipment, of the Reserve forces, of thousands and thousands and thousands of volunteers, of paid service, and yet these fires continue. This is a different age. This is a different emergency. This is a climate emergency. And we cannot deny it. Yes, we were forewarned about it. This morning Senator Wong alluded to comments that she made in 2003 about a future fire crisis.

I can't watch the images of Australian wildlife anymore. To see those animals fleeing for their lives, to see them burnt, is absolutely horrific. I can't imagine what it is like to pick yourself up and start all over again, having lost everything that you held near and dear in your family among your possessions, and just, for some people, having the clothes they stood in and a handful of possessions. I can't imagine, if I were faced with developing a fire plan, what I might take and what I would leave behind. I can't imagine how much courage it takes to make that decision to stay and defend your property. It's not a decision I would take, but I do respect those that take that decision and the courage that they must have, when we've seen the onslaught of those flames. And, yes, it's going to take many, many years to recover from this. But this is our opportunity to learn, to be united and to act as a parliament to respond to this emergency.

We have new language now. I have never heard fires in Australia be described as 'megafires' before. I've heard those victims, heard 'Armageddon' being used. I'm sure all of us were fearful for those on Mallacoota beach as they watched those flames come closer and closer. The heat, the smoke, the intensity must have been overwhelming for those families with young children, with elderly relatives, waiting, wondering and fearful. I can't imagine the level of anxiety of those who've lived with this threat for months and months and months, who've breathed in the smoke that's been around for months.

When I flew into Canberra on Sunday, I flew into a territory that had declared a state of emergency. A state of emergency was what was being declared as I flew in. Today, ironically, we again have smoke all around the building. And, to those Australians who today came here and stood around the parliament imploring us to do more, we must accept the science of climate. We must consider climate as we develop a response. It's not enough to say, 'This is the new normal.' Smoke masks, states of emergency, thousands of volunteer hours being spent every summer—that's not the response we need. We need to act now to do something positive around climate change, this climate emergency that we are facing, before it is too late.

I urge the government to take the leadership, to do the brave thing, to ignore those on your side who are denying that this is a climate emergency, to now stand up and to show leadership. That's what Australians want, whether they've been victims of this catastrophic fire season or whether they're ordinary Australians outside the parliament today imploring us to do more. Now is the time.

Senator McGrath (Queensland—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (19:19): There have been many heartfelt speeches here today, and I simply wish to add, first and foremost, my condolences on behalf of Queensland and Queenslanders to the families of those who've lost their lives this summer, to those who've lost their homes and businesses and property, and to recognise and thank the efforts of all those who have given their all to their communities.

There is no doubt that the summer of 2019-20 will go down as one of the darkest in recent memory. The fires started early in my home state of Queensland, and I appreciate the season is far from over. In September last year, fires threatened homes on Peregian Beach on the Sunshine Coast. They burned through parched paddocks and Stanthorpe, threatening the town and destroying homes, along with historic Binna Burra Lodge on the Gold Coast Hinterland, while the Scenic Rim faced fires at Canungra and Beechmont. As we moved into November, fires ravaged crops, properties and communities near Yeppoon in Central Queensland. For farmers who'd rebuilt and replaced property, equipment and crops after the cyclone in 2015, this was a tough pill to swallow. Rural firefighters worked alongside state emergency responders to fight the flames for days and days at Woodgate, near Bundaberg, and blazes returned to the western and southern areas of the Scenic Rim.

State member for Scenic Rim, Jon Krause, noted that as in many areas there had been a huge impact on farmers, with fires coming on top of the cruel, mean drought—the worst drought in living memory. Farmers like Glenn Fearby lost 2,000 acres of feed, and others like Catherine Drynan lost thousands in feed, stock and fencing. For local businesses there's been the added negative side effect of lost trade as people stay away from the regions. As we all know now, this was only the beginning of what would be a long, hot, horrible summer.

The damage we've seen from these fires and the ongoing, unrelenting drought cannot be measured, except in the most tragic circumstances. People have lost their lives, children have lost parents and families have been changed beyond recognition. Local concerns have been raised about the failure of vegetation management, with dangerous fuel loads in national parks. This failure certainly contributed to the fires, especially in the border areas. But more about that some other time. Through the smoke and the flames, through the concern, the confusion and the hurt, we saw the very best of our country and the very best of people coming together. On a visit to Stanthorpe
in September last year with my colleague David Littleproud, the local member, we saw how long-serving volunteers worked alongside professional firefighters, along with students from the local high school, who worked together to defend their community. If you know Stanthorpe, you'll know how close the fires came to destroying that community. While discussing some of the tragic and horrific impacts of these fires, my colleagues across Queensland also shared their admiration for those in their communities who went above and beyond during these most difficult of times.

In Central Queensland, Michelle Landry, the member for Capricornia, worked to help incredible members of her community, such as Anthony Sylvester from the Bungundarra Rural Fire Brigade, and Livingstone Shire Council Local Disaster Coordinator, David Mazzaferrri. Stewart and Pamela Skeen lost their home in Binna Burra. They met our Prime Minister and Mrs Morrison back in September and intend to rebuild their home. I have it on good authority that Mrs Morrison and Queensland LNP leader, Deb Frecklington, are on a promise to visit the Skeens for tea when the home is rebuilt. Times of adversity often deliver incredible acts of kindness and generosity, not only in terms of monetary donations and fundraising but in generosity of spirit. The member for Hinkler, Keith Pitt, noted this was on display at Woodgate when the Rural Fire Service was presented with the Woodgate Community Organisations Award at the Australia Day Breakfast. First Officer Michael Claffey accepted the award on behalf of the community. Keith Parry, the immediate past first officer and current officer, received the Woodgate Citizen of the Year Award for his contribution to the Woodgate community. Scott Buchholz, the member for Wright, and Jonathan Krause, the aforementioned member for Scenic Rim, praised SES volunteers led by Scenic Rim leader, Danni Bull; the Beech Mountain CWA for their amazing support of fires and their ongoing help in the community recovery effort; and the efforts of first officers such as Mark Ayers from the Beechmont Rural Fire Brigade, with Phil Rankin and Damon Rockliff from Canungra Rural Fire Brigade, as well as Steve Geiger and Trevor Turner from the Mt Alford Rural Fire Brigade, Kerry Surawski from Carneys Creek-Maroon Brigade, and Dick and Cate Buchham and Evan Christensen from Tarome Rural Fire Brigade. These people are leaders in the community, and it is not fair—I say on their behalf—to call them out, as they'll be embarrassed by this, because so many people in so many communities did so much work to protect and defend their communities.

The Fassifern Salvation Army volunteers, led by Allan and Elsa Stibbe, deserve so much thanks for coordinating catering and other arrangements to look after dozens of fires in Boonah. Federal members, including Llew O'Brien, Ted O'Brien, Scott Buchholz, Keith Pitt and Andrew Wallace, have been working alongside state members, led by Deb Frecklington, across Queensland to support the communities as they recover from these fires. I'd also like to acknowledge the contribution of our defence members and reservists and those who arrived on deployment from overseas. I would like to finish by conveying my sincere thanks to the thousands of unseen community heroes across our country—those people who've taken time out from their lives, away from their businesses and away from their families to help those less fortunate as they take stock and come to terms with these events.

As we continue our vigilance through the remainder of this long, hot and horrible summer and turn our thoughts towards recovery, I'm going to leave everybody with this simple request: please come and visit those in regional Queensland who've been hurt by these fires. An angry, cranky, smorgasbord of floods and fires and now coronavirus is smashing and destroying Queensland's tourist industry. Michael Trout, the former member for Barron River and a leading tourism operator, said on radio today that the coronavirus is worse in terms of the impact on the tourism industry in Far North Queensland than the pilots' strike of the late 1980s. So please continue to support these communities in Queensland and across Australia. They are beautiful places with stunning, beautiful people. Please come to regional Queensland, bring your money, spend it and help us rebuild regional Queensland.

Senator CHANDLER (Tasmania) (19:27): Tonight I rise to join members of this parliament in paying my respects to all of those Australians who have been impacted by the devastating bushfires that have burned through so much of our country over the past few months. A number of Australians have lost their lives. This is an absolute tragedy first and foremost for their families but also for the local communities that these families come from and for the nation as a whole. We are all grieving with the families and communities who have lost loved ones, and I cannot begin to comprehend the pain and suffering that they're currently experiencing.

We know that without the heroic and extraordinary efforts of our firefighters, along with the defence personnel and all of those who have helped to protect homes and lives from bushfire, the toll could have been so much worse. Tragically, some of those people who volunteered to fight these fires and protect others are amongst those who have lost their lives. The nation has collectively wept for the firefighters who've lost their lives this summer. We will never forget the sacrifice that they've made to keep others safe and we will never be able to truly quantify how many lives that they and their colleagues have saved.
As Australians, we also extend heartfelt condolences to the families in the United States who lost their loved ones when their water-bombing aircraft went down in New South Wales. Their commitment to come here to help Australians in our time of need was truly heroic, and we are devastated that they've paid the ultimate price for their bravery and their willingness to help their fellow man on the other side of the world.

In my own state of Tasmania, the communities of Fingal and Pelham were impacted by bushfires. I know that I speak on behalf of all Tasmanians when I express my thanks and my gratitude to the Tasmania Fire Service and its volunteers, to Sustainable Timber Tasmania and to the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service for all of the work that they have completed over the last few weeks to ensure that those fires remained as under control as possible and impacted on as few lives as possible.

The bushfires we've seen this summer have demonstrated once again the way in which Australians pull together in a time of crisis. So many have donated food, money, clothes and other goods to help those who have lost their homes or been evacuated. A staggering amount of money has been raised by Australians, let alone those around the world who have also raised tens of millions of dollars for this effort. I join with millions of other Australians, I know, in calling on the charities who have received much of this money to do everything in their power to ensure that donations reach families and the causes that those donors intended their money to go towards.

As the fires are contained and eventually put out, supporting affected communities to rebuild and recover will be a critical focus for the whole nation. The Australian government will certainly be at the forefront of these efforts, and this is already well underway with the establishment of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency and the initial $2 billion investment into the Bushfire Recovery Fund. Many specific measures to support recovery have already been announced and will continue to be announced. As the Prime Minister has said, we will do whatever it takes to support these communities and businesses hit by these fires, and if we need to do more then we will.

Going forward, there will also be plenty that we can do as individuals, not just through donations but also by playing a part in keeping affected local economies moving by visiting and holidaying in these regions, buying local goods and produce and supporting businesses in fire affected regions. The tourism industry in particular needs the help of all Australians in holidaying at home and supporting the visitor economy across the country, especially in affected areas, as much as possible.

Of course, in many parts of Australia, the focus remains firmly on fighting active bushfires and protecting life and property. Across the whole nation, we must remain highly vigilant and alert to the threat of new fires starting as hot, dry conditions persist. I know that in my own state of Tasmania February is regarded as a more dangerous part of the fire season, so we will certainly be remaining vigilant for at least the next few weeks.

As with every disaster situation, we will, of course, need to review the response and preparedness and find out what we can do better ahead of next summer. Bushfires have been a part of the Australian landscape for thousands of years but, with longer, hotter and dryer conditions leading to increased fire seasons, we must continue to review what we do to protect lives, property and the natural environment. We all know that there is no way of eliminating the threat of bushfires in Australia. But whatever we can do to reduce, even in small ways, the number of fires that are ignited, the severity of the fires that do start and the chances of those fires threatening lives, homes, businesses and infrastructure must be considered. I look forward to these reviews occurring and producing evidence based actions that can be implemented to make Australians safer next fire season and every year into the future.

Senator GREEN (Queensland) (19:32): In the same way that we acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we meet on today, I want to begin today by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands that have been affected by bushfires across the country. I acknowledge their connection to country and their continued custodianship of those lands.

As we meet here today for the first day of parliament this year, bushfires continue to burn across the country. Here in Canberra, smoke still sits in the air. The truth is we're yet to fully take stock of the impact these fires are having on our communities and our environment. This summer has been brutal and costly. Lives have been lost, homes have been lost and communities are going to continue to count the economic cost for many months to come.

The level of devastation we have seen this summer has at times felt overwhelming. I know that many Australians, particularly young Australians, are worried about the immediate danger we face but also about what a bushfire season like this means for the future of our country. With our climate changing, many Australians want to know if this is the new normal. We need to ask that question. We need to ask questions about the level of government response in the peak of this emergency. We need to establish what support will be needed now but also into the future months and years ahead to help recover and rebuild. We need to know what the ecological impacts of these fires have been and what species are now at threat because of the damage to habitat. We need to
consider the factors that have contributed to the intensity of these fires and the warnings that were given about the intensity of the fires to come. We need to make sure that that changes to protect Australian lives, Australian homes and Australia's economy from future disasters. And there will be time to ask those questions, but right now we have to take this opportunity to recognise the 33 lives that have been lost and express our very deep sympathies with those Australians who have lost loved ones. Indeed, right now, they are asking themselves the cruellest question: how will they overcome the grief of losing a husband, a parent, a child, a mate? We know that nothing can bring back the embrace of a loved one. We know that losing a house is costly, but losing a home is heartbreaking. To those who have lost their loved ones, their homes, their towns, their livelihoods and livestock: our hearts break with yours. We know that you are grieving and you need our help and support to recover.

Throughout this terrible time, on the frontline of the fires, firefighters, Defence personnel and volunteers have put their lives on the line to save homes and protect lives. We say thank you to those volunteers for their hard work and bravery. In addition to fighting fires at home, the Queensland government has also deployed 516 personnel to New South Wales and Victoria to assist with the ongoing crisis. Many of these men and women haven't seen their family or friends for weeks or months. Most are volunteers from rural and regional areas, fighting to protect the communities and environment that they love.

Just two days ago, on my trip to Canberra, I met a crew of volunteer firefighters travelling from Queensland to Canberra to support local crews here on the ground. I had the chance to meet them and say thank you and to tell them to stay safe. I asked them what they needed and how we could help. You could tell that they didn't want the accolades or awards, but they did say that something needs to be done to provide some financial support for volunteers who have been working for months. We know these volunteers don't expect to get paid, but they don't expect to see a fire season such as the one we have faced this year. We owe it to those volunteers to support them the same way they support us. Without them, where would we be?

Across Australia, there are also 6,400 Australian Defence Force personnel, which includes 3,000 Reserves, assisting with these efforts. From Townsville, North Queensland more than 140 personnel from the 5th and 6th Aviation Regiments, along with four Chinook and four NH90 helicopters, have been deployed to Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. They have been carrying out evacuation operations, supporting firefighting operations and providing humanitarian assistance to remote and isolated communities. They make us proud and they keep us safe. We are forever grateful for their service.

Finally, many people in Australia and across the country have also made donations to bushfire relief efforts. Some donations have been financial; some have been in kind. The response has been overwhelming and heartwarming. We say thank you to every person who has contributed, big or small.

In my first speech I spoke about the Aboriginal community of Yarrabah, located on a beautiful beach south of Cairns. It's a community of rich history and activism. There is a chronic lack of housing in Yarrabah. The median income is $288 a week. That's less than half the national average. Yet, in response to these fires, the community held an event in Yarrabah to raise funds for bushfire victims. A young boy asked one of the elders why they were collecting money, and he was told those people have lost their homes and they need our help. The community raised over $500. All across Australia people who don't have much are giving everything that they have to help Australians that they will never meet. For me, that is what it means to be Australian.

Throughout this time of darkness and at a time of deep anxiety about our future, Australians can take some comfort in these stories of bravery, service and generosity. As I said at the beginning, there are some tough questions that need to be asked and answered. And there will be time for that, but today we acknowledge those Australians who have no home to return to or roof over their heads and the families who will never see their loved ones walk through the door again.

Senator HUME (Victoria—Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology) (19:40): I would like to use my opportunity today to add my sympathies and sentiments to the heartfelt condolences that this chamber has expressed today. I want to thank so many of my colleagues for their warm words of sympathy, and particularly those who have not used the opportunity to speak in the chamber today for politicking or grandstanding, because I do believe that this is not the appropriate day for that. In fact, I think my contribution today will possibly be the least political speech I have ever made in this chamber.

While I genuinely and sincerely support every part of the condolence motions that have been put forward today, I want to talk specifically about the north-east of Victoria, which is a place that I have long loved and grown to know very well over recent years. The people of north-east Victoria are tough and they are proud and they are resilient, but their confidence has been shaken by the events of this summer. However, their humanity and their kindness and their community have also been galvanised. I heard many of their stories. One, in particular, is very close to my office. In fact, a young man who works in my office, Jacob Mildren, lives in the...
north-east of Victoria. He spent the summer at home at his family's house and broader family's farm. He sent us messages throughout the summer telling the whole office what was going on. It was harrowing for us all to think that he potentially was in harm's way. So I asked him to explain his experiences to us for my contribution today. His story went a little bit like this. He said:

There was a quiet menace that turned to hellish fury in the Corryong fire. On 30 December the air above the winding hills and valleys of the Upper Murray was clear. Recent weeks of smoke haze had dissipated and it seemed like we could all breathe easy again. But when dark orange smoke plumed above the mountains we knew something was not right, and when the wind picked up we realised it was blowing in our direction and getting stronger with each hour. Even when you're prepared there is a sense of urgency, fear and dread. We saw the four-wheeler on its way down the paddock, and a message came from the farmhouse—"It's time to go. Get to the house, now!" We did all the right things, and, although much of the property was damaged and livestock lost, the house was saved. But we were the lucky ones. In the hours that followed, townships were threatened, homes were lost and countless sheds and outbuildings were levelled. Local firefighting volunteers sprung to action, defending their community and their homes in acts of extraordinary bravery in some of the most testing conditions ever witnessed. We later learned that the fire, which was started by a lightning strike, had become so huge that it had created its own weather pattern. While we had been watching and waiting, only a few kilometres away a tanker was caught in a fire tornado—winds so extreme that the tanker was lifted and flipped, injuring two firefighters and killing 28-year-old Samuel McPaul. It could have been any of us.

The Upper Murray fire, like those across all of Australia, has caused such devastation. Among the stories of tragedy are stories of bravery and generosity that warm the soul left cold by senseless destruction. But it is the quiet humanity of these communities that makes them stronger in the face of adversity. Individuals like Josh Collings personify this. Josh is from Cudgewa, a town of just 230 people, and he lost everything. Yet, despite this, within a matter of just days Josh was one of the first to set up support networks in Cudgewa, and its neighbouring towns, to help those around him. Josh felt firsthand the heartache of loss and he just wanted to make it that little bit easier for those who shared those feelings.

In times of strife, it's stories like these that demonstrate the best in us really does shine through. So today this chamber extends its sympathies to those who have lost so much—whether it be friends or family, property, homes, businesses or a way of life. It will take time and the scars will inevitably run very, very deep. But they will rebuild, they will get the assistance that they need and we will all play our part.

When I visited the north-east, just a fortnight ago, the worst was done but the fight continued. The incident control centre was calm and organised and well resourced with professionals, with staff and with volunteers. The ADF were on hand and were cleaning up, clearing roads and consoling residents, and their presence was very welcome. I also took time to visit those communities not necessarily razed by the fires but adjacent to them and greatly affected nonetheless—small communities like Mount Beauty, Falls Creek, Rutherglen and Bright in Victoria's beautiful alpine valley. In this peak January season you would expect to see hikers, campers, young families and holiday-makers, but instead these communities are like picturesque ghost towns. The tourists were evacuated and they haven't returned.

I met with Jake, who, along with his wife, owns and operate the Mount Beauty Bakery. They employ additional casual staff at this time of year, over the summer period. Often they are university students that are coming home for their university holidays and work in town on their break. But this year they've had to shorten shifts. They certainly haven't thought about paying themselves or family members. They have desperately tried to keep those casual staff on, yet the bakery, when I was there, was empty. I don't think I've ever bought so much bread in my life. Then I met the irrepressible Jaye, who owns a popular cafe that I'm sure many of you would know, in Falls Creek village. At this time of the year there are normally mountain bikes lined up outside her cafe, as riders from everywhere around stop for her very famous food, but now there is not a single one in sight. The owners of cottages, caravan parks, B&Bs and motels in the region spoke of empty rooms, bookings down 85 per cent on this time last year.

Now is the time for rebuilding and supporting. It is not the time for politicking. There is always plenty of time in this place for that. Now is the time to reach out the hand of friendship and support to our fellow Australians in need. Now is the time for community spirit, just like Josh's, to spread across the region, and we can all play a part—whether it be buying wine, which I know plenty of people in this place do, from one of the online cellar doors in Rutherglen or in the Alpine Shire vineyard, or taking your family on a bike-riding holiday along the rail trails, or spending a weekend at the extraordinary restaurants or craft breweries in these beautiful, beautiful towns.

This year—here's an idea for you—Corryong, which was one of the towns worst affected by these fires, will host the 25th-anniversary Man From Snowy River Bush Festival. An awful lot goes on at this festival, and despite what has gone on, despite the devastation of the community, they are going to hold this thing. All proceeds of the event will be donated to bushfire relief. North-east Victoria is open for business. They want us to reiterate that. It's
open for business. These communities are proud, they're resilient, they are really big hearted, they are welcoming and they are waiting for people to come.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank some of my Victorian state parliamentary colleagues for the work on the ground during that period, particularly state upper house member Wendy Lovell, the member for Seymour, Cindy McLeish, and particularly the member for Benambra, Bill Tilley, because he is not only the member for Benambra; he is also a CFA volunteer. He witnessed so much of this fire season firsthand, fighting on the front line for his community, both politically and physically. Bill, I take my hat off to you. The work you did this summer was quite extraordinary.

To the brave men and women who risked everything, to the families that allowed them to do so and to those who have lost so much this summer, I say thank you. It will take time to rebuild, to stitch back together what needs to be mended and to mourn everything that has been lost. But communities in northern Victoria and, indeed, around Australia in these bushfire-affected places have proven their strength in countless ways, and we in this place and all around the country will walk beside you as you heal.

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (19:50): I rise to join with colleagues in the Senate in expressing our sincerest condolences to those families and friends that have lost loved ones during this horrifying bushfire season. To date, 33 people have lost their lives and tens of millions of hectares have been burnt. The fires are still burning, but it is fitting that this parliament takes the first opportunity available to pay tribute to those whose lives have already perished. It is also important we place on record our thanks and admiration for those that have put themselves in harm's way every day, day after day, for weeks, if not months, to help and to rescue individuals and communities in extreme danger. The thousands of CFA, RFS and South Australian Country Fire Service firefighters have been truly remarkable. Their bravery and commitment have helped save many lives, thousands of homes and important infrastructure. But properties have been lost. Businesses have been lost. Tourism and accommodation venues have been lost. Native animals have been lost. Of course, people have been lost. Livelihoods have been lost.

In Tasmania, we've had fires in or near Scamander, St Marys, Elderslie, Lachlan and Swansea, along with multiple fires in the south-west of Tasmania. Over 41,000 hectares have burnt since October last year. Property has been destroyed and habitat has been lost. But my home state has largely been spared so far this fire season from the devastating experience that has occurred on the mainland. I would like to place on record my respect and admiration for my colleagues the member for Gilmore, Fiona Phillips, the member for Eden-Monaro, the Hon. Mike Kelly, and the member for Macquarie, Susan Templeman, who have been tremendous advocates, organisers and representatives for their communities in these terribly tough times, as has the member for Gippsland, the Hon. Darren Chester.

There is a saying that goes: in extraordinary times we see ordinary people do extraordinary things. So it is with these fires. Many of these ordinary people can be found working at our ports or on our ships. Tugs and a pilot boat from Eden provided safe harbour for those threatened by fierce bushfires last month. More than 80 residents from Eden, aged between six months and 92, along with 12 dogs, sheltered on the tugs Wistari and Cooma. Crews of the tugs ensured there was enough food and organised games and colouring-in competitions to keep morale up whilst also helping out with other emergency tasks. The pilot boat and her crew assisted with many emergency call-outs and provided support and assistance throughout the emergency. Crews of tugs also helped with the transport of firefighters across Twofold Bay. Local tugs and their crews provided invaluable assistance with the uplift of evacuees from Mallacoota beach to HMAS Choules and MV Sycamore.

The supply boat Far Saracen and her crew were tasked by the Victorian government to deliver much-needed supplies of food, water and diesel to those 4,000 people stranded in Mallacoota. These invaluable supplies were delivered by Australian seafarers while the ADF ships and personnel were on their way down the coast to assist with the emergency relief and rescue effort. The diesel supplied by the Far Saracen was used to power local generators and fuel the CFA fire trucks so they could resume their vital firefighting task. The crew on the Far Saracen looked after a seven-month-old baby during the evacuation and made a swing on the deck for the little kids that were on board the vessel. I'm told the civilian crew of the MV Sycamore were so taken with the people and area around Mallacoota that they took up their own collection and made a substantial donation to the Mallacoota wildlife rescue organisation. The crew on the MV Sycamore took their role of helping the evacuees very seriously. Mick Kennedy, the MUA delegate on the Sycamore, had the job of minding an evacuee's dog. Kangaroo Island ferries and their crews undertook an extraordinary amount of work to transport relief supplies to the island, assist with the evacuation, and ferry ADF equipment and personnel assisting with fighting the fires.

These Australian crews and their vessels provided many, many instances of essential emergency relief and support during a time of significant crisis. Maritime workers are used to putting themselves in harm's way every time they go to work, but to learn of their extraordinary commitment in coming to the aid of others in a time of
catastrophic emergency is indeed admirable. That is why I wrote to the Prime Minister last week, requesting that he ensure that these hardworking, dedicated and brave seafarers who helped out during the bushfire crisis are eligible for the proposed National Emergency Medal.

While today gives us time to reflect on sacrifices made by so many who have lost their lives, put themselves in harm's way to defend their communities and battle this emergency for weeks and months, it's also important to place on record that the opposition supports and values the role undertaken by all personnel, volunteers, professionals and civilians in this emergency fire operation. It is our belief we need to develop a more formal and coordinated civilian capacity to assist our communities in times of emergency.

The experiences of those crews in Eden, Mallacoota and Kangaroo Island, to name a few, have prompted the beginning of a broader debate that will no doubt canvass options to develop a permanent civilian capacity to undertake large-scale relief and rescue operations. We are keen to ensure that the government and opposition work together to develop a non-partisan position on the development of such a response capability.

I also would like to join other contributions in supporting the call to Australians to visit these areas, to go down and spend time, spend a night, in the areas affected by bushfire—not only those that have had suffered fire but also those surrounding communities that are experiencing extreme downturn and are struggling to be able to survive through this season and perhaps even into the next. So I join those senators that have asked Australians to visit these communities.

Senator ASKEW (Tasmania) (19:58): In my lifetime I have lived through a lot of Australian summers, and every summer we've experienced bushfires and—more often than not—cyclones, storms and floods. We live in a vast, volatile country that certainly experiences the full force of nature at times. And so it is with sadness that today I rise to speak in support of the condolence motion relating to the bushfires that have become such a key focus and a dominant part of our lives over recent months in so many parts of our vast country. Communities across Australia have been threatened by intense fire conditions. Towns and swaths of property and bushland have been destroyed, and lives and livelihoods have been lost.

The immense scale of this summer's bushfires has been extreme and something I hope we don't see again. I'm very sad to note that 33 people have lost their lives in these bushfires, including nine brave firefighters and aerial tanker crew members who have given the ultimate sacrifice in their service to us. I extend my condolences to the families and friends of each of these 33 people and to the communities who have been affected by these fires. Over 3,000 homes have been confirmed lost and more than 11 million hectares have been burnt across the country.

This bushfire season has been devastating for so many, but it has also shown that Australians will always look out for each other—working together to help their neighbours, their communities and fellow Australians during such times. It is this attitude around unswerving support that I want to focus on today. Areas across Tasmania's north, the Midlands, east coast and southern region have experienced fire activity over several months, including one last week in the Tamar Valley, just down the river from my electorate office. As at the end of last week, Tasmania Fire Service had responded to 1,117 vegetation fires in this season alone. This has resulted in over 36,000 hectares burnt throughout the state.

The number of people involved in fighting those fires is large, too. Approximately 1,700 employees and volunteers from Tasmania Fire Service and the State Emergency Service, along with 248 Parks and Wildlife Service personnel, 116 Sustainable Timber Tasmania personnel and 127 Sustainable Timber Tasmania firefighting contractors and machinery operators have been deployed so far during the 2019-20 Tasmania firefighting campaign. The vast majority of these people undertook multiple rotations. Many thousands of hours have been devoted to such deployments within my state, and it doesn't stop there. Since 16 September 2019, 525 Tasmanian firefighters have been deployed to help battle fires in mainland Australia. This figure of 525 comprises 51 Tasmania Fire Service career firefighters, 398 TFS volunteers, 61 from Parks and Wildlife Service, and a further 15 from Sustainable Timber Tasmania.

Our Tasmanian firefighters joined mainland crews to fight fires and supported operational staff in New South Wales, Queensland and here in the ACT. They were deployed to Coffs Harbour, Tamworth, Kempsey, Sydney, Port Macquarie, Queanbeyan, Shoalhaven, Moruya, Cooma, Tumut, Rockhampton, Brisbane and Boonah as well as the state operation centres in New South Wales and Queensland. Their roles spanned tree felling, investigation, liaison, public information, logistics, leadership and incident command as well as firefighting. I am so proud of the efforts of our Tasmanian firefighters, associated agencies and the Tasmanian members of the Australian Defence Force who have all deployed to fire grounds and operations statewide. I'm extremely grateful for all the assistance rendered by interstate and international personnel—all of whom worked tirelessly to keep our Australian communities safe. Thanks to each and every one of you.
Closer to home, my staff members and their families have personally contributed to this vast firefighting effort. As a volunteer for Tasmania SES, my office manager and policy adviser, Jorden Gunton, spent time last month providing operational and logistical support for the bushfires in the Fingal Valley in Tasmania's Midlands. Jorden's mother, Sergeant Sharon Gunton, an Army reservist with Tasmania's own 12/40th Battalion, Royal Tasmanian Regiment, was deployed to Kangaroo Island, South Australia, to provide vital logistical support as part of the Australian Defence Force's Operation Bushfire Assist. Tasmanian-born Adrian Jones, who is the brother of my diary manager, Jacqui Martin, is the Air Service Australia superintendent and the fire manager for Canberra Airport. In this capacity, Adrian has been overseeing firefighting activity for fires across the ACT and New South Wales, including the fires that led to the airport's closure on 23 January. These experiences and many others across the country give us a unique insight into the firefighting situation and help us understand the implications of the decisions we make on the ground and here, in our nation's capital, whether we are protecting our own homes or making policy decisions around personnel deployment.

Beyond fighting the fires and volunteering support within affected communities, Australians have continued to show their generosity in donating food, shelter and money to charities that are helping those impacted. Across Australia, appeals have raised incredible amounts of money, supported in most part by everyday Australians wanting to make a difference.

Locally in Launceston, a cocktail event organised by the Rotary Club of Tamar Sunrise and supported by the greater business community raised in excess of $72,000 for Rotary's National Bushfires Appeal; Launceston's Australian Italian Club's bushfire relief fundraiser resulted in a $5,000 donation to BlazeAid; and many other individuals, community organisations and businesses around the state have held their own fundraising events for the cause. Generosity in the face of adversity is a proud Australian tradition. These bushfires have left scars that run deep across our landscape and our hearts, but again it has shown us what we are really capable of as a nation.

Senator WALSH (Victoria) (20:05): I want to offer my condolences today to the families and communities of the brave Victorians who gave their lives fighting fires to protect us all: David Moresi, Mat Kavanagh and Bill Slade. They will be remembered as heroes. To the families and communities of East Gippslander locals Mick Roberts and Fred Becker, who sadly lost their lives defending homes, and to all the families, friends and communities of those 33 people who died across the country in these tragic and devastating fires, I offer my condolences. On behalf of all Victorians, I say thank you to our emergency workers and firefighters, paid and volunteer, who have battled extreme exhaustion and the worst conditions and have just kept going with courage and with conviction. Thank you to all of you who have donated whatever you can and who've run fundraisers or volunteered. To those working hard restoring services, power and access to communities that have been cut off, to those staffing evacuation centres, to those rescuing and caring for injured wildlife and to the ADF evacuating and protecting those in danger: thank you.

This summer we have seen death and destruction. Thirty-three lives have been lost across the country, with five lives lost in Victoria. Thousands of homes have been destroyed, including over 300 in my home state. Right now those Victorians are in the toughest of times. In trauma and having lost everything, they now face the decision of whether to rebuild in the fire zone and confront more dangerous fire seasons ahead or to leave the communities that they love. Wildlife has been killed and injured at a horrific scale, and we've all been sickened at the scale of this loss. Farms and businesses are under extreme stress, and I know that so many people living outside the immediate bushfire zones have felt helpless as they watch the communities of their fellow Australians burn. They've felt helpless as they've seen extreme heat, toxic smoke and dust replace the carefree summer life that, for so long, we've taken for granted in this country. Checking our emergency apps and wearing face masks have become part of daily life, and it shouldn't be this way.

These bushfires have touched everyone, and they've also brought us closer together as a state and as a nation. From the smallest acts of kindness to the most heroic acts of saving lives, we have united. And now the community wants its political leaders to unite too. This summer people have spoken to me about little else than the bushfires and the need for politicians to stop arguing and start acting, to just figure it out and get on with it. The Australian people want this parliament to come together, so it's time for us to unite to deal with the immediate crisis and get urgent relief to where it's most needed right now—and then to stay with those devastated communities long beyond this fire season and for as long as it takes to rebuild lives, homes, jobs and communities and to rebuild hope.

It's also time for us to unite together as a parliament and confront the underlying causes of our longer and hotter fire seasons: our warming climate. There is just no real question in the community anymore about whether our planet is heating up. It is, and we all know that carbon pollution is what is making that happen. So it's well past time that everyone in this parliament listens and that we act—that we act to cut our carbon pollution, that we act to invest in renewables and that we act on the global stage to bring others along with us. The Australian people want
their political leaders to find a way forward, and, if we care about our future, the future of our children and the future of our planet, we will do just that.

Senator CANAVAN (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (20:10): I too rise to offer my sincere condolences to all of those Australians that have suffered enormous loss over this terrible and tragic summer period and add my brief words to this statement. These fires have been devastating and tragic for so many. Thirty-three Australians have lost their lives. More than 3,000 homes have been lost. My heart goes out to all Australians that have been impacted by these fires—that have lost loved ones, that have lost property, that have lost farms or that have lost business through the indirect impact of the fires on local communities.

These have been very hard times for many in our country, but it's at these times that Australians have shown the strength, resolve and compassion that we are known for as a nation. Those values have been shown more by our rural firefighters than anyone else. They have put themselves in harm's way to protect others and protect property, and for that they have my never-ending gratitude. We should recognise their efforts because self-sacrifice is one of the highest human virtues and our firefighters demonstrate it in spades.

I also want to recognise the efforts of our Australian Defence Force. While this was a formal and compulsory turnout, I know that the efforts of our Defence Force were made with the same volunteer spirit that was shown in our rural firefighting services, and their efforts in response have given so much hope to communities that were at a low, low point. It has not only helped in the immediate response to these tragedies but also, I think, put many Australians in a better position to recover and grow.

I think the most important thing we can do as a parliament and as a government in response, in the months and years to come, is not just to offer our condolences here but to make sure we also stand with these communities to help them recover over the long term. In some senses it will be in the months to come that the pain will be almost the hardest, and that's when we must remember all of those Australians who are suffering and be there to support them. I know this government is doing that. I don't live in an area that's been affected in the tragic ways that many areas of south-eastern Australia have, but in my area, near where I live at Yeppoon, was one of the first fires we experienced, in mid-November last year. Indeed, the fire began only a couple of kilometres from my house, proceeded north and west and destroyed a lot of farmland in my area. Also, 14 homes have been destroyed.

In the last month I have spent quite a bit of time travelling around with the local member, Michelle Landry, to those farms and communities, and it is humbling to see the stoic nature of people who have almost lost it all. I thank people like Graham and Judy, Robert Sikes, and Jack and Ray Cowie for showing us around their properties. They have lost a lot, but fortunately they've saved themselves, and I know we'll be there to help them rebuild and they will all come back from these tragic events.

I also want to thank the local people in my area for their response at an individual level—people like Anthony, who is the captain of the Bungundarra Rural Fire Brigade. His own property was at risk, but he spent the whole time, the four or five days that this fire was at its peak, not trying to save his own property but, as captain of the rural fire brigade out there, saving other people's places, and he helped so many by doing so. We can only take the positive out of events like these, which is the example set by ordinary people, before our very eyes, and how we should all respond as well.

These fires have been very devastating. They're some of the worst fires on record, depending on how you measure that. The quantified devastation is not the thing that marks as unique these fires and the other events we've recently experienced. The really unique feature of the fires of the last few months is how many of us, particularly in this place and others like it, have sought to use others' tragic circumstances for their own political gain.

I was here in Canberra in 2003 for the devastating fires then. I had just moved to the town with my then fiancee, now wife, 17 years ago now, almost to the day. When we moved down to Canberra we had a presumption that it was a public service town and it might not have the same community feel as other parts of the world that we'd lived in. But within two weeks of arriving, when those fires hit, we saw the whole of this community come together. There was a great community response, even though it was a tragic event, where four people lost their lives and 500 lost their homes. It was such a tragic event, but a unifying moment because people did come together at that time. Unfortunately, we don't seem to do that as much anymore. We have floods, cyclones and fires, and they're no longer a time for us to unify and just help people out. They have become a time for some to preen themselves on their self-proclaimed moral virtue while accusing others of having blood on their hands.

I'm going to draw an analogy here. The richest man in Rome at the time of Julius Caesar was a bloke called Marcus Licinius Crassus. Crassus made his fortune in a number of nefarious ways, but one was that he established the first fire brigade in Rome. His brigade would rush out to any fire threatening or burning homes, and he would offer to buy the homes in the path of the fire at a fraction of their value. Eventually, landowners would generally
accept because otherwise they would get nothing. As soon as they did that, the brigade would fire up the hoses and save these properties, and Crassus would leave with a fortune.

Many politicians over the past few months have acted in the same sort of dishonourable way as Crassus. They've acted in a crass way—and we get the word 'crass' from the Latin 'crassus'. They've turned up at the scene of fires, not seeking to help people, not even to offer support or condolences. Instead, they've launched into harangues that are all about politically profiting from others' tragedy, just like Crassus did 2,000 years ago. We know they are doing this because they so often stretch the truth and paint an incomplete picture about why these fires have occurred.

Let me be very, very clear: we have experienced more fire-weather days—that is, hot, dry, windy days—over the past 40 years, and part of this increase is attributable to climate change. That is all laid out in a definitive reported Climate change in Australia, produced by the CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology. But what you won't hear, I think, from almost any commentator on this issue is that the report goes on to say—this is a direct quote from the CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology report:

However, no studies explicitly attributing the Australian increase in fire weather to climate change have been performed at this time.

That result is also consistent with the latest IPCC special report on climate change. In that report, there's a table summarising the potential impacts of climate change on a range of natural disasters. In the row describing and outlining wildfires and climate change, Australia is listed as having little to no information about a link between climate change and bushfires. So, why, if we're getting more hot days, is there not that established link? That is because weather conditions are only one factor in establishing fire risk. As the CSIRO and the bureau say in their report that I quoted earlier, fire potential at a given place depends on four 'switches'. They are, the report says:

… 1.) ignition, either human-caused or from natural sources like lightning; 2.) fuel abundance or load—a sufficient amount of fuel must be present; 3.) fuel dryness, where lower moisture contents are required for fire, and; 4.) suitable weather conditions for fire spread, generally hot, dry and windy ...

Two of those factors directly relate to climate, one of them does indirectly and the other has no link at all.

The reason why it has been hard to establish a direct link between fires and climate change is that they could have counteracting impacts. As a scientific paper titled 'Effects of climate change on bushfire threats to biodiversity, ecosystem processes and people in the Sydney region' says:

Effects of elevated CO2 on plant growth could counteract effects of future dryness on fuels, but such effects in local ecosystems are uncertain. Thus there is potential for fire activity to either increase or decrease in the Sydney region as a consequence of climate change.

Now, all I'm doing tonight is reading out the direct science on this issue. I haven't had a chance to listen to every speech here tonight, but there have not been many—none that I've heard—that have directly quoted science. We're not going to solve these issues by exaggerating the potential impacts and risks that we face. We need to calmly respond to the fact that we are a country that faces serious fire risk and we are a country that is experiencing higher amounts of hot weather and dry conditions, and therefore we do need to take corresponding action to reduce the other things that we control, of those four factors that determine fire, to reduce risk to the Australian people and make people safer.

One of those conditions for fires that we can have a big impact on is the amount of fuel that is available. We can reduce that amount of fuel. We can do more to clear vegetation, to put in fire breaks and to potentially stop the spread of fire when and if it is created. Instead, though, over the last 10 or 20 years we've been reducing the amount of clearing and fire preparation we do in fuel loads. We have been taking rights away from landowners to do their own clearing and reduce those risks, risks that I have seen, up-front and personal, as I've gone around farms in my region. Farmers have pointed to areas where they have wanted to thin, but have been prevented from doing so because of the various state laws and regulations that are in place. That is something that we must turn our attention to in response to this fire, not offering people the false hope that, if we were to ban all coalmines in this country and get rid of all coal-fired power stations, we would somehow remove all bushfire risk in this country. That is what is seemingly suggested by some people in this place. As incomprehensible as it would seem, that is the logical conclusion of a lot of the positions people are taking.

This country has always faced significant bushfire risk. Our Indigenous Australians know that. They've been dealing with it for over 10,000 years. And I don't think, even in the grossest exaggerations of the recent Dark Emu book, there is any suggestion that Aboriginal Australians back then had coal-fired power stations. That wasn't the cause of those fires back then. We had those risks then. We can deal with these risks today if we use the tried and tested methods to do so to keep people safe.
What I think we should do now and in the next few months, potentially as a royal commission and other inquiries occur, is to all talk a little bit less definitively on these issues and do a lot more listening to those who face these issues and risks at the frontline of our country, those that tackle fires almost on a yearly basis, those that try and plan and protect their properties every year to face the risks that they do in this country. They know. They have the knowledge. They are aware of the issues. If we just listen to them a little bit more, I am confident we'll make Australians safer. We won't remove bushfire risk, but we'll make Australians safer and we'll reduce the likelihood of tragic events like this happening again.

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (20:23): I rise today to speak to the matter of the bushfires that have cast such a pall over my home state of New South Wales and, indeed, over the whole country. These fires have shocked not just our nation but the entire world due to their size, longevity and sheer destruction. On Sunday, as I came down to Canberra, I shared a flight with a local group of rural fireys from the northern part of New South Wales. I want to acknowledge them—and I think this was the sentiment of the whole plane—as the true heroes in our midst, people from community who stepped forward in our time of need. They've come from the fires in the northern part of New South Wales, which began in August, to help here in Canberra and in the alpine areas. They had plenty to say, and I hope that what they say and what they have concerns about is documented and changes practices in this country. I do sheet home, particularly to the state governments, responsibility for the correct provision of resources for people to fight fires in the way that they know how.

The fires that we're talking about have burned an estimated 46 million acres and killed one billion animals and have tragically killed at least 33 people. They've caught the horrified attention of the world. All of us here, along with our fellow Australians, are appalled at the scale and the relentless devastation that has marked this summer. Indeed, people have spoken to me here in the halls of this very place since I've arrived about the way in which the whole notion of summer has changed. People have spoken to me since I arrived in Canberra about the incredible loss of pastures and fencing, concerns about their community, concerns about their families and concerns about access to health services for the mental toll that it's taken on them, their families and their communities. I want to sincerely convey my condolences to each and every person who has lost a member of their family, a close friend, a colleague or a mate. Your loss is, indeed, profound. As a representative of the people of New South Wales, I say: we wish we could rewind the days to the happier times you knew before this great personal tragedy struck.

My home state of New South Wales has been in the grip of these fires for months now. I want to particularly acknowledge the work of three of my colleagues in this state—Susan Templeman, Mike Kelly and Fiona Phillips—for the incredible community support that they've offered to those who elected them at the last federal election. Blazes have raged across the south-east of New South Wales, the Blue Mountains and all over the North Coast. The destruction has spread to Mulwala, Pilliga, Coonabarabran, Uranquinty and even the very edges of my home region, the Central Coast of New South Wales, particularly reaching the farmers and the community at Mangrove Mountain.

I want to thank my local RFS brigade at Copacabana for their sterling work in fighting dozens of fires across the coast, including the vast Gospers Mountain blaze, over the summer. In fact, I have my very own copy of the December-January issue of Copa Life. In it, a story about the rural fire brigade by Matt Francis speaks of the Gospers Mountain fire. At that time, he said, 'It still remains within the proposed containment lines outside the Central Coast LGA,' but at that stage it had burnt 185,000 hectares. Little did they know, when they were providing this amazing resource to the local community about preparing for bushfires, the toll that would be taken by the fires of the summer of 2019-20.

There is a group of amazing local volunteers in Copacabana, my home town in my home state, and I was able to get funding for them for a Striker, which is a very small vehicle that is able to fight fires in contained areas. That was one of my first contributions in public life, in fact—to be able to get the state Labor government to commit to that. We hold the Copacabana Rural Fire Brigade in great esteem. We're a proud community and we're very proud of those who do that work in our community and across this state. Yet, when they dared to put up a crowdfunding request for some money to buy adequate face masks because the ones they had been provided did not provide enough protection, they were actually shut down. The money arrived, but the PR arm of the New South Wales government, the image minders, attacked those firefighters from the Copacabana Rural Fire Brigade. They were men and women who needed adequate protection and needed masks to protect their health, but instead they received a telling-off and a silencing by leaders who should have done better and should have given them adequate safety gear in the first place. This is simply not good enough and it's not right. It's a disgrace that our brave firefighters and our volunteers from all of the services should have to go around rattling the tin for the bare minimum resources that they need to safely protect themselves in order to protect our communities, especially when the New South Wales state government crows about a surplus and its extravagant infrastructure program at the cost of human health and wellbeing and support for these vital firefighters.
As one of many in this building who have travelled to Canberra in the last few days, I don't have to look far from this building to see how the fires continue to threaten communities so near to where we're speaking today. It's a reminder we are not out of the woods in this long summer of fire, and we still stand to lose even more.

I was devastated, like men and women right across this nation, to hear of the tragic deaths in Buxton of two brave firefighters—Geoffrey Keaton and Andrew O'Dwyer, young fathers and proud members of the New South Wales Horsley Park Rural Fire Service. I give my particular condolences to their families and their friends and to the members of the Horsley Park Rural Fire Service. This is a tough time for those who have already given so much. These amazing young men died volunteering, giving their time to protect Australian lives and Australian property, and the loss of their lives is tragic. Their youth and their service to the country in its time of need makes this loss incredibly heartbreaking.

There is no doubt that this is my state's worst bushfire season on record. It featured the largest forest fire in Australian history not far from where I live—the Gospers Mountain bushfire, which had reached that record level on 15 December. By Christmas Day, it had burned another 162,000 hectares. But it is not just the state of New South Wales that has been devastated. Victorian Premier Dan Andrews was forced to call a state of emergency for his state after the terrible fires in East Gippsland burnt through three million acres of land and over 200 homes. Fires still burn across the east of Victoria, and my thoughts are with the residents and emergency services personnel still battling those blazes there.

Australia looked on in horror at the scenes of over a thousand Mallacoota residents being evacuated in a miniature Dunkirk move by the Navy. They were chased off their land by a massive fire front and had to seek shelter on the beach and wharf. I want to take the opportunity also to thank the Defence Force and, particularly, the reservists who came out over summer to undertake the necessary work of protecting life, limb and infrastructure in this country.

I can't add to the comments that the Leader of the Opposition made when he spoke of the terrible tragedy that was visited upon the people of Kangaroo Island. Engulfed in flames, it is a community that has had about one-third of its island razed. People were tragically killed. Many of the species of wildlife, like the koala population, were pushed to the brink. The entire community has been devastated. As a senator for New South Wales, I think that those on Kangaroo Island have felt the deep, deep hurt of this season in the same way that our state has.

The smoke from the fires across this nation was so vast it could be seen from space as satellites circumnavigated the globe. New Zealand, our partners across the ditch, were blanketed in smoke. The whole of the South Island was caught in a yellow haze.

The heroism of the RFS volunteers giving their precious time and devotion over the holiday season cannot be overlooked. They have lifted the community spirits of this very nation. Their tireless efforts, their self-sacrifice and their grit has ensured that their deeds this fire season will never be forgotten by a grateful nation.

I want to also thank the firefighters who've come from so many nations to aid us in our struggle. We cannot thank you enough for what you have given. Three of your own citizens, sadly, gave their lives in service of our nation—Ian McBeth, Paul Clyde Hudson, and Rick A DeMorgan Jr. Thank you to the governments and the people of Canada, Fiji, France, Japan, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore and the Philippines for your help.

Australians here opened up their homes and their wallets to help those doing it tough. Celeste Barber's fundraiser alone raised over $50 million, shattering the world record for the largest ever Facebook fundraiser. Over $140 million has been gathered and now needs to be poured into deserving communities. We've seen Australians of all kinds and of all ages motivated by a range of views, including their religious views, to put their faith into action, to exercise mateship and to travel, in that spirit, to bushfire ravaged areas to deliver food and desperately needed supplies. We've seen people like my state colleague Jihad Dib who travelled to Adelong with the Lighthouse Community Support Muslim Women's Association, Lakemba Travel Centre, Human Appeal, the NRL's Bulldogs and the GWS Giants side-by-side with dozens of volunteers to stand by our fellow Australians.

I also want to acknowledge that I was proud to represent the Leader of the Labor Party, the Hon. Anthony Albanese, at St Andrew's Cathedral for a service of prayer for those affected by the bushfires. We have gathered not just in churches but in halls, on the edges of streets and in corridors to seek to salve the wounds of this burning summer.

I urge every Australian: keep doing what you can. Donate to ethical, accountable charities. If you want to put your money into a particular local area, look to the local councils for mayoral funds that will be greatly needed in the times ahead. We need to support businesses, particularly small businesses, across this nation. It's regional and rural Australia that has been most affected by this sad summer. We need to make sure that those small businesses that didn't burn down but were affected by the burn get the support that they need—not more paperwork that
prevents them accessing the dollars that they need to get on with the job and to keep jobs alive in their communities. Please, if you can, make sure that you visit great and beautiful places like the South Coast of New South Wales, East Gippsland in Victoria, the Blue Mountains and, indeed, the Central Coast. Reinvigorate those small businesses and industries that give life, jobs and hope to countless communities.

We must be proactive in our efforts to rebuild these communities, and we have to help one another right now. The government has no time to take a backward step. This is a time for rebuilding. But we must be better prepared. Our services must be better equipped for the inevitable next fire season. We also need to look at the impact this season of fire has had on the mental health of emergency service volunteers and families directly impacted. The scenes of hell that have emerged through the media can hardly be compared to the heartwarming experience of watching locals look after one another despite the loss of their homes and the loss of their beautiful environments. It feels as if a dull, passive ache rests on the heart of the nation.

Emergency service workers have gone above and beyond the call of duty. I want to particularly commend Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons for his entirely remarkable leadership in what must be one of the most trying times of his career. I'm also mindful of this morning's prayer gathering here in Canberra and the lessons that we learned, documented in a prayer that was written in 2009 after the dreadful fires in Victoria. I close with the words of the first hymn:

Now thank we all our God
For courage meeting danger,
When selfless spirits fight
For mate or helpless stranger,
When wind and bushfire flare
And terror grips our faith,
Compassion keeps us strong,
Through tragedy and death.

Senator DEAN SMITH (Western Australia—Government Whip in the Senate) (20:38): I rise this evening to add my voice and the voices of many Western Australians to the condolence motion and, in doing so, extend my sympathies to those many Australians touched by the devastating impact of this summer season's bushfires. This condolence motion recognises the loss of 33 lives, the destruction of over 3,000 homes and the devastation of wildlife and of regional communities and the local economies that provide for them. It extends the deepest sympathies of this Senate to the families who have lost loved ones, recognises the bravery of all emergency service volunteers and career firefighters, applauds the efforts of Australia's Defence Force personnel and its reservists, and honours the perseverance and courage of those nine firefighters who lost their lives answering the call to go to the aid and defence of our local community.

Unfortunately, Australians are not new to adversity and disaster, and many can recall the tragedies of the past: Black Friday in 1939, Ash Wednesday in 1983, the Canberra fires in 2003 and Black Saturday in 2009. We'll soon add to this list the unfinished tragedy that has marked this summer in Australia.

But this is a tragedy that has been met by enormous charity. Western Australians, being well acquainted with bushfire, felt knowingly of the heartbreak, shock and loss being experienced by their fellow Australians thousands of miles away. While Western Australia has been relatively isolated from the worst of these latest bushfires, the response by the West Australian community has been one of solidarity when witnessing the hardship and danger experienced by their fellow country men and women. Despite the safety and security that come with distance, West Australians have dug deep to support bushfire recovery efforts. No town, suburb or community in my home state of Western Australia is without its own story of compassion coupled with charity. From the local coffee shop staff donating their tips, to community organisations like the Wanneroo Lions, who collected donations at their annual Australia Day breakfasts, to children donating their pocket money to support recovery efforts, the pain of thousands has been met with the charity of hundreds of thousands.

This afternoon, let me honour those WA communities of new Australians who have dug deep to support their fellow Australians: the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan in Perth's northern suburbs; the Buddha's Light International Association of Western Australia; the Chung Wah Association of Western Australia; the Filipino Community Council of Western Australia; my good friends in the Chin Community in Western Australia; the Indian Society of Western Australia; the Shree Swaminarayan Mandir in Wangara; the Sikh Gurudwara in Bennett Springs; the Tamil Association of Western Australia; the Bosnia-Herzegovina community at Bennett Springs, in Perth's northern suburbs; and the Vietnamese Community of Western Australia, who raised funds at their Tet New Year Festival just last weekend.
Tonight I also honour and pay tribute to the contributions of another group of great West Australians: the sacrifice of more than 100 West Australian Department of Fire and Emergency Services personnel who rallied to the call to support the voluntary efforts of others across our country. This disaster has shown once again that adversity brings out the best in every Australian.

An Australian's home is their castle—a source of pride; a domicile of memories—and around 2,900 castles have been lost in these fires and many more damaged. While they will be rebuilt, it will take much longer to make them a home again—the wall with kids' measurements that no longer stands; the photos of happier times that have been reduced to ashes. These homes will never quite be the same, but their reconstruction will demonstrate the resilience of the Australian way, our strength of spirit and character, conquering adversity, and getting on with the job. Today, we pay tribute to those who are already beginning to rebuild their lives and to create new memories.

There's no doubt that along with the physical repair and recovery effort after these bushfire disasters will come a more contested political debate, perhaps a deeper policy response to these bushfires and, with some maturity, perhaps a national consensus on at least some elements. This must be done. The events of this summer have been unprecedented, but I don't believe they can be characterised as unexpected. The attitude of our community to our changing climate has been evolving for many, many years. In discussions with friends and family and the wider community over the Christmas break, it is abundantly clear that the people we represent are expecting more to be done to respond to and to mitigate against the human-influenced component of our changing climate. Australians know that cutting emissions in Australia, when we contribute just 1.3 per cent of the global total, is not going to dramatically shift the dial on climate change. But neither do they believe we are excused from inaction or excused from re-evaluating our assumptions when the evidence makes it obvious to do so.

In this condolence motion, this Senate commits to learning the lessons from this fire season. There will be lessons that can be applied locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Some will want them to be symbolic; others, like myself, will want them to be pragmatic, practical and tangible. And part of that action should involve using our competitive advantage in mining and petroleum to deliver solutions to the world.

Western Australia is home to the minerals the world needs to create batteries, and, already, two energy-intensive lithium processing facilities are under construction. The Western Australian government is committed to developing a hydrogen industry to support clean energy solutions. Western Australia's LNG is a vital part of the world's transition to renewable energy, with it generating 50 per cent fewer emissions than other fuels. And our uranium deposits are vast and ready to be developed, with nuclear technology providing a cheaper, cleaner, base-load power option for developing and developed nations. By using our natural competitive advantages, we can deliver lower emissions for emerging energy markets.

With regard to a future response to the challenges of our changing climate, I stand with a former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom David Cameron and his view when examining the challenges of climate change and his assertion that this is a natural conservative issue. On this theme, he recently made a very pertinent remark. He said:

… don't leave this to the left or you'll get an anti-business, anti-enterprise, anti-technology response. We need business technology to be at the heart of what we do. And I think conservatives can lead on this.

Not all action is good action when responding to the dramatic changes in our climate. Our response to climate matters can't be allowed to entrench energy poverty in developing nations and impoverish the many vulnerable people who are their citizens. Australians do not believe that standing in the way of supplying affordable energy to economies that need it for electricity, refrigeration and access to technology is the way to be a responsible global citizen. Access to cheap energy is vital if we are to boost the living standards of others. Refrigeration leads to improved health outcomes and technology drives education and innovation.

Today's condolence motion marks not the end but the beginning; the beginning of the repair and of the recovery, the beginning of the lessons learnt and the application of new approaches and new responses, and, hopefully for the many that have been touched by this bushfire disaster, the beginning of the healing.

**Senator CHISHOLM** (Queensland) (20:47): I too wish to add my remarks to the condolence motion regarding the unprecedented bushfires that have had an impact on so many parts of Australia. We acknowledge the devastation, the loss of life and the ongoing impact on families and communities from the bushfires. Talking to people since being back in Canberra and the impact that it has and continues to have locally, I have spoken to many Canberra residents, particularly those who have a connection to the South Coast. The impact of the bushfire season for them has been something that has lasted weeks and, indeed, now months.

I pay tribute to those who have been on the frontline and to those volunteering. What an amazing sacrifice, particularly given it has been occurring over a period when many of us enjoy spending time with our families and loved ones. This has been such a long and devastating bushfire season. I was in Bundaberg in mid-November and...
was briefed by the mayor, Jack Dempsey, and the deputy mayor, Bill Trevor, on fires that had been impacting on their community in the days beforehand. They were fortunate in that there was no loss of life or property, but I was back in Bundaberg last week and the mayor informed me of the ongoing recovery efforts that have been taking place up there since November.

We also saw fires in Pechey, near Toowoomba, that burnt through nearly 20,000 hectares and destroyed six houses. The Peregian Beach area on the Sunshine Coast was impacted, along with Stanthorpe, Mareeba, Yeppoon and Beechmont in Queensland. Overall, there were a total of 42 state emergencies declared across local government areas in Queensland. The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Acting Chief Superintendent Kevin Reading said, 'The vegetation will dry out again and the fire risk will continue.' Mr Reading, who has worked at the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services for 15 years, said that he hasn't seen a season like it. So I would like to put on record my thanks to the volunteers across Queensland and emergency services personnel for their work over the last couple of months.

In more recent weeks the images from New South Wales, Victoria, and Kangaroo Island in South Australia have obviously made an impact on the broader Australian community. We mourn the loss of life. The loss of the three American aircrew is a devastating reminder of the international efforts that have gone into fighting these fires from across the world. Communities have no doubt been left wanting answers. Part of Senator Wong's speech today was important in showing, I think, what the future will look like. Senator Wong referred to her speech from 2009 in the Senate, where she said this:

... we are also likely to see an increase in very extreme fire weather days. That is one of the effects of climate change that was documented again by the Bushfire CRC, the Bureau of Meteorology and the CSIRO in 2007, when they said that very extreme fire weather days now occur on average every two to 11 years at most sites, by 2020 they may occur twice as often and by 2050 they may occur four to five times as often.

So we have been warned about these bushfires becoming more regular.

There was one article that I read in January that has stayed with me over the last couple of weeks. It appeared in The Sydney Morning Herald on 8 January 2020. It's by Amelia McGuire. The article details the effort of Terry Snow in defending his own private equestrian centre. Mr Snow did not evacuate but stayed to defend his property. The area that we're talking about is on the New South Wales South Coast. I will just read out a couple of parts of the article, because I think it's important. This is a quote from Mr Snow:

We weren't naive, we'd been expecting and preparing for years and always engaged a fire consultant. We followed his advice to the letter and were so grateful that we did.

The article says, about Mr Snow:

... the 77-year-old's intricate fire plan has also been credited as part of the reason the nearby coastal town of Bawley Point escaped annihilation in the firestorm that swept through the region last month.

It goes on to say:

As the fire bore down on his property, Mr Snow, whose net worth is valued at approximately $1.6 billion by Forbes, used a fleet of privately owned machinery to protect his business.

"We had a big loader to run along the ground and remove debris [along fire trails]," he said.

Mr Snow's team was also able to use two large water trucks with a combined capacity of 2300 litres.

"We had 10-15 employees on rotation to ensure the fire line was always covered," he said.

Willinga Park—

which is the name of the property—

was also supported by multiple sources of emergency power Mr Snow built on the property after he bought it in 2002, including a 500-kilowatt solar system, a 2.1 kWh Tesla battery storage system, and diesel generators spread across three engines.

... ... ...

Mr Snow said the park's preparedness meant the RFS was able to concentrate on other properties under threat in the area, but also provided protection to Bawley Point.

... ... ...

Shoalhaven mayor Amanda Findley believes it was a combined effort, saying the "heroic" efforts of the RFS, Willinga Park's "significant private firefighting capacity" and Bawley's residents saved the town.

I don't for one second begrudge Mr Snow for what he did. He obviously has the resources to do it and is very protective of his property. But, as the warnings say, these fires are becoming more prevalent. We can't become a society where your ability to defend your property depends on your wealth. I believe this is an issue that the royal
commission needs to consider if it is actually going to make a thorough effort to look at the bushfire crisis over recent months.

Once again I put on record the devastation and loss of life. I acknowledge the ongoing impact that this is going to have on families and communities, and I wish those communities all the best in their recovery efforts.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians and Minister for Youth and Sport) (20:54): I rise to make my contribution to the debate on the condolence motion on the bushfires that was moved by the Leader of the Government in the Senate this morning. As has been said a number of times, none of us in this place haven't been touched in some way by the devastation that was seen across Australia this summer—that is still occurring. We saw when we flew into Canberra on Sunday night that the fires are still alive close to this city, our nation's capital, where we work this week.

We extend our condolences and sympathies to the families, the communities and all those who've been touched by these quite tragic events—to the families of those who have been lost, those 33 lives; to the individuals in the communities that have been affected by the destruction of over 3,000 homes and all that those things mean; to those who remain on edge while the bushfire season remains; to all of those firefighters who remain away from home, whether they're local, from interstate or, as we've heard a number of times, from overseas, who are assisting in the effort to manage these fires; and particularly to those firefighters who've lost their lives tragically, looking to defend their communities or, in the case that has been mentioned many times during the debate today, those from overseas who have come to assist us. We extend our thanks to all the emergency services workers and the Defence workers who have come out to assist—whether volunteering or turned out, in the case of the Defence Force. It's an extraordinary effort at an extraordinary time. I'd like to add my voice of recognition to those who have spoken before me and will speak after me in the chamber.

I'd also like to add a bit of a shout-out to some in the community who haven't been noticed or haven't been recognised as part of the debate but who nonetheless have played a role and are some of the people who will play a continuing role as communities recover in the aftermath of the fires, as communities look to rebuild. I was down on the South Coast of New South Wales the week before last and called into headspace at Bega—talking to the workers there who were preparing for the additional resources that were going to come their way, working out how they might manage those, how they might best fit into the community and how they might best be engaged. Adjacent to the headspace services and job placement service, those people are looking to assist young people with their mental health. They are preparing for when all the kids go back to school and for the issues that will start to manifest once the kids all get together and start talking about things as a group. All of these people are of those communities and have been impacted themselves.

One chap there whose house had been saved—the only thing remaining on his property, but he'd been without power for 20 days—was still at work trying to assist young people to find work. Ensuring that these people are looked after as this process continues, as the recovery continues, is going to be extremely important, because they are the people who are assisting in looking after the young people in that community as the community recovers. It's important that they themselves are looked after. Brianna Armstrong, who's the manager at headspace in Bega, and her team have a huge job in front of them but are all dealing with the impact of the fires in their own lives as they assist the communities to recover. It is a big job and it's a special job.

I also took some time to visit a number of aged-care facilities in the region. Some of the stories that I heard there were quite instructive—what worked, what didn't work. We're working really closely with those sites to get a good understanding of what worked for them and what didn't work for them in certain emergency situations when everything was stressed—all of the logistics services were stressed—and of how they managed. In New South Wales, prior to Christmas, there were six facilities that were evacuated. In Queensland, there was one. Since Christmas, 405 care recipients at 10 aged-care services were safely evacuated and then returned to the facilities, and there were another 73 from three multipurpose services and 15 that had to leave a retirement village. In Victoria, there were about 260 people all up from facilities there: 174 from four multipurpose services and 81 from a residential aged-care service.

I called into Tura Beach south of Bega and spent some time with RSL LifeCare there. Three facilities had been folded into one for five days. Madam Acting Deputy President Bilyk, I know you're interested in aged care. If you can, imagine 120 people residing for five days in an aged-care facility that's built for 60 and the work that was done by the staff to manage that. In one case, they moved 60 residents and their beds so that they would be comfortably catered for at the facility that they had to be evacuated to, to look after the residents of the aged-care facilities.

I acknowledge Jan Hume, Julie Evans and Katie Hughes—Jan is from Hugh Cunningham Gardens, Julie Evans is from Albert Moore Gardens at Merimbula, where everybody went to, and Katie Hughes evacuated her residents...
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all the way up from Eden to Merimbula—and the goodwill in the community. The staff had to come in and bring their families in to assist with moving the people because everything was stretched. All the other services in the communities were stretched. A couple driving past in their transit van saw the activity and said, 'Can we give you a hand?' They spent seven hours ferrying supplies seven kilometres down the road to assist the aged-care facility to manage the evacuation of the residents. The residents were there for five days, and then they were all moved back. I was talking to Julie. When her daughter rang and said, 'Mum, we've been told we have to leave; you have to come with us,' she said, 'Well, I can't; I have all these people that I'm responsible for, that I have to look after.' These are the things that people have confronted in the aged-care sector. They've had a pretty tough 12 months, but you could see the care and the passion they had for looking after the residents that were in their facility, and I can only congratulate them and all their staff. They did a wonderful job, and they're to be commended.

I acknowledge Leanne Turner at IRT Crown Gardens at Batemans Bay and IRT Moruya. Again, they had spot fires on the site that they were looking to manage. They had people that they'd brought in. They evacuated to a number of facilities. They had no power. They couldn't cook the food. They had to find ways to manage all of these things, yet they did it. The chef was on site for 48 hours straight to feed the residents of the facility—extraordinary efforts and extraordinary stories. I can only, from a ministerial perspective in the portfolio, extend my sincere thanks, gratitude and congratulations to these people for the wonderful work that they've done, because they really did go above and beyond the call of duty.

Down at The Glen Residential Care Service at Catalina, just south of Batemans Bay, the manager, Amanda Ackerley, was standing outside the building with the fire hose damping down the site outside, and the fire came to the building. They had 80 residents inside, and yet they defended that. A number of issues came up that they had to deal with, and they will all be very, very important learnings for how we manage these circumstances in the future. We've started the process of gathering the information to make sure that those learnings are incorporated into the systems as they need to be, because, as we've heard, we can only expect that these events might occur more commonly into the future.

Can I return to those who have lost their lives—whether they be citizens or whether they be firefighters from Australia or from abroad—and to their families, and extend to you this place's deepest and sincerest condolences. I know that in the context of those who you've lost, effectively all you have left is your memories. I hope that they're strong and they remain strong. I hope that they can give you comfort at this most difficult time and that they can endure and continue to give you comfort, particularly memories of those who have been lost fighting the fires. It wasn't in vain; it was for a good purpose. And, to the children of those firefighters: know that your parent gave everything for your community, and let that be a strong part of the memory that you maintain and gain strength from as you grow up, because from this place, on behalf of a very, very grateful nation and community, we say thank you. It's a terrible thing to have to endure, but we just hope that there is some comfort that can come to you from the warm memories that you hold of your loved ones. I thank the Senate.

Senator KITCHING (Victoria) (21:07): The events of the past few months have united our nation in grief, in despair and sometimes even in a sense of hopelessness, but these events have also brought out the best in us—the unity, the sense of community and a willingness to help one another, even if that means a sacrificing for ourselves. Imminent disaster can bring to the fore how fragile our mortality is, but it can also unleash displays of complete selflessness.

Many words have been spoken here today, and many more will come. We will continue to speak and write about these few months for generations to come, and I think we should pause and ask why, because what we have witnessed, and what Australians have lived through, is unprecedented. Thirty-three people have died, over 3,000 homes have been destroyed, 11 million hectares of land have been burnt and more than a billion animals have been killed. Countless people cannot return to their communities, and others remain without communication and other critical services.

Even for a country that has become accustomed to the land burning, this is not normal. These fires cannot be just classified as a natural disaster, for they are a national public health emergency too. For Canberrans, as we all experienced last night, but for those who have been here over the summer, the persistent lingering smoke is an ever-present reminder that this is not over. A day here or there of reprieve is quickly reversed by a change of wind.

I have mentioned that these events can bring out the very best in human beings, and I want to cite one example. A friend of mine, Kathy Mikkelsen, and her family and friends were in Mallacoota over Christmas. They were evacuated to Tathra on the night of 30 December. They then found themselves evacuating again when a warning of an approaching fire came through at about 3.30 am. So six adults, six children and three dogs then made their way to Bega, from where it became increasingly obvious that they could go no further. What they were worried about was the increasing number of embers falling, and they were very anxious about protecting the children from
those falling embers. So they started to erect a camp in the underground car park of the Bega Safeway, all the while trying not to let the kids see how anxious they were. They had nowhere else to go.

If you knew my friend Kathy and her husband, James, you would know that what happened next is not surprising, because they are some of the kindest hearted people you could ever meet, and the universe always seems to repay them in kind. Coming upon them in the underground carpark was the trolley attendant at the Coles at Bega—a Sudanese refugee named Ibrahim. He took one look at their anxious and exhausted faces and offered them his home for the night. His home is a tiny flat above the Bega shops. He found them beds, and his girlfriend cooked them a big meal. They realised it was the first time that they had eaten for a few days without being on the move and keeping ahead of the fire. They sheltered there. Kathy is a fantastic musician and a professional singer who is currently studying for a PhD in medical science. In return for the shelter and the food, they played music for Ibrahim and his girlfriend with the only instruments they had—a recorder, a ukulele, some spoons, and two flashlights for the lightshow. The couple told Kathy it was the best New Year's Eve that they ever had, and for Kathy and her family and her friends, they could sleep the sleep of those who had arrived at a safe haven. They are all still in touch.

In 2009 while I was working as an adviser in the Victorian government I travelled with then Premier Brumby in the aftermath of the Black Saturday bushfires. On the Whittlesea oval were marquees set up with every kind of clothing that people might need—for example, pyjamas from Peter Alexander, jeans from denim companies—and all sorts of food; in fact, I have never seen so much food located in one place. Also, for example, Telstra were there with a huge marquee, and what they had done was give people peace of mind, because people did leave their homes with their phones, but often they didn't take a charger with them. Telstra had every type of charger under the sun for every make of phone. They also set up a centre so that people could put a message on social media—for example, on their Facebook—because, of course, all of the communications had gone down in the area and their family members didn't know whether they were alive or not. I will also never forget going with emergency services into some of the affected towns, because they were still trying to locate and to quantify how many people lived in each house so that they would know whether people had died in that residence or not. I have never forgotten that experience.

But we have seen in the last month more of the same type of selflessness of volunteers and emergency services. Words really cannot provide the debt of gratitude that the country owes these people. But I would like to say to the emergency services, the brave volunteers, the members of the Defence Force who are of the utmost professionalism and are just such upright young men and women, as well as those who have joined in the effort from overseas: we thank you from the bottom of our hearts, and that really isn't enough. But day after day, and often without pay and compensation, but always without complaint, you continue to bravely fight these fires, help to evacuate communities at immediate risk and join in to rebuild what has been destroyed. We thank you.

I'd like to also thank the state premiers, the ministers for emergency services and the emergency services commissioners. I would particularly like to acknowledge Commissioner Andrew Crisp, who is a thoroughly decent and upright person and someone I know quite well. He's a wonderful human being, and I know what he has done over the last couple of months. And, of course, all of these people's families are also a part of this effort. They show up day after day to the command centres to coordinate relief efforts and provide up-to-date and real-time information to those at immediate risk. We thank them as well.

To the 33 people who have died in this bushfire season: you are dearly missed by those who knew and loved you, and we regret very much what has happened.

Senator BRAGG (New South Wales) (21:14): I rise tonight to offer my sincere condolences as part of this parliament's effort to commemorate the memory of the people who have perished in these dreadful bushfires. As we went to Christmas, I think it was very clear to everyone that it was going to be a very tough traditional summer period—and it certainly was, with the level of death and destruction really unprecedented. The loss of loved ones as well as the loss of wildlife and the loss of livelihoods comes on top of a crippling drought throughout much of eastern Australia. It has been a truly dreadful summer period, and it has been very hard to focus on anything other than what has been happening to people where they have seen their whole lives lost to these dreadful fires.

One of the good things, perhaps the only good thing, that has come out of this dreadful period has been much wider community awareness about the importance and the value of volunteerism in our communities. We would have lost so many more people if it weren't for the culture of volunteerism which we see throughout the eastern states that have been particularly affected by these fires. In my home state, the RFS have made a very significant sacrifice and we thank them for that very much. The community has rallied very much behind the people that have been affected. I have to say that I've been blown away by the generosity of the community and the coordination of campaigns to support people. Whether it's been through the Bondi surf club, or Northbridge or Mums of the Shire, they have rallied to support people across the state and across the country.
I also wanted to say that I do think that the business sector, in many ways, have stepped up. They're often criticised, and I think they have helped a lot. I know that Jennifer Westacott and the Business Council of Australia have established a trust to support the children of the firefighters that have perished, which I think is a very, very good thing. There have also been campaigns to try to support the businesses that are untouched by fires and are desperate for people to go and visit their areas or to use their produce. The Empty Esky group has been a very positive step. I also wanted to mention that there have been extraordinary outpourings of support from multicultural communities throughout our country and also very significant offers of assistance from abroad.

But, most importantly, this has been a very important and sombre opportunity for us to commemorate the memories of the people that have perished. In particular, we remember the firefighters who were volunteers. I particularly reflect upon the three young men from the RFS in New South Wales that have perished. They had, frankly, very similar family circumstances to what I have. Young children, some not yet born, will have to live their lives without their fathers. As so many of my colleagues across the aisle have remarked tonight, these kids will grow up knowing that their fathers made the ultimate sacrifice in the protection of our community and that their deaths were not in vain, because so many more people have been able to live because of the culture of those organisations and because of their sacrifice. So, again, I offer my sincere condolences on all those who have perished in these dreadful fires.

Senator MARIELLE SMITH (South Australia) (21:18): It has been an absolutely heartbreaking summer. Like our brothers and sisters in the eastern states, my home state of South Australia has suffered deeply at the hand of these bushfires, some of the worst our state and our country have ever seen. The images that those of us lucky enough to escape the tragedy directly have seen streaming on our televisions and devices have been harrowing. Of course, that is nothing compared to what our communities who have lived through this devastation and tragedy have felt. And it is nothing compared to what our brave and selfless volunteers have endured and given.

In South Australia, Kangaroo Island has suffered horrifically. Three hundred thousand hectares have burned. That's an estimated 68 per cent of our beautiful island. Australia's third largest national park, Flinders Chase, on the south-west of the island, was mostly destroyed and burned. The visitor centre, which I was lucky enough to take my son to just last year, has been completely wiped out. There were 100,000 sheep and at least 25,000 other livestock lost. The world's purest strain of the Ligurian honeybees are found on the island; 6,000 of their beehives have been lost and a further 10,000 damaged. It will take seven years before the trees they feed on flower again. Sixty homes on the island are gone, as are hundreds of buildings, including important tourism infrastructure.

Tragically, of course, two South Australians lost their lives in the Kangaroo Island fires. Dick Lang and his son Clayton were on their way home to the family property after fighting fires for nearly two days, but they never returned. Desert Dick, as they called him, was a pioneering push pilot and safari operator. He assisted countless travellers and tourists to explore the charm of Kangaroo Island. His son Clayton was one of Adelaide's leading plastic and reconstructive surgeons. His brother Lachlan described him as someone who was determined and light hearted, with a strong work ethic. Their deaths are an incredible loss to the Lang family, to the Kangaroo Island community and to our state as a whole. May they rest in peace.

So too Ron Selth of Charleston—who, sadly, was lost in the Cudlee Creek fire. Ron has been remembered by his family as a loving and generous man with a unique and unforgettable character. He was a grandfather to six grandchildren, who will no doubt miss him immensely—a tragic and great loss for his family, his community and our state. The Cudlee Creek fire that tore through the Adelaide Hills region, including nearby Lobethal, claimed 25,000 hectares. Vineyards, farms and homes were destroyed and 500 buildings were lost. I was in Cudlee Creek last week and I was completely struck by what seemed to be just apparent randomness in what the fire took and what was spared. I saw whole structures that had survived standing next to structures which had been completely burned. Whilst the area is still very much still open for business and needs our support, the evidence of the tragedy is plainly visible to everyone.

Nationally, 33 people have lost their lives, some of them parents who leave little children behind; 3,000 homes have been destroyed; and 10.5 million hectares have burned. Of course, what these statistics can never convey is the depth and meaning of what is lost. The loss of a parent or child, a brother or sister, a friend, a community member is something which can never, ever be given back to those families. And there's the loss of the houses, people's homes—perhaps the first place they brought their child home from hospital, where they've shared Christmas with family, where they've broken a sweat painting walls and hanging photographs, where they've cooked meals for their families and got the kids ready for school. The loss of someone's home is so much more than the loss of a building. And, of course, in every home there are hundreds of valuable possessions which can't be quantified by a dollar amount and can never be replaced by insurance or the generosity of strangers. Then there are the other buildings lost, the hectares burned, the number of people whose livelihood went up in flames this
summer: vines destroyed and damaged irreparably, livestock killed, businesses ruined. When you lose not only your home but also your business, or when your street and your whole community is suffering, what kind of loss is that? It is impossible to adequately describe it in this place and it is impossible to adequately emphasise for those of us who didn't feel it.

By almost any measure, these fires have been unprecedented. The season was unprecedented. But unprecedented should never be confused with rare or one-off, because our scientists are telling us, as they have been for years, to expect more of the same. They predicted this. The severity of this season and the extreme weather that has exacerbated these conditions have resulted from our changing climate. The science on climate change is clear: climate change is making extreme weather events more frequent and severe. We know what causes climate change and we know what we must do to act.

The devastation in my state is heart wrenching, but we are a resilient state filled with resilient people. We will of course get through this. The generosity of our community in the face of this tragedy has been absolutely awe inspiring. As the Leader of the Opposition said, 'In response to the worst of Mother Nature, we are seeing the best of human nature.'

Of course, there is no greater generosity than the fearless service of our firefighters and volunteers. I want to take this opportunity to put on the record my eternal gratitude to the South Australian Country Fire Service and their volunteers who battled these deadly fires in our state for months and even travelled interstate to assist others.

Within our community more broadly, so many people stepped up to offer their support in whatever way they could, with $250 million donated to charities. Locally, organisations like the Sant Nirankari Mission of Adelaide got together and delivered a truckload full of donations to Foodbank South Australia. Foodbank itself did a tremendous job of coordinating donations and extending support to the community with what they needed and when they needed it. Local women, like Karen Flinn, organised Backpacks for Bushfires and collected 4,000 backpacks for kids in need. Nurses, vets and volunteers at our animal hospitals, like the Adelaide Koala and Wildlife Hospital—which I was lucky enough to visit—are working tirelessly to support our injured wildlife. Of course, in South Australia there is the #BookThemOut campaign, an initiative of the state government and the tourism commission, which I commend and am absolutely proud to support.

Beyond these initiatives, we need to remember that of course our producers and our communities need support not just now but into the long term. I visited Petaluma winery in the Adelaide Hills last week. While some of the damage was clear—melted sheds, destroyed machinery, vines lost and burnt—so much of the impact is yet to be known. We don't know how the smoke will damage the vines. We don't know what the impact will be, what can be saved or what can be produced down the track. This means that for many of our producers, who can't necessarily see visible damage, there will be an impact on their business, and it will hit in a few years time. So we need to make sure we remember them years into the future, not just now. We must also make sure that we empower the people who are helping our producers, like the Australian Wine Research Institute. The best thing we can do as a community is support our bushfire affected areas. But the best thing we can do as a parliament is to get our policy settings right for the future, to empower our emergency services and our volunteers, to listen to the experts, and to act on their advice to act meaningfully on climate change.

The road to recovery in my state will be long and difficult, but we will recover. The mental and emotional impact will last a lifetime, but the scars will fade. We will never get back those we've lost, but we will always remember them, their service and their sacrifice. We can never thank our volunteers enough, but we will do everything we can to show them that we respect their sacrifice and that we know that they deserve better. Australians expect all of us in this place to do everything we can to limit this tragedy, or one like it, unfolding again and again, and we owe it to them to deliver better and to change.

**Senator ANTIC** (South Australia) (21:27): I rise tonight to lend my voice to this motion to send our condolences to those who have lost homes, property and tragically, in 33 cases across this great nation, their lives. The recent bushfires have hit the nation, and my home state of South Australia, very hard. Areas such as Cudlee Creek, Lobethal, Lenswood and Woodside in the magnificent Adelaide Hills were devastated by fires over numerous weeks. Those communities, famous for their wine, fruit orchards, historic townships and scenery, found themselves battling an inferno.

The beautiful Kangaroo Island was also ravaged by fire. Kangaroo Island is an enormously special place for South Australians. It's an enormously special place for me personally, as I have spent much time over the years visiting its beautiful and pristine surrounds. It's a place used to advertise South Australia to the world, with its unique and majestic landscapes and formations. Sadly, the western half of the island burned as a result of the fires this summer. Thousands of livestock were killed, many hectares were burnt, and significant numbers of trees, bushland and wildlife were destroyed. Rest assured, though, Kangaroo Island is open for business. South
Australians are supporting the island in the best way they know how: by returning. So we must continue to support them, and the entirety of our bushfire affected communities, throughout this recovery process.

Fires across the Adelaide Hills saw thousands of hectares burnt, affecting approximately one-third of the region's wine production. Although it's easy to see the immediate damage, the long-term effects of these fires will continue to flow on to South Australia for years to come.

The triage and recovery efforts have been a true reflection of the Australian spirit. We've seen farmers donating precious water from their dams to fight the fires, countless donations from the public and volunteers working overtime to lend a hand to those affected.

Prior to Christmas, I spent a day visiting the Adelaide Hills with a group including the Prime Minister. We spoke to brave members of the Woodside CFS, many of whose members had been working around-the-clock shifts for several weeks. We visited Barristers Block winery in the Adelaide Hills, which had lost its vineyard prior to Christmas. But, with some true Aussie spirit, the cellar door remained open for business.

We've seen that great organisation, BlazeAid, rally for communities across South Australia. BlazeAid is a volunteer based organisation that works with families and individuals in rural Australia after natural disasters, helping to rebuild fences and other structures that have been damaged or destroyed. BlazeAid has been setting up camps on Kangaroo Island, in Lobethal, in Kingston and on the Yorke Peninsula.

During the break, I volunteered for BlazeAid in Mount Compass, where bushfires had torn through just weeks prior, spending a day repairing fences at a local farm with a group of volunteers from across the state. These volunteers' days are jam-packed, beginning at 7 am and working out in the sun until at least past three in the afternoon. Their work lifts the morale of those who are affected and contributes to a sense of community in tough times. To say the experience was eye-opening would be an understatement. Seeing the devastation caused by the fires was confronting, but it was also empowering to see the huge number of people who were willing to drop everything and help out those who needed it most.

I'd like to acknowledge the extraordinary work of the Australian Defence Force in their recovery efforts. The 6,500 Defence Force personnel, whose number includes approximately 3,000 reservists, we thank you. ADF teams got to work on Kangaroo Island with recovery operations in places such as Parndana and Vivonne Bay, where they were cleaning, providing fencing and working on infrastructure tasks. In the Adelaide Hills, they provided engineering support, focusing on infrastructure repair, route clearance and water distribution.

I would also like to acknowledge Dick and Clayton Lang, a father and son who passed away on Kangaroo Island after fighting a fire close to their property. Dick was a pioneer pilot, and Clayton was a top South Australian plastic surgeon. They were known and loved by many, and my heart goes out to their family and their loved ones at this terrible time.

I note that the summer is still upon us and that the fires still burn, including here in the ACT. My thoughts and prayers go out to those communities who are still fighting these fires across the country. I say thank you to the ADF, the firefighters, the CFS workers, the volunteers, the charities, the community leaders and the businesses, and I say thank you to the people of South Australia for your generosity. I join with my Senate colleagues to express my condolences and pay tribute to the lives lost across our nation and in my home state of South Australia.

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (21:33): I rise in the shadow of terrible losses, a time of red dark skies, roaring fires, terrifying stories of communities plunged into 40 hours of darkness and stories of the sun simply not rising. I rise to express my grief and my heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of 33 people across three states who have lost their lives, including nine firefighters who died while keeping others safe. I pay tribute to those who have tragically lost their lives in bushfires this summer, defending homes, defending us and defending a way of life that revels in summer, extraordinary native bushland and our magnificent beaches. I also acknowledge the firefighters, police, ambulance officers, defence personnel and others who have worked tirelessly to protect their communities. As a Tasmanian, I want to particularly acknowledge the dedication and preparedness to help of the Tasmanians who have travelled interstate to support firefighting and recovery efforts. Thank you. We are so very proud of you—not forgetting those who are working so hard to extinguish the flames in north-east Tasmania, in the Fingal Valley.

On Sunday I received a letter from a Tasmanian, Danielle Fox, who had been holidaying over the New Year with her young family on the South Coast of New South Wales. She wanted to tell me the impact the fires had had on her and her young family, and I want to share some of her words tonight. She said:

On the 31st December … we were evacuated from Wonboyn Lake (just south of Eden) … as the threat of the Border Fire loomed. Over the next few days, news reports indicated that over 100,000 people were evacuated from the region due to the danger to life that this fire, and several others burning on the south coast, posed. We were scared, my 6-year-old daughter was
visibly frightened as we drove through thick smoke with much unease to find a safer place to be. After 15 hours on the road (skirting around fires surrounding Canberra and Albury), we found safety at my aunt's house in Melbourne. The next day, my other daughter, who has an intellectual disability, was visibly distressed from the experience … We arrived home to Tasmania and spent the next week in the safety of "home" before feeling emotionally able to enter the world again. In the meantime, my family holiday home, built in 1952 by my great grandfather, was burned down as the Border Fire burned through Wonboyn—a place I have visited almost every year of my 48 years and have a deep sense of connection and belonging. Even three weeks later as we watched the Australia Day 'Welcome to Country' ceremony on the ABC television, my neuro-typical daughter was cowering and afraid on the couch beside me when they announced that fire would be brought onto the performance stage as part of the ceremony—of course, this was only a small smouldering fire for the smoking ceremony, but she associated it with the trauma she experienced from the bushfires.

Danielle goes on to call on us all to do better, to be better, to show leadership and to work harder to protect our communities, the environment we love and the planet we treasure.

So today is not for calling out differences and scoring points. Today is a day to pay our respects; to put our arms around the grieving and hold them; to honour the sacrifice and dedication of all who are working so hard to fight these catastrophic fires and to help in recovery; to acknowledge that many of the scars that these flames have inflicted will take a very long time to heal, if they ever do; and to commit to ensuring that those who are traumatised by these events receive the care and support they will need for a very long time. It is also a day to commit to doing better, to defending what we love and value, and to doing all we can to ensure that home is a safe place to be and that we do not spend every summer watching our beautiful country burn.

Senator HENDERSON (Victoria) (21:38): It is an honour and deeply humbling to rise this evening to speak on this condolence motion. I join with senators and members in the other place to express my sincere condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the 33 people who tragically died in bushfires this summer, including nine courageous firefighters. Our nation mourns with you. Our hearts are broken by the scale of the loss of human life, of wildlife, of homes, of farms, of stock and of millions of hectares of our country. There is a deep black scar across large parts of Victoria—which I so proudly represent as a regional Liberal senator for Victoria—and in New South Wales, as well as large parts of the Adelaide Hills and Kangaroo Island in South Australia.

Whenever our nation is hit by a disaster, amidst the fear, devastation and loss and then the recovery and rebuilding, it brings out the very best in who we are as Australians: courageous, resilient, caring, sacrificing. In Victoria, we saw this in spades, from the beach at Mallacoota to the tiny town of Bruthen to the high country in Victoria's north-east. In Victoria, we lost Mat Kavanagh, Bill Slade, David Moresi, Mick Roberts and Fred Becker. This bushfire disaster has touched thousands upon thousands of families, including my own. My aunt and uncle and their children and grandchildren were evacuated on the South Coast of New South Wales, and they spent a frightening night not knowing if their home had escaped the firestorm. They were one of the lucky ones. Close friends lost much of their vineyard in the Adelaide Hills, but not their home, and they too were lucky.

As the death toll rose and images of firestorms were beamed around the world, tens of millions of dollars in donations poured in. The response was incredible. I want to place on record my thanks for the incredible work of our firefighters and our emergency workers. I pay tribute to their bravery and service. Every day, when they do their job, they put their own lives at risk to keep us safe. I thank our charities, our community service organisations and our volunteers.

I wish to place on record the work of our government, led by our great Prime Minister, to support bushfire impacted communities: the unprecedented call-out of the Australian Defence Force, including some 3,000 reservists; the tens of millions of dollars paid in immediate financial assistance; payments to volunteer firefighters; and the massive investment in the recovery effort underpinned by the $2 billion National Bushfire Recovery Agency and the fund. The support of so many other countries which came to our aid was overwhelming. The loss of three American firefighters, who died when their C-130 Hercules crashed, was just so incredibly sad. The work of our serving defence men and women was incredible.

The recovery and the rebuilding will be long, tough and traumatic. I've seen this firsthand, when I worked with the communities of Wye River and Separation Creek after the terrible 2015 Christmas Day bushfire. The memories of Ash Wednesday are still seared in the minds of so many Victorians, including so many Victorians who I represented as the member for Corangamite. Around Canberra and in parts of New South Wales and Victoria, fires continue to burn and the threat of further devastation continues. As I flew into Canberra yesterday for the start of the parliamentary year, the smoke was so thick from fires burning to the south that our first attempt to land was aborted.

But, even now, our thoughts start to turn to the big questions. What caused this? Could it have been prevented or mitigated? How? By whom or what? Have we learned from Ash Wednesday in 1983 or Black Saturday in 2009? Whatever caused and fanned these huge firestorms—lightning strikes, power lines brought down by trees,
climate change conditions, lack of preventive, timely measures like fuel reduction burning or, worst of all, wilful arson—will need to be addressed dispassionately and objectively. We will look particularly at those elements under control of governments and public policy where we can make a positive difference. We must set aside ideology and embrace the science and expertise which will help to prevent and mitigate such large-scale devastation again.

One element firmly within our control is fuel reduction burning. After Black Saturday's lessons, can we say hand on heart that we did all that was possible, that we listened to the lessons and conclusions of the 2009 Victorian royal commission and acted accordingly? Already the Victorian and federal governments have announced separate but hopefully complementary inquiries to address these questions. Now, in this condolence motion, is not the time to address these issues in detail. That is to come.

I do wish to say, however, that some of the wild claims about our government's response to climate change are disappointing and blatantly false. There have been some things said in this chamber which do not bear repeating and which are more than disappointing.

Right across the economy, we continue to address the challenges of climate change, reduce our emissions and meet our Paris targets. The climate is changing, leading to longer, hotter and drier summers, which is why our government is placing so much focus on climate resilience, building dams, hazard reduction, investing in a stronger electricity grid and driving record investment in renewables. We will continue to do whatever it takes to make our nation stronger. But for now we pay tribute to the men and women who lost their lives in this terrible tragedy and we remain united in our determination to support their families and all the Australians who have lost so much at this most challenging time for our country.

Senator SCARR (Queensland) (21:45): It is fit and proper that we start this parliamentary year dedicated to this condolence motion. There is no more important business. It is a rare honour to be the last senator to speak on this condolence motion after the contributions of my fellow senators. To those who have lost loved ones, I say: 'The whole Australian family grieves for your loss. Please feel our embrace.' To the thousands of firefighters, emergency personnel and members of the Defence Force, I say: 'There is no greater service than to put yourself in harm's way to protect the lives of others. Thank you.' To the families of the nine firefighters who lost their lives—and let me name them: David Moresi, Geoffrey Keaton, Andrew O'Dwyer, Samuel McPaul, Bill Slade, Mat Kavanagh, Ian McBeth, Paul Hudson and Rick DeMorgan Jr—I say: 'Australia deeply honours and respects the service of your loved ones. Please know that you have our eternal gratitude.'

In my home state of Queensland, 6.6 million hectares of land was burned and 49 homes were lost. From farms to tourist destinations, the loss has been profound. The fires impacted the length and breadth of Queensland, from the Southern Downs to the Sunshine Coast, from the Scenic Rim to the Gladstone region, from the Lockyer Valley to the Maranoa. But, as is the case across the whole of Australia, our communities have rallied. There has been an outpouring of generosity. We saw it in the aftermath of the Brisbane floods in 2011 when the so-called 'Mud Army' mobilised in its thousands to help those in need. We are seeing it today in response to the bushfires and we will see it in the future whenever disaster occurs. Australians help those in need because that is what Australians do.

In his poem, 'The Fire at Ross's Farm', Henry Lawson captures the spirit of mateship:

Down on the ground the stockmen jumped
And bared each brawny arm
They tore green branches from the trees
And fought for Ross’s farm
And when before the gallant band
The beaten flames gave way
Two grimy hands in friendship joined—
And it was Christmas Day.

I have seen those hands in friendship join. Just prior to Christmas, I was pleased to attend a fundraising dinner convened by the Fiji Senior Citizens Association of Queensland and the St George Chinese Community Memorial Committee. A total of $10,000 was raised. They reached the hand of friendship out to the Queensland Country Women's Association Beech Mountain branch. The Beech Mountain branch of the CWA was dealing with the aftermath of the September fires in their region and the destruction of the iconic Binna Burra resort and 11 homes. The Beech Mountain branch of the CWA had provided 6,000 meals for the fire crews over a six-day period. They provided funding and support to 50 displaced families. The Beech Mountain branch of the CWA will continue to provide support as long as it is needed. As their president, Leonie Smith, said: 'Our CWA ladies were not armed
with clipboards and high-vis jackets. They were armed with kindness and hearts filled of compassion, with the mantra: "We are to do no harm". In the lead-up to Christmas, the branch had distributed much of the over $50,000 they had raised. Now, here were two community groups in Brisbane, personifying the best of multicultural Australia, reaching out that hand of friendship referred to by Henry Lawson and providing another $10,000 just when it was needed—at Christmas.

I've seen many such examples over the last month. On 18 January, the Queensland Tamil Mandram association and the Thaai Tamil School raised funds at the celebration of the Pongal Festival, the Tamil thanksgiving, held in Springfield. On 22 January, I attended the opening of a short film by an extremely talented young Queenslander, Madison Marneros. The opening was organised by Caroline Russo, a great supporter of the TV and film industry in Queensland, and funds were raised for the Salvation Army. On 25 January, a group of Papua New Guinea associations, including the PNG Federation Queensland Inc. and the PNG students association, held a barbecue in Roma Street Parkland to raise funds. Papua New Guineans have big hearts. On 26 January, Australia Day, Wests rugby union club of Brisbane, the mighty Bulldogs, held a bushfire appeal rugby tournament, and donated the funds to Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service. On 31 January, as part of the Chinese New Year celebrations, the Queensland federation of Taiwanese associations donated over $90,000 to the Brisbane Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust bushfire appeal. Through January, the Islamic Council of Queensland has raised an additional $17,800, on top of $55,000 raised in December, to provide assistance to families in Batemans Bay, New South Wales.

Lions Clubs, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army; sporting clubs and other service organisations; religious institutions; businesses large and small; and families and individuals have all extended that hand of friendship to their fellow Australians in need. At a time when our fellow Australians need it most, our community, our Australian family, is there with support and compassion. This is what Australians do. This is who we are. This is what defines us as a people. This is what makes us Australian.

Question agreed to, honourable senators standing in their places.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Vice-President of the Executive Council) (21:52): I move:

That, as a mark of respect, the Senate do now adjourn.

Question agreed to.

Senate adjourned at 21:52