INTERNET
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Proof and Official Hansards for the House of Representatives,
the Senate and committee hearings are available at

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

SITTING DAYS—2014

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

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

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

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

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

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

Printed by authority of the Senate
### Members of the Senate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senator</th>
<th>State or Territory</th>
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<th>Party</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abetz, Hon. Eric</td>
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Pursuant to section 42 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, the terms of service of the following senators representing the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory expire at the close of the day immediately before the polling day for the next general election of members of the House of Representatives.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(7) Chosen by the Parliament of Queensland to fill a casual vacancy (vice B. Joyce, resigned 8.8.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

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

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

(10) Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice R. Carr, resigned 24.10.13), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
Heads of Parliamentary Departments

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

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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Brett Mason</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Employment</td>
<td>The Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Arts</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
<td>The Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Small Business</td>
<td>The Hon Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<td>Acting Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Steven Ciobo MP</td>
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<td>The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
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<td>Minister for Education</td>
<td>The Hon Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
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<td>Assistant Minister for Education</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education</td>
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<td>The Hon Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry</td>
<td>The Hon Bob Baldwin MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Kevin Andrews MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Communications</td>
<td>The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications</td>
<td>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Defence</td>
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Tuesday, 13 May 2014

The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. John Hogg) took the chair at 12:30, read prayers and made an acknowledgement of country.

BILLS

Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator BACK (Western Australia—Second Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (12:32): I rise with pleasure to support the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013. This bill honours a commitment which the coalition took to the September 2013 election—and I quote from the coalition's policy document—for 'better transparency and accountability of registered organisations'. The Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, said at the time of the election: 'The coalition will take strong action to ensure registered organisations are more transparent and accountable. We will act on this in the first week of the new parliament'—and indeed he did. He went on to say that Australians who join trade unions or employer associations deserve to have confidence in the conduct and administration of these organisations, that registered organisations are a central part of the fair work regime and they must operate to the high standards. In government we have honoured that commitment, and we stand here today in support of the bill.

I will go to the four premises of the bill—and they were spelt out in the Senate Education and Employment References Committee report to this place in 2014. The bill proposes to: firstly, establish an independent registered organisations commission to monitor and regulate registered organisations, with enhanced investigation and information gathering powers; secondly, amend the requirements on officers' disclosure of material personal interests and change grounds for disqualification and ineligibility for office; thirdly, strengthen existing financial accounting disclosure and transparency obligations under the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009, making them enforceable as civil remedy provisions; and, fourthly, increase civil penalties and introduce criminal offences for serious breaches of officers' duties as well as new offences in relation to the conduct of investigations under the Fair Work Registered Organisations Act 2009.

It is interesting to reflect on the background and the reasons for the need for these amendments to come into place—and I intend to speak to them in some detail—but it is equally interesting that in December 2013 the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee reported to the Senate on the outcome of that legislation committee report. Immediately the legislation committee report was in, we then had the opposition—the Labor and the Greens—joining forces to call for an Education and Employment References Committee inquiry into exactly the same issue. It is disappointing that, with all of the hard work that befalls us in the Senate, we had to have the chiefly political exercise of effectively going through exactly the same matters again. At that time, the coalition senators noted that the Senate committee was charged with looking at Labor's amendments to the registered
organisations regime in 2012. And at that time—and I think this is very important from the viewpoint of accountability—as a result of a direction by the then Minister Bill Shorten, the committee had only five days in which to examine what was then the ‘Shorten bill’. I contrast that with the four weeks this committee was given by our coalition government.

So all of this goes back to the laziness and incompetence of the then Minister Shorten. He saw what the coalition was bringing as a policy to the 2013 election, he panicked and he directed his department to try and short-circuit the whole process. As would be expected from a person of this limited capacity, he obviously got it wrong. To make sure that it was not given adequate opportunity for scrutiny, this place had only five days to examine the bill. It is interesting that the now opposition, then in government, failed to consult, failed their opportunity to speak to their own constituency and actually get that legislation right in the first place.

For example, in support of what I am saying, the coalition senators firmly agreed with the then Australian Workers Union National Secretary Mr Paul Howes who said at the time in relation to union corruption, ‘If we ignore any pocket of dishonesty—it will grow like a cancer.’ He spoke further about the need for developing corruption resistance at every level. So in fact this legislation and these amendments from the government have the strong support of those members of the union movement who share the same discouragement, the same disappointment. Indeed, in some instances, the same shame was actually visited upon the Australian community, particularly upon well-meaning and honourable members of the union movement. What we require in this legislation and these amendments is a circumstance in which those responsible for moneys of members’ registered organisations, be they employer, trade union or whatever form, should be the subject of the same rigors and the same civil or criminal penalties for very serious offences. It would bring it into line and in the minds of the Australian community it would create a sense of fairness, a sense of transparency and a return to a sense of honour. Surely, that is a matter which is of tremendous interest and concern to the Australian people.

There were five recommendations that came forward from the legislation committee to the Senate. I am very pleased to be able to record the recommendations and those that are now found in these amendments which we are debating today. One would only hope that the Labor Party and the Greens senators will see the sense of them. One hopes that they will see that the ill-considered and improperly constructed legislation then presented by Mr Shorten will be redressed and will return to a level of comparability between the registered organisations representing employer groups as well as trade unions. For example, the first recommendation was:

The Committee recommends that, consistent with the Corporations Act 2001, material personal interest disclosures should only be required to be made to those officers whose duties relate to the financial management of the organisation.

As it is now, this is potentially required by everybody. Only those with responsibility for the purse strings, those with some level of financial accountability, should be the people who have who are called to account under the new legislation. The first amendment, then, reads:

Limit the obligation to disclose material personal interests to officers whose duties include duties that relate to financial management of the organisation or branch.
So in your capacity as the acting chair of the committee, Senator McKenzie, isn't it
tremendous to see that these recommendations, as moved and as presented to this place, have
indeed found their way into the actual amendments that are before us today?

Senator McKenzie interjecting—

Senator BACK: The second recommendation was that a list of exclusions from the
obligations to disclose material personal interests based on section 191(2) of the Corporations
Act be inserted into the bill, thus narrowing the obligation to disclose material personal
interest of officers' relatives. The legislation at the moment encompasses the possibility of
somebody's spouse, children or whoever. Indeed, we see the amendments coming through
before us today removing the express obligation on officers and organisations to disclose
details of any material personal interest an officers' relatives has or acquires in a matter that
relates to the affairs of an organisation. So once again, we see common sense prevailing from
this side. We see a recommendation that has come before this chamber finding its way into
the amendments, which are the subject of our debate.

The third recommendation was that, with certain exclusions, the obligation placed on
officers to disclose every payment should be reduced, including limiting disclosures to
payments made above a certain threshold. Following that recommendation we see the
provision of a civil penalty for an organisation's or branch's failure to provide minutes of
meetings of the committee of management to members. Any member of a registered
organisation should have the right
to examine the minutes of meetings of the committee of
management. This is a circumstance that should have been dealt with in the original
legislation, if it had not been pushed through in such a panicked fashion by the then minister,
now Leader of the Opposition, Mr Shorten.

Another of those amendments that we will consider in this place is aligning the obligation
on officers to disclose material personal interests with section 191(2). This will be done by
inserting into the bill similar exclusions to the obligations to disclose material as is applicable
to directors of companies. In the evidence that came before us in the Senate inquiry process,
these points were raised by witnesses—by employer representatives and by union
representatives. It is interesting to see that they have been picked up, that the coalition in
government has listened to both sides and has acted.

We are also considering the expansion of exclusions that apply to the disclosure of
payments made by an organisation or branch to related parties, including the exclusion of
payments that are less than a prescribed amount. Once again the commissioner will have the
authority to be able to set a figure below which these sorts of disclosures are not necessary to
be made. To bring all this together, the amendments before us enable the Registered
Organisations Commissioner to grant exemptions from the training requirements if an
organisation can demonstrate that an officer has a proper understanding of their financial
duties within the organisation or the branch. This naturally again goes to a level of common
sense. It goes to submissions that were placed before the committee. It goes to representations
by witnesses. There are training requirements and skills required of people involved in
financial management of registered organisations. If, indeed, there are people who already
have those financial skills and can demonstrate to the commissioner that they have them, then
what is the purpose or the reason for the cost associated with having to go through and
undertake those activities once again?
In the time that is left available to me it gives me no pleasure to reflect on the background and some of the reasons that we find ourselves in these circumstances. Naturally enough, although not exclusive to the amendments, we had the circumstances associated with Mr Craig Thomson—once a member of parliament in this place—and the former ALP national president, Mr Michael Williamson, both acting in their capacities as officers of the Health Services Union. We spent far too much time in this parliament over the last three to four years distracted by the actions and activities of both those men, both of whom have now been dealt with by the courts and, of course, found guilty of the activities with which they were associated. In the case of Mr Thomson they were activities which he emphatically denied even on the floor of the other house in this place. These are people who were found guilty of misusing Health Services Union members' funds—in the case of Mr Williamson, almost $1 million. At the time all of this was taking place my mother was a high-care patient in a nursing home in Perth, and I remember reflecting on the excellence of the care that was given to her and to the other elderly patients, including those with Alzheimer's and other conditions.

The people who were providing that care had paid their union fees for many years only to see those funds going to the purposes for which it has now been established both Mr Thomson and Mr Williamson have either admitted or been found guilty. I recall an interview with an elderly Eastern European lady who had worked her entire life. Somebody had done the figures and had said to her, 'With those funds you could have had a trip back to Europe to visit your family.' She said, 'No, I would have used those funds towards the education of my grandchildren.' How those people can reflect on their behaviour, one can only imagine.

The important thing is that if we had had this legislation and amendments in place prior to the time those people carried on with those behaviours, one would hope that we would not have seen that abhorrent behaviour which was the subject of so much scrutiny, discord and disappointment to the Australian community. Yet we see it playing out again with respect to the ex-secretary of that same union, Ms Kathy Jackson, who was very much involved in the processes associated with those gentlemen. In the last couple of days we have seen in the Federal Court an allegation that Ms Jackson siphoned off almost $250,000 of members' funds into a bank account of which she was the beneficiary. That is the allegation that was presented by lawyers for the Health Services Union in only the last two or three days, so no doubt we are going to see that play out as well. Surely members of unions, particularly those who do not have the opportunity to be represented at meetings, have the right to see the minutes of meetings and to understand the activities of their unions. One can only speculate on what they must think when they hear about behaviour like that and when they see where their funds have gone. I urge strong support from the other side in this place to ensure that these amendments go through in the way in which they are intended.

In different circumstances, but relating particularly to my own home state of Western Australia, we see being played out in the royal commission the activities of the Australian Workers Union and their former leadership, Mr Wilson and Mr Blewitt assisted by their former lawyer, Ms Gillard. When I was in Kalgoorlie late last year discussing this question with some members of the AWU, one of them told me in a very distressed fashion of an incident which occurred—

*Senator Cameron interjecting*—
Senator BACK: I know Senator Cameron will be interested in this story, which was told by this gentleman who was an official of the union. He said that they had a million dollars on account in the goldfields. It was a big sum of money at the time, in the 1990s. There was huge pressure on them to release those funds and make them available to the management of the organisation in the city, and they opposed it vehemently. But a very smart young female lawyer turned up from Melbourne and they reluctantly made the decision and the million dollars disappeared. The gentleman said, 'I'll always remember the next day when a fellow that I never knew, but I knew of, came to the Kalgoorlie office, grabbed all the files pertaining to that matter, took them out to the Kalgoorlie tip and burnt them.' I think that is what stuck in their craw more than anything else. It was not the fact that the funds all disappeared— although that really worried them. It was not so much the fact that $1 million, which they no doubt had imminent use for given the nature of the industry that we see in the goldfields of WA, but it was the fact that any possible trail of accountability or audit literally went up in smoke. I have no doubt that we are going to see that game played out even more.

The last matter which I will draw senators' attention to is very current in Western Australia, and it is associated with the MUA. I have in front of me the declaration of results from the Australian Electoral Commission, and 41 members of the union have voted to put themselves in a circumstance where they can strike under a protected action ballot for 24 hours. That was question 1 that was asked of those who were eligible. All 45 out of 45 voted for a 24-hour strike to be undertaken. The next question related to whether there could be an unlimited number of stoppages for a period of 48 hours. We are talking about $100 million a day. Out of 45 members, 44 supported that one; one did not. The third question was whether or not they would have unlimited stoppages for seven days. That is $700 million to $1 billion of direct costs in that period of time without considering the workers at the mines, on the trains, in the trucks and, of course, the rest of the industry which is so vital to this country. That is where we are being held, and I come back to the point which is simply this. There should be unanimous support right around this chamber for the amendments contained in the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013.

Senator CAMERON (New South Wales) (12:52): It is always good to follow Senator Back. He is always interesting, if nothing else, and I do not think there was much else in that speech this afternoon. I rise on behalf of the Labor Party to oppose the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013. This bill is unnecessary. It imposes massive regulatory burdens on voluntary organisations based on the coalition's ideological opposition to collective organisations acting in the interests of their members. That is fundamentally what this is about. The bill is not about accountability; it is about the coalition's obsession with destroying collective bargaining in this country. The bill is about the government introducing over-the-top regulation and red tape on the trade union movement while at the same time railing against regulation and red tape in every other area of the economy. This is hypocrisy on a grand scale, but it is something we have to get used to with the Abbott government.

After failing to reduce workers' rights with Work Choices, the coalition have now embarked on an attack on the organisations that support employers and workers. The ideology and strategy is clear: destroy effective unions and you destroy workers' capacity to protect their wages and conditions. The bill is designed to make it extremely difficult for unions and employer organisations to operate as they have over the last 150 years—that is, with volunteer
rank and file membership on their governing bodies. Rank and file members would be faced with huge obligations and penalties far outweighing and inconsistent with the role they play on their unions' governing bodies.

The bill is an attempt to treat all employer organisations and unions as if the default driver is criminality and personal greed. When criminality and greed is exposed in the business sector, the usual argument from business and the coalition is that laws should not be enacted based on the behaviour of individuals which is inconsistent with the general behaviour in business and industry. I have heard this argument several times from the opposite side. For ideological reasons, this approach is not applicable when it comes to the trade union movement. Labor is appalled by the behaviour of a small number of individuals who deceitfully and criminally stole the funds of the union and its members for their own personal gain. Those individuals have faced proper processes, and one is in jail and another one looks like going to jail.

Labor moved decisively with this issue and, after consultation with employer organisations and unions, we effected the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Act 2012 and the Fair Work Amendment Act 2013. These laws are rigorous, balanced and appropriate. Labor's laws strengthened the legislative provisions concerning disclosure and transparency of decision making. This was done while understanding and recognising the difference between voluntary organisations and for-profit businesses.

The government claims that this bill will place the regulation of registered organisations on the same footing as the regulation of corporations under the Corporations Act. There is absolutely no logic to this approach. Voluntary organisations are significantly different from corporations, are subject to significant regulatory overview and have regulatory requirements that ensure compliance with appropriate standards for voluntary organisations. The coalition bill, by design, will establish a more onerous regulatory regime on volunteers who make up the committees of management of registered organisations than that which applies to highly paid executives on company boards. So you have an ordinary worker who says: 'I will help with my union. I want to engage with my union.' They go on the board and they are subject to more scrutiny and harder laws than those affecting other business people earning $150,000 a year to sit on a board. And these workers get not a cent. These volunteers get not a cent to do the work that they do.

The legislation has more to do with an ideological attack on the trade union movement than it has with any genuine desire to ensure standards for voluntary organisations. A range of submissions was provided to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee during its inquiry into the bill. It is clear that the coalition have managed to do one thing. They have managed to do something that is unheard of in the industrial history of Australia. They have united employer organisations and the trade union movement against this overt attack on collective organisation in this country. I would have thought, given the explosive revelations in New South Wales in ICAC, that the coalition would be more concerned about cleaning up their own act than attacking, for purely ideological reasons, unions of employers and employees.

Senator Back used some highly provocative language in his submission, something that is the stock and trade of the coalition in this country. He spoke about shame. He spoke about honour. He spoke about transparency. And he spoke about the need for rigorous penalties. Let
me tell you, I agree that those principles should apply to the New South Wales Liberal Party and the federal Liberal Party in their operations, with all their slush funds and all their trusts that are hiding money from the proper organisations in this country—and I will come to that in some detail.

I would have thought that the coalition would have been keen to do some internal analysis of the promises that they made to the Australian public prior to the election, prior to the reality that the public will have to face tonight with an austerity budget that will hand money back to big business—hundreds of millions of dollars will go back to Twiggy Forrest, Gina Rinehart, BHP and Rio Tinto—while people will have to wait longer to get a pension, while the value of the pension will decline, while people will have to pay more for petrol every time they get in a car and while people will have to hand over more money every time they go to the doctor. I would have thought that these would be the issues that the Liberal Party would be discussing. I know that some like Senator Macdonald are discussing these not only within the party but in the public arena. So the hypocrisy of the coalition knows no bounds—taking money out of the pockets of ordinary Australians and putting money back into the pockets of the billionaire mining companies and billionaire miners.

No amount of dissembling as to what is a tax and what is not a tax and no amount of rhetorical ballet dancing in relation to lowering the overall tax burden will hide the reality of the broken promises of the coalition. Remember your leader Tony Abbott's statement: 'No new taxes, no surprises, no broken promises, no cuts to health and no cuts to education.' Remember those words tonight when he puts his hand in the pocket of every ordinary Australian on the basis of some unreal fiscal crisis, some unreal budgetary crisis, some unreal budgetary emergency. It is all a nonsense.

The issues of lies, deceit and broken promises should be addressed internally in the coalition. Workers and employer organisations should be allowed to operate under the various international conventions that we are legally obliged to uphold. Attacking the trade union movement and working people in this country with penal provisions and trumped-up royal commissions should stop, and the coalition should set about cleaning up their own act by announcing a royal commission into Liberal and National party slush funds. That is what they should be doing. The public in New South Wales and across Australia have been watching in horror as the rogues' gallery of Liberal Party members and politicians parade at ICAC, exposing the unfair and illegal approach that is taken by the Liberal Party to undermine democracy in this country. That is something that I think they should be looking at, instead of attacking employer organisations and the trade union movement in this country.

The public are watching in fascination as Liberal politician after Liberal politician is exposed for corrupt and illegal practices—practices designed to corrupt democracy and corrupt the democratic processes in New South Wales, practices designed to illegally avoid the exposure of cash for influence in the coalition. That should be the focus of a royal commission, not the trumped-up, biased royal commission into the trade union movement.

Ray Carter, an adviser to Chris Hartcher, one of the leading Liberals in New South Wales, said that they all knowingly and deliberately were running donations from prohibited donors and they were running those donations through the Free Enterprise Foundation, which is a foundation associated with the federal Liberal Party. So we have Senator Back coming in here trying to smear the whole trade union movement because of the illegal activities of a few
people, activities that are reprehensible, and force legislation on the whole trade union movement because of the illegal activities of a few people but not being prepared to do anything about the illegal activities of the Liberal Party. Trying to undermine democracy in Australia, in my view, is one of the most reprehensible things you can do.

The Liberal Party in New South Wales, and it looks like they have been aided and abetted by the Liberal Party in Canberra, have been laundering slush funds from illegal donors in New South Wales into Canberra and back into New South Wales. That is being exposed day in and day out. Yet what is the priority for the Liberal Party? It is to attack the trade union movement and turn a blind eye to the corruption and illegality in the Liberal Party. They attack the trade union movement because they do not want workers to collectively bargain. I just think it is outrageous. For Senator Back, and for any of the Liberals, to come in here and fail to mention this issue is pure hypocrisy. Senator Back comes in here and tells these stories about being out in the bush talking to a union member and the union member says this and the union member says that. If Senator Back has got any evidence of corruption or illegal activity, he should take that to the police. He should take that to the authorities. I challenge Senator Back to come back in here and explain to the parliament what he did with that allegation, whether he advised the appropriate authorities that, as a senator, he has been advised of illegal activity in Western Australia. What did he do about it? My bet is he did nothing. My bet is that it is probably a made-up story anyway to embellish his pretty boring speech in here on this issue. I challenge Senator Back: ‘Come back in here, tell us when you went to the police, tell us what you have told the police and let’s get the thing dealt with by the authorities. Don’t come in here trying to smear the trade union movement with unsubstantiated allegations.’ That is stock-in-trade for the coalition in this country.

The issues relating to compliance under the Workplace Relations Act are confined to isolated criminality by a small number of corrupt individuals. The issues of coalition corruption, influenced heavily by greed and stupidity, are now the hallmark of this coalition and seem to be a systemic part of the culture of the Liberal Party. The isolated problems of the trade union movement have been addressed by the Labor Party, the ACTU and the police. No attempt has been made by the coalition, and especially the Liberal Party, to deal with corruption of the democratic processes in New South Wales.

We now see these links back to Canberra, with the corrupt money flow from New South Wales laundered in Canberra and used by Liberal Party politicians in New South Wales. Never in the history of Australian politics have we seen the systemic undermining of the democratic processes and the laws of the land as we are watching in New South Wales. Never in the history of Australian politics have we seen a Liberal premier having to stand down because he misled the corruption watchdog. Never in the history of Australian politics have we witnessed a senator—Senator Sinodinos—a frontbencher, recently sitting across this chamber, attempting to justify a payment of $200,000 for 40 hours work and to justify a $4,000-an-hour payment to drive from the CBD of Sydney to Castle Hill. $4,000 an hour! Never in the history of Australian politics have we seen Liberal politician after Liberal politician appear before a corruption inquiry and, one after the other, fall on their swords. Never in the history of Australian politics has the web of influence peddling for cash been exposed as it has with the Liberal Party.
And never in the history of politics has a political party with so many internal corrupt activities tried to divert attention from their own illegal activities by attacking the trade union movement in such a systematic way. Why is the coalition attacking the trade union movement when the real issue for democracy in this country is the operation of Liberal Party slush funds? Let us have a royal commission into Eightbyfive, the Millennium Forum, the Forward Brisbane Leadership Fund, the Cormack Foundation, the Free Enterprise Foundation, the Greenfields Foundation, Bunori Pty Ltd—an organisation that Senator Sinodinos failed to disclose that he had an interest in when he became a senator—Vapold Pty Ltd, the North Sydney Forum and Vaughan Constructions—a company that went bust, but which weeks before it went bust, leaving workers with no pay and subcontractors with no payments, gave $400,000 to the Liberal Party.

Those of the type of people we have sitting over there; trying to lecture Labor and the trade union movement about honesty, about shame and about honour. I welcome these debates in this place, and I call on the Liberal Party to actually form a royal commission into the dishonest operation of the Liberal Party both at the federal level and in New South Wales. And while we are at it, let's spread it up to Brisbane and let's get it over in Perth because I am sure the same peddling of influence for money is underway in the Liberal Party right around this country. There will be Nick Di Girolamo's equivalents everywhere in the Liberal Party.

So instead of attacking the trade union movement, which is out there battling to get workers a fair go, they should be investigating their own internals. They should be setting up a royal commission to look at the corruption and the deceit and the dishonesty in the Liberal Party. Leave the trade union movement alone, leave the employer organisations alone; start looking at your own backyard, that is where the corruption is. *(Time expired)*

**Senator WRIGHT** (South Australia) (13:12): I rise to speak on the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013, and I say, on behalf of the Australian Greens, that the Senate should reject this bill.

The Abbott government's hypocrisy is evident in this bill: on one hand pledging to remove red tape while on the other doubling the layer of regulation on employer associations and unions is utterly shameless. If we needed any further evidence of hypocrisy it is here in this bill as well in that the government states that it is committed to protecting so-called 'traditional' rights, yet this bill would see overreaching intrusions into the lives of those people who are involved with unions and other registered organisations. These are rights which I think anyone would agree are traditional rights, like freedom of association, the presumption of innocence and the right to privacy and reputation. It is hard to think about how much more traditional you could get than those rights.

The bill's compliance burden alone is enough to make this bill unworthy. It will inflate organisations' training costs and it will submit them to a regulatory burden which is so unrealistic that it just makes no sense. This is what the Senate Education and Employment References Committee found in recommending that the bill be rejected, and I call on the Senate today to heed those recommendations.

Just so we can be very clear about what the government is proposing to do here, let us look at what the bill does. Registered organisations are unions and employer associations that are registered under the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009. That act was already amended in 2012 to enhance registered organisations' financial accountability as well as that
of their office holders. Those amendments included rules for disclosure of remuneration and pecuniary and financial interests, increased civil penalties, strengthened investigative powers for Fair Work Australia and requirements for education and training to be provided to the officials of registered organisations about their governance and accounting obligations. Many of those amendments only took effect from 1 January this year—less than six months ago and after this current bill was introduced. So the government did not even wait to see the efficacy of those previous amendments.

This bill proposes to go even further. It will establish a new stand-alone agency called the Registered Organisations Commission, which will have powers to monitor and regulate registered organisations, enforced by extensive investigative and information-gathering powers. So here we are today, standing on the brink of a budget which, all the indications suggest, will see the abolition of many long-standing and respected cultural and environmental agencies—just to mention one sector—in the name of so-called efficiency, deregulation and removal of red tape, yet if this bill is to be passed we will see the creation of a new government agency to oversee, essentially, unions. That shows the real ideological agenda that is at play here.

What will this commission—and this bill—do? It will increase reporting obligations, including by amending requirements about material personal interests. I will come back to that. As well, the bill proposes to increase civil penalties, create offences relating to investigations, and introduce criminal offences for breaches of officers' duties.

The Australian Greens say that this bill should be rejected. It has significant unintended consequences, which were revealed in the course of the Senate Education and Employment References Committee inquiry, and it imposes major training and financial burdens on organisations. In this, it contrasts with the government's posturing about reducing red tape and protecting traditional rights. It will establish an onerous regulatory regime, on top of regulation already present under the Corporations Act.

A good case study can be taken from the submission and the evidence that came before the Senate Education and Employment References Commission from an organisation in my own home state of South Australia—the South Australian Wine Industry Association. In their submission that association said that this bill will impose 'excessive compliance and disproportionate monetary penalties on all registered organisations'. They make the point that they are a not-for-profit incorporated association. They have board members who provide a great deal of unpaid time each year, which is a fundamental aspect of the effective work of that association. They attend meetings across regional South Australia, which involves not only the meeting time but the travelling time. They read board papers, meet with the government and consult with their members. All this is fundamental to conducting the meaningful activities of SAWIA, the South Australian Wine Industry Association. The association points out that the role of these board members cannot be directly compared to listed public companies, which are commercial operations with well remunerated directors. Yet, in many cases, the proposed amendments under this bill will result in far greater penalties and requirements being imposed. It makes no sense.

The hypocrisy of this government in pledging to remove red tape, while doubling the layer of regulation on registered organisations, is not lost on the Australian Greens, and it was not lost on the stakeholders who made submissions against it in the two Senate inquiries since its
introduction. Stakeholders who made submissions to the Senate committee inquiry supported
the need for good governance, but not in the form proposed by this bill. The Australian
Council of Trade Unions noted it supported the passage of the 2012 legislation because it
supports a legislative regime promoting the operation of accountable, democratic and
effective trade unions which are member governed. However, it described the provisions of
this bill as 'poorly conceived, badly motivated, and entirely unnecessary'. That was the tenor
of most of the submissions before the inquiry.

Other submitters said that this bill would interfere with and impede registered
organisations' abilities to carry out duties on behalf of their members. Maybe that is where we
got to the essence of this legislation. Maybe that is the government's intended purpose—to
make it more difficult for trade unions to service the needs of their members in a pluralist
society.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation said the bill was 'unnecessary, poorly
structured and excessive'. The Australian Air Traffic Control Association suggested that the
establishment of a commission effectively disregards all of the processes that organisations
had implemented to comply with legislation changes in 2012. This goes to the heart of this
legislation: it is not based on necessity; it is based on ideology. The Senate Education and
Employment References Committee concluded that these 2012 legislative changes need to be
implemented fully, before further interference with registered organisations' governance is
considered.

Fair Work Australia gave evidence that its updated approach to regulation since 2012 has
delivered a marked increase in registered organisations' compliance levels. And that is what
we are looking for here. For example, it stated that there was a lodgement rate for annual
returns of 96.2 per cent in the 2012-13 financial year, which by May of 2013 had increased to
99.5 per cent. Fair Work Australia also stated that a proactive election audit that it conducted
with respect to all registered organisations required to lodge election information with the Fair
Work Commission has, for the first time, shown a comprehensive compliance picture across
503 election entities. All this has occurred before the legislation has been enacted.

The Australian Privacy Foundation criticised the proposed disclosure regime in this bill,
saying that it is unnecessary, it erodes privacy protection and it is out of step with the
government's stated commitment to traditional freedoms. So they were calling the government
on their hypocrisy.

Submitters also said that the compliance burden proposed by the bill would impose
significant training costs. The committee agreed that the regulatory burden proposed by the
bill is excessive and inappropriate. It also agreed that the proposed disclosure regime for
material personal interests is not only inappropriate; it is wholly unworkable. It is impractical.
The committee concluded that the bill poses a great threat to the ability of registered
organisations to provide services for the advancement of their membership if it means they
will be occupied with the degree of extra regulation and red tape it proposes. It does lead one
to wonder if this is the government's intention when it comes to the important work of unions
in defending and promoting the rights of their members.

There is a broader picture here, though. The Australian Greens are not only concerned
about the impractical compliance burden associated with this bill, in contradiction to the
purported intention of this government. We are also seriously concerned about its
encroachment on traditional rights and liberties and the fact that it is totally inconsistent with
the government's purported commitment to these. Do not judge a government by what it says;
judge it by what it does.

In relation to the new criminal offences that this bill would establish, the committee
concluded that these duplicate existing crime legislation. The committee also shared the
concerns of submitters regarding the fact that the proposed structure and powers of the
commissioner are inappropriate. The commission's proposed investigative powers are too
extreme and go far beyond what is appropriate to ensure adequate regulation of registered
organisations. It is clear that the regulatory framework which was enacted by the 2012
legislative changes is sufficient to empower the current regulator to do its duties.

The Australian Greens are very clear that the proposed powers of the Registered
Organisations Commission are excessive, draconian and completely unnecessary. The
Australian Greens condemn the government for introducing this legislation before the
amendments under the 2012 act have had a chance to operate effectively. It discloses an
ideological agenda operating here. This is bad legislation because it increases registered
organisations' compliance burden far out of proportion to any necessity and it undermines the
very traditional rights and freedoms which the government claims to be committed to.

This legislation was not introduced in good faith but rather to undermine unions, their
members and their ability to achieve outcomes. Let's be clear about that. The Australian
Greens are committed to free, independent and democratic unions as an essential pillar of
civil society. We believe that the present legislation for registered organisations is
appropriately rigorous, without denying unions the ability to achieve important outcomes for
their members.

This would be the creation of a new commission when we are standing on the brink of the
government abolishing many other longstanding and respected organisations, commissions
and agencies, such as the National Library, the National Gallery and the National Museum.
They are all in the crosshairs of the budget. We will wait to see whether that occurs, but there
will certainly be some that will be dismantled or merged on the basis of efficiency and
reducing red tape, regulation and duplication. Despite that, we have this bill proposing to
create a brand new commission to make sure that the government can sufficiently intrude into
the unions and the way they operate on behalf of their members to reduce their effectiveness.
That is what will happen if the government has its way. So I call on the Senate to reject this
bill and affirm the rights of registered organisations to get on with the job.

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (13:26): I would like to begin today by actually agreeing
with Senator Doug Cameron on one point. He said that trying to undermine democracy is one
of the most reprehensible things you can do. I absolutely agree with him on that point. Our
point with this legislation is to improve and enhance democracy by improving transparency
and accountability. There was no argument about whether there needed to be reform in this
area because, in fact, the initial bills to reform the area were put through by Mr Shorten when
he was in government last year. The only problem, of course, was that they followed the usual
pattern of Labor legislation, which is that the bills were ineptly drafted, hastily developed and,
mostly, completely incompetently implemented. So most of the changes we are talking about
this morning relate to trying to fix some of the problems that were so evident in the legislation
that Mr Shorten put through.
It is probably worth just making a point about what we are looking at in the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013 today. It limits the obligation of officers in registered organisations to disclose material personal interests when they do not relate in any way to their duties. It removes the express obligation on officers and organisations to disclose details of any material personal interests in a matter that relates to the affairs of an organisation that an officer's relative has or acquires. It requires officers to make disclosures of material personal interests to the committee of management and for such disclosures to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and be available upon request to members. It provides for a civil penalty for organisations or branches that fail to provide minutes of the committee of management meetings to their members. It aligns the obligations on officers to disclose material personal interests with the Corporations Act by putting in exclusions about what obligations and material personal interests are applicable and which are not. It provides that an officer is not restricted from taking part in a decision where they have a material interest if that interest is not such that it needs to be disclosed. It expands the exclusions that apply to the disclosure of payments made where they are less than the prescribed amount or where member approval for that transaction is not necessary under the current Corporations Act.

It enables the Registered Organisations Commissioner to grant exemptions from training requirements if an organisation can demonstrate that an officer has a proper understanding of their financial duties within the organisation or branch. It is a bit bizarre when you consider that the legislation as the former Minister Shorten had it drafted, given the way it read, would have required qualified accountants to go and do a one-day financial training course so that they knew how to behave when they were on the board. These are common-sense amendments to give better transparency and better accountability for registered organisations.

Certainly the coalition welcomed in principle the fact that then Minister Shorten did recognise that there was something very, very wrong within the union movement when he put his initial legislation up, but of course we had the situation where a former union boss was relying on the goodwill of other unionists for that legislation to go through. I am somewhat bemused by some of the arguments around how poor little unions run by volunteers should have the same sorts of requirements put on them as you might put on a kindergarten committee or such and that they should not face the same requirements as a corporation. I am afraid that that is not a view that works on this side of the House, and it was not a view that worked with the Australian people. We made it very clear at the last election that it was our intention that people who ran unions should have the same qualifications and the same responsibilities as people who ran corporations because, after all, it is not their money that they are playing with. It is someone else's. It is their members' money. You only have to go back to the major problems that caused then Minister Shorten to put his flawed legislation through last year—that is, the Health Services Union's problems and the resulting court cases out of that—to see one aspect of the problems that need to be so significantly addressed in this area.

One of the key components of that legislation and what happened with the Health Services Union was the inordinate delay—in fact, it was later described as such by PricewaterhouseCoopers when they reviewed it—in the hearing of that case by Fair Work Australia. It is not impossible—and certainly many people have suggested it—that the fact that the government required the vote of the alleged 'Independent' Labor member, Mr
Thomson, could explain part of the reason for why that delay happened, although many other apparently cogent reasons were put up by Fair Work Australia as to why it took them years and years to go through material, which of course has since led to both civil and criminal charges. If we were looking at the Health Services Union as a one-off issue, there would not be the same need for legislation as has been required. But it is clear that there has grown up in some elements of the union movement a systemic corruption, a systemic sense of being entitled to do what they damn well like with members' fees. Certainly in some areas there was a view that the political support of the then Labor government was so much more important than meeting the needs of members.

I would like to add there that the vast majority of executives of unions are people trying to do their best for their membership and working hard at that. But to suggest that they are poor little volunteers akin to someone on a kinder committee is nonsense; it has always been nonsense. As we will now discover, many of these union executives are paid the sorts of money that would, in other circumstances, lead Labor members to talk about 'rich fat cats'. They receive the sorts of payments that senior executives receive; they receive larger pay packets in fact than members of parliament receive.

Senator Bilyk: No! Do you know how much a union official earns? What are you talking about? You're atrocious!

Senator BOYCE: I think we will just continue on, Senator Bilyk. I do not—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Gallacher): Order! Senator Boyce, please direct your comments through the chair.

Senator BOYCE: I think we all know that there are extremely highly paid union officials around, and to try to suggest that somehow we would compare unions—

Senator Bilyk interjecting—

Senator Cameron: Not as well paid as Arthur Sinodinos!

Senator BOYCE: to kindergarten committees is a complete nonsense.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Boyce, please direct your address through the chair.

Senator BOYCE: I was addressing my remarks to the chair. I did not in any way refer to members opposite by their names or anything, Mr Acting Deputy President, so I would have thought it was perhaps more the interjectors who may have been causing the issues here, rather than my speech.

Senator Cameron interjecting—

Senator BOYCE: I think Senator Cameron was listened to in silence more because people were bored by hearing the same message over and over.

Senator Bilyk interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Interjections are disorderly!

Senator BOYCE: The complete denial from the other side that corruption happens in any way within the union movement is just very sad. As I said earlier, I support Senator Cameron's view that democracy requires transparency, but it also requires accountability and members of many unions have not had that. We have had it in minute detail as to how that has
not happened for the Health Services Union. And of course there are other unions involved, and I have just run through a small list that, coincidentally, was published in The West Australian today. We have the Ai Group urging the Heydon royal commission to investigate claims that unions are receiving generous and undisclosed kickbacks from income protection insurers to sign up members. We have the Master Builders wanting all payments made by employers for training by unions to be investigated. We have the fact that there are training groups set up by the CFMEU, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, and that they lent some money to a training organisation—in fact training has been a nice little earner for unions. That is fine if what is happening is genuine training for genuine reasons. But that is not what has been happening. It is being used as a way to milk employers yet again in an apparently honest way. But of course it is not honest; it is the usual overkill and attempts at bribery.

We go on to look at the AWU slush fund scandal, which is the whole reason that the royal commission was established. We even have reports of one union official saying that many of the members of the AWU had secret TAB accounts where they could hide $1,000 or so from the missus. Now of course they were not just hiding the money from the missus; they were hiding the money from their members, from the tax office, and from any efforts that could be made to try to bring criminal charges for fraud against them.

I have mentioned already, of course, Mr Thomson and the HSU. Even more serious, and certainly a matter of great concern in my home state of Queensland, have been the apparent links between the CFMEU and organised crime. On the east coast of Australia we have recorded conversations, bank records and police files that demonstrate that major crime, bikie gangs and the CFMEU have all been working together very nicely within the construction industry. I would hope that the members opposite would agree with me that these matters need to be exposed. They have no place in Australia and they have no place within a union movement that is trying very hard to—

Senator Cameron: Mr Acting Deputy President, I rise on a point of order. The senator is making allegations that have got no basis in fact. The Crime Commission appeared before the Senate inquiry. The Crime Commission, the Federal Police and the Victoria Police have indicated that there was no basis to allege this type of activity.

Senator Back: Mr Acting Deputy President, on the point of order: the senator is debating the issue. He has had his opportunity. He squandered it and now he has got to sit and listen.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: There is no point of order.

Senator BOYCE: It is somewhat sad that Senator Cameron, who I think is a great proponent of democracy in Australia and would be a proponent of democracy within the union movement, is making what appear to be excuses for behaviour that I would have thought he would condemn. I would have thought that he would be one of the people foremost in saying, 'I want an organisation that I can be proud of;' and I very much hope that that is where we will end up with some of the inquiries that go on. But I would contend that there has been in some unions and at some levels systemic corruption, a systemic lack of interest in the rights of members, systemic indifference to the needs of members and systemic featherbedding going on. Wherever that happens, this Senate has a duty to attempt its very best to ensure that it is exposed.
I would like to look at articles out of today's paper that demonstrate that in other areas there is action taken and there is the availability of criminal and civil penalties against those who behave wrongly. We have a headline about fears that a $7 million insider trading deal involving the ABS and others is in fact simply the tip of the iceberg. That is terrible. That should not happen. But ASIC and others have the responsibility under the legislation to ensure that it does not happen. Here we have a case where it has actually come out, where the alleged offenders will be taken through the courts and forced to come up with a solution. This involved the ABS and it was found out through the auditing that went on between the ABS and other areas.

We have ASIC, the ANAO and numerous other bodies overseeing the way government departments and agencies and corporations function. But the minute you suggest that there be a similar body to oversee the way unions behave we have the most bizarre and ridiculous nonsense coming out of the opposition about the fact that these are tiny little groups involving volunteers with scarcely a cent to their name. It is just nonsense. The opposition know it is nonsense and they know that work has to be done to improve the transparency of unions.

If Fair Work Australia had demonstrated the ability to deal with these matters when they had the chance with Craig Thomson and the HSU, if we could have said, 'My goodness, that was shocking, but it is a one-off issue; it has got nothing to do with any other unions or the way any other unions function,' then that would be fine. We could say, 'Okay. Fair Work Australia should just get its act together and do better next time.'

But that is not what happened and that is not where the problems lie. I would love to be able to stand here in a few years time and say we probably do not need a Registered Organisations Commissioner anymore; the job is done. But certainly the job has not even begun yet. I would hope that the majority of members of the Labor Party, the majority of union members and the majority of members of this place would want to see the union movement cleaned up. They would want to see the same amount of accountability and transparency in the way these organisations are run as you would expect to see in any other organisation of the size.

**Senator Cameron:** Like the Liberal Party and Arthur Sinodinos!

**Senator BOYCE:** I would suggest that we are not talking simply about whether anyone ever committed some sort of corrupt act; we are talking about the ability for the public to know and perceive that this has occurred. I think we have had some rather good examples from both sides of parliament in New South Wales of what happens when you get transparency. But I think we also need to take into account that the Independent Commission Against Corruption is not a court; it is simply an investigative body, and out of that investigation one imagines some charges may well be laid against numerous people. But simply appearing as a witness in a court, tribunal or commission is not a suggestion that one has committed a crime.

**Senator Bilyk:** Neither is belonging to a union.

**Senator Cameron:** It's a crime to take 40 grand an hour!

**Senator BOYCE:** I think that, when we look at some of the other matters that have gone on—

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order!
Senator BOYCE: Thank you. I recommend these amendments to the house. I am saddened by the fact that people who allegedly care about democracy on the other side of this chamber do not think that putting through the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013 will assist the people that I understood they are here to represent. I think they need to take some advice from the people at the bottom who put them here and who support their policies. They need to genuinely behave like representatives of workers. (Time expired)

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (13:47): I rise to speak in the debate on the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013. In March last year I spoke against the private senator's bill from Senator Abetz. It was almost a mirror proposal of the one before us today. In March last year I stressed that officers of registered organisations or anyone in a position of trust misusing the funds of members or acting inappropriately, taking benefits where they are not entitled, must never be condoned. In the HSU case that sparked this debate and reactionary bill, the Fair Work Commission collected evidence and the courts have made their verdict. These trials show that there is no need for this new commissioner, that the current system is working. This legislation will not stop people committing fraud, as Senator Back alleged earlier today. The current system has found these people guilty. This legislation is simply a witch hunt, simply another way to smear working people and their unions.

It is one thing for the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, as Senator Abetz was at the time, to propose a private senator's bill that no-one supports. He wanted to make a point. He wanted to propose an idea. But there is so little support for the idea and so little policy merit one has to wonder why it is being brought back here. On the whole, employer groups and trade unions do not support these reforms. It is an idealistic approach that actually defies their own deregulation ideals.

I am a former state secretary of a trade union: the Tasmanian branch of the AMWU. I am pleased to stand up here in this place and put on record my background as a union member, as an organiser and as secretary. I do so with a strong sense of purpose; I know where I came from and I know who I represented. I know the clear intent of this bill that we debate today is not to strengthen union governance. It is not to make unions more appealing to the community in an effective way to grow membership. No, the sole purpose of this bill is to strike at the heart of registered organisations and sever the ability of honest volunteers to play their part in the governance of their union or organisation. This bill wants to make volunteering on the decision-making body of a union or employer organisation so unappealing that no-one will do it. This bill wants to destroy one of the most basic principles of volunteer organisations. The bill wants to use the improper and fraudulent actions of a handful of officials to materially weaken trade unions into the future.

On this side we want to talk about fairness in employment and industrial relations. We want to spend time promoting positive reforms, not tarring over two million Australians and their families with a brush because they want to collectively organise and negotiate for decent conditions at work.

When I spoke on the bill last year I highlighted a story of the importance of a union and the importance of acceptance of unions for a group of female workers at a factory in George Town, Tasmania a number of years ago. It was such an important story that I felt I needed to
share it again. It was a small fishery and processing facility. I as an organiser was approached by some of the staff to come along and speak to the whole team. When we in the old Food Preservers' Union approached the management to come along, they were very helpful. They invited us in, they got the workers together in the lunchroom and they made us feel welcome.

The workers at the processing facility were predominantly women, all of them employed on a casual basis. The few men around were all permanent. With permanency came security but also a sense of superiority. We spoke to the staff about joining the union, and people seemed positive. We left them some information and told them we would come back the next week to talk again to those who wanted to join.

We thought that we had had a good hearing and that we would be able to offer these people the support that they needed. Unfortunately, when we left, the boss got everyone in the lunchroom and said that, if they joined the union, they would lose their jobs. Plain and simple: they would lose their job. Two women who were silent members of the union called and told us what had happened. They were worried about their jobs. A week later we went back to the factory and talked to the people again. This time, publicly no-one was interested; however, the silent members called again and arranged for us to meet with a group of the workers, and we met with the women at one of their homes.

They told us of the shenanigans that went on in their workplace—one-way shenanigans towards the female workers by the men and actions that many people might not think of as wrong but as larrikinism, but there were a lot of acts that any reasonable person would frame as assault and dangerous.

The workers would be hosing down at the end of the day. One day, one of the men was cleaning down in his underwear—I do not know why. He repeatedly turned the hose on the women, who were just going about their job, and sprayed them with a high-powered hose. It was harassment. It could be viewed as assault, but it was definitely dangerous. At the factory there were only shared toilets—that is, a number of cubicles in a room. On more than one occasion some of the men would force themselves into the bathroom cubicle while one of the women was in there. It was a sick and twisted game to intimidate the female workers.

One day, it got out of hand. One of the men forced his way into the cubicle, and the woman was able to fight him off but was injured with visible bruising on her arms. She told me that she spoke to her husband when she got home that night. His first reaction was: 'Who is this bloke? I'm going to go and rip his head off.' This was a desperate reaction from someone without the means to resolve disputes through negotiation. The second reaction was: 'But you have to go to work tomorrow because we need the money.' This woman, this family and all of their workers felt they had no choice but to put up with this behaviour. We asked them, 'Why didn't you raise these matters with the supervisor?' Their simple replies were, 'We couldn't; he was one of the men involved.'

They had no recourse on their own, but they wanted to join the union. They wanted to join the union so that together they could make a change at their workplace. So we set up a picket outside the factory. We went to the Industrial Relations Commission, where we were able to run an argument for these women and lay down the facts. The commissioner found that there was clear evidence that the workers wanted to join a union, that they had been discriminated against and that they should be protected. The commissioner enforced a code of conduct for the factory management and gave the female workers in particular comfort that there were avenues for recourse if they needed to go down that path in the future.
Clearly, power structures exist across a range of situations, across a range of worksites and across a range of organisations. It was untrue in this situation in George Town that there was a mentality or a value set whereby anyone could walk into their boss's office, raise issues of concern and be treated fairly. And it is untrue for many millions of Australians today.

Unions are the staff; they are the workers joining together to give themselves some bargaining power to give themselves some cover. If there had been a union at this factory providing a mechanism for the workers to raise issues and to be listened to fairly, some of the incidents might not have happened the second, third or 10th time. In fact, they might not have happened at all.

So what will this bill do for these people? It will do nothing. It is not designed to help them. It is designed to demonise working Australians. It is designed to put doubt into the minds of non-union workers about joining a union. It is designed to continue the campaign of fear and misinformation. When workers like these women need a union and are faced with a power imbalance at work they should feel comfortable in approaching their respective union for assistance.

As coalition senators speak in favour of this bill they ignore these stories. They continue to carry the torch of yesteryear in their battle of employers versus unions. In seeking to stoke the fires of the past, the Liberal government does not seek a conciliatory outcome. The Liberal government does not seek a middle ground or their so-called sensible centre. The Liberal government does not even care about the collateral damage to their own side—that is, the potential fall in membership of employer groups—in their blind pursuit to rid the country of organised labour and to throw the corporate veil across every aspect of our lives.

There have always been different regulations and legislation for registered organisations and corporations to reflect the differences in purpose and motivation of unions, employer groups and corporations. The facts are that under Labor the financial accountability standards applied to registered organisations, trade unions and employer groups had never been higher. The powers of the Fair Work Commission had never been stronger, and penalties had never been tougher.

There are already requirements in the legislation governing registered organisations for officers to act with care and diligence, to act in good faith, not to improperly use their position and not to improperly use information they have obtained through acting as a member of an organisation. As I have mentioned, as the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Mr Shorten introduced significant reforms to the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act in 2012. These reforms tripled penalties for breaches of the legislation; required that the rules of all registered organisations deal with disclosure of remuneration and pecuniary and financial interests; required that education and training be provided to officials of registered organisations about their governance and accounting obligations; and enhanced the investigative powers available to Fair Work Australia.

Without allowing time to test their effectiveness, those opposite simply seek to create fear in the community. Instead of allowing time for these changes to be bedded down, those opposite have mounted a weak argument for further change. In reality, this bill is a cruel backhanded attack on Australia's workers' rights to organise and to collectively bargain. Importantly, many of the changes introduced by Labor's reforms in our last term of government only came into effect at the start of this year. So this Liberal government, who
dedicated so much energy in opposition to attacking sensible regulations, who promised repeatedly to cut the waste and who, upon coming to government, dedicated a whole day in the House of Representatives to ridding the country of regulations from before any of us were born, actually want to significantly increase the regulatory burden, leading to alleged increased costs and poorer services to members of employer groups and trade unions.

I participated in the Senate Education and Employment References Committee inquiry into this bill. The references committee really scrutinised the bill after significant flaws were highlighted during the legislation committee's inquiry. Of course, the Liberal government opposed the inquiry, and I note with interest the final three sentences of their dissenting report. The first states:

Coalition Senators are not surprised that union and employer organisation bosses aren't emphatically in support of this legislation.

This sentence highlights and concedes that the majority of submissions from trade unions and employer groups do not support the bill. However, the second and third sentences highlight the true intent of the bill and the collateral damage to the coalition's own base—employer groups. The sentences state:

That said, it is very clear that this reform is in the national interest and in the interests of honest union members who want to ensure that their money is being spent properly.

The only people that have anything to fear from this legislation are dodgy union bosses who do the wrong thing.

It is quite remarkable really. It reads as though there are many, many unions acting improperly with members' funds, but not one employer group.

Debate interrupted.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:00): by leave—I inform the Senate that Senator Cormann, the Minister for Finance, will be absent from question time today. He is, as one might imagine, briefing representatives on the 2014 budget. For the purposes of question time, I will represent the Minister for Finance, the Treasurer, the Minister for the Environment, and the Minister for Trade and Investment. Senator Fifield will represent the Assistant Treasurer.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (14:00): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health, Senator Nash. I refer to the Prime Minister's pre-election promise of 'no cuts to health' and 'no new taxes'. Will the minister restate that commitment on the floor of the chamber today?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:01): I can indicate to the Senate that we will be honouring our election commitment. We will also be honouring our commitment to the Australian people, to fix the economic mess that the previous Labor government has left this nation. We
have facing us a serious economic mess and the commitment we made to the Australian people was to fix the budget mess.

When we look at what the previous Labor government has done, when we look at the waste and mismanagement from the previous Labor government, it is absolutely imperative that we honour that commitment to the Australian people. We will do that in a measured way, we will do that in a sensible way and we will have a fair budget that makes the right decisions for future sustainability for the Australian people. We on this side of the chamber understand the importance of economic responsibility. We understand that to have sustainable portfolios across the government into the future—

*Honourable senators interjecting—*

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Senator Moore, I will not give you the call until there is silence.

**Senator Moore:** Mr President, I rise on a point of order: relevance. The minister has not actually answered the particular question asked by the senator, which referred to 'no cuts to health' and also to 'no new taxes'. It was a specific question, Mr President, and we would appreciate an answer to those two points.

**The PRESIDENT:** There is no point of order. I cannot instruct the minister how to answer the question. The minister still has 45 seconds remaining to address the question.

**Senator NASH:** I did indicate to the chamber that we would be honouring our election commitment and I also indicated to the chamber—for senators on the other side—that we will be honouring our election commitment to ensure that we provide a budget for this nation that ensures the future of this nation is sustainable. I know those on the other side do not want to hear—

**Senator Moore:** Mr President, I rise on a point of order: relevance. I would ask you to draw the attention of the minister to the question, which was specifically about 'no cuts to health' and also 'no new taxes'. The answer has not been provided.

**The PRESIDENT:** There is no point of order. The minister has 20 seconds remaining.

**Senator NASH:** As I have indicated to the chamber, we will be honouring our election commitment. At this point in time, we have a nation that is in an economic mess and the commitment that this government made to the Australian people is to fix it.

**Senator McLUCAS** (Queensland) (14:04): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Does the minister back the assertion by the Prime Minister's handpicked adviser Tony Shepherd that Australians visit the doctor 11 times a year and, as he said, 'I just don't think we're that crook'? Why is the government relying on dodgy data to introduce a GP tax on taking your sick child to the doctor?

**Senator NASH** (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:05): I am not going to speculate on the budget. But I will inform the chamber that it is this government, this side of the chamber that has a focus on future health delivery in a sustainable way for this nation. We only have to look at the previous—

**Senator Moore:** Mr President, I rise on a point of order: relevance. This point of order is fairly straight forward. There was a particular question on a statement made about going to
the doctor 11 times and also about the data on which that statement was made. It was not speculation about the budget.

Government senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The minister still has 38 seconds remaining. I am listening carefully to the minister's answer. There is no point of order at this stage.

Senator NASH: It is this government that has a much greater focus on the ability of families to be able to attend medical practitioners, to get proper health services, unlike the previous government that was so focused on bureaucracy and duplication. We are focused on delivering health care in a sustainable way—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! On my right and on my left.

Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order: relevance. We now have 13 seconds left to go and we still do not have a specific answer to our question. I would ask you to draw the minister's attention to the question.

The PRESIDENT: There is still no point of order at this stage. The minister has 13 seconds remaining.

Senator NASH: Unlike those opposite, it is this side of the chamber that is focused on people and families being able to get the level of health care they deserve, unlike those opposite who are caught up in bureaucracy and duplication. (Time expired)

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (14:07): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I refer to the Prime Minister's pre-election promise that this government 'will do what we have said we will do'. Why is this government breaking this promise and introducing a tax that means that Medicare will be for people who can afford it rather than people who need it? How can the Australian people trust anything that this Prime Minister says?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:07): I am not going to speculate on the budget. What I will say about the budget is that this government will deliver a budget that does the right thing for the future of this nation. This government will deliver a budget that ensures sustainability into the future, particularly in my area of health. On this side of the chamber this government understands that we need to make hard decisions, and those people out in the community elected us last year to ensure that we fix the economic mess that was left to us by those opposite. We did not create this economic mess—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Nash is entitled to be heard in silence.

Senator NASH: We did not create the economic mess that this country is in but we will take the responsibility to fix it. The Australian people know that and that is why they elected us.

Budget

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (14:09): My question without notice is to the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Abetz. I refer to Treasurer Mr Hockey's statement that the budget will shape the destiny of the nation. I ask
what destiny does the government envisage for Australia in terms of energy infrastructure, in particular given the intention to scrap carbon pricing, the Renewable Energy Agency and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and to undermine the renewable energy target?

**Senator ABETZ** (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:09): I thank the Leader of the Australian Greens for allowing me to outline the vision that we as a government have for this great nation. When she was in cahoots with the former Labor government in this place there was no future. Indeed, the light at the end of the tunnel was the debt train rattling at us at 100 miles an hour. After tonight the light at the end of the tunnel will in fact be daylight where the future generations of Australians will be able to be satisfied that the government in 2014 took the right decisions to guarantee their future.

In relation to our vision for energy, one of the great advantages Australia has had over many generations has been our cheap energy, one of the great benefits we have had. We went to the Australian people on the very firm policy of abolishing the carbon tax, a tax we were promised we would never have, especially by the current Leader of the Opposition in this place and the Leader of the Opposition in the other place. So we have a vision to ensure the energy security for our country and a vision to reduce the cost of that energy so that the manufacturing sector, the agricultural sector and the tourism sector can be viable players in a very tough world environment. Why we want them to be viable players is because we know that they are the ones that create the jobs for our fellow Australians that allow them to run sustainable households in a manner where they control their destiny rather than the government controlling their destiny.

**Senator MILNE** (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (14:11): I ask a supplementary question, Mr President. In terms of energy infrastructure, since renewable energy is going to go down in price and fossil fuel energy is going to increase in price, how are you going to guarantee cheap energy in the future by abolishing the very processes and renewable energy agencies and climate corporations that support the infrastructure of the future?

**Senator ABETZ** (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:12): As with all things, the coalition adopts the moderate approach in these matters. We are not the fanatics that the Australian Greens seem to represent in this place. This government does in fact believe in renewable energy but we say take it in steps in a manner that does not mug the economy, as the carbon tax did, continues to do and will continue to do until the Senate agrees to abolish it—something which the Australian people overwhelmingly voted for on 7 September. You can shake your head, Senator Milne, but I think a lot of people on 7 September were motivated by a desire to get rid of the Labor-Green government that was ruining this country and their cost of living and their desire to rid the nation of a carbon tax which they saw as being emblematic of increasing their cost of living and ruining— (Time expired)

**Senator MILNE** (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (14:13): Mr President, I have another supplementary question. The Treasurer has said that the cost of acting now—

Honourable senators interjecting—
The PRESIDENT: Senator Milne is entitled to be heard in silence when asking her question. Order! When there is silence I will give Senator Milne the call. Senators Cameron, Bernardi and Conroy.

Senator MILNE: The Treasurer has said that the cost of acting now is less than the cost of acting later but was referring to road building, not the climate. What is the cost to the nation of failing to invest in public transport and rail?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:14): I am not sure what that question is all about and how it relates to other matters on renewable energy, but the Australian Greens can ask whatever they like. The simple fact is that you will have to wait another 5¼ hours, and the Treasurer will get onto his hind feet and deliver an excellent budget which will guarantee the future of our country. You will then see that we have a vision for this country, unlike that which the Labor-Green governments were able to deliver.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Abetz, you might resume your seat momentarily. When there is silence, I will ask Senator Abetz to continue, but not until then. Senator Abetz, continue.

Senator ABETZ: In the 19 seconds remaining, I simply ask the Leader of the Australian Greens to remain patient and wait. It is now less than 5¼ hours until the delivery of the budget, when she will see that this is a government that is committed to the long-term future of our country and the next generations in particular.

Budget

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales) (14:16): My question is to the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Minister for Employment and Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Abetz, and it relates to the federal budget that will be delivered tonight. Can the minister advise the Senate why it is necessary for the government to make tough but fair and responsible decisions in this budget?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:17): I thank Senator Williams for that question and for the insight that he has into the need for us to restore the economic fortunes of our country. The Australian people overwhelmingly elected the Liberal and National parties to government on 7 September to fix the budget, not just for this generation but also for the generations to come.

This government has inherited a debt and deficit disaster from Labor that, if left unaddressed, threatens the future prosperity of our children and grandchildren. The International Monetary Fund has warned that by 2018—only four years away—Australia's real government expenditure is set to outstrip all of the other 17 advanced OECD economies. As a result of Labor's fiscal vandalism, Australia is facing the single largest increase in national debt outside Europe. This is simply not sustainable. Indeed, each and every month, as we speak, the government of Australia, courtesy of the Labor-Green legacy, is borrowing $1,000 million per month from overseas just to pay the interest bill—not to pay down the capital; just to pay the interest bill. We are having to borrow to pay for the interest. It is like using your credit card to pay for the house mortgage. At the end of the day, the credit card is going to run out and then the whole house has to be sold off.
We are taking the action that is so vitally necessary today to ensure that the future of our nation is guaranteed. I will conclude on this: government debt is deferred taxation and is theft from future generations.

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales) (14:19): I have a supplementary question, Mr President. Can the minister inform the Senate how tonight's budget and the government's broader economic action strategy will fix Labor's debt and deficit disaster and create more jobs for future generations of Australians?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:19): The conclusion of Senator Williams' question absolutely hits the nail on the head. This is all about getting the economy back on track so that we can create the jobs necessary to sustain the Australian population. That is what they want—they want jobs—and that is why it is so imperative that we fix the economic disaster left to us by those opposite.

Our strategy was very clear. We said that we would have five pillars to our economic policy: cutting the carbon tax, cutting the regulatory burden, boosting trade, building the infrastructure of the 21st century and getting the budget back on track. Having created the mess, you would think that the Labor-Green senators in this place would at least get out of the way to enable us to fix it. They remind me of the arsonist complaining about the water damage being occasioned by the fire brigade. (Time expired)

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales) (14:20): I have a further supplementary question, Mr President. Can the minister advise the Senate what other steps the government is taking to develop a strong and prosperous Australian economy with higher living standards, better pay and more jobs?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:20): One thing that you have to understand—and Senator Williams understands this, even if the Labor-Green senators do not—is that by paying down the debt, by getting rid of the debt and interest burden, we will free up taxpayers' money for the possibility of growing the much-needed infrastructure in this country. What we are seeking to do, and will seek to do in tonight's budget, is deliver a budget that is both tough and fair, a budget that will get us back on track. It will anchor the government's legislative reform package that is designed to free up the economy so that workers can get jobs and that businesses can grow and prosper.

Already we have introduced legislation that will abolish the carbon tax, scrap the mining tax, unshackle Qantas and re-establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission. These bills form part of our program that the Labor and Green senators in this place, refusing to acknowledge the decision of the Australian people, refuse to pass. (Time expired)

Medicare Locals

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales) (14:21): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health, Senator Nash. I refer to the Prime Minister's pre-election promise:

We are not shutting any Medicare Local.

Will the minister restate that commitment on the floor of the chamber today?
Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:22): As I have indicated to the chamber, I am not going to speculate on the budget tonight. The Leader of the Government in the Senate has just indicated that we have a little over five hours to go before the budget will be before the Australian people. I will indicate to the chamber that it will be a budget that will fix the economic mess that this government has been left by the previous Labor government. The previous Labor government, when it came to health, was focused on bureaucracy and duplication and not on ensuring that the Australian people had access to health services that they deserved. That is what we on this side of the chamber will be doing this evening.

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales) (14:22): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Given that the Prime Minister's pre-election promise was that there would be no cuts to health—and that is the expectation of the Australian people—can the minister confirm that Medicare Locals are not on the chopping block?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:23): Those on the other side would know that there is a continuing role and need for organisations to carry out a coordination function in primary care. That is well recognised. As those opposite would also know, the government commissioned the former Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer, Professor John Horvath, to carry out the review of Medicare Locals and their role. There has been a different model advocated by Professor Horvath. He recommended that there be fewer organisations carrying out that role, that their boundaries be realigned and that the names of the organisations be changed. He also found that some of their Medicare Locals worked very effectively. So, in the context of the continuing role of primary health care, there is an opportunity for those organisations. But I would say: we are going to ensure that there is proper delivery of health services in that context to people who need it.

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales) (14:24): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Given that Minister Nash lives in rural New South Wales, can I ask: does the minister support the Murrumbidgee Medicare Local, which extends from Hay to Griffith, to Tumbarumba, Wagga and Young, spreading over 100,000 square kilometres and servicing more than 200,000 people? And will she stand by the promise on Medicare Locals?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:24): I support the better delivery of health services than we saw from the previous Labor government. As the senator opposite would well know, I do live in a regional area and I have done for a very long time. So I know better than anybody that it is this government that is going to be able to ensure better health delivery for people in rural and regional Australia than those opposite. That is borne out by their track record, with a lack of focus on rural and regional Australia—a lack of focus on the proper health delivery that we needed to see out in the regions. So I do very much understand what is needed in terms of rural and regional Australia. It is this government that will ensure the efficient delivery of health services. It will ensure a lack of bureaucracy, a lack of administration and ensure care goes to those who need it.

Asylum Seekers

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (14:26): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Senator Cash.
Senator Cameron: Why don't you ask about jobs in Canberra?

Senator Polley interjecting—

Senator SESELJA: I refer the minister to the fact that—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Seselja, you are entitled to be heard in silence.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senators on my left! Order!

Senator SESELJA: My question is to the Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Senator Cash. I refer the minister to the fact that, when Labor was elected in November 2007, there were just four people in detention who had arrived by boat, the budget for managing illegal arrivals by boat was $85 million, 4,706 people received offshore humanitarian visas, and the offshore component of our refugee humanitarian program was over 75 per cent of the total intake. Minister, what has been the impact on the budget and our refugee and humanitarian program of six years of avoidable cost, chaos and tragedy under the former Labor government?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:27): I think all Australians would agree that there is no greater example of incompetence and mismanagement than under this portfolio under the former Labor government. As Senator Seselja has said, in 2007 when the Labor government took office, there were four people in immigration detention that had arrived by boat. Effectively, the number of people arriving had been reduced to zero in 2002. Our immigration detention network was costing the Australian taxpayer less than $85 million—let me say that again, because I said 'million' not 'billion' dollars—per year. Yet what did the former Labor government do? They ripped apart the Howard government's proven Pacific solution and, in six years, we had in excess of 50,000 people arrive here illegally by boat, from a starting point of zero when they assumed office.

In terms of budget blow-outs, we had a budget blow-out of in excess of $1 ½ billion of taxpayers' money, when under the former Howard government the entire immigration detention network was costing the taxpayer less than $85 million. In terms of the human consequence of the failed border protection policies of those opposite, more than 14,500 desperate refugees living in camps were denied a place in our very precious humanitarian program because those places were taken by those who came to this country illegally. So, in terms of the impact, it was disastrous on both a financial level and a human level, and this government is turning it around.

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (14:29): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate of the savings being achieved by the coalition delivering on its election commitment to stop illegal arrivals by boat?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:29): I confirm with the Senate that under this government's border protection policies there has not been a successful people-smuggling venture to Australia in now over 20 weeks. If you compare that same period of time last year under the former government, 8,942 people arrived on 135 boats.
How does that translate on budget day into savings for the Australian taxpayer? As Minister Morrison announced last Friday at the Lowy Institute for International Policy, tonight, because of the Abbott government's strong border protection policies, we will have saved the Australian taxpayer $2.5 billion over the forward estimates, compared to in excess of an $11½ billion budget blow-out under the former government. That is a successful policy.

(Time expired)

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (14:30): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister further advise the Senate how the coalition government is repairing the damage to our border protection regime which occurred under the former Labor government?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:30): While the former government had a process of opening detention centre after detention centre after detention centre—in fact, they opened 17—this government is taking the steps to now close detention centres. On Friday, Minister Morrison announced that we will now be closing a further six detention centres opened by the Labor government, and this is in addition to those closures which we announced in January this year.

Because of this government's responsible border protection policies, we have been able to announce the establishment of the Australian Border Force as of 1 July 2015. Savings realised because of this government's border protection policies will not be frittered away like the former government did but instead will be responsibly reinvested back into this portfolio to continue to secure Australia's borders.

Budget
Pensions and Benefits

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (14:31): Mr President, my question is to the Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator Fifield, representing the Minister for Social Services. Over the last few months, Treasurer Joe Hockey has said that the age of entitlement is over and that spending cuts will do most of the heavy lifting to reduce the deficit. It is obvious from comments to the media and leaks to the media that these cuts will be focused very strongly on income support payments, yet even economists at big banks, such as Saul Eslake, at the Bank of America Merrill Lynch, say it is 'virtually impossible' to cut government spending in ways that do not disproportionately affect people on low to middle incomes, meaning that people will be living in poverty—widening the gap between the wealthy and the poor, the have and the have-nots. Has this government done any modelling on the impact of growing inequity and inequality and the impact of people living in poverty and its intergenerational impacts?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (14:32): I thank Senator Siewert for her question. This government tonight in the budget will set about the task of getting the budget back on track. I am glad that Senator Siewert talks about equity issues and intergenerational equity issues, because consistent deficit budgeting is nothing more than intergenerational theft, and this government is determined to put in place a plan to put to an end that intergenerational theft.
Those opposite, both Greens and Labor, consistently put forward a false dichotomy. They present economic policy and social policy as alternatives. They are not. They are two sides of the one coin. You need to have a good economic policy so that you can sustain a good social policy. And at the heart of a good economic policy is a good budget policy and a government that lives within its means. Unless government lives within its means, unless it stops intergenerational theft through the form of deficit budgeting and debt, it does not have the capacity to sustain the sorts of social programs that we all want to see continue.

That is why this government is taking these steps tonight in the budget—which will in many cases be difficult decisions to take. We are doing that because of our deep and profound commitment to a good social safety net in Australia, for pensions—for the disability support pension, for the age pension—and also so we have the capacity to introduce, in full, a National Disability Insurance Scheme. That is why the government is taking these steps. It is because we understand the importance of a social safety net in Australia.

So I would urge senators opposite to read the budget very carefully so that, after 7.30 pm tonight, they can go through the Australian community and explain the good work that this government will be doing and the effort that we are taking to make sure that there is a social safety net there for the long term.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (14:34): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I will take that as: 'No, there has not been any modelling of the impact of growing inequality.' It is interesting that the minister mentions the growing budget deficit. When you look at ACOSS’s report today, it shows that in fact payments such as Newstart, family tax benefits and DSP are growing far more slowly than other government spending, yet these are the payments that the government apparently are targeting for cuts. How do you justify cutting these payments when in fact they are not growing as fast as you—the government—make out?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (14:35): What the government will be outlining tonight in our Economic Action Strategy is a plan that will see the economy grow, a plan that will see more jobs created. When we see more jobs created, there will be fewer people on Newstart, because our objective on this side of the chamber is to see fewer people on Newstart and more people in work. Our objective on this side of the chamber is to see fewer people on the disability support pension and more Australians with disability in the workforce, where they want to be. Far from seeking to target people on Newstart or people on the disability support pension, we want to help those people with their hand up saying, 'I want to work,' to work. The best way to do that is to create the environment that is conducive for business to create jobs. When there are jobs, these people on the DSP and on Newstart with their hand up saying, 'I want to work,' will have the opportunity to work. That is what this budget is all about: providing jobs and providing opportunity.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (14:36): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. What evidence do the government have that throwing and dumping people into poverty actually helps them into employment? In fact, I bet they have none, because the evidence shows—does it not, Minister?—that living in poverty is yet another barrier to employment.
Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (14:37): What this government is seeking to do tonight in the budget could not be further from the assertion of Senator Siewert. We want to see jobs created so that people on Newstart and people on the DSP can move into the workforce. We want to see jobs created so that older Australians who want to continue in the workforce can do so.

The other thing we want to do in the budget tonight is to make sure that we live within our means so that governments—not just this government but future governments—have the capacity to provide the social safety net that all of us want to see in place and see continue in place. We want to walk and chew gum at the same time. We want to have a growing economy that can employ more people, but we also want to have the capacity to provide a social safety net. That is one of the important things about Australia: we have the commitment to help people who face extra challenges for reasons beyond their control. We are committed to those people. We want to support them in times of need and we want to help them into work.

Ministerial Staff: Code of Conduct

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:38): My question is to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Scullion. I refer to the conflict of interest in the minister's office that caused the resignation of his adviser Mr William Johnstone. When did the minister first learn of Mr Johnstone's interests as director and majority shareholder of the Indigenous Development Corporation and as founder and leading executive of Indigenous Corporate Partners?

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:38): I thank the senator for the question. I can assure you that, like all members of this government, I take the Statement of Standards for Ministerial Staff very seriously. This government recognises the importance of appropriate governance arrangements for staff. Mr Johnstone came on board to assist in the set-up of the Remote School Attendance Strategy in late 2013. There was no intentional impropriety by a member of my staff. However, Mr Johnstone has resigned. He is committed and passionate about advancing the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians and I am sure that he will continue to make an invaluable contribution to this area.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:39): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I again ask the question the minister refused to answer: when did he first learn of Mr Johnstone's interest? I also ask: when did the minister advise the Special Minister of State, the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's office of this conflict of interest? Was it before or after the Prime Minister approved the appointment?

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:40): Mr Johnstone advised me—that is, in relation to your first question, Senator—that the Indigenous Development Corporation is a company comprising himself and one other which conducted occasional consultancy work. Mr Johnstone has advised that he was not doing any work for the company whilst in my office.

Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order going to relevance. The specific question is about the timing of this information exchange. The minister so far has not talked
to any position of timing. Mr President, I ask you to draw the minister's attention to the specific question, which is about when this information was exchanged.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order at this stage. I am listening carefully to the minister's answer. The minister still has 38 seconds remaining to address the question.

Senator SCULLION: As to the points of the question that relate to the specific times, I will take those on notice.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:42): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I refer to Mr Johnstone's resignation just days after this matter was raised publicly. Can the minister explain why it takes a story in the media for this government to uphold ministerial standards?

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:42): All ministerial staff are required to comply with the Statement of Standards for Ministerial Staff.

Health Funding

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (14:43): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Nash. Can the minister advise the Senate of the challenges that the government is currently facing in delivering a quality Australian health system?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:43): I thank the senator for her question. The health system, as we inherited it from Labor, is unsustainable. In our country, with a population of 23 million people, the taxpayer currently funds 263 million free services a year under Medicare and, if we are to have a strong and sustainable health system into the future, that figure is not sustainable. Ten years ago we were spending $8 billion on the MBS. Today it is $19 billion, and in 10 years time it is forecast to be more than $38 billion. Australia is faced with an ageing population and with Medicare benefits growing at an alarming rate. Similarly, in public hospitals, where 10 years ago we were funding $7.5 billion, today it is about $14 billion a year, and in 10 years time the figure will climb to $36 billion. We have a growing burden of chronic disease and increasing pressures and costs on our health system. Almost 63 per cent of adults are overweight or obese and so are 25 per cent of children.

To understand what we are facing, let me further highlight it in this way: by 2020 the number of Australians with dementia is estimated to reach almost 400,000 people. In that year it is expected that 155,000 Australians will be diagnosed with cancer, up 17 per cent from 2014. These are projections for 2020 and they are a snapshot of what we can expect over the coming decades. This government intends to provide the leadership and make the tough decisions to ensure a sustainable health system into the future. We need to make changes so that we can strengthen the health system for tomorrow and make it sustainable for our future generations.

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (14:45): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate of some of the factors that have contributed to the pressures on the Australian health budget?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:45): The waste, mismanagement and broken promises by the previous Labor government have put enormous pressure on the health budget—along with
the ballooning bureaucracy that they created and a lack of focus on the delivery of front-line services. That lack of focus that we saw from the previous government has contributed enormously to the pressures on the health budget. Labor promised 64 GP superclinics and they only delivered 33 while in government. They promised to fix hospitals and, if that was not achieved, they said there would be a referendum to seek to take control of Australia's 750 public hospitals. They broke both of these promises. They promised to slash elective surgery waiting lists—they went up. In over six years in government, health bureaucracy completely ballooned under Labor.

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (14:46): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate what this government will be doing to ensure the Australian health system is sustainable into the future?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:47): This government has a vision for the future that will ensure better delivery of health services. Labor has left the health system in a mess, but this government is committed to fixing it. Unlike the previous government, we will be fiscally responsible. This government will make sensible, well-thought-out policy, unlike the policy-on-the-run that we saw under the previous government. This government is focused on reducing bureaucracy and red tape. The pressures with us now are thanks to the previous Labor government, and it is this government's job to strengthen the health system so that our children and future generations can enjoy the health services that they deserve.

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (14:48): My question is to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis. I refer to the Attorney-General's exposure draft on changes to the Racial Discrimination Act. Does the Attorney-General welcome the support of Holocaust denier Fredrick Toben and the Adelaide Institute for his changes to the Racial Discrimination Act?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:49): I was not aware that Mr Toben had expressed any views on the exposure draft, and I must confess to you, Senator Singh, that I have never heard of the Adelaide Institute. But I have to tell you that I am aware of some remarks that in the past Mr Toben has made about Holocaust denial, and I think what Mr Toben has said is absolute rubbish, of course, as anyone in this chamber would say.

Senator Singh's question does, however, give me the opportunity to acknowledge and thank the many Australians—some thousands of Australians in fact—who have responded to the government's invitation for feedback and input on our proposals to reform the Racial Discrimination Act so as to achieve the twin goals of removing the anti freedom of speech provisions and strengthening the anti racial vilification provisions, which, as I keep saying, are not inconsistent goals if handled correctly. The consultation period officially expired on 30 April, though that being the middle of the week and there being plenty of late submissions we extended that by a couple of days. I am in the process at the moment of going through those many submissions. You will not be surprised, I suspect, Senator Singh, that those submissions reflect a variety of views across the Australian community on what is an important and difficult issue. There are those who would repeal section 18C in its entirety. That is not the position of the government and it has never been the position of the
government. There are those who would leave section 18C unamended, and there are those who, like the government, think that there is a case to be made for reform of the section.

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (14:51): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer to Mr Toben's submission to the Attorney-General, in which he argues that the new law should be referred to as 'the Toben amendments'. Does the minister agree with Mr Toben?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:51): As I have said, I have never read anything Mr Toben has said but I am aware of his views from press reports. The views that I have heard attributed to Mr Toben are absolute rubbish. I wonder, Senator Singh, if you are going to take this seriously, why you would delay the time of the Australian Senate by quoting a nutter like Fredrick Toben. But I will tell you who I do agree with. I do not agree with Mr Toben but I do agree with President Barack Obama, who said last week in relation to the Donald Sterling case: When ignorant folks want to advertise their ignorance, you don’t really have to do anything. You just let them talk. And that’s what happened here.

That is the difference between our approach and your's, Senator Singh: people who believe in objectionable ideas should be exposed.

Senator Cameron interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Cameron, I am waiting to give Senator Singh the call.

Senator Cameron: Bad luck, bad luck.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (14:52): Can the Attorney-General advise the Senate of any major community or ethnic group in Australia that has made a submission to support his plan to remove protections from the Racial Discrimination Act?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:52): As I said in my answer to your primary question, there are a variety of views on this issue and different areas of the Australian community partake of that variety of views. You see, Senator Singh, unlike the people on your side of the chamber, we actually are not threatened by the fact that there is a variety of views on important social questions. We think the fact that that is a variety of views on important social questions is a good thing and a bad thing. And unlike you, Senator Singh, we are going to consider that variety of views in order to arrive at the objective that the government has set itself. And that is to reform section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act so it serves, better than it currently does in its current form, the twin objectives of stronger anti-racial vilification laws and greater protections for freedom of speech.

National Security Legislation Monitor

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:53): My question is also to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis. Can the Attorney-General update the Senate on how the government intends to respond to the work of the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor.
Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:54): Yes, I can. I thank Senator Edwards for his question and his keen interest in this area of policy. The government announced as part of the red tape review that the Office of the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor would not be extended beyond its current three-year term.

Senator Kim Carr: What about the laws?

Senator BRANDIS: I wish to take the opportunity to thank the gentleman who served as the independent monitor, Mr Bret Walker SC, for his service in that role over the past three years. But to come directly to your question, Senator Edwards, we acknowledge that in that three-year period the independent monitor did some useful work which deserves a response.

Now last night, the shadow Attorney-General, Mr Dreyfus, put out a press release calling attention to the importance of the work of the independent monitor of national security since it was established in 2011. I wonder, therefore, why it was that throughout the entire life of the Labor government, from the time that office was established in 2011 till the Labor Party went out of office in September 2013, it responded to neither of the reports that the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor had published. The independent monitor of national security laws published his first report in December 2011. It was entirely disregarded by the Labor government. He published his second report in December 2012 and by the time the Labor government went out of office that had not been responded to either. We acknowledge good work was done by Mr Walker and we intend to respond to those reports.

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:56): I have a further question of the Attorney-General. Is he aware of any alternative approaches to and views on the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:56): Yes I am, Senator Edwards. I have just referred to them in my answer to your primary question. That is the attitude of creating an office, investing it with wide powers of inquiry—which on reflection duplicated pre-existing other offices and committees such as the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Intelligence and Security and the Australian Law Reform Commission and other appropriate bodies—tasking an eminent barrister to take up this task to review national security laws and then entirely disregarding his reports for the lifetime of the entire government. Because that is the respect that the former Attorney-General, now shadow Attorney-General Mr Dreyfus, took to the national security monitor's role. Before the office is wound up, we will respond to the work that he did.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:57): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Is the Attorney-General aware of any alternative views on the role of the Attorney-General?
**Senator BRANDIS** (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:57): As a matter of fact, I am. As a matter of fact, I am—

**Senator Conroy:** This is embarrassing. Tell us how good you are.

_Opposition senators interjecting—_

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Order on my left! Senator Brandis is entitled to be heard in silence.

**Senator BRANDIS:** As a matter of fact, I am, Senator Edwards. An article that the shadow Attorney-General, the former Attorney-General, Mr Dreyfus, wrote yesterday has been drawn to my attention. In it he recommends an Attorney-General taking a, to quote his words, 'conformist and largely passive approach'. Now we certainly know that Mr Dreyfus took a conformist and largely passive approach because he never did anything. He never did anything and you cannot be more passive than someone who never does anything, not even to the extent of responding to the reports of the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor that was established by his government. But I do not accept Mr Dreyfus's attempts now to politicise national security issues.

**Pensions and Benefits**

**Senator POLLEY** (Tasmania) (14:59): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Social Services, Senator Fifield. I refer the minister to the Prime Minister's pre-election promise that there would be no change to pensions. I also refer the minister to the Treasurer's announcement that the age pension age will rise to 70. Why is the government breaking the Prime Minister's promise to millions of Australian pensioners?

**Senator FIFIELD** (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (14:59): The government has made it clear that there will not be a change without going to an election first. That is the same principle that was adopted in relation to some other significant measures under previous—

_Senator Wong interjecting—_

**Senator FIFIELD:** I am referring to the question from Senator Polley in relation to pensions. The government has made clear that it will not make a change to the pension without first taking that to an election. I want to nail this idea that the government will be seeking to target in the budget particular sections of the community. Far from it. We recognise that the task of repairing the budget requires a contribution from across the community. Part of the reason for that approach is to make sure that we can provide appropriate support to people on low and middle incomes. That is the whole purpose. That is the whole idea: to make sure that we continue to have the capacity to provide a social safety net, which everyone in this chamber agrees is important. We know that if spending were to continue government wide on the trajectory established under the previous government, it would compromise the capacity of future governments to provide the supports that everyone in the community believes should be in place. We are seeking to make sure that governments have the capacity. That is something that would have been compromised if the previous government had been re-elected.

**Senator POLLEY** (Tasmania) (15:02): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer the minister to the Prime Minister's pre-election promise that there would be no changes
to pensions. I also refer the minister to media reports that the disability support pension will be cut with new indexation arrangements. Why is the government breaking the Prime Minister's promise to the Australian people?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:02): I am glad that the disability support pension was mentioned by Senator Polley. The objective of this government is to help people who are on the disability support pension, who have their hands up and who have the capacity to work, to work. We recognise that there are many people on the disability support pension whose impairment is manifest, who will never be in a position where they can work, and we all agree that there should be support for those people. But we want to focus on the people who have their hands up and say, 'I want to work. I've got the capacity to work but I need some assistance to work.' We will be putting in place measures to help those people into the workforce. More than that, we will be helping to create an economic environment which creates more jobs so that there is a greater capacity for those people to find work.

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (15:03): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I refer the minister to the Prime Minister's pre-election promise that 'We will do what we've said we will do.' Why should elderly Australians who have worked hard all their working lives have to pay for the Prime Minister's broken promises?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:03): I am a little speechless on occasion by the attitude of those opposite, because the situation that we have inherited is not of our making—Senator Wong: You lie!

Senator FIFIELD: yet we are determined to fix it.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Wong, you will need to withdraw that.

Senator Wong: Mr President, what the Prime Minister said before the election was untrue. He said there would be no changes to the pension. It was untrue.

The PRESIDENT: I just asked you to withdraw.

Senator Wong: I withdraw.

Senator FIFIELD: Mr President, Kevin Rudd said before he became Prime Minister that the reckless spending would stop. Kevin Rudd exacerbated the reckless spending. Those opposite are like arsonists who set fire to a building and then they stand in the way and try to stop the fire brigade getting there. We did not create the situation; we are determined to fix it. Tonight in the budget we will lay out an economic action strategy to repair your budget damage, to create an economy that will grow, to create an economy that will see new jobs created. You should study our economic action plan carefully tonight, because it is the path to undo the damage you have done.

Senator Abetz: Mr President, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS
Budget
Medicare Locals

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (15:05): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answers given by the Assistant Minister for Health (Senator Nash) to questions without notice asked by Opposition senators today relating to health funding.

The questions that were directed to Senator Nash today gave her the opportunity to restate the commitments made during the election campaign by the then opposition leader, now Prime Minister. I asked Senator Nash to restate Prime Minister Abbott's commitment that there would be 'no cuts to health' and that there would be no new taxes. Those are words that the now Prime Minister said over and over during the election campaign.

Australians will be concerned that Minister Nash did not take the opportunity given her to reconfirm those election commitments. She did not say that there will be no cuts to health in tonight's budget. She did not say that there would be no new taxes. That opportunity was given to her and Australians can read that for what it actually is. Repeated requests from our Manager of Opposition Business for her to answer the question were not heeded. She did not say there would be no cuts to health. She did not say that there would be no new taxes. So it is reasonable for people to expect that tonight's budget will see a co-payment to attend the GP and also, potentially, a co-payment to attend the emergency department. That is policy designed because they know that as soon as you charge people on low incomes to go to the GP, with a co-payment, there will be an increased attendance rate at our emergency departments. This will be an absolute broken promise from Mr Abbott, who said there would be no cuts to health.

During the election campaign Mr Abbott also said that there would be no surprises and no excuses from this government. I suggest that in tonight's budget we will see a lot of surprises and a lot of excuses. Mr Abbott also said, 'This government will do what we have said we will do.' Mr Abbott said there would be no cuts to health. Well, we will see. He said there will be no new taxes. The truth is that a co-payment is a new tax. It is a new tax on attending the GP. Any cuts to Medicare Locals in the budget tonight will be a broken promise. Mr Abbott said absolutely clearly that there would be no change, no cuts, to Medicare Locals.

We know, from the research internationally, that if you put a co-payment on attendance at a GP the result will be lower attendances for preventative health scans. The people who should be most encouraged to go to the doctor will not be going to the doctor. We know there will be more attendances at emergency departments. So essentially it is just shifting the cost on to the states and territories. We know that there will be increases in chronic illness, with more cost to the health budget in the long term. Frankly, there will be lesser health outcomes for Australians.

Neither did Senator Nash take the opportunity to back up the bizarre reasoning of Mr Abbott's hand-picked adviser, the Chair of the Commission of Audit, Mr Tony Shepherd, when he said that Australians visit the GP 11 times a year. He also said he did not think we were that crook. I am not surprised, frankly, that Senator Nash did not back that up. Mr Shepherd exposed himself, when he made those comments, as a person who is certainly not a health economist. It also shows that in devising the audit report the group, under his
chairpersonship, took no advice from those who do know: the health economists of our nation. It is of great concern that the government in the design of their budget has taken advice from someone who can do a division sum, who can divide the number of GP visits in the year by the population of the community. That is not the way you devise good health policy. That is not the way that you make good health policy for the future of our country.

Mr Abbott was wrong when he said, when he was the health minister, that the government of the day was the best friend that Medicare had. Tonight's budget will show once again Mr Abbott's ideological opposition to universal health care—health care that provides health equally to those who need it, irrespective of the size of their chequebook, so that anyone can attend the doctor when they need to. Tonight's budget will be a test of this government's ability to hold to their election commitments. *(Time expired)*

**Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS** (New South Wales—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services) *(15:11)*: Following on from what I can only describe as the hypocrisy of those opposite after the mess that Labor left us in health after six years in government, I would like to go to some of the more stark examples of what Labor's health mess was. I would remind those opposite of the words of Kevin Rudd back in August 2007:

> When it comes to improving Australia's health and hospital system, as Prime Minister if elected, the buck will stop with me.

He said that the Rudd Labor government would seek to take financial control of Australia's 750 public hospitals if state and territory governments had failed to agree to a national health reform plan. He said that the blame game would end under him. But what did we see in these six years under Labor? We saw this so-called health reform. All that was really about was 'Dr' Rudd and 'Nurse' Roxon madly rushing from hospital to hospital around this countryside, dressed in white gowns, taking photo opportunity after photo opportunity, so it could all be posted on the MyHospitals website. One only has to listen to Ms Roxon's description of some of those visits to know just how stage-managed they all were. That is the legacy of those opposite.

We had the 10 new agencies—the new bodies under Labor, which diverted resources away from the front end, away from benefiting patients—and a whole lot of new bureaucracy so that the health portfolio ballooned by 27 per cent. And of course there were those famous GP superclinics. This is yet another example of Labor's waste and mismanagement, part of the mess they left us in health. Labor pumped $650 million into this ill-conceived program and at the same time pulled money from other areas of health, including subacute beds in public hospitals. Seven years after these so-called superclinics were promised, some are still not opened or even operational. The superclinic idea was all about helping Labor's candidates in marginal seats. It certainly was not about the patients. For many communities, the so-called 'superclinics'—and I put 'super' in inverted commas—remain nothing more than a dream in the distance. So our objective is to clean up Labor's mess. We will methodically assess Labor's programs and failures and make appropriate decisions about them.

Can I for the record correct Senator McLucas's incorrect comments in relation to Medicare Locals. Former Chief Medical Officer Professor John Horvath has carried out a review of Medicare Locals for the government and his report has been presented to the Minister for Health. The findings of that review are currently confidential and any release of that report will be a decision of the government. Of course, like many issues in the health portfolio, the
review may be considered in the context of the budget and announcements may be made at an appropriate time. This is Labor's record on health, so it is sheer hypocrisy for Senator McLucas to come into this place and give us a lesson about health given the abysmal and appalling record that they left us in health.

I will make some general comments in relation to the Rudd-Gillard government's six years of chaos, waste and mismanagement, where they delivered higher taxes, record boat arrivals and debt and deficit as far as the eye can see. Labor inherited $20 billion in surplus. They have forgotten how to spell surplus, it has been so long since they last had a surplus. I think 1989 was the last time that Labor delivered a surplus to the Australian public, and they then left a projected $50 billion deficit—$50 billion in the bank projected into debt, well over $200 billion. This is the legacy of the mess that Labor left us. *(Time expired)*

**Senator URQUHART** (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (15:16): I rise on the motion to take note of the answers given by the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Nash, from questions asked by Senator McLucas in relation to the cuts and increased taxes slated for the health portfolio in tonight's budget. It is clear from the answers from all coalition government ministers today that tonight's budget will be full of broken promises, increased taxes and overblown rhetoric around a budget emergency that is their own creation, and it will be full of cuts to health, education and community services that will hurt the most disadvantaged Australians.

If tonight's budget includes a GP tax, this of course will clearly be a broken promise. A GP tax could cost Tasmanians around $150 million extra a year and a co-payment for PBS medicines could mean an extra $40 million from Tasmanians being spent on medicines. Tasmanians are already some of the lowest bulk-billed patients in the country and we are already paying more for health care. Yet, if you break down these costs on an average per person basis, as those opposite so love to do, it is around $400 per Tasmanian per year. Of course, those on fixed and low incomes, age pensioners, disability pensioners, single parents and veterans may have to visit the doctor more than the average and may rely on prescription medications for pain relief, for blood pressure or for chronic illness. It is these people who have the lowest capacity to pay. It is these people who will be unfairly targeted in tonight's cruel budget.

It will be a budget full of broken promises, as Prime Minister Abbott seeks to find a way to pay for his overblown, unfair Paid Parental Leave scheme—a Paid Parental Leave scheme that will give $50,000 to very well-paid women to have a baby, a Paid Parental Leave scheme that will be paid for by cutting health services, by introducing a GP tax and increasing the co-payments for PBS medicines. This Paid Parental Leave scheme will overwhelmingly benefit very well-paid women while slugging those who happen to be sick with a tax while visiting the doctor and, on the way out, with an increase in the price of their medicine. It is a proposition that will hurt low-income Australians. It is a proposition that is so warped that it will actually discourage low-income Australians, as Senator McLucas said, from visiting the doctor and filling their prescriptions. It is a proposition from a Prime Minister and Treasurer whose priorities are so twisted that they have in fact doubled the deficit in just eight months. In just eight months, Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey have managed to add $68 billion to the budget deficit, create a so-called budget emergency by fiddling with assumptions and provide unnecessary grants to the Reserve Bank. They have not created a better Australia but provided
a means to make severe cuts to health services and impose new costs on those least able to pay.

Last week, I met with senior staff from Tasmania Medicare Local to discuss their potential concerns with this budget. Senator Nash would do well to actually come to Tasmania and visit our Medicare Local before resorting to the talking points about duplication and waste. What I saw was an organisation that is extremely efficient at delivering primary health care across the state, keeping people out of hospital and providing e-health, after-hours general practice, population health research, mental health services and specific assistance for Aboriginal Tasmanians. The facts are that Tasmania's population is older than those of all the other states. Our population is ageing at a faster rate than other states. We have higher rates of chronic disease and the most dispersed population in the Commonwealth. Yet this Abbott government will tonight show no regard for Tasmania's health system difficulties. Tonight's budget will hurt Tasmanians in the hip pocket every time they get sick or every time their family gets sick. The budget will be full of the twisted priorities of Prime Minister Abbott and will not be about setting up the country for the future, as government senators said over and over during this question time.

This budget will take the Australian health system back to the pre-war era—that is, pre-war World War II—which was defined solely on your ability to pay, not if you were sick. The Australian community will not forgive this government for its broken promises on health and across the budget. Last week, I was contacted by a doctor in my home town of Ulverstone who said that she has previously worked in the US and seeing patients who had to pay was a dismal failure. She ended up diagnosing many advanced cancers—(Time expired)

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Queensland) (15:21): This is only my second speech in the Senate and I approach it with some trepidation. But I would like to thank the opposition for choosing the topic of broken promises, in particular broken promises in the area of health, because it has made my job just that much easier. Under Labor, we saw the health bureaucracy balloon while public hospitals, private health insurance, dental and other areas were cut. We saw $4 billion cut from private health insurance and $1 billion cut from dental health.

It should have come as no surprise to us, because in the area of promises we had a promise from the Labor government to indicate that they would be fiscal conservatives. They took a cash surplus legacy left to them in 2006-07 and took it to a $192 billion debt. One can only imagine what could have been done in the area of health services had that money been dedicated into that area, which it was not—it competed with reductions. Or, indeed, there are the $1 billion in debt payments that are made here on a monthly basis. That borrowing was an increase of 400 per cent in the first two years, and the borrowing in that area increased by 100 per cent each year. So in less than three years Labor borrowed $147,000 million which could have been put into health and we would not have any challenges to our spending program at the moment. Labor have shown me that they know more about tonight's budget than I do. It will be an interesting discussion tomorrow morning if some of the statements they have made in this place and outside this place do not come to fruition.

One of the things that is necessary for any government to be able to maintain the services they want to in meeting their duty of care to their constituency is to ensure that they have a strong economy. I am happy to have a discussion with the opposition, or anybody, in relation
to the economic performance of a conservative government. The previous government under Howard and Costello inherited a debt of $96 billion and were able to dispose of that over the term of their government, leaving us at the time with a cash surplus, if my memory serves me correctly, in the order of $45 billion when Labor took over.

To keep health services well funded, one must be able to operate surpluses. If Labor want to talk about promises, let us talk about the promises of the surplus indicated for 2008-09—where we ended up with a $27 billion deficit. In 2009-10 we were promised that saving decisions would set us up on the path to surplus for 2015-16. Of course, we all know what the deficit is for 2015-16.

They talked about a strategy that would see the budget returned to surplus in three years' time. That statement was made in 2010-11. Well, in the three years' time the deficit was $47 billion. So it is appropriate to have a conversation about promises—promises on any level. The measures that might have to be taken in the budget today will be as the direct result of failed financial management over a long period of time. This was from a government that was headed by someone who I remember from one night when I had to rewind on my television—I heard Kevin Rudd indicate to Australians that he was a 'fiscal conservative'. I watched him with great interest from that period of time.

I think that there is quite a deal of hypocrisy for the opposition to start pre-empting an attack on our government, on the coalition, in terms of the management repairs that they have to do into the future. Might I end by saying that there was a wonderful saying by Walter Kirn in relation to hypocrisy:

Everyone loves a witch hunt as long as it's someone else's witch being hunted.

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales) (15:26): I too rise to take note of the answers to the questions asked of Senator Nash today and, particularly, the questions that I asked Senator Nash about the future of Medicare Locals.

There has been a bit of argy-bargy across the chamber this afternoon about the issue of broken promises. We are all very conscious of the campaign that the government ran during the election campaign and straight after, where the Prime Minister looked straight down the barrel of the camera and promised that there would be no broken promises, and that his was going to be a government for all Australians.

I suppose that the question that was asked today of Minister Nash really goes to the touchstone issue of health care in Australia. It is the concern that we, as parliamentarians, hear most when we are travelling around our states as senators or in our electorates as members of parliament. That is, the fear and concern that our constituents have about having access to appropriate and timely health services—particularly if you are regional senator, like all of the members of the National Party sitting here today. They know the challenges there are in combining thin health markets, distance, access to services and particular populations that have particular health needs. I asked Minister Nash today about whether or not she actually supported the Murrumbidgee Medicare Local, which covers a population of almost 200,000 people across south-western New South Wales and across a geographic area of more than 100,000 square kilometres.

She was reluctant actually to commit her confidence to the work of the Medicare Local in Murrumbidgee, and that is a shame because they do an extraordinary job while challenged by
some very important and difficult demographics. There is the fact of the density of 4.1 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of Australia living in that region, as opposed to the national average of about 2½ per cent. So there are really important health challenges that the Murrumbidgee Medicare Local has very strategically and very cleverly made out to address by decreasing the rates of chronic disease and treatable and preventable mortality by expanding the current preventative health and chronic disease services and programs. These are really innovative and locally developed programs to address the specific needs of those communities. They have fantastic prenatal and antenatal services, outreach services that challenge the issues of distance across those regions.

When the government came in, the Australian Medicare Local Alliance issued a release which said the Australian Medicare Local Alliance welcomed the decision by Prime Minister-elect Tony Abbott to appoint Peter Dutton to the position of Minister for Health and welcomed Senator Fiona Nash as Assistant Minister for Health because she understands the issues affecting people in rural and remote communities and will be an asset in the health portfolio. She has an interest in equity of access to health services that taps right into what Medicare Locals are working to deliver across Australia. The Australian Medicare Local Alliance was also pleased that the federal government has continued to recognise the importance of mental health.

Medicare Locals have been systematically, across the country, addressing these issues and are now waiting with bated breath for the announcement of this budget. So trying to actually reassure the patients and participants in Medicare Local programs across the country that Medicare Locals are not for the chop is absolutely okay—they will survive the review and they will survive the budget. We fear greatly for Medicare Locals and we fear that the dislocation and the disruption to quality health care in the regions will suffer immensely from what we know are the Prime Minister’s cuts to health.

Question agreed to.

Budget
Pensions and Benefits

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (15:31): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Assistant Minister for Social Services (Senator Fifield) to a question without notice asked by Senator Siewert today relating to income support.

The question related to a society that is going to have a growing gap between those that have access to resources and those that do not, between the rich and the poor, and between the have and the have-nots. Whichever way you put it, we are going to see growing inequality. It is quite obvious that this government has not modelled the impact on society of growing inequality.

The minister said that we have to live within our means. But of course when we see these cuts, it means that those on the lowest incomes and those on the income support will have less means with which to live within. The government talks about a safety net, but the holes are going to be so big in this so-called safety net that people are going to fall right through. The government is talking about potential cuts to indexation of the pension—a pension where we saw a rise of $32 not too long ago. If indexation of the pension is cut, we will see that rise in the pension completely undercut.
We have a community where we already have 35 per cent of those aged over 65 living in poverty or near poverty. The government is talking about potentially changing the taper rates to Newstart, which will mean that people have less money to live on. When those opposite say they are going to review eligibility, what they mean is: we are going to kick a whole lot of people on the disability support pension on to Newstart, which will inevitably mean they will live in poverty. The Commission of Audit report, which we know was commissioned and directed by the government, raises the issue of cutting indexation to parenting payment single—again, these are people who can least afford it.

The week before last, Anglicare in Sydney released a report entitled *Locked out: deep and persistent disadvantage in Sydney*. What that report points out and the recommendations it makes are just as pertinent to any other town or city in this country. It talks about deep and persistent disadvantage. That is what you face when income support is cut so low that you are living in poverty and that is what you face when you are living on Newstart. This government plans to dump, potentially, hundreds of thousands more people from the disability support pension on to Newstart. Those opposite are talking about changing pensions. Even though they said they would not, they are talking about changing pensions.

When children grow up in a household with deep and persistent disadvantage, those childhood experiences affect children's ability to acquire capability and opportunity, and that closes doors to their future prospects and wellbeing. So those opposite are right when they talk about intergenerational theft—they are thieving children's opportunities into the future. Already, we have five per cent of Australians living in deep and persistent disadvantage. What we are going to see with these cuts is that number grow quite substantially because we will have even more people living in deep and persistent disadvantage, which leads to their exclusion from not only economic participation but social participation also. Disadvantage affects children into the future because those experiences stay with them for the rest of their lives, which is referred to as 'intergenerational impacts'. So not only will a child's life prospects be damaged but their children's life prospects will be damaged also.

The government made promises about not changing the pension. What do they think changing the indexation of pensions is going to mean? Already, we have nearly 200,000 people over the age of 50 on Newstart. That has gone up by 41 per cent over the last three years. If you extend the pension age or if you change indexation for the pension then you affect those people too. The government will make people stay on Newstart longer, exist in poverty even longer, wait to get the pension and then that will be affected by indexation. We are condemning not only younger people but also future generations into long-term poverty, into persistent disadvantage. We are blocking off their future aspirations and we are growing a society where we have more— *(Time expired)*

Question agreed to.

**CONDOLENCES**

Harradine, Mr Richard William Brian

_The PRESIDENT (15:37):_ It is with deep regret that I inform the Senate of the death on 14 April 2014 of Brian Harradine, a senator for the state of Tasmania from 1975 to 2005._
Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (15:37): by leave—I move:

That the Senate records its deep regret at the death, on 14 April 2014, of Brian Harradine, former senator for Tasmania, places on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service and tenders its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Mr President, the Australian Senate was graced for 30 years by the presence of Senator Brian Harradine, a man of conviction, a man of principle, a man of integrity, a man of humility, dedication and self-giving love, a man of immense talent who committed his life to the service of others through his faith, through his family, through his many elected positions as a union man and a parliamentary representative for the state of Tasmania. He was rightly described by His Grace Archbishop Julian Porteous at the state funeral as a just man as described in chapter 4 of the Book of Wisdom.

Richard William Brian Harradine was born in Quorn, South Australia, in 1935, into what might be described as a typical Catholic Labor family with strong union links. Brian initially embarked on a religious career before working with the Commonwealth Railways and then the Postmaster-General's Department in Adelaide. Then, like his father, uncles and brothers, Brian became a union official. He joined the Federated Clerks Union and became a protege of John Maynes, who, during the 1950s played a leading role in the Australian Labor Party's industrial group known as Groupers, who took on the Left and especially the communists in a battle that resulted in a split in the ALP in Hobart in 1955 and which led to the formation of the Democratic Labor Party.

In 1959 Brian came to our home state of Tasmania as a union secretary. He first lived with the Noonan family, with Mick Noonan becoming a close friend and later Brian's campaign manager for each of his Senate election campaigns and, might I add, a very good and successful record. It was a period of struggle, suspicion and bitterness between the Left and Right factions of the ALP. In the 1950s Cold War atmosphere there were strong fears that communists were securing a significant foothold in the trade union movement to the detriment of Australia's national interest—a fear that history has shown was very well founded. Brian set up the shoppies union in Tasmania and was its president for many years even while a senator. They supported him and I noted that Joe de Bruyn, the national secretary of the shoppies, amongst many other luminaries from that union attended his funeral.

In 1964 Brian Harradine, who was regarded as a very capable right-wing union organiser, was elected secretary of the Tasmanian Trades and Labor Council and to the ACTU executive, positions he held up until his election to the Senate in 1975. Brian Harradine served on the ACTU executive for 12 years, representing the Australian trade union movement overseas on many occasions. His election to these bodies was achieved against strong communist and left-wing opposition and came at a time when those forces were stepping up their campaign to capture control of vulnerable state branches of the ACTU. The political attacks made against him from those within the ALP were vicious, sustained and disingenuous and need to be seen within the Cold War context.

When he topped a poll in 1968 to represent the Tasmanian ALP on the federal executive there was an immediate negative and nasty reaction amongst communist and left-wing forces.
Brian's views and beliefs inevitably conflicted with those on the Left. So between 1968 and 1975 he was prevented from taking his seat on the federal executive of the ALP, whose factional composition was becoming more and more critical to Gough Whitlam's internal reform agenda. He stated at the time that he was prevented from taking his seat by that now very famous quote 'friends of the communists'. Brian Harradine sent a long statement to the then state president of the ALP, the late former Tasmanian Premier Bill Nielsen, alleging that, amongst other things: 'Friends of the communists intend to try and silence me. They know that on the federal executive I will support Gough Whitlam if he seeks an inquiry into the Victorian ALP executive.' When this statement was published it became the subject of debate on the ALP federal executive, leading to a showdown for the ALP parliamentary leadership between Gough Whitlam and Jim Cairns. Can I just say, as an aside, that if that was the choice facing me I too would have supported Gough Whitlam.

But despite strong campaigns against him between 1968 and 1975 by left-wing forces, Brian Harradine and his supporters consolidated their hold on the Tasmanian Trades and Labor Council. Brian was even spied on from a cupboard by private investigators engaged by Ray Gietzelt and subsequently accused of attending a National Civic Council meeting in Sydney, a claim subsequently proven to be false. It was in fact an official ACTU subcommittee meeting and the official minutes proved Harradine right and his accusers wrong. Nevertheless, and in the face of the undisputed contradictory evidence, on 2 August 1975, on a motion moved by Bill Hartley, Brian Harradine was expelled from the ALP by a 9-8 vote, a decision described by the New South Wales delegate and a predecessor of yours, Mr President, Labor Senate President Kerry Sibraa, as a kangaroo court. His expulsion was reconfirmed at a subsequent federal ALP executive special meeting on 22 September 1975. The Prime Minister at the time, Gough Whitlam, stated that 'Harradine is a victim of perjured evidence'. The former Liberal Prime Minister, John Howard, described it in these terms: 'Brian Harradine did not leave the ALP; the ALP left him.'

The federal executive decided that Harradine's appeal against expulsion would be heard at the ALP federal conference in July 1977, but Harradine wanted to avoid any further damage to the state ALP, the party which he had been a member of since 1961. He decided that, in order to effectively continue his work on behalf of the people of Tasmania, he would stand for the Senate at the December 1975 election. Running as an Independent for the Brian Harradine Group he won 12.8 per cent of the primary vote and went on to be re-elected at the 1980, 1983, 1987, 1993 and 1998 elections—an unsurpassed record; the highest vote ever for a truly Independent candidate; and the longest stay of an Independent in this place. In his maiden speech in 1976, the now Senator Brian Harradine said:

Never have I had a desire to enter this place. But I am a trade unionist. I have been a full-time union official for over 17 years. That is my love; that was my life. I was committed to uplifting the poor, to championing the cause of the underprivileged …

...  ...  ...

Why, then, am I here? I am here because, after years of constant, unremitting, relentless pressure being directed at me by the extreme Left coalition forces—and I stress for Hansard here: small 'l' coalition—

It required a detour to be taken and it may be—I hope I am right—that I have found the highway upon which I can advance the objectives of the people that I represent; namely, the people of Tasmania.
And, as they say, the rest is history. His hopes were, without doubt, fully realised.

Brian holds the dual titles of being the longest-serving senator and longest-serving Independent senator in the Australian Senate. He was a senator for about 30 years, holding the balance of power on a number of occasions. He never abused this power and, in its exercise, was always guided by deeply held principles. Perhaps the greatest testament to Brian's integrity and achievement is that his exercise of this responsibility enhanced the respect in which he was held. Brian was the joint Father of the Senate from 1993 to 1999 and then singularly held that title from 1999 until his retirement in June 2005. Brian Harradine became identified with this title of Father of the Senate not just because of his fatherly demeanour but also, I am sure, because of the paternal role he personified in relation to the affairs of the nation.

He never compromised on his principles when dealing with legislation. His labour roots and his loyalty to the working class guided his decisions on industrial relations. He maintained a principled stand on issues such as the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death and same-sex marriage because of his commitment to the welfare of children. He strongly opposed stem cell research, pornography, the use of foreign aid for so-called family planning, as well as the Northern Territory's euthanasia legislation.

He demonstrated his political and negotiating skill during the 1998 Wik native title debate in the Senate, maintaining as best he could in that poisonous political atmosphere his strong commitment to Aboriginal rights and his care for Australia's Indigenous community. He wanted to avoid a race-based election in 1998 and his political judgement was demonstrated in arriving at an agreement with the Howard government which history will show was the best that could have been secured at that time.

Brian Harradine was intensely loyal to Tasmanians and he used his position in the Senate when the opportunity arose to benefit Tasmania. The partial sale of Telstra presented such an opportunity, and on two occasions—in 1996 and 1999—he was able to negotiate financial benefits for his home state without compromising his firmly held principle of majority public ownership.

To the introduction of a GST in 1999, despite a mandate from the people at the 1998 election, he famously said that two-word sentence 'I cannot' to the Howard government, based on the loyalty he felt to working people. I confess I may or may not have entertained uncharitable thoughts about the good senator at that time but yet recognised his sincerity and that there was no hint of populism or cynicism in his decision; it was just pure sincerity. It helped imprint on me that men and women of good faith can come to differing conclusions on the issues of the day. Indeed, after he uttered those words 'I cannot', he said in the next paragraph in Hansard:

I know my name will be mud, whichever way it goes, but it has been mud before today, and it will be mud again later on.

Today I can assure his family that his name is most definitely not mud; in fact, it is held in very high regard.

He was a great friend and champion of the Baltic states and the people from those countries. He supported their rights and independence—a role acknowledged by the Baltic community on his passing. Gough Whitlam's disastrous de jure recognition of the
incorporation of the Baltic states into that evil empire of the USSR—as he did, might I add, with East Timor and Indonesia—left Brian Harradine very cold and a champion for the Baltic communities, especially in Tasmania.

Brian Harradine has been variously described as humble, intelligent, just, canny, wily, principled, complex, honourable, anticommunist, politically savvy, a fine orator and debater, the silver fox and one of the most capable and effective politicians of our time. I would not demur from any of those descriptions. In 2004 he was awarded the Papal distinction of Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great for his contribution to public life and public debate over many years.

The humility of the man was shown by the fact that he left instructions with his family that he was not to be eulogised at his funeral. I think his son Bede would make an exceptionally good black-letter lawyer because, in the order of service that we were given at the funeral service, there were some words of remembrance published, and his son Bede, with whom I contested student political elections at the University of Tasmania more years ago than both of us would care to remember, said this: 'He most certainly had no desire to be eulogised.' But then he went on to say: 'To my knowledge, however, the words 'Do not print any words of remembrance' never passed Dad's lips.' And, therefore, he thought he could have a written eulogy without offending his father's wishes. But this is what he wrote about his father:

Brian Harradine, my father, was a humble man. Throughout his life he never sought the praise of others. In death, he most certainly had no desire to be eulogised. As a family we are honouring his wish that the focus of the Mass of Christian Burial to be not on his life and legacy but, in the ancient Christian tradition, on prayer for his soul as it passes into eternity.

On the back of the Order of Service was a wonderful contemplative photo of Brian Harradine on one of his beloved bushwalks—a man who understood that you can actually support forestry, wilderness and bushwalking all at the same time. The verse that was under that contemplative picture was: 'What return can we make to the Lord for all His goodness to us?' And I have no doubt that that was one of the driving factors in Senator Brian Harradine's life.

But, above all, his commitment to his family was legendary. In 1962, Brian married Barbara Ward with whom he had six children: Bede, Gemma, Mary, Richard, David and Ann. He had only been a senator for five years when Barbara tragically passed away in 1980. In 1982, he married Marian, a widow and mother of seven children: Anthony, Paul, Fiona, Phillip, Nicola, Cushla and Benjamin—which of course made a great campaign team of 13 children.

So Brian Harradine leaves his wife Marian, 13 children and 38 grandchildren. Our condolences go to all of them. They are his legacy and a true reflection of all that he worked so hard for during his long and productive life. Allow me to again quote his son Bede: 'For family, he was far more than a man with a three-song piano repertoire who loved a game of cards and who once had a fifth share in a sixth-rate racehorse. He was a practical witness to self-giving love.' If anyone deserves eternal rest after this life of unrelenting principled battle, it is in fact Brian Harradine. So the card we were all handed at the state funeral was most apt when it said, under a picture of a smiling Brian Harradine: 'Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord,' and to that the coalition says, 'Amen.'

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (15:56): On behalf of the opposition, I support the condolence motion moved by the Leader of the
Government in the Senate, and extend our condolences to Brian Harradine's widow, Marian, and to their children and extended family—and I understand that one of his daughters is present in the gallery today.

Brian Harradine retired from the Senate on 30 June 2005, having given three decades of service to this place as a senator for Tasmania. He was the longest serving Independent senator since Federation. Although Brian was a passionate Tasmanian, he was in fact born in South Australia. He began his lifelong love affair with Tasmania when he moved there in 1959. It is fair to say that that love was reciprocated—reflected not just in his election to the Senate in 1975, 1980, 1983, 1987, 1993 and 1998, but in the reaction by Tasmanians to his passing last month.

Before entering the Senate, Brian was a committed trade unionist. He was the secretary of the Tasmanian Trades and Labour Council, and a member of the ACTU executive. Brian was a member of the Australian Labor Party until he and Labor had, shall we say—and described well by Senator Abetz—a parting of the ways in 1975.

In his inaugural speech on 25 February 1976 Brian said:

… I am a trade unionist. I have been a full time union official for over 17 years. That is my love; that was my life.

Brian may have left his life as a full-time union official behind in coming to this place, but he never lost his passion for the underprivileged or the disadvantaged. From the crossbenches, he was a powerful advocate for Tasmania and a champion for the causes in which he believed. He played critical roles in important debates and decisions in this place on such issues as native title and the privatisation of Telstra.

We also remember his opposition to the introduction of the goods and services tax. During the debate on the GST bills, Brian Harradine said this:

Decisions we make now on this issue are not for the next three years; we are making decisions here that will affect generations.

What Brian enunciated there during the GST debate was his approach to all legislation that came before this place. In the statement he issued announcing he would not be recontesting his seat, Brian reflected on his role as a senator in these terms:

I am particularly proud of the role I have played in promoting and defending the Senate not as a rubber stamp for the government of the day, but as a true house of review scrutinising and refining the laws under which we all live.

Brian Harradine did just that during the three decades in which he represented the people of Tasmania in this place.

I think some of the tributes described by Senator Abetz are very apt. 'The silver fox' is probably my favourite. He demonstrated that time and time again in negotiations with all parties. He always negotiated in good faith. I would say—from one of my previous roles—that I have always admired his decision to gain for Tasmania what was called 'fibring up the isle of Tasmania'. He negotiated to get government funding many years before the debate about fibre ever started, and he insisted on getting many benefits for Tasmania. But that far-sighted vision that he gained from the government demonstrated that not only did he mean what he said about getting policies over time; he delivered on getting policies over time. That fibre serves Tasmania well today and it will continue to serve Tasmania.
I say to all of us who served with him: it was a delight to deal with him. I was not as lucky as Senator Abetz to deal with him as regularly, but it was a great pleasure to discuss many, many matters with him—and, as always, some entertaining matters about the ALP's past.

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (16:01): I rise to support the motion, and I also rise to speak as a fellow senator reflecting on the enormous contribution made in this place by Brian Richard William Harradine, who was born in 1936 and who sadly passed away on 14 April 2014. I am sure that all of us here concur with the sentiment that a truly bright light was extinguished from private and public life on his passing. I offer my sincere condolences on behalf of the National Party and the government to his spouse and the rich legacy he leaves behind in his children, stepchildren and grandchildren.

I want to start off by noting that, as many have said, Mr Harradine was a humble man. His battles were never about seeking to draw attention to himself, even if political attention was never far from him. His battles were always about others, in keeping with his deep Christian beliefs and convictions. Whilst his views were not considered to have been fashionable by some, he has been universally respected on all sides of politics and beyond. This is because he followed his internal moral road map without wavering.

If I can draw on the words of our former Prime Minister, John Howard, who spoke at Brian Harradine's funeral. He said:

It's an indication that when you make a contribution to public life that's based on integrity, it crosses the political divide …

In an entry in The Companion to Tasmanian History, Wendy Rimon describes Mr Harradine as starting off as a 'union official and politician', even if this is not how most people remember him. This was prior to his parting with the Labor Party in 1975 because of his fierce anticommunist views and his association with social conservatives. After his departure from the Labor Party, the Father of the Senate, as he came to be called, served as an Independent—and there was no-one who was more fiercely independent in thought and conscience, as well as conduct, than Brian Harradine, serving in that capacity for 30 years, the longest-serving Independent senator since Federation.

While it is true that it is difficult to fully appreciate the profundity of his vision, and whilst I may not be able to do justice to the breadth of that vision, the common theme that informed all his battles in this place was a sense of community service. This was reflected in his commitment to the state of Tasmania as the patron of Tasmanian jobs and families, despite his having hailed originally from South Australia. It was no mean feat that he managed to secure a $350 million cash deal for Tasmania, which he negotiated in return for his vote on the partial sale of Telstra.

Of particular interest to me was his role in brokering the Wik native title agreement. He was pivotal in the Wik native title legislation because he feared an election based on race, something he could not countenance. And it should be remembered that it was not Mr Harradine who gave ground in those difficult and protracted negotiations; it was in fact the then government. Mr Harradine was not one to give ground when he firmly believed in something.
Mr Harradine was also a great negotiator, whether it was on the parliamentary stage or indeed in dealing with Indigenous people, for whom he had a deep respect and care. He was always motivated by securing their interests. He was not only the Father of the Senate but a father figure for the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society.

In this place he served on many committees, bringing to bear his indomitable style founded on conviction and hard work. As I noted earlier, it would be difficult to go through all his achievements in public life. In terms of his personal life, his devotion to his family and those closest to him was immeasurable. His authenticity is sadly missed. Frugal with himself, he was generous with everyone else. It should not, however, be forgotten that, for all his seriousness and dedication to his work, Mr Harradine did have a sense of humour, and this dry humour was invariably aimed at himself. It was a truly beguiling trait that a man with so much talent and power refused to take himself seriously.

Brian Harradine, may you rest in peace—a peace you justly deserve. Vale, gentle soul.

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (16:05): I rise today to support the motion and, as others have, to pay my respects to former senator Brian Harradine. Senator Harradine was a great man, a just man and a great Australian. Senator Harradine was one of my political role models. He represented his constituents, he fought for his state, and he stood up for what he believed in. He did so with compassion, grace and humility.

Senator Harradine's political career lasted three decades, and he sat in both this chamber and the old chamber. He successfully contested five elections. He was known as 'the Father of the Senate', which is an apt description for a great man. The people of Tasmania trusted the senator to represent them and deliver for them. He delivered time and time again. Senator Harradine's achievements are too numerous to list.

Senator Harradine believed in the sanctity of life. Through his negotiating, he ensured that Australian aid money was not spent running abortion clinics in Third World countries. He successfully blocked the abortion pill RU486 from being sold in Australia for many years. He also saved the lives of Chinese women and children who fled their country under the nation's one child policy.

He stood up for the rights of workers. His background as a trade unionist served the people of Australia well, especially when it was his vote stopping the Howard government from passing draconian industrial relations laws. Senator Harradine was particularly proud of his role in brokering the Wik native title agreement, and rightfully so.

The few minutes I have here in this place cannot begin to do justice to the man Senator Harradine was. I would like to quote from the homily delivered at Senator Harradine's funeral by His Grace Archbishop Julian Porteous of Hobart. He said:

Brian worked tirelessly for the common good seeking to promote the conditions necessary for the advancement of individuals; he sought to protect the dignity of human life from conception to natural death. Brian Harradine recognised that politics ultimately should not be viewed in terms of parties but instead should recognise its role of service to the community. Brian provided a clear example of the role of someone in political service. His Catholic faith was the inspiration of what he did. It motivated and informed his actions. He did not seek to impose his beliefs but allowed his faith to provide the inspiration to his decisions and actions.

Senator Harradine was an inspiration. He truly was a public servant, not a public master. He put the common good back into the Commonwealth. Well done, good and faithful servant. You will be missed.
Senator BOSWELL (Queensland) (16:09): I join my colleagues in this motion of condolence. I was fortunate: I sat next to Brian Harradine for 10 years. I suppose I knew him as well as anyone in this parliament knew him. Brian was elected as an Independent senator in 1975 and served in this parliament until his retirement. He had a passionate understanding not only for the blue-collar worker but for the underprivileged and the unborn. He was a person who really got a grip straightaway on how the system works.

I was young enough to remember that after the 1975 election there was a lot of ill-will against the sacking of the Labor Party. At that time the Labor Party in protest moved out of the parliament and left the opposition benches vacant. Senator Harradine went up and sat in the Leader of the Opposition's chair. He said to the people, 'If you walk out of the battleground and leave it uncontested, then I will represent the opposition.' He moved up and sat in that chair up there. I knew then that he was a skilled performer.

He was an Independent. He put in 30 years of service. I can remember the day he was standing there giving his address on native title and he fumbled. I could see that something was going wrong. He got through that speech with tenacity, and I believe that was the time that he realised that he had a minor problem.

Thirty years is a long time in politics. That is what his tour of duty was all about. He stood up as an Independent for Tasmania. I do not think anyone will ever again see an Independent or, in fact, another senator that used his leverage and pivot in the Senate with such great effect. He was an old-school politician who fought to get the best deal for his home state of Tasmania and, by gee, didn't he deliver. He was a devout catholic who opposed gay marriage. He campaigned against abortion, stem cell research, pornography, the Northern Territory euthanasia legislation and the use of foreign aid for family-planning purposes. I am proud to say that on all those occasions I stood with him. His abhorrence to China's forced adoption program was emphasised when he boycotted President Hu Jintao's address in parliament in 2003.

He remained loyal to his faith throughout his political career. He was a member of the Labor Party and he always had the Labor Party brand on him. You could always tell that is where his roots were: for the working man and woman. I recall one time when we were debating section 121C of the taxation act, which said that cooperatives could get a double tax break. I went to Brian and said, 'Brian, you've always believed in cooperatives. I want you to stand up and vote against our government,' and he did. We won 121C due to Brian Harradine. It is the only thing that keeps cooperatives viable at the moment. Rural Australia owes him a strong debt of thanks.

He was expelled from the Labor Party because he nominated some people as friends of communists. The Labor Party expelled him—what a terrible mistake that was. The Labor Party lost a man of conviction and courage; a truly decent man who championed the cause of the underprivileged, the vulnerable and the blue-collar worker. What a loss that the Labor Party could ill-afford. What a loss not to have him standing over there with the Labor Party. What a tragedy for the Labor Party. If he had been with them, I am sure that his wise counsel would have prevented them from going down some of the courses they took that were against the blue-collar worker.

Brian was beholden to no political party, and held firm to his values and beliefs. He applied those values to the issues that confronted him in the Senate. He was guided by three
principles: the protection of human life; delivering for Tasmania; and minimising the impact on his beloved battlers. Harradine held the balance of power in the Senate during the Fraser government in the eighties and in the Howard government from 1996 to 1999. I know that wore heavily on him—he just wanted to be a feather duster again—and he was relieved when the balance of power was taken from his shoulders. He took responsibility for important legislation, and he did it very seriously. He had enormous pressure on his shoulders when he was the one vote that could swing the parliament. He was a wily negotiator. He was able to secure $353 million for Tasmania as part of the Telstra sale. Tasmania got $183 million as a result of Harradine's vote for T1 and $170 million for T2. I can remember standing here saying, 'Brian, if they put another telephone on that island, it will sink!' And we had a good laugh together. But he certainly delivered for Tasmania. He extracted so much for Tasmania during the Telstra debate.

I have a cartoon in which Brian was debating the Wik legislation and defending the Aborigines, and I was taking forward the voice of the graziers of Australia. The cartoon shows Harradine and me, stripped down to boxing shorts—he was a very thin man; I was pretty rotund at the time, and still am—and boxing gloves. I have still got that cartoon on the wall of my office. It shows us fighting for the people who we thought deserved a voice.

Brian was recognised by his beloved Catholic Church with the papal distinction of Knight Commander of the Order of Saint Gregory the Great. That was conferred in October 2004. He suffered a stroke in March 2005. I am not sure whether it was at that exact time that I saw him fumble his speech when he was debating on native title. He continued on, kept pressing forward, to reach out to the people of Tasmania. In his valedictory speech on 21 June 2005, he stated:

I have maintained that the true measure of our society and our civilisation is not how rich, powerful or technologically advanced we are. Simply, it is how we treat the weakest and most vulnerable among us. It underpins my unwavering defence of pro-life, pro-human values against the despondency of abortion and euthanasia.

Brian was one of the most formidable politicians I have ever worked with. He was a true Australian patriot guided by a deep love of country, its blue-collar workers, its Indigenous people and its natural heritage. I was sad to hear of his death on 14 April this year. On my annual pilgrimage to Tasmania I always called into his house. To Brian's wife, Marian, I say thank you for the hospitality, the cups of tea and the beautiful apricots—they have the most wonderful apricot tree in Tasmania. To Marian, to their children—Bede, Anthony, Gemma, Paul, Mary, Fiona, Richard, Phillip, Nicola, Ann, Cushla, David and Benjamin—and to their children, I express my deep sympathy on the loss of your beloved husband, father and grandfather. I doubt that we will ever see the likes of Brian Harradine in the Australian Senate again. He will be missed.

Senator Jacinta Collins (Victoria) (16:20): I join in relatively few condolence discussions, but this is one I think I should make a brief contribution to. I shared the last 10 years of Senator Brian Harradine's period in the Senate and I recall him with enormous fondness. We shared many things over that time. I would like to thank Senator Abetz for his contribution to this discussion; I think he covered the history and contribution of Senator Harradine to Australian public life with enormous respect. I would like to add some of my fondness and personal anecdotes to this discussion. The one principle that I saw Brian
Harradine representing, and that I too was inspired by, was that of the common good across a very broad range of public policy issues. I too remember the day when Brian Harradine said, 'I cannot.' He supported progressive taxation; he saw the GST as regressive. In that role he had, with the balance of power in the Senate, he tried to see if there were ways to ameliorate its potential effects, but at the end of the day he said, 'I cannot.'

Brian dealt with an enormous range of issues over that time. For most of that 10 years, as the Labor Party spokesperson on workplace relations matters, I worked with him across a range of those issues in the Senate. And I share Senator Scullion's recollections of Senator Harradine's humour and dry wit.

Brian Harradine and I shared offices nearby. We shared babies; my own, and his staff's. We shared the atmosphere here in the parliament that can often seem to all of us a bit like boarding school. His humour and his wit were those things that help lighten some of the stresses of life here. His passion and commitment to public life, his level of astuteness, his tenacity both to his political adversaries and with respect to his health are all important things to note. But Brian Harradine balanced that passion with his skills, his tenacity and his judgement.

I can recall one day—I cannot recall the debate—standing pretty much in this position as the shadow minister at the time, and he walked past me. He had obviously been listening to the debate up in his office as he came down to the chamber. As he walked past me he gestured—I was being passionate but maybe a bit too much—that I might want to tone it down just that little bit. I think that reflection highlights that whilst Senator Brian Harradine was an Independent, he was indeed father of the Senate. He could proffer support, advice and guidance not only to the crossbenchers but also to those of us within the major parties participating in debates and discussions here. I recall Senator Harradine with great fondness and I note this place has been quite different since his absence. He struggled with his health for a number of years. I would like to thank Marian and his family for the support that they have provided to him over many, many years and share with them their loss. Thank you.

Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (16:24): I rise to express my condolences on the passing of former Senator Harradine and especially to pass on my condolences to his wife Marian, their 13 children, and their grandchildren. I had the privilege of attending Brian's funeral a couple of weeks ago at the cathedral in Hobart. It was an absolutely terrific send-off for a very great Australian.

He is best known as a Tasmanian, but of course, he was not in fact a Tasmanian; he was a South Australian. He grew up in the mid-north of South Australia, one of the most austere parts of the country. He left that part of the world, that dry and arid region in the mid-north of South Australia, to go down to Tasmania, a very verdant and lush environment. So it was quite a different world. As Senator McEwen would recall, he went down there as an official of the Federated Clerks Union. From that position, he eventually became the Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council down in Tasmania. As a number of people have referred to, he was expelled from the Labor Party in 1975, but then ran as an Independent and won successive elections for the next 30 years.

He did hold the balance of power at a number of crucial times. We have heard about the role that he played in rejecting the GST. He understood the regressive nature of that tax. He was under enormous pressure from the Howard government to back the introduction of the
tax, and of course, he very correctly and courageously rejected that tax. We subsequently saw the consequences for the Australian Democrats when they did support that tax. We saw what happened to them. There is no doubt in my mind that Senator Harradine made the correct decision.

But there was one other issue that he played a crucial role in. Although he started out as an official of the Federated Clerks Union, he ended up as the President of the Tasmanian branch of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association—that great union. Not only did he serve as president, but he was also on the national council of that organisation for many decades. In 1975, that union was under great challenge by the New South Wales branch of the union. A fellow called Barry Egan had amalgamated the shop assistants' union in that state with the Building Workers Industrial Union, and was in the process of devouring each of the branches of the union. Brian used his position in the balance of power in the Fraser government to ensure that the New South Wales branch could not achieve that takeover of that union. One can imagine how different the Labor movement would be had Brian not stepped in and intervened at that time.

It was very sad occasion to see Brian pass away. I was at the funeral as were his sister Joan and her daughter Christa. It was a sad occasion, but I think Brian would have absolutely loved the celebration afterwards at the Glenorchy racetrack. It was terrific to be there with all of his friends, including Paul Griffin, the current Secretary of the Tasmanian branch of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Union, and with all of his family. I want to pass on my deepest condolences to his wife Marian and all of his children.

**The PRESIDENT (16:29):** Before putting the condolence motion, I rise briefly to offer my deepest sympathies to Marian and the family on behalf of my wife Sue and myself. I express our disappointment at missing his funeral because of a personal commitment. As is obvious, I knew Brian over a long period of time and, of course, had formed a friendship independent of this place but based on my involvement with the SDA and his involvement with the SDA. Whilst we did not come together very often, I did respect the man and what he stood for. He will be sadly missed in life by his family.

Question agreed to; honourable members standing in their places.

**PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS**

**Senator Faulkner** (New South Wales) (16:31): I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

**Senator Faulkner:** I want to refer to former Senator Bob Carr's weighty tome, *Diary of a Foreign Minister*. On page 364 of this book—

**Senator Conroy:** You got that far?

**Senator Faulkner:** which coincidentally, Senator Conroy would be interested to know, refers to events of Tuesday, 14 May 2013, which was budget day last year—my name is mentioned. Bob Carr writes about what he says must be the last caucus before the election. He writes:

Lower House MPs must be looking around the room, thinking this place will be cleaned out, half of 'the colleagues' gone from the next parliament, they themselves. I haven't even gotten to learn their names.'
A little later he said, 'John Faulkner says the meeting is like a mausoleum but not to quote him, because he plans to use it in his book.'

Mr Deputy President, let me make these points. First, I do acknowledge that I said to Bob Carr in a private conversation that attending the caucus meeting was like visiting a mausoleum. Second, I didn't ask Bob not to quote me; I had no thought that he ever would and no idea he was writing a book. Third, I certainly did not suggest I would use the line about caucus being like a mausoleum in my own book. I have never had any plans—not then, not now—to bore people senseless by writing such a book.

I make this personal explanation because this brief passage about me from Bob's book was extracted and highlighted in a number of newspapers at the time of the book's release. And, Mr Deputy President, I really don't want anyone to think that I am such a wally and so pompous and self-important that I would ever say such a thing to anyone at all—let alone to someone who was likely to publish it.

PETITIONS

Violence Against Women

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (16:34): by leave—I present to the Senate a document, which is a submission by Rise Queensland under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22. I believe this document, which is in the form of a nonconforming petition, has been circulated to the whips and agreed for tabling.

The Clerk: Petitions have been lodged for presentation as follows:

TO THE HONOURABLE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE SENATE IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

This Petition of citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the Senate:

• Despite rising youth unemployment, the Abbott government is threatening to cut the Youth Connections program that helps early school leavers to complete their education and get a job.

• Youth Connections program has proven success in securing the future of over 75,000 young Australians

    We therefore ask that the Senate:

• Secures the future of the Youth Connections program by ensuring funding is provided in the 2014-15 Federal Budget

    by Senator Lundy (from 2,399 citizens).

Petitions received.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senator Siewert to move:

That the Senate—

(a) acknowledges that the Western Australian Government’s shark drum line program ceased on 30 April 2014, and that the Western Australian Government has applied to extend it for a further 3 years;

(b) notes that:

(i) 172 sharks were caught on the drum lines, 48 sharks were destroyed, 20 died on the drum lines, and an unknown number died after being released,
the cull caught at least 110 sharks under 3 metres in length, despite the Western Australian Government’s commitment to mitigate the risk of this happening,

(iii) 5 short fin mako sharks were caught and 4 died during the cull, and

(iv) the Minister for the Environment has determined that an environmental assessment of the proposed extension of the cull be undertaken, but has delegated responsibility for the assessment back to the Western Australian Government;

(c) condemns the unnecessary deaths of these sharks; and

(d) calls on the Federal Government to ensure that no further shark deaths occur by ending its support for this policy.

Senator Milne to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes with concern the ongoing deterioration of democratic principles in Egypt, evidenced by:

(i) the arbitrary arrest of more than 16,000 protestors since the military coup of July 2013,

(ii) the lack of procedural fairness and due process in the judicial system, particularly the recent mass trials that sentenced 529 people in March, and a further 683 in April, to death, and

(iii) suppression of free press, including the ongoing imprisonment of Australian journalist Mr Peter Greste, and fellow Al Jazeera journalists; and

(b) calls on the Prime Minister (Mr Abbott) and the Minister for Foreign Affairs (Ms Bishop) to speak out publicly, and increase pressure on the Egyptian Government to seek the immediate release of Mr Peter Greste and the other 19 individuals detained.

Senator Milne to move:

That there be laid on the table by the Acting Assistant Treasurer (Senator Cormann), no later than 5 pm on 16 June 2014, the report prepared by KPMG for the Reserve Bank of Australia, that inquired into the conduct of board members of Note Printing Australia in relation to allegations of foreign bribery.

Senator Rhiannon to move:

That there be laid on the table, no later than 23 May 2014, by the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, all documents and correspondence relating to Livestock Shipping Services (LSS) between 1 November 2013 to the present day, including, but not limited to:

(a) all letters and emails;

(b) all briefing notes, including but not limited to all Ministerial briefing notes;

(c) all internal departmental emails and memos;

(d) all recorded or noted phone calls and meetings, including meeting minutes; and

(e) all records and other relevant documents.

Senator Fawcett to move:

That the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 15 May 2014, from 5 pm to 7 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the review of administration and expenditure no. 11 and no. 12.
Senator Wright to move:
That the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee be authorised to hold a private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 15 May 2014, from 3.45 pm.

Senator Smith to move:
That the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit be authorised to hold private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sittings of the Senate from 10.30 am, followed by public meetings, as follows:
(a) Thursday, 19 June 2014; and
(b) Thursday, 26 June 2014.

Senator Macdonald to move:
That the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 15 May 2014, from 4.45 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the provisions of the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth and Other Measures) Bill 2014.

Senator Back to move:
That the Education and Employment Legislation Committee be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Wednesday, 14 May 2014, from 7 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the provisions of the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014.

Senator Fawcett to move:
That the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services be authorised to hold a private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sitting of the Senate on Monday, 16 June 2014, from 11.30 am.

Senator Fawcett to move:
That the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties be authorised to hold public meetings during the sittings of the Senate, from 11 am to 1 pm, as follows:
(a) Monday, 16 June 2014; and
(b) Monday, 23 June 2014.

Senator Thorp to move:
That the time for the presentation of the report of the Environment and Communications References Committee on its inquiry into the Great Barrier Reef be extended to 27 August 2014.

Senator Wright to move:
That the time for the presentation of the report of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee on the Manus Island Detention Centre be extended to 16 July 2014.

Senator Wright to move:
That the time for the presentation of the report of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee on its inquiry into a comprehensive revision of the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 be extended to 27 August 2014.

Senator Macdonald to move:
That the time for the presentation of the report of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee on the provisions of the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Unexplained Wealth and Other Measures) Bill 2014 be extended to 5 June 2014.
Senator Lundy to move:
That the time for the presentation of the final report of the Select Committee on the National Broadband Network be extended to the last day of sitting of the 44th Parliament.

Senator Waters to move:
That the Senate—
(a) notes:
(i) the huge community opposition to Metgasco’s plans to drill for tight gas near Bentley in New South Wales,
(ii) that tight gas extraction involves hydraulic fracking which risks precious water resources, and
(iii) that 84.5 per cent of Bentley locals want their lands and road gas-field free;
(b) congratulates the Bentley blockaders for their commitment to protecting their land, water, the climate and regional communities from big gas; and
calls on:
(i) the New South Wales Government to respect the rights of protesters to peacefully protest, and to respond to the community's valid concerns by revoking Metgasco’s gas exploration permit, and
(ii) the Australian Government to extend the current protections for water resources under our national environment laws to all unconventional gas, to give landholders the right to say no to gas mining on their land, and to not hand responsibility for protecting land and water from big gas to state governments.

Senator Edwards to move:
Fifteen sitting days remain, including today, to resolve the motion or the instrument will be deemed to have been disallowed.

Senator Edwards to move:
That the Migration Amendment (Bridging Visas—Code of Behaviour) Regulation 2013, as contained in Select Legislative Instrument 2013 No. 269 and made under the Migration Act 1958, be disallowed [F2013L02102].
Fifteen sitting days remain, including today, to resolve the motion or the instrument will be deemed to have been disallowed.

Senator Carr to move:
That the Higher Education (Maximum Amounts for Other Grants) Determination 2013, made under sections 41-45(1A) and (1B) of the Higher Education Support Act 2003, be disallowed [F2013L02165].
Fifteen sitting days remain, including today, to resolve the motion or the instrument will be deemed to have been disallowed.

Senator Hanson-Young to move:
That the Migration Amendment (Bridging Visas—Code of Behaviour) Regulation 2013, as contained in Select Legislative Instrument 2013 No. 269 and made under the Migration Act 1958, be disallowed [F2013L02102].
Fifteen sitting days remain, including today, to resolve the motion or the instrument will be deemed to have been disallowed.
Senators Cash and McKenzie to move:

That the Senate:

(a) recognises that sport is integral to life for so many Australians and that the Australian Government has a strong commitment to supporting and empowering women to be leaders in sport;
(b) acknowledges that netball is the leading participation sport for women and girls in Australia;
(c) congratulates the Australian netball team for the 2014 Commonwealth Games, including:
   (i) Captain Laura Geitz,
   (ii) Caitlin Bassett, Julie Corletto, Shami Layton, Kim Ravaillion, Madi Robinson and Caitlin Thwaites on their maiden Commonwealth Games selections,
   (iii) Tegan Caldwell on her debut international selection,
   (iv) Bianca Chatfield on returning to the Australian Commonwealth Games team for the first time since 2006, and
   (v) Kimberlee Green, Renae Hallinan and Natalie Medhurst;
(d) notes that:
   (i) Australia will host the 2015 Netball World Cup in Sydney and the Australian Government has committed $3 million towards Netball Australia to host the event as well as an additional $3 million to support the construction of the Netball Australia Centre of Excellence, and
   (ii) Netball Australia also receives approximately $3 million annually from the Government, through the Australian Sports Commission, to support netball high performance programs and increasing participation in the sport; and
(c) wishes the Australian netball team for the 2014 Commonwealth Games every success in Glasgow.

Senators Brandis, Cash, Wong, Milne, Moore and Waters to move:

That the Senate notes that:

(a) Australia condemns the group responsible for the abduction of more than 200 school girls from Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria, and is deeply concerned at reports of further abductions in north-eastern Nigeria;
(b) the Australian Government has made contact with the Nigerian High Commission in Canberra and the Nigerian Government in Abuja to express concern;
(c) Australia is working with Nigeria on counter-terrorism to prevent attacks including the recent bombings that took place in Abuja and these abductions;
(d) Australia has joined other members of the United Nations Security Council in condemning in the strongest terms the recent attacks committed by Boko Haram;
(e) Australia is strongly committed to empowering women and girls socially, politically and economically, by ending violence against women and girls, and improving access to health care and education; and
(f) the Australian Government continues to advise Australians to reconsider their need to travel to Nigeria given the high threat of terrorist attack and kidnapping.

Senators Fifield and Fierravanti-Wells to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:
   (i) the week of 12 May to 18 May 2014, is the 25th anniversary of National Volunteer Week, a time each year when not-for-profit organisations collectively take the time to celebrate and thank the volunteers they rely so heavily on,
(ii) the theme for this year’s National Volunteer Week is ‘Celebrate the Power of Volunteering’,
(iii) over 6 million Australians generously volunteer their time each and every day, and
(iv) volunteers are a vital part of society in many essential areas, including community, 
environmental, sporting, welfare, emergency services, education and cultural services and support 
services; and
(b) acknowledges the volunteers who assist migrants and refugees who have recently arrived in 
Australia to connect with their new communities.

BUSINESS

Leave of Absence

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (16:35): by 
leave—I move:

That leave of absence be granted to Senator Heffernan from 13 May to 15 May 2014, for personal 
reasons.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee

Meeting

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (16:35): by 
leave—At the request 
of the Chair of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References 
Committee, Senator Wright, I move:

That the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee be authorised to hold a private 
meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sitting of the Senate on 
Wednesday, 14 May 2014, from 3.15 pm.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS

Senate Temporary Orders

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and 
Assistant Minister for Social Services) (16:36): I move:

That the following general business orders of the day be considered on Thursday, 15 May 2014 
under the temporary order relating to the consideration of private senators’ bills:

No. 1 National Integrity Commission Bill 2013.
No. 25 Social Security Amendment (Caring for People on Newstart) Bill 2014.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (16:36): by 
leave—I move:

That the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme be authorised to 
hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Wednesday, 14 May 2014, from 10.30 am.

Question agreed to.
NOTICES

Postponement

The following item of business was postponed:


BILLS

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Alpine Grazing) Bill 2014

First Reading

Senator DI NATALE (Victoria) (16:38): I move:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, and for related purposes.

Question agreed to.

Senator DI NATALE: I present the bill and move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator DI NATALE (Victoria) (16:38): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to table the explanatory memorandum and have the second reading speech incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

The Greens have long opposed calls for the reintroduction of cattle into Victoria's Alpine National Park. The last attempt was in January 2011. In that trial, the Victorian Government allowed 400 cattle into the park across several sites. In that case, the Federal government intervened to put an end to the program.

We are now having the same debate again. The reintroduction of cattle to the park has been done once more under the guise of a trial into the fire reduction effects, but this time with Federal Government approval. This is disingenuous at best. There is no scientific uncertainty around the issue. There is no evidence to support this move as a fire abatement program. The scientific consensus is clear, that the damage the cattle are doing to a fragile ecosystem puts the lie to any discussion of the trial being for the benefit of the national park.

The real debate is about the extent to which we should protect our natural environment. The Greens give Australia's wonderful natural environment the benefit of the doubt. We ascribe a very high value to biodiversity, the preservation of wilderness, and preserving areas of natural beauty for all to enjoy. This is not an attitude shared by the current Victorian or Federal governments. Rather, they see Australia's environment as a resource to be exploited. Rather than ask, "Why should we risk damage to this unique part of Victoria?" they ask, "Why should this resource be locked away? How can we extract economic
value from it?" To them, "biodiversity" is just a word, a piece of jargon used by environmentalists in their attempts to impede progress. It can all be lumped under the banner of "green tape" and dismissed.

This trial, and the damage it will cause to Alpine National Park, is an example of this philosophy. It is symbolic of this Government's attitude to the environment as a whole.

This Bill is required to prevent that damage and do what the Minister himself should have done—protect the national park. Unfortunately legal protection for national parks cannot be taken for granted. The EBPC Act is the best tool we have at present to bring about this protection.

I encourage Senators to turn their minds to what exactly the EPBC Act does. It does not protect the whole of the natural environment. It singles out matters of national environmental significance. That is, it identifies those parts of our common natural inheritance which are so precious, or so fragile, that the Federal Government must protect them. It chooses the best of the best. The species and ecological communities protected by this Bill are some of those very matters.

From among the best of the best, the EPBC says "only where there is a significant impact" on one of these matters will the Federal Government step in. This is an example of just such a significant impact.

Our national environmental laws are woefully weak, but here is an example of where they can and should swing into action.

This Bill amends the EPBC Act and deems a referral regarding alpine grazing to have been made by the Victorian government and rejected by the Minister. It is a last resort—a legislative backstop—but it is necessary if the Minister will not act of his own accord.

We still have time to limit the damage caused by this act of contempt for Victoria's environment.

I commend the Bill to the Senate.

Senator DI NATALE: I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Budget

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (16:39): A letter has been received from Senator Moore:

Pursuant to standing order 75, I propose that the following matter of public importance be submitted to the Senate for discussion:

The Abbott Government's budget of broken promises.

Is the proposal supported?

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

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

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (16:39): What we will see this evening is a budget of broken promises—broken promises on tax, broken promises on health, broken promises on education and broken promises on pensions. During the election campaign, the now Prime Minister could hardly make a public comment without mentioning taxes. At a doorstop on 6 August 2013 he said:

Taxes will always be lower under a Coalition government.

At another event, on 9 August 2013, he said, and I am quoting directly:
The only party which is going to increase taxes after the election is the Labor Party.

Two days later, when he was asked specifically what taxes he proposed to raise, he said:

The only party that will raise taxes after the election is the Labor Party.

Wrong. All wrong. Running through tonight's budget will be increases in taxes. Running through tonight's budget will be new taxes and new charges.

What do we know so far? We know that income taxes are going up. We know that petrol prices will go up, with the government set to do a deal with the Greens to increase fuel excise. Where are all the cries from Senator Abetz today? Every time an Australian goes to the petrol station, they are going to be slugged thanks to the Prime Minister. We know that every time someone sees a doctor they will be slugged with a GP tax. We know that when someone goes to a hospital they will be slugged with a hospital tax. We know that every time Australians get their wallets out Prime Minister Abbott's hand will be in there, too, taking his cut. So much for Mr Abbott's pre-election promise to run a no-surprises, no-excuses government.

Let us have a look at some more pre-election quotes from the Prime Minister.

A coalition government will keep the current income tax thresholds …

Wrong. Here is a quote:

… no one's personal tax will go up …

Wrong. Here is another one:

What you'll get under us are tax cuts without new taxes.

Wrong again. None of these quotes is ambiguous. There are no weasel words here. No, the weasel words are coming now. We have heard a lot of weasel words in recent weeks—weasel words like those of the Prime Minister in his appearance on the Neil Mitchell radio show, and weasel words like those telling Neil Mitchell that hitting Australians with higher taxes would not be a broken promise. This is what the Prime Minister said:

I think if there was a permanent increase in taxation that would certainly be inconsistent with the sort of things that were said before the election.

How about the Treasurer on Channel 9 on Sunday?

We never said we were going to never change a tax or alter a tax.

Perhaps Mr Hockey and Mr Abbott did not talk to each other during that election campaign, or he did not see Mr Abbott on any of the TVs every single night. Weasel words are what we have before us today and we will be hearing lots more of them in the coming days, as the coalition scrambles to explain all of the Prime Minister's broken promises.

How about another quote from the Prime Minister, this time from the day before the election. Here it is: 'No cuts to education, no cuts to health, no changes to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS.' The only promise in there so far that is not going to be broken tonight is 'no change to the GST'. But let's not take Mr Abbott at his word on that one; let's take them one by one.

Education is set to be cut. The pre-election unity ticket, as Mr Abbott described it, on Gonski has been ripped up post election. Young Australians will be paying more for their higher education and they will have to repay their HECS sooner. As I have already outlined, if you want to go to the doctor, under the Abbott government you will have to pay a GP tax. The universality of Medicare, one of the great Australian institutions, is being trashed by the...
Prime Minister and the coalition. Only a couple of months ago in February, the Prime Minister claimed he was not going to bring in a GP tax. Just in February he told the parliament, ‘There is no such tax planned.’ Tonight he will deliver it. Medicare Locals are said to be axed, despite the Prime Minister's pre-election promise that they would not be touched. I have it here in black and white: ‘We are not shutting any Medicare Locals.’ There will be cuts and closures for Medicare Locals tonight.

On pensions, we know that the pension age will be increased to 70. Mr Abbott really is in favour of working till you drop. It has never been truer than tonight—we will see that Australians will have to work till they drop. We are seeing reports of changes to the indexation of pensions. Before the election, it was 'no changes to pensions'. After the election, it is less money for pensioners and work till you drop. Yet again, another broken promise. It is not just over the top to suggest that the cigar-chomping Treasurer and the Minister for Finance do not have a clue about what it is like for a brickie, a nurse or a cleaner to work until they are 70. For the brickie, for the nurse and for the cleaner this budget is all pain and no purpose.

We know that the government's attacks on the ABC and SBS will continue with both organisations set to face the budget knife. I wonder how the coalition partners, the Nationals, the doormats, are going to feel about regional radio services being in the firing line thanks to their Liberal Party colleagues. The Nationals are continuing their tradition of rolling over and not standing up for their constituents.

This will be a budget of broken promises. This is a government that made so many promises that it is just becoming one big rolling broken promise. They are a government of new and increasing taxes. They are a government of cuts. They are a government that have deceived Australians. They are a government that will hurt hardworking Australian families. This is not the government that they promised they would be. This is not the 'no surprises government'. This is not the 'no tax increases government'. When all of those opposite, possibly even including yourself, Acting Deputy President Fawcett, get your speaking notes tonight, you will not be quoting any of those statements from the now Prime Minister before the election. You will not have them on your sheets. You will be standing here trying to pretend it is all somebody else's fault. You dodged-up the numbers for the deficit and this is your excuse for these cuts. (Time expired)

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (16:49): I congratulate Senator Conroy and the Labor Party on their crystal ball. I congratulate him on his capacity to know what is in tonight's budget and to so roundly condemn it before he has even seen it. But I condemn rather than congratulate Senator Conroy and the Australian Labor Party for the mess they have left, for their management over the last six years and for the reality that the circumstances we seek to address in tonight's budget are largely of the Labor Party's making as a result of their own neglect, their own mismanagement, their own waste and their own failure to deal with the challenges Australia faces not just in the next couple of years but in the next 10, 20, 30 and 40 years, well into the future. Australians voted at the last election, having heard the now Prime Minister say on no fewer than 30 occasions that, as a government, we would end the waste, we would stop the boats, we would build the roads of the 21st century and we would get the budget back on track.

Senator Jacinta Collins: You missed a few, Simon.
Senator BIRMINGHAM: Exactly those four commitments were given in exactly that way, Senator Collins, time and time again on no fewer than 30 occasions during the election campaign by the now Prime Minister. That is exactly what our government are seeking to do and that is exactly what tonight's budget will continue to do. We have already been working to end the waste and tonight's budget will provide further demonstration of a government committed to having a public service and a level of government expenditure that deliver what is required but does so as efficiently and effectively as possible.

We have implemented policies to stop the boats, and stop they have. We are building the roads of the 21st century, and we will see tonight more detail on those infrastructure promises, our delivery of those roads. In particular, in my home state—and our home state, Mr Acting Deputy President Fawcett—I warmly welcome the indication that we will proceed with two stages of upgrades over the next four years to the north-south connector to the South Road. And we will see delivery of the Darlington Upgrade Project and the Torrens to Torrens upgrade; vital infrastructure that will improve both the productivity and the lifestyle of so many people in South Australia.

Most significantly on this budget day, tonight Australians will see that we are honouring that commitment given to get the budget back on track. They will see that we are taking hard decisions; decisions that we take no pleasure in making but that we make because they are the right decisions for Australia's future and that we make because they honour our commitment to get the budget back on track. It will stand as a stark contrast to the six years of hollow rhetoric that we heard during the six Labor budgets that preceded this one.

Let us go back over that rhetoric and the associated outcome. In 2008-09 Treasurer Swan stood up and said in his budget speech:

… it is a surplus built on disciplined spending, …

The outcome was not a surplus but a $27 billion deficit.

The next year, in 2009-10, he said about their savings that:

They will put us on the path to surplus by 2015-16.

That year, he handed down a budget deficit of $54.5 billion.

The next year, in 2010, and again in his budget speech, Treasurer Swan said:

… a strategy that will see the budget return to surplus in three years time, …

That year, he delivered a $47.5 billion deficit.

The next year—the fourth of the Swan budgets—in 2011-12, he said:

We will be back in the black by 2012-13, on time, as promised.

That year he delivered a $43.4 billion deficit.

In the fifth of the Swan budgets, in 2012-13, he said:

This budget delivers a surplus this coming year, on time, as promised, and surpluses each year after that, …

It resulted in an $18.8 billion deficit for 2012-13, the year, of course, that he first promised that we would be back in surplus by.

And then, for the 2013-14 financial year, when Treasurer Swan handed down that budget—his last budget—he said:
This budget sets a sensible pathway to surplus, …

The projected outcome according to the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook statement is a $47 billion deficit.

In every single one of Wayne Swan’s budget speeches he spoke about delivering a surplus or returning to surplus. And on every single occasion it was nothing more than hollow rhetoric. On every single occasion it resulted in more deficits, and deficits as far as the eye can see. The previous government delivered five record budget deficits. They turned a $20 billion surplus into $191 billion worth of cumulative deficits and, indeed, the projections under MYEFO are for a further $123 billion in deficits over the next four years. And without change to policy settings, Australia will see gross debt grow out to $667 billion. Of course, this is unacceptable; of course, things have to change and, of course, we have to take action to deliver on our commitment to get the budget back under control.

Tonight’s budget will include a range of policy measures. There will be short-term measures that have an immediate impact to try to bring down the projected deficits over the next few years. There will be medium-term measures and there will be long-term structural measures that deal with the great challenges Australia faces in tackling an ageing population and a declining proportion of the population in the workforce—challenges that, if left untackled as they were by the previous government, will create significant problems for the next generation of taxpayers. They will find that there are around 30 per cent fewer taxpayers to support a greater number of non-working Australians.

We could, like the previous government, be driven by polls and driven by focus groups. We could do that, and not take the hard decisions, but we will not shirk those hard decisions. We will make sure that we take them so that future taxpayers do not have to take even harder decisions. Because that is what we have seen overseas: when you ignore tough decisions, let deficits blow out and continue to balloon into greater debt and even greater debt, eventually you do not get to take decisions that just change the way entitlements or policies work in a very graduated and careful way. You suddenly find you have to take hard, rash decisions—like cutting the actual level of pension entitlements instantly. That is not the circumstance that we want to see any future Australian government put in, and that is why we will take the difficult decisions now for the long-term future of Australia.

It is why we will get on with delivering a budget that is fair and that gets the budget back under control. I want to make this important point, because Senator Conroy spent some time on it: a budget that does reduce the tax burden for Australians. This budget will do that. This budget will ensure that there is less tax take than would otherwise have been the case. The reason for that is because we are fulfilling our commitments to get rid of bad taxes, like the carbon tax and the mining tax. The average Australian household will be better off as a result of the suite of budget measures that we are introducing. They will be better off to the tune of some $550 per annum as a result of the abolition of the carbon tax. These are meaningful changes that will make the cost of living better for Australians.

People will not always welcome every other measure that is in the budget, but taken in its totality—as people will be able to do after tonight, rather than act like Senator Conroy did on a whole lot of speculation—people will be able to see a plan for a stronger Australia; an Australia that delivers a fair outcome from this budget and sets it up for a prosperous economic future. (Time expired)
Senator DI NATALE (Victoria) (16:59): Paul Keating once said that when you change the government, you change the country. On the eve of the first budget, those words have never been more relevant. The Abbott government has already—to use the Prime Minister's words—stamped its authority on nearly every aspect of Australian life, whether it be winding back action on climate change, demonising refugees, challenging the independence of the ABC or dismantling laws that protect Australians from racial vilification. In a few short months, this government has changed the very fabric of Australian society. In recent months there has been a lot of talk about debt and deficit, and about the ongoing budget emergency. No claim has been too outrageous. If you were to believe the rhetoric from the Treasurer, we are on track for a disaster to compare with the Great Depression or with modern-day Greece; we are a country that is on track to default with our debt; and we are an international pariah with a Third World economy.

Last year the Treasurer went as far as to say, 'The cupboard is bare; there is no money left in the till.' He effectively declared the Australian nation bankrupt. I understand that in politics perception is everything—I get that. In this piece of theatre, the nation's finances are effectively being used as a political bludgeon. While it might serve the government's purposes, it is a piece of political theatre that does not serve the country well. Federal budgets have an enormous impact on people's lives: whether you can go to the doctor, whether you can afford a decent education for your kids; what happens to someone if they become unemployed; and whether people are going to have enough for their retirement are all issues that are dealt with in the nation's budget. The government believes it is necessary to outsource those tasks to big business, that these are questions for the market, not the government, and that lower taxes and lower spending are the only pathway to prosperity. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, these are articles of faith for the coalition.

We have a very different view. It is a bit more nuanced and it does not fit into a three-word slogan but it is a vision that says everybody, regardless of the size of their wallet, regardless of whether or not they were born with a genetic disease deserves access to decent health care. It is a vision that says every kid in this country should get a decent education. It is a vision that says we need to protect our natural environment and we need to get on with the challenge of tackling climate change.

We understand that sometimes markets work well and are the best way to achieve these tasks. We also understand that there is often a role for government. Far from being inherently evil, taxation is the price we pay for a civilised society. Taxes are health care, taxes are education, and taxes are trains and roads. How much we tax matters much less than the quality of our tax spend. The difficulty for the coalition is that when you get beyond these simple slogans and sound bites and you put these competing visions to the Australian community, what you discover is the current government's agenda is deeply unpopular. It is unpopular because it benefits those with wealth and privilege ahead of ordinary people who rely on those services. And that is why those opposite have had to tell this misleading story about the nation's economy. It is why they created the piece of political theatre that was the National Commission of Audit. To get the answers they wanted, they hand-picked the actors—effectively a Who's Who of corporate Australia—and they wrote the script. The script goes something like this: 'We've got a structural deficit. The only way we can fix it is by drastically cutting government expenditure. We've got huge debt. We've got to reduce it
urgently and we've got to make deep cuts.' The best place to start, of course, is on those services that Australians rely on—health care, education, supports for people with disabilities.

The Greens established an inquiry into the Commission of Audit, because we would not buy the lie. We heard evidence through that inquiry from academics, from unions, from economists and from business groups across the country, and they told a very different story: that Australia's debt crisis is a fabrication; that Australia's level of public debt is amongst the lowest in the OECD; and that, far from being a crisis, we have an economy that is the envy of the world. Those experts challenged the falsehood of Australia's high taxation levels. Far from being an economy that is shackled with high taxes, our tax take as a percentage of GDP is low by world standards and well below the OECD average.

What we heard was a simple proposition: it is not how much you tax; it is what you do with those taxes that matters. That brings us to those public services that we deliver in the form of universal health care, in the form of education, in the form of supports for people who are down and out and in the form of supports for people who have disabilities. We have learnt that we deliver those services very efficiently. When it comes to health care, we have one of the most efficient healthcare systems in the world as a proportion of GDP. We spend about nine per cent of our GDP on health care. Compare that to the US, which spends double what we spend and gets much worse health outcomes. Yet, in this budget, on the back of the recommendations from the Commission of Audit, we have a prescription for a US style health system. If ever there was a triumph of ideology over evidence, this is it. When you look at our Public Service, what we see is that, following years of public sector cuts, there is no more low-hanging fruit. Cuts to the Public Service mean cuts to services, pure and simple.

That is not to say we do not have long-term challenges; we do. Over the next 50 years, we will have challenges that we need to start addressing. But the Senate Select Committee into the Abbott Government's Commission of Audit inquiry heard very clearly that if we do have a structural problem within the budget, the problem is on the revenue side of the equation, that we have had inadequate investment in infrastructure, in training and in education, which are the real long-term threats to our global competitiveness. If we simply cut services we are doing nothing about the underlying structural problems within the Australian economy. Just recently the Secretary of the Treasury, Martin Parkinson, expressed a similar view, that if we are going to meet our commitments to provide these critical services we cannot ignore the issue of government revenue. And what better place to start, if we are serious about the end of the 'age of entitlement', the end of corporate welfare, than by abolishing the huge handouts that go to rent-seeking industries in the economy? What about the cheap fuel that Gina Rinehart and the mining industry get in the form of the diesel fuel rebate? Rather than investing billions into the private health insurance sector, why not invest that directly into public health? Let us have a big debate about the issue of tax concessions in this country like the huge concessions that go to superannuation and other sectors of the economy. It might not appear on the annual budget figures, but we do know that these enormous tax expenditures cost us billions and strip money away from the services that Australians want. If we are serious about addressing these long-term challenges, we cannot afford to ignore the huge handouts that go to big business and other areas of the economy that do nothing except widen the huge gap in this country between the haves and the have-nots.
In the end the budget is about this simple proposition: what is the measure of a decent, caring society? What is it that defines the Australia that we want to live in? In the view of the Greens it is straightforward. We want a quality healthcare system that everyone can afford, not just those people on high incomes. We want every child in this country to be able to access a decent education and to further their prospects through universities. We do not want to see a huge gap between the rich and the poor and we want to see our natural environment protected. We do not subscribe to this dog-eat-dog agenda of this government. We do not want a world where it is everyone for themselves and where if you are lucky enough to be born into wealth and privilege, good luck to you, you deserve more of it and, if not, tough luck. That is why we will be here fighting every minute of every day to make sure that these changes in the budget that affect ordinary Australians do not see the light of day.

**Senator TILLEM (Victoria) (17:09):** I rise to speak on this matter of public importance. There can be no more important issue than tonight's budget. I am not quite sure what the budget lock-up is all about today, because the government have already told us they are going to break their election promises. Using the Commission of Audit as cover, they will break their promises on health, they will break their promises on education and they will break their promises on no new taxes. They also promised that when it came to education funding both sides of politics were, to quote the member for Sturt, 'on a unity ticket'.

This government has taken all of eight months to break its word to the Australian people. Quite simply put, it will betray the Australian people. Government is about priorities and we will see tonight that this government's priorities are about ripping the heart out of families, universal health care and education. Those who will be hit hardest are working families, the socially disadvantaged and the elderly. These are the people who need to have trust in their government to put them first. Working families are set to be slugged with an increase in their fuel bills while having family tax benefits stripped away. This comes from a government that before the election said it was committed to easing cost-of-living pressures. Its promises to the Australian people were hollow.

They have now shown their true colours, at the expense of ordinary Australians. Increases in the cost of petrol will affect ordinary Australians more than any other group. Taking the kids to school, doing the shopping, going to the footy on the weekends—these will cost more under the government, and at the same time tax concessions in the form of family tax benefits will be stripped away. These initiatives were designed specifically to ease the pressure on working families' budgets. Families will be betrayed in this budget. How can deliberately hitting the hip pocket of families help? How does that show any level of understanding for the pressures they face every day? It is becoming clearer and clearer every day that the rhetoric of those opposite before the election was just empty words. Those opposite believe that they owe people nothing and that they can get away with breaking their promises to minimise cost-of-living pressures. Those opposite promised they would ease the squeeze on family budgets. This will be a broken promise tonight.

In the budget tonight, in the firing line is the health system. Bulk-billing is good public health policy. It encourages people to seek out primary care through their GPs when in need of medical consultation rather than burden hospitals. The values which underpin the arrangements of bulk-billing through Medicare are that health care should never be determined by how much money you have in your wallet. We live in a community where
quality health care is made available to all citizens. It is a vital part of our social wage that has created a fairer, healthier, more productive and more cohesive community. Yet this government is determined to wind back bulk-billing of GPs. This budget will see the introduction of a fee-for-service component when ordinary Australians visit their local doctor, and we know that once this government sets in train a system of co-payments for GPs this will be the beginning of the end for Medicare. The government believes that access to health care for all Australians is a privilege and not an entitlement. The co-payment system set to be introduced will only funnel more Australians into hospital emergency rooms. This policy will increase the strain on our hospitals, making them more expensive and less efficient to run. Those doing it toughest in our society will be hit harder than most. Wealth should never dictate the right to access quality health care.

But nothing can expose this government's class war on ordinary Australians more clearly than the axe to education that will most likely be brought down in tonight's budget. What we can expect tonight are cuts to skills and hikes on student loans. We have a skills shortage in Australia, yet this government has decided that support for vocational learning is no longer a priority. Instead, it has become a target for the ruthless commitment to cutbacks and twisted priorities. Australian families whose children wish to embark on a trade will no longer receive the support they did under Labor. Indeed, it has been reported in Fairfax papers today that this government intends to abolish Commonwealth incentive payments to apprentices, worth $5½ thousand each. These payments were designed to assist apprentices as they begin their journey of gaining accreditation in a given trade. But, under this government, apprentices and their families are on their own. Governments should be here to assist and help the aspirations of ordinary citizens, not place roadblocks in front of them and discourage them.

Another nasty floated in the lead-up to the budget has been an increase on interest payments made on student loans. The success of our loans system is that debts accrued by students are financed at low levels of interest. Raising these interest payments will once again affect those less able to afford them. Students have to study for longer than ever as youth unemployment squeezes school and university leavers. Now not only will students have to study for longer than ever but, under this government, they will also have to pay more than ever.

Australians will be forced to work longer than ever and will have their access to pensions restricted. Australians who pay their taxes year after year will no longer be afforded the social wage that should be the hallmark of a prosperous society. After being knocked from pillar to post year after year by the actions of this government, Australians will wind up being tossed onto the social scrapheap. This government does not care about ordinary Australians. It is a government that will be judged as a government that broke promise after promise after promise—'No new taxes, no cuts to health, no cuts to education, no changes to the pension.' The silence in this chamber is astonishing, with no-one here to defend the government and its broken promises.

The Liberal and National parties have pontificated for too long in this chamber about the virtues of trust and honesty—and today we will see that the cupboard is bare. They embarked on a strategy of slogans and mistruths at the time of the election in order to get elected and in less than eight months what we have seen is a complete reversal. They will talk about budget bottom lines. They will talk about a crisis—which they have imagined. They will talk about
the need to get the bottom line back to where it should be. The reality is that this government will be judged and should be judged on its broken promises. These broken promises will be remembered by pensioners, those who go to their doctor and those who go to university. They will be remembered by every single Australian who was given a commitment by this government and who have now been let down.

Today the government have been exposed to the Australian people for what they are. Tonight they will be shown as an untrustworthy government whose broken promises are endemic of their ideological opposition to fairness for all Australians.

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (17:19): Like my colleague, Senator Birmingham, I do find it curious that those on the other side seem to have an in-depth knowledge of what we are going to hear about tonight.

Senator Tillem: We read about it.

Senator BUSHBY: You've read about it? Well, you have done very well. I have a copy here of the Treasurer's budget speech and I am going to read some excerpts from it. I am sure you will find this very interesting. I will just read a few bits and pieces. I quote:

Our predecessors had Australia on a path of deficit and debt to the next century.

Make no mistake, this path would only make future choices harder, future possibilities bleaker and rob Australians of the future opportunities they deserve.

Our Government could not stand back and ignore the problem. Although we did not create it, we will take the responsibility to fix it.

The measures I announce tonight will reduce the underlying deficit by around $4 billion this year and $7.2 billion over two years. These measures will balance the budget over the term of this Parliament. These are the net effect on the budget bottom line after the introduction of new policy to meet the Coalition's election commitments. These measures represent a historic turnaround in Commonwealth finances.

The speech goes on to say:

Mr Speaker—

and that is a hint there, 'Mr Speaker'—

you don't turn around a nation's finances, a nation's future without making some hard decisions. But if we avoid the hard decisions now they are only going to get harder in the future.

The tightening measures have to be fairly shared. We cannot expect those who rely on pensions and allowances—low income earners—to bear the cost. So we are asking high income earners to make a contribution and business to make its contribution too.

The measures are balanced, strong and fair.

Of course, that Treasurer speech is not the speech that will be delivered tonight. It was speech that was delivered by the member for Higgins in respect of the 1996-97 budget year. But it is a speech that could be delivered tonight, because the words of that speech very accurately reflect the challenge that we face now—that being that, if we do not address the challenges that we currently face in our fiscal position, the consequences down the track will be far more severe, as Senator Birmingham mentioned in his comments.

During the 2007 election campaign I was travelling around campaigning with my colleagues in the Senate team. We went to a restaurant and we met a waiter, and the waiter said to us, in the context of the then election, that he saw the two major parties in this way:
'When things are good and you feel like you've got a bit of money and it's all very comfortable, you throw a party and you invite everybody around and you drink and you eat and you trash the house and you make a huge mess, and you wake up the next morning and you've got a massive hangover and the house is horribly trashed and it's a real mess, and you look around and you say, "Well, the Labor Party threw a good party, but we need to get the Liberals in to clean it up." I think that is what we saw in 1996. We had to get John Howard and Peter Costello in to address the mess that was the legacy of the Hawke-Keating years—particularly the Keating years. And it is what we see now, with the budget that we are facing tonight. We have got a horrible fiscal mess following the party that the Labor Party threw with reckless abandon, spending money on things that just do not deliver any outcomes for the people of Australia, and leaving a huge fiscal hole that needs to be plugged. And tonight that is what we will try to do. We will actually deal with the mess that Labor left us.

This is not something that we want to do. The decisions that will be in the budget tonight—and, unlike the Labor Party, I am not completely au fait with what we will hear tonight, and I look forward to hearing it—represent the bitter medicine that is needed to avoid further consequences of the disease that Labor left us. They are not something that we necessarily want to do. But this is something that we were elected to do. We were elected to fix this problem.

We would much rather have inherited a situation like the Labor Party did in 2007 where we were in surplus on an annual basis, we had money in the bank, and things were very comfortable. That is one of the main reasons why we compare so well with other countries now: we started so far ahead of them. There are other reasons, but that is one of the main reasons. Unfortunately, we did not inherit that situation. We inherited a situation very similar to that which the Howard-Costello government inherited in 1996, and we again face the challenge of having to address that problem—to clean up after the party that the Labor Party threw.

Senator Di Natale also mentioned that he thought that the Commission of Audit was a piece of theatre. Well, the committee that he referred to was set up, stacked with opposition and Green members. Because it had the numbers, it decided who the witnesses were. It decided when the hearing dates were. It set the findings in the reports. It was even quorate without any government senators being there, so it could hold meetings when and where it wanted to and if coalition senators could not make it then it did not matter—they could just proceed anyway. I suggest that the only reason that that committee was set up was as a piece of theatre.

The National Commission of Audit was a serious attempt to actually examine all lines of spending of the government, with a view to seeing where savings could be made. It made recommendations to the government—and I guess we will find out tonight which of those recommendations, if any, have been accepted. But, in terms of a piece of theatre, I have never seen anything more theatrical than the select committee that was set up to look at that. It spent months examining the Commission of Audit that had been set up, when no findings had been released. It was purely there to run a scare campaign: highlighting all sorts of things that it might find needed to be cut and then scaring the people who might be affected. Talk about theatre! That was it.
Senator Di Natale also mentioned how we compare with other comparable nations. This is very interesting to me. They look at our percentage of debt to GDP, and they say, 'Look—we are so much better off than other nations.' Ignoring the fact that when Labor came into government in 2007 we had no debt, the fact is that, yes, we might compare well with other nations—if we have 13 per cent of debt to GDP and they have 30 per cent, then we compare better to them—but if they were at 60 per cent, would it be okay to have a debt-to-GDP ratio of 30 per cent? If they were at 90 per cent, would it be okay for us to have a debt-to-GDP ratio of 60 per cent?

It is not about the relativities; it is about the absolutes. And the absolutes show that if we have the debt that we currently have, we are going to be paying $12 billion worth of interest every year. That is $1 billion of interest a month, and that comes at a huge opportunity cost. That is hundreds of billions of dollars we are going, largely, overseas to borrow, and $12 billion that we are sending overseas to pay the interest on that debt. That is $12 billion that we are not spending on the types of things that Senator Di Natale outlined: the very worthwhile projects that all Australians think that government should deliver. But we are still taking that $12 billion. We are taxing people to pay interest on debt.

Twelve billion dollars is a massive amount of money. It is equivalent to around half of Australia's defence budget. It is around the same amount that the government spends on aged care. So the same amount that we are spending on aged care annually we are, because of decisions that the Labor Party and the Greens made when they were in government, currently paying in interest and sending overseas, largely to people who we had borrowed money from—the same amount of money that we spend on aged care annually. It is also more than the government spends on universities. I heard Senator Tillen talking about what may or may not be in the budget tonight affecting education. Well, I will tell you what: we could fund education a lot better if we were not sending $12 billion a year in interest to people who we had borrowed money from during the Labor-Green years, every year.

Also, the concerning thing about our relative position is the trajectory of the rate of growth of debt. The International Monetary Fund recently found that Australia's spending is projected to grow faster than any of the 17 advanced economies profiled. So if you are looking at comparing Australia to any of those other 17 advanced economies, and you say, 'Our debt-to-GDP ratio is nowhere near as bad as theirs,' we are growing faster than they are and we are catching them. A lot of those countries have actually decreased their debt in recent years at the same time as we are rapidly increasing it. In the absence of any decisions such as those that we are likely to make tonight, that debt will continue to grow rapidly at a rate that puts us in a position where, within 10 years or so, we will owe three-quarters of a trillion dollars in debt, and that $12 billion of interest that we are paying is likely to be three or four times that amount—up to $50-odd billion that we will be paying in interest. So that is money that we take off Australian taxpayers and we send off somewhere else before we can spend one dollar on delivering services to Australians. To me, that is not the best use of taxpayers' money. I would rather be spending taxpayers' money delivering the services that Australians want and need.

And if we do not make the tough decisions early, we are going to have to make far tougher, far more draconian, far deeper cuts in order to be able to deliver those services. As I said before, we need to take the medicine now to deal with the problems that we are likely to have.
Even if that medicine tastes a bit bitter tonight, it is going to taste a lot better than the consequences of the disease that will result if we allow our debt position to continue to get larger and larger, along the trajectory that we are currently facing. Just bear in mind that in the 1980s Greece had roughly the debt-to-GDP ratio that we have now.

Senator DASTYARI (New South Wales) (17:29): I rise to speak on this matter of public importance. In just under two hours, we are going to finally see unveiled the Abbott government's budget of broken promises. Throughout the election campaign, voters were given promise after promise by the then opposition leader, Tony Abbott, who went so far as to say, hours out from the last federal election:

No cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions … no cuts to the ABC or SBS.

Voters put their trust in Mr Abbott and in his words when they elected him as the Prime Minister of Australia. But the Prime Minister today will reveal that he has abused the trust of the Australian people.

Voters who took Mr Abbott at his words have been duped. They have been misled. Mr Abbott made promises during the election campaign that will not be kept this evening. The public will be the victims of this deceit, and if the leaks about the budget are accurate, if what has been strategically dropped by the government in media stories over the past week is true, then, frankly, the Prime Minister has not kept his word and the Prime Minister in those cases has lied to the Australian public.

The rules of debate in this chamber do not permit me to use offensive words against either house or member, but I suspect there will be many people who took Mr Abbott at his word, who gave him their trust, who gave him their vote, who have every right to be offended by him today. I suspect some of the offensive words will be used by those voters tonight as the Abbott government breaks promise after promise in its budget. Tonight we are going to hear Mr Abbott break his promise to our elderly pensioners, to young families sending their kids to our schools and hospitals and to the people who rely on our public broadcasters.

Voters may have been jaded by the choices facing them at the ballot last September, but they have every right to be outraged by the duplicity of Tony Abbott—

Senator Williams: Mr Abbott!

Senator DASTYARI: Mr Abbott—and his deception, his dishonesty and his fraudulence if the claims that have been strategically dropped to the media are true. With all due respect to our Prime Minister, even the News Corp press have stood up this week to call him out for what is a litany of broken promises. Even his friends and the Prime Minister's supporters are shocked by the lies that have been used to coax voters to cast their ballots—the promises that, it now appears, are not going to be kept. We have heard repeatedly in the media of members of both the coalition's backbench and cabinet who are disgusted by the duplicity, the deception and the dishonesty of what has been said. We have heard that members are calling coalition MPs to remind them that this is not what they signed up for.

This is not governing the country with integrity. The very idea of fairness that is a foundation of Australian culture and society is something that Mr Abbott used again and again during his campaign. He told us he was going to be the most fair dinkum Prime Minister we have had. But the Prime Minister has not been fair to his party colleagues. He has not been fair to his organisation. And, more importantly, he has not been fair to Australian
voters. He has violated the trust that he was instilled with, and he does not deserve their confidence.

Australians are about to receive a budget that no-one thought they would be getting and that they were told would not be the case. Not even in the most cynical corners of the Liberal Party were they expecting what is going to be unveiled tonight. Tonight we will receive the Abbott government's first budget of broken promises, a budget that is built on duplicity, on deception, on dishonesty and on lies. When our kids stop going to the doctor for check-ups, Australian voters will remember that that was not something they voted for. When our grandparents, our parents and people of my generation are working until 70, they will remember that that was not something that Tony Abbott promised. *(Time expired)*

**Senator WILLIAMS** (New South Wales) (17:34): What a pleasure it is to follow Senator Dastyari, a young fellow born on 28 July 1983. This July he will turn a massive 31 years old. You can imagine a little Sam Dastyari—he was six years old the last time the Labor government delivered a surplus in the budget in this nation. A little boy like that would not even remember it. He would not even have contemplated what was going on.

*Senator Lines interjecting—*

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Whish-Wilson):** Order, Senator Lines! Interjections are disorderly.

**Senator WILLIAMS:** The lion roars! We will continue. Senator Dastyari would have been a little boy of six years old, and his mum and dad would have said, 'At last we've got a budget surplus.' He would have said, 'What's a budget surplus?' And now every Labor supporter ever since 1989 has asked the same question when Labor was in government: what's a budget surplus? They do not know what the word means. And here you are saying 'a budget of lies' tonight.

**Senator Dastyari:** When were we told about Medicare?

*Senator Lines interjecting—*

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Direct your comments through me, through the chair, Senator Williams, please. Ignore the interjections.

**Senator WILLIAMS:** I certainly will do that, Mr Acting Deputy President. It is very rude, and you would think they would know better by now, wouldn't you?

*Senator Lines interjecting—*

**Senator Dastyari interjecting—**

**Senator WILLIAMS:** Crikey, give us a break! The flatmates are teaming up together! They do! They share a unit together. I asked Senator Dastyari, 'Does she speak in her sleep?' He didn't answer my question!

*Honourable senators interjecting—*

**Senator WILLIAMS:** Yes, you would wonder how they get in. Imagine if she spoke in her sleep, Senator Smith. It would be never-ending. We could put some microphones there and just broadcast to everyone in Canberra. What an exciting night it would be! They would dream about budget surpluses. The Labor Party in their wildest dreams: 'We will deliver a budget surplus.' Remember the former Treasurer, Mr Wayne Swan: 'We will deliver a budget
surplus.' You do not know what the word means. Look up 'surplus'. It does not mean red ink; it means black ink. You do not understand what it means.

We went to the election saying we would stop the boats. We have not had a boat in 20 weeks. In fact, the billions of dollars that the previous government cost our taxpayers, along with the more than 1,100 people who lost their lives from a crazy policy, were an absolute disgrace. We said we would do away with the mining tax and the carbon tax. Senator Tillem said, 'This is a cost on families.' You lot over there are costing every family in Australia $550 a year because you will not support the abolition of the carbon tax and respect the mandate that the coalition were elected on last September. We said we would get the books in order. I make no apology that it is going to be a tough budget tonight. I am quite prepared to pay some more, as I should. There is the contribution to Medicare. Perhaps Senator Lines disagrees with me. Three weeks ago I had my glaucoma pressure tested. I am one of the roughly 300,000 in Australia who has glaucoma. I walked in to the optometrist and had a quick test of the pressure—the new drug is working very well; 15 drops in each eye; very good—and I walked out. I did not pay a red cent. Isn't it amazing! I am on a salary of $200,000 a year and do not pay a red cent. Shouldn't I pay $15? Shouldn't I pay $20? Shouldn't I make some contribution to the government's budget of Medicare and the cost of health in this country? I walked out scot-free, and that is wrong. If we continue down this road of your financial destruction, there will be no Medicare, there will be no hospitals and you will send us broke.

I had to laugh when Senator Di Natale said, 'Compared to other OECD countries, we're in pretty good shape.' It is like living in a street: I owe $300,000 on my house, but things are pretty good because the person next door owes $400,000 and the other person next door owes $500,000. What they owe does not help me pay my debt of $300,000. The sum of $12,000 million a year goes to interest alone. You inherited a government debt free. Remember former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Treasurer Wayne Swan's first budget. There was a $22 billion surplus. It ended up being a massive deficit. You built $191 billion of government debt in the time you were there. All my life I have seen it, whether it is state governments or the federal government: put Labor in power and they empty the cheque account and we wallow in debt. Who is going to make the hard decisions? We did not make the mess. You made the mess and we will clean it up for the benefit of future Australians instead of mortgaging our children and grandchildren's futures away, because you are financial messes. You have done it all my life when I have followed how you manage money. You could not manage a circus. Your fiscal management is an absolute disgrace. Tonight will be the turning point where Australia will start heading in the right direction because of a courageous budget. (Time expired)

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Whish-Wilson): Order! The time for the discussion has expired.

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Whish-Wilson) (17:40): I present documents listed on today's Order of Business at item 13 presented since the Senate last met.

The list read as follows—
Documents Presented Out of Sitting

COMMITTEE REPORTS (pursuant to Senate standing order 38 (7)).

1. Environment and Communications Legislation Committee—Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Submarine Cable Protection) Bill 2013 [Provisions]—Report, additional information and submissions. [Received 28 March 2014]

2. Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee—Effect on Australian pineapple growers of importing fresh pineapples from Malaysia—Effect on Australian ginger growers of importing fresh ginger from Fiji—Proposed importation of potatoes from New Zealand—Final report, Hansard record of proceedings, documents presented to the committee, additional information and submissions. [Received 31 March 2014]

3. Abbott Government’s Commission of Audit—Senate Select Committee—Second interim report, dated April 2014. [Received 24 April 2014]


5. Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters—Conduct of the 2013 Federal Election: Senate voting practices—Interim report. [Received 9 May 2014]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORTS (pursuant to Senate standing order 166)

1. Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee—Report—Report of the DLA Piper Review and the government’s response. [Received 5 May 2014]

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS (pursuant to Senate standing order 166)

1. Foreign Investment Review Board—Report for 2012-13. [Received 10 April 2014]

2. Australia and the International Financial Institutions—Reports for 2012-13. [Received 23 April 2014]

3. Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse—Royal Commission—Report of Case Study No. 1—The response of institutions to the conduct of Steven Larkins, dated March 2014. [Received 24 April 2014]


5. Gene Technology Regulator—Quarterly report for the period 1 October to 31 December 2014. [Received 30 April 2014]


REPORTS OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL (pursuant to Senate standing order 166)

1. Report no. 24 of 2013-14—Performance audit—Emergency Defence Assistance to the Civil Community: Department of Defence. [Received 16 April 2014]

2. Report no. 25 of 2013-14—Performance audit—Management of the Building Better Regional Cities program: Department of Social Services; Department of the Environment. [Received 17 April 2014]

3. Report no. 26 of 2013-14—Performance audit—Medicare compliance audits: Department of Human Services. [Received 23 April 2014]

4. Report no. 27 of 2013-14—Performance audit—Integrity of Medicare customer data: Department of Human Services. [Received 24 April 2014]
5. Report no. 28 of 2013-14—Performance audit—Review of child support objections: Department of Human Services; Department of Social Services. [Received 30 April 2014]

6. Report no. 29 of 2013-14—Performance audit—Regulation of Commonwealth radiation and nuclear activities: Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency. [Received 7 May 2014]

7. Report no. 30 of 2013-14—Performance audit—Administering the Code of Good Manufacturing Practice for Prescription Medicines: Department of Health. [Received 7 May 2014]

8. Report no. 31 of 2013-14—Performance audit—The Australian Electoral Commission’s storage and transport of completed ballot papers at the September 2013 Federal General Election: Australian Electoral Commission. [Received 8 May 2014]

RETURN TO ORDER (pursuant to Senate standing order 166)

1. Environment—Maules Creek Coal Project—Order for Production of Documents—Letter to the President of the Senate from the Minister for Finance (Senator Cormann) responding to the order of the Senate of 18 March 2014, dated 15 April 2014 and attachments. [Received 15 April 2014]

2. Environment—Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority—Dredging at Abbot Point—Order for Production of Documents—Letter to the President of the Senate from the Minister for Finance (Senator Cormann) responding to the order of the Senate of 18 March 2014, dated 2 May 2014 and attachments. [Received 5 May 2014]

STATEMENTS OF COMPLIANCE WITH SENATE ORDERS (pursuant to Senate standing order 166)

Indexed lists of departmental and agency files (continuing order of the Senate of 30 May 1996, as amended on 3 December 1998):

Australian Taxation Office. [Received 8 April 2014]

Treasury portfolio. [Received 16 April 2014]

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: In accordance with the usual practice and with the concurrence of the Senate government responses will be incorporated in Hansard.

The response read as follows—

SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCES COMMITTEE REPORT OF THE DLA PIPER REVIEW AND THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Introduction

The Australian Government is committed to supporting reforms to the management of allegations of abuse in Defence and implementation of Defence's cultural change program. The Australian Government acknowledges the contribution of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee's report on the 'DLA Piper Review and the government's response' to providing parliamentary oversight of this work.

On 26 November 2012, the response to the report of the DLA Piper Review into allegations of sexual and other abuse in Defence was announced. The response included a general apology to members of the Australian Defence Force and Defence employees who have suffered abuse in the course of their employment, the establishment of an independent Defence Abuse Response Taskforce to assess individual complaints and identify any wider systemic issues, and access to reparation.

Apologies delivered by the Chief of the Defence Force, General David Hurley AC, DSC and in the Parliament on 26 November 2012 offered a significant step in the healing process for those affected by past abuse in Defence.
A Defence Abuse Response Reparation Scheme, with payments up to $50,000 for those who plausibly suffered abuse in Defence, was established to provide financial recognition that abuse is unacceptable and wrong and should never have occurred. Professional counselling and referral to other health services will further support victims of abuse on the road to recovery.

The work of the independent Defence Abuse Response Taskforce will include referral of appropriate matters to law enforcement authorities for criminal investigation while others, with the consent of the complainant, may be provided to Defence for investigation into possible administrative or disciplinary action. Complainants may also have the opportunity to participate in a restorative engagement conference, allowing their personal account of abuse to be heard, responded to and acknowledged by Defence.

March 2014 marks the second anniversary since the release of *Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture*. This important document outlined Defence's strategy for achieving enduring cultural change. It sets out the requirement that Defence personnel demonstrate exemplary behaviour commensurate with the nation's expectations, in and out of uniform, on and off duty, and how the Defence leadership will require these standards are met.

Implementation of Pathway to Change by Defence and the work of the Taskforce are essential to ensuring Defence continues to serve Australia's national interests in a way that is consistent with modern community standards.

The Australian Government recognises concrete measures recently taken by Defence to improve support to victims of sexual abuse and move towards cultural change. This includes the launch of the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office on 22 July 2013, marking an important shift toward a victim-focused approach for responding to incidences of sexual misconduct and providing education about the prevention of sexual misconduct and assault in Defence.

The Australian Government and the Defence leadership remain absolutely committed to fully implementing the range of cultural reforms essential to managing and preventing occurrences of inappropriate conduct. Together, we will build a culture that gives confidence to the Australian people and creates a workforce genuinely reflective of the community it serves—just, inclusive and fair-minded.

**AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

**SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCE COMMITTEE 'REPORT OF THE DLA PIPER REVIEW AND THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE'**

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<th>Recommendation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendation 1</strong></td>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paragraphs 7.5 - 7.6, page 68</td>
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<td>The apologies delivered by the Chief of the Defence Force and the then Minister for Defence are accessible to all Australians on the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce's website and on Defence's internal and external websites. Defence referred to the apologies in its Annual Report.</td>
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The committee recommends that Defence prominently display, and commemorate, the apology by the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the Defence Force to victims of abuse in Defence.
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<td><strong>Recommendation 2</strong></td>
<td>Defence</td>
<td><strong>Agree</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Paragraphs 7.7 - 7.21, page 68 - 72</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Noting that Pathway to Change is Defence's response to the Reviews initiated in 2011, Defence will consider the systemic issues and findings of the DLA Piper Review in this context.</td>
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The committee recommends that Defence formally respond to the systemic issues and findings of the DLA Piper Review in its public reporting on the progress of the implementation of the Pathway to Change Defence cultural reforms.

| **Recommendation 3** | Defence | **Agree** |
| *Paragraphs 7.7 - 7.21, page 68 - 72* | | Defence has affirmed to the Chair of the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce, the Hon Len Roberts-Smith RFD QC, its commitment to supporting and participating in the Restorative Engagement Program. The Defence Abuse Response Taskforce and Defence are working collaboratively to establish arrangements for implementing the program, including a framework underpinned by the best practice principles and values of restorative practice and mediation. |

The committee recommends that Defence actively encourage senior officers to participate in the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce's restorative engagement program with victims of abuse.

<p>| <strong>Recommendation 4</strong> | Defence | <strong>Agree</strong> |
| <em>Paragraphs 7.22 - 7.42, page 72 - 78</em> | | Defence, in consultation with the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce, has prepared a 'limited waiver of confidentiality and deed of release and indemnity' so that persons who have previously settled a claim against Defence involving allegations of sexual or other forms of abuse by Defence personnel are not prevented from having their matter dealt with by the Taskforce. |</p>
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| **Recommendation 5**  
*Paragraphs 7.22 - 7.42, page 72 - 78*  
The committee recommends that, following the conclusion of the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce's operation, the Minister for Defence facilitate the productive use of the Taskforce's depersonalised statistical database of information regarding reported incidents of abuse in Defence. | Defence (in consultation with the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce) | Agree  
Defence and the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce have agreed the value of providing an appropriately depersonalised database. Work is underway to achieve this outcome. |
| **Recommendation 6**  
*Paragraphs 7.22 - 7.42, page 72 - 78*  
The committee recommends that the Australian Government commission an independent review to determine whether any of the functions of the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce's should continue and how to ensure these functions can continue to be performed effectively. This independent review will report its findings and make recommendations to the Minister for Defence, the Attorney-General and the Minister for Veterans Affairs. | Defence (in consultation with the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce) | Agree in principle |
|  |  | The Australian Government notes that the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce is independent of Defence and it has advised that it sees value in some form of review taking place toward the end of its outcome delivery phase. Such a review could then be assessed by the Minister for Defence, the Attorney-General and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, to decide if any of the functions of the Taskforce should continue in another form. |
|  |  | While the Australian Government is supportive of a review taking place, it considers that it is too early, at this time, to form a clear view on exactly what form the review should take. The Taskforce is currently approved to operate to the end of November 2014 and the terms and scope of any review should be reconsidered at a later stage. |
**Recommendation** 7  
Defence Abuse Response Taskforce should continue in another form.

**Proposed Response**  
Defence  
Agree  
This recommendation was agreed as part of Pathway to Change and is being implemented.

**Recommendation** 8  
Defence Agrees to the recommendation 19 of the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force's review - that the appointment of case officers to support complainants and respondents should be required in all cases.

**Proposed Response**  
Defence  
Agree  
The Australian Government notes action by Defence in Pathway to Change that will, through sustained effort to implement practical measures, corrective processes, and structure and support, achieve Defence's cultural intent.

**Recommendation** 9  
The committee recommends that Defence assess whether additional support services for victims of non-sexual forms of abuse should be included within the Pathway to Change cultural reforms.

**Proposed Response**  
Defence (in consultation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs)  
Agree  
Defence will examine, in conjunction with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, avenues for dialogue.

**Recommendation** 10  
The committee recommends that, at the completion of the implementation of the Pathway to Change strategy, the Australian Government conduct an independent review of its outcomes and an assessment of the need for further reform in Defence.

**Proposed Response**  
Defence  
Agree in principle  
Noting existing mechanisms of reporting and oversight of Pathway to Change by Government and the Parliament, the Australian Government will consider the necessary activity for evaluating Defence's efforts to achieve cultural change and measures of success.

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**Senator McKENZIE** (Victoria—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (17:40):  
I move:  
That committee documents be printed in accordance with the usual practice.

Question agreed to.  
Ordered that the committee documents be printed.

**Senator McKENZIE**: by leave—

That consideration of the committee reports and government response tabled earlier today be listed on the Notice Paper as separate orders of the day.
Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES
House - Standing Committee
Report
Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (17:42): On behalf of the Chair of the House Standing Committee, I present the House Standing Committee's report.
Ordered that the report be printed.

DOCUMENTS
Responses to Senate Resolutions
Tabling
The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Whish-Wilson) (17:42): I present responses to Senate resolutions as listed at item 14 on today's Order of Business.
The list read as follows—
Minister for the Environment (Mr Hunt) to a resolution of the Senate of 10 December 2013 concerning the Wet Tropics Management Authority
Minister for Health (Mr Dutton) to a resolution of the Senate of 4 March 2014 concerning the National Perinatal Depression Initiative
Minister for the Environment (Mr Hunt) to a resolution of the Senate of 4 March 2014 concerning Abbot Point
Assistant Secretary, External Budget Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Mr Griffiths) to a resolution of the Senate of 18 March 2014 concerning development assistance to Pacific nations
Minister for Foreign Affairs (Ms Bishop) to a resolution of the Senate of 19 March 2014 concerning South Sudan
Minister for Health (Mr Dutton) to a resolution of the Senate of 20 March 2014 concerning emotional resilience and wellbeing
Premier of Queensland (Mr Newman) to a resolution of the Senate of 20 March 2014 concerning National Close the Gap Day
Minister for Education (Mr Pyne) to a resolution of the Senate of 26 March 2014 concerning teacher quality
Minister for Foreign Affairs (Ms Bishop) to a resolution of the Senate of 26 March 2014 concerning Sri Lanka
Minister for Industry (Mr Macfarlane) to a resolution of the Senate of 27 March 2014 concerning science and technology

Abbot Point
Senator WATERS (Queensland) (17:43): I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the response by Minister Hunt to the resolution of the Senate regarding the Abbot Point dredging proposal.
Leave granted.
Senator WATERS: I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

I rise tonight to take note of Minister Hunt's response to a really important Senate motion that was passed a few months ago regarding the Abbot Point dredging project. As people will recall, this is the plan to make Abbot Point the world's largest coal port. It is not just anywhere but in the Great Barrier Reef. Clearly, this is horrific. What is even worse is that it will involve five million tonnes of dredging—that is, digging up the seabed—and offshore dumping of that sludge back into the reef's World Heritage waters.

We moved the motion back in March. Some freedom of information documents have revealed that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority had cautioned against approving this dangerous project. In their internal advice, their scientists said they believed that the Abbot Point application should be refused and that the offshore dumping had the potential to cause long-term irreversible harm to areas of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. They thought that the North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation dredge plume modelling—how far the stuff would travel once you dumped it—was of limited value, deficient and unreliable. They went on to say that they thought the project would result in water quality in the region being in a degraded state for approximately the next six to seven years.

Lastly, they finished by saying that they thought the proposed conditions were not practical or feasible, that the damage could not be offset and that the conditions were effectively unachievable. This was pretty explosive stuff, because it was clear internal scientific advice that this project was going to be dodgy and damaging for the Great Barrier Reef. So the Senate moved that motion and called on Minister Hunt to reconsider his approval for this project, to have another look at the science and to have another go at the decision—and, hey, maybe to refuse something for a change.

Sadly, in the response that we have now received from Minister Hunt he has said: 'No, go back to sleep. We've done a rigorous assessment process. It's best practice application of national law. I've considered all of the relevant research and advice. Everything commissioned by GBRMPA I considered.' That is very interesting, because a report was released last Friday showing that our so-called best practice national environmental law is actually full of flaws. In Gladstone Harbour there was a similar dredging and dumping proposal in a different location but done under the same system. The report found that those conditions were poorly drafted, that they had not been properly enforced and that multiple alleged breaches had not been investigated. So the system which he claims is best practice, his own inquiry found inadequate. So I am afraid I do not share Minister Hunt's confidence in the strength of our environmental laws.

What is more, if you have a report saying that you are not enforcing your own conditions, yet we have a budget tonight that is expected to slash even more staff who might otherwise be responsible for enforcing those conditions, how on earth can there be any confidence that the conditions placed on Abbot Point will be complied with? I am afraid the farce continues.

The offset condition that was imposed in this instance has come under some scrutiny. Frankly, commentators have found that it is pretty ludicrous. Minister Hunt seems to think that he is actually going to make the water quality better. By dumping five million tonnes of sludge into the Great Barrier Reef he is going to make the water quality 150 per cent better. I am afraid that we have not yet found an expert who thinks that that is viable or achievable.
What is more, the amount that would need to be offset to make water quality 150 per cent better is unachievable. We have had a wonderful program going for the last five-or-so years called Reef Rescue. It has been supported by the Commonwealth and Queensland governments. It has been supported by the hard work of farmers who are changing their practices, on farm, to try and retain sediment and stop that run-off. They are making some wonderful gains. We have been huge supporters of that program. Indeed, it needs more funding.

Unfortunately, allowing the big mining companies and the North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation to dump five million tonnes of that sludge really undermines that work. If you were to offset the damage done by that dumping you would need to be doing that program by a means that was 20 times more efficient. To put that another way, now off Abbot Point 20 times the sediment will be dumped as the combined might of two levels of government, with $200 million and five years, had achieved. So how on earth that offset condition is achievable is completely beyond me, particularly when that Gladstone report has found that conditions enforcement is quite underperforming.

Sadly, it seems that the minister, despite internal concern within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, has decided, once again, to back the big mining companies by backing the doubling and trebling of coal export through our Great Barrier Reef. He is sadly ignoring the concerns of the World Heritage Committee, who have warned us once again—how many passes are we going to get?—that the reef is in danger of being put on that World Heritage list of sites in danger. We know that that would have a devastating effect on our tourism economy in Queensland and we know that it would signify the peril that the reef is truly in.

We have a different path to go down, and that path could start with the minister reconsidering and revoking his approval for the Abbot Point coal port. We call upon him to do that. Thank you.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (17:49): I will start by congratulating Mr Greg Hunt on the work he is doing as Minister for the Environment. He does a fabulous job. He is a minister who fully understands the portfolio he has. He has a genuine commitment to the environment and all of the things that make Australia great. The expansion of the Abbot Point coal terminal is a proposed development on a part of the Queensland coast not far from where I live. It is about 60 or 70 kilometres south of where I am, and just south of the outfall of the Burdekin River—one of the mighty rivers of Australia. It is a river which naturally takes millions and millions of tonnes of sediment down the river and into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon every year, particularly in times of heavy floods. That is a natural part of life.

I do agree with one of the things Senator Waters has just referred to—that is, what a mighty job the Queensland and Commonwealth governments did with Reef Rescue, but, more importantly, what a mighty job the cane farmers and land-owners around the Great Barrier Reef lagoon catchment have been doing over many years in improving their environmental footprint.

I get incensed every time I see these massively expensive and hugely funded programs—normally with funds from outside Australia—promoting the decline of Australia’s productivity and of our sustainable exploitation of our natural resources. There is a campaign being run by the Greens political party, WWF and the Wilderness Society and some
American group to try and stop coalmining right throughout Australia. It is the same campaign they have been using for years to try to stop logging in Australia, and I am delighted that the Tasmanian government has now brought some sensibility into the debate on logging in Tasmania. But this is the Greens: anything that makes Australia productive or adds to our standard of living, which we cherish, the Greens are opposed to. They would rather we slash and burn forests in the Solomons, Malaysia or Indonesia and ignore the most sustainable forest industry in the world—the one here in Australia.

Similarly, the lies and misinformation that are delivered in relation to Abbot Point are just incredible but typical of the Greens, the WWF, the Wilderness Society and their cohort. This extension of an existing development at Abbot Point has been carefully assessed by scientists, but that is not good enough for the people who constitute the Greens political party. Do not worry about what the scientists and the experts in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority say—the Greens know better! Forget what the scientists say, forget what all of the experts in the environment department say—the Greens will just go along with this worldwide campaign of misinformation that is so typical of them.

We even heard Senator Waters say this spoil is being dumped on the Great Barrier Reef.

Senator Waters interjecting—

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Have a look at the Hansard, Senator; you did say that. You always say that. The Greens and WWF always say that because they know they get more bang for their buck by trying to build fear for the Great Barrier Reef. Senator Waters knows as well as I do that the spoil will be dumped very carefully in a very controlled way in a very small section of a lagoon about 30 or 40 kilometres away from the Great Barrier Reef.

The silly motion was only passed on the numbers because of the Labor Party not having the courage to stand up for a development which their former colleagues in the Bligh and Beattie Labor governments approved. The Labor Party in here regrettably fell in with the Greens because they are in an alliance. As Mr Hunt has said in response to that, there are conditions placed upon this development.

Senator Waters interjecting—

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Senator Waters laughs at that because, again, apparently she knows better. She knows better than all of the scientists. She knows better than Dr Russell Reichelt. She knows better than the Australian Institute of Marine Science. So while they gave advice to the minister to approve the development, subject to certain conditions, Senator Waters knows better than them because she is, after all, a member of the Greens political party. How could you possibly challenge the scientists in relation to that? These conditions imposed by Mr Hunt are extensive and very, very stringent. Any sensible person who reads the conditions and understands the development not only will be welcoming of the approval of this development that is so important to the economy of my state of Queensland but also will be supportive of the very stringent conditions.

The Greens are very vocal about this. Did you hear them murmur a word when a ship their former leader, Bob Brown, was on running through the Barrier Reef started leaking oil? Did we hear anything from the Greens about that? Mind you, did we hear much from the ABC about that either? No. So it is okay if it is a Greenpeace ship or whatever it was that Bob Brown is on. It is okay if that leaks oil into the Great Barrier Reef. All the bauxite ships that
come around and do not leak any oil into the Barrier Reef are bad, but Bob Brown's ship is okay. It just shows you the hypocrisy of the Greens political party and their cohort of WWF, the Wilderness Society and all those foreign organisations that give the opponents of this development millions and millions of dollars for glossy brochures, videos and DVDs to try to stop coalmining in our country. One can only wonder why that is.

I am proud of the Great Barrier Reef. Not very often these days but in the past I have been out there fishing and enjoying the reef. I understand, better than anyone in the Greens political party, how important the Great Barrier Reef is to our tourism industry. That is why I, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, AIMS and Mr Hunt all want to make sure that the reef is protected.

I remember when the Greens opposed the Port Hinchinbrook development. Again, they were saying things like, 'Hinchinbrook Island is going to be destroyed!' Yet the development was not even on Hinchinbrook Island. It is a pattern of conduct from the Greens political party that transcends two or three decades. The environmental impact of that development—

Senator McLucas interjecting—

Senator IAN MACDONALD: I hear Senator McLucas yelling over there. Sure, there are problems there but not with the environmental aspects of that particular development, which was eventually approved, I think, by a Labor government in those days. But, anyhow, I digress.

I am delighted with Mr Hunt's response. I am delighted with the care and attention he has given the conditions of approval for that Abbot Point coal terminal. And I am delighted that Queensland will have another industry that provides wealth and jobs for Queenslanders. I just hope that that Abbot Point development does go ahead and that the international financiers are not spooked by the Greens campaign. That is what this is all about. It is about the Greens and their allies trying to spook the financiers into not financing this wonderful project for Queensland.

Question agreed to.

Education

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (18:00): I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the response by the Minister for Education to a Senate resolution.

Leave granted.

Senator LINES: I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

I had a look at the response from the Minister for Education, Mr Pyne, and I have to say it is a bitter disappointment—particularly from the party that, before the election, committed to Australian students, and indeed Australian parents and the Australian community, that it was on a unity ticket on Gonski.

We know that Gonski is about providing equal opportunity in our schools. It is a new funding model which, for the first time in Australia's history, will address disadvantage and will address different outcomes. As a modern society, as a society that prides itself on education, we cannot allow postcodes to keep determining student outcomes in Australia—that is the wrong approach. And judging by Minister Pyne's response this evening, I would
have to say it seems it will continue along that way. All of what Minister Pyne wants to focus on—teacher quality, principal autonomy, engaging parents in education and strengthening the curriculum—has been revisited before, and the opportunity to really address the funding inequities in our school system across all sectors of schools, public and private, seems to have disappeared. That unity ticket on Gonski is a shadow of its former self, and who knows what we might expect in the budget that is going to be announced in a couple of hours?

And it is not as if we do not know what is happening with education in Australia. The pointers are there. We have the Australian Early Development Index, an index that goes across five-year-olds. It looks at five domains to see how ready our five-year-olds are for learning: it looks at their physical health and wellbeing, their social competence, their language development and their communication skills. And guess what? Most Australian students are doing reasonably well on those measures. But when you use those measures to look at the children who are developmentally delayed, 22 per cent of our five-year-olds—these are children who are just starting school: they are ready; they are eager to learn; they are the students we should be focused on—in Australia are developmentally vulnerable on one or more of those domains, and more than 10 per cent of Australia's children are developmentally vulnerable on two or more of those domains. These are five-year-old children at the start of their formal school-based learning. And when we look at Aboriginal children, they are twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable on those indexes.

What Gonski was designed to do was address that inequality right at the beginning of our children's schooling. We know all the academic research tells us that brain development is done in the early years—five is, quite frankly, a little late, but not beyond fixing—and yet we now have a government, sadly, that is not funding, that is not even focusing on trying to address that sort of inequality. Gonski told us that a significant number of 15-year-olds are leaving school barely able to read, not literate enough to be able to effectively operate in our community. And no wonder when we look at that index for five-year-olds! We have five-year-olds we can measure and we know they are already failing before they start in the school system. Gonski would have addressed that.

But, no, the government wants to commit itself to independent schools, basing it on a Western Australian model. I can tell you, as a Western Australian senator, there is no academic research that tells us that independent schools do any better than any other school, and yet this is a plank the Abbott government is hanging its hat on. The life of our school students should not be something that is gambled on. We have quality research that tells us we need to do more for our five-year-olds. We have Gonski, which tells us that postcodes are defining academic outcomes. And yet this government is completely ignoring that, trying to reinvent schooling all over again, but all it is doing is committing significant number of another generation of Australian students to failure.

By the time children are 10, they know if they are failing in our system. We have an index that tells us five-year-olds are missing out. By the time they are 10 they know they are missing out. And we know from Gonski that we have 15-year-olds who are not literate. That is a shame. It is a disgrace. And all of us, no matter which political party we come from, should be wanting to do something about that. But, no, the Abbott government is going to focus on making schools independent, but there is no proven academic research that tells us that does any good for our students. So it is very disappointing to see the response from
Minister Pyne. It is very disappointing, and quite frankly dishonest, that he committed to a unity ticket on Gonski to the Australian public, which has found that it is now gone. Goodness knows what our budget is going to do. I implore in this chamber that it would be a travesty to follow the Western Australian model of education. Western Australia is not a leader in education by any stretch of the imagination, and it is a shame that Minister Pyne's response does not address equity at all.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (18:06): I too rise to speak to the same minister's response to the notice of motion agreed to on 22 March 2014. I find it quite curious, as we gather here tonight to address the budget misfortune that this government was left with by the former government, that Senator Lines has the cheek to criticise—and it is a bit pre-emptive, Senator Lines—when the Senate Select Committee on School Funding does not actually deliver its report for another couple of months.

Senator Lines interjecting—

Senator McKENZIE: You will have your chance to address your issues with the way this government is approaching education in this country. One thing that we are doing, Senator Lines, is making very, very clear who is going to be the centre of our education policy, and it is students—students first. The motion we are speaking to was agreed on 22 March and the Labor Party agreed to it, so I do find it quite curious that Senator Lines is here tonight not backing the vote that she was very happy to have in putting students first on 26 March of this year. The motion before the Senate at that time was not talking about early childhood education or Gonski funding. It was talking about something we can all agree on—putting students first.

It is about recognising what the international research says around the quality of teachers in the classroom, the quality of the curriculum, the freedom for school principals and school communities to decide what is important for their school to be doing and what is important for their community—the types of skills and knowledge that need to be developed in their students, what sort of education the parents of that community and that school want their children to be receiving and giving principals the power and the autonomy to make those decisions at a very local level. That is about empowering schools, Senator Lines, empowering teachers, instead of being beholden to the command and control from central office—you will get X, you will get Y and we will try generically to make you all come out the same. Education is just not like that.

Kids come into our classroom from all different levels. They start at different places. They have good teachers and they have bad teachers. They have great resources and they have less than great resources. Across the spectrum, whether we want to value them by PISA results—which the former Labor government wants to hold up as the epitome of educational success—or we want something else, we want to put students first. I think the notions of educational success for all children are a lot broader than how they do on an international standardised testing regime, but we will leave that debate for another day.

I am rapt that the minister has gone down the pathway he has after the Labor government's track record in education—and who can forget Building the Education Revolution, with its rip-offs and rorts to the tune of $6 billion to $8 billion? That is a lot of schools, that is a lot of teachers, that is a lot of research going on in terms of educational outcomes. But they do not worry about that. They do not worry about the debt and deficit they left for us. We are paying
$1 billion a month on interest. The resources we could actually put into early childhood education and higher education, skills and training on an interest bill of $1 billion a month—Senator Lines, rock on! We could do some really great work, but we cannot do it because of the mess you left. It is time to take responsibility for that.

Senator Lines interjecting—

Senator McKENZIE: It is very nice to be carping from the sidelines, Senator Lines, carping loud and clear for all to hear. It is time to take responsibility. You would not do it, so we are having to do it, and it starts tonight and everybody is going to have to bear their share of that pain.

In the final year, Labor announced cuts to higher education funding, including an efficiency dividend applying to university grants, changes to student loans and scholarships, a cap on tax deductibility of self-education expenses. So if we want to roll out a track record on who is supporting education—how, why and when—I am happy to have that debate, Senator Lines, any time of the day. But do not come after you have supported a motion and critique the very things that this motion went to the heart of in terms of supporting professional development for our educators and ensuring that our teachers in our schools right across this nation are the highest trained and best equipped to make sure that our young Australians, the 660,000 young Australians in regional Australia that attend public schools, have access to a very high-quality education.

$1.2 billion of funding was ripped out from states that did not sign up to the Gonski plan. Let us be honest: there was no Gonski plan. By the time we got to putting signatures on the line it did not bear any resemblance to the research document that came out. I am really looking forward to the day when we bring down the report of the Select Committee into School Funding after listening to Henry Ergas’s testimony in Sydney a couple of weeks ago critiquing the economic modelling on which assumptions were based. I am very, very keen to get that out of the closet and into the public domain so we can talk about what matters, which is putting students and their education first in this nation.

Obviously this is going to be a debate to continue. I congratulate the minister for his very strong start and the amount of reviewing he has been doing to make sure that the policy we develop as a government around education is of the highest quality, is well informed and actually ensures stakeholders are consulted appropriately and that they are not having policy designed on a notepad and brought into the chamber the next day—as was the case with that doomed self-education funding debacle where so many people using that setting to further their education to ensure that they were more employable and fit for work within our economy had the rug pulled out from under them without so much as a day’s notice. Well done, Labor! You have got a poor track record. We are looking forward to restoring some integrity.

I would also like to remind senators that school education, Senator Lines, is a state issue. I look forward to your communication with state education ministers rather than bringing what is very much a state issue into this chamber. I look forward to your further support on further notices of motion around education that actually put students front and centre, motions that are based on well-researched arguments and policy settings that ensure that our education system for the 21st century takes our nation forward and does not make the federal
government in charge of things that should rightfully be the responsibility of parents, of local schools and principals, and state governments.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (18:15): I do not want to take the time of the chamber, because I am conscious that other senators want to speak on other matters, but I simply want to congratulate Senator McKenzie. It is such a refreshing change to have someone speak in this chamber on education matters who actually knows what they are talking about. I am aware of Senator McKenzie's distinguished career in the education system.

From listening to Senator Lines, you would not be aware that the motion was about teacher quality, but I am pleased that Senator McKenzie was able to demonstrate that education is about what parents need, what the children need and not what the teachers union wants. You can be assured that Senator Lines's speech drew heavily on the work of the teachers union, who seem to be more interested in their own positions in the union movement than in the quality of education that Australian children are getting.

I will not take the matter further except to say how pleasing it is to have a contribution from someone like Senator McKenzie, who clearly knows what she is talking about when it comes to education.

If nobody else wants to speak on this, I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

Student Wellbeing

Senator WRIGHT (South Australia) (18:16): I seek leave to take note of Health Minister Dutton's response to Senate resolutions.

Leave granted.

Senator WRIGHT: I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

On 20 March this year the Senate passed a motion about adolescent mental health and wellbeing and noted the alarming findings of the 2014 survey by Resilient Youth Australia, which showed 38 per cent of girls and 28 per cent of boys between years 7 and 12 feel constantly under strain and unable to overcome difficulties and highlighting the pressures and challenges that many young people in Australia face in 2014. In that resolution the Senate also affirmed that every school student should be able to access the tools to develop emotional resilience and called on the federal government to facilitate nationwide monitoring of adolescents' emotional resilience and wellbeing and to ensure that every school provides an environment conducive to students' wellbeing, including access to qualified mental health personnel to support students during adolescence.

The statistics regarding the mental health challenges faced by our young people are indeed sobering. In a report for ReachOut.com from the Inspire Foundation, which is one of the pre-eminent pioneers for e-mental health for young people in Australia, I found these statistics. I know they are generally agreed. One in four young Australians live with a mental health difficulty. Seventy-five per cent of people with a mental health difficulty will experience the onset by the age of 24. Suicide is the leading cause of death for young Australians aged between 14 and 25. Perhaps most damming of all, over 80 per cent of young males and nearly 70 per cent of young females with mental difficulties did not access any mental health
services. It does not take a lot of thinking to realise that the statistic about suicide being the leading cause of death for Australians between 14 and 25 could be a different statistic if indeed those mental health services were available. I quote the ReachOut Strategic plan 2014-2017. They say:

Whilst the prevention of mental illness is a crucial part of our mission, we must also help young people flourish, equipping them with the knowledge, skills and resources to thrive in a changing world.

As the Australian Greens spokesperson for mental health and for schools, I am acutely aware of the challenges confronting young people in Australia today. I hear from parents and teachers from around Australia on a regular basis, and they are reporting to me that at an increasingly young age Australian children are exhibiting symptoms of depression, anxiety and other disorders like body image, self-harm and eating disorders, just to name a few. These are, of course, conditions that interfere with young people's ability to enjoy their childhood and to learn, grow up and be proud of who they are. This is one of the reasons that I helped establish the Parliamentary Friends of Youth Mental Health to explore not only the conditions and treatment options available in relation to young people's mental health but to encourage a wider discussion in the parliament and in the community about the pressures and challenges that are besetting young people in 21st-century Australia and to look at ways to build resilience.

It is also one of the reasons that the Australian Greens are working so hard for a more inclusive Australia where every person—and that includes every young person—can participate fully and has the chance to feel proud of who they are. Bullying and discrimination on the basis of race, cultural background or sexual preference is just not on. That is why it is such an important principle for the Greens to remove the exemption that makes it legal for religious schools to discriminate against their students and their teachers on the basis of their sexuality. It sends a very clear message to young people attending those schools that who they are is not okay. We know that this is devastating for young people just at a time when they are developing a sense of who they are and venturing out into the world. It is also why the Australian Greens' policy is clearly to increase the number of qualified mental health counsellors and social workers in government schools by redirecting money from the national chaplaincy program and boosting that money significantly to pay for that qualified, expert workforce.

When it comes to mental health support for our students, the time for amateurs is over. The statistics clearly show that. That suicide statistic is absolutely alarming. We need to invest in the services that are needed to turn around those statistics from ReachOut.com that over 80 per cent of young males and nearly 70 per cent of young females with mental difficulties do not access any health services at all. Mental ill health and mental health and wellbeing should be non-partisan issues. Our young people are our future. It is incumbent on us as a community to do what we need to do to ensure that we can nurture, protect and support them to grow up strong and healthy.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (18:22): I too rise to speak very briefly and to congratulate the minister for outlining what the coalition government is doing to support young people around mental health issues and developing resilience. As a former educator of young people, I understand how crucial schools and, for instance, the school chaplaincy program are in that process and in ensuring that young people...
have the support structures around them to assist with developing resilience and getting the appropriate mental health care as they proceed through school.

As a National Party senator, a lot of my work is in regional Australia. I note the Assistant Minister for Health is in the chamber tonight and I know she has a personal and keen interest in young people's mental health issues. She is a strong supporter of the headspace program, which has been set up throughout regional Australia. It has just completed a survey of 3,634 young people aged between 12 and 25 revealing that some of the precursors to issues that occur within the schoolyard, such as alcohol fuelled events on the weekend and drugs, are actually quite significant. Ninety-two per cent of young people have drunk alcohol and 34 per cent have taken drugs over the last two months. That has a severe impact on young people's mental health and it is a growing challenge for those people working with young people to ensure they have appropriate care.

It is also something that should be a part of teacher training. There needs to be more of a focus at universities to ensure that not just the chaplains, mental health workers and community health workers in our local schools but also the teachers are better equipped to deal with mental health issues that arise within the classroom. Our government has been a keen supporter of the MindMatters program, which is a tool that teachers can use within classrooms to assist with identifying problems and to assist young people to meet the challenges of being an adolescent in our classrooms.

I also know that the online cybersafety working group—the coalition's policy development process—put forward some key areas for us to target, such as the rapid takedown of bullying material on sites like Facebook, Twitter et cetera to ensure that bullying that occurs not just face-to-face within schools and within communities but also online is addressed and dealt with to ensure that our young people have the optimal environment in which to grow and flourish.

Question agreed to.

Closing the Gap

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (18:25): I seek leave to take note of the response from the Premier of Queensland, Mr Newman, to the National Close the Gap Day motion.

Leave granted.

Senator SIEWERT: I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

In the short time that is remaining before we break, I would like to take note of the response from Premier Newman, who does make some good points in his response to the resolution of the chamber on the National Close the Gap Day, if people recall. He points out a number of programs—in particular, the Deadly Ears program that combats chronic ear disease and prevents hearing loss. As people know, that is a particular passion of mine.

I would also like to point out some of the issues around the continuation of some of the Closing the Gap programs, the closure of which we may see tonight in the budget, one of those being the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development. We all know how absolutely critical it is that we address early childhood
development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, because we know that it is the foundation of how they develop later. It has fundamental impacts on later-life opportunities and also breaks the cycle of intergenerational poverty and disadvantage.

It is particularly disappointing that it looks like this program will close, and I note that the Queensland minister for education, John-Paul Langbroek, wrote to the federal Indigenous affairs minister, Nigel Scullion, last week warning that failure to renew the agreement at a critical stage of the program would potentially force the closure of some Queensland family centres. This would be heartbreaking given that these programs are starting to play such a critical role in addressing the gaps in early childhood development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

I have spoken in this place also of the Wyndham Early Learning Activity Centre in Wyndham in Western Australia, which was funded by this program and which after June is likely to have no further funding for any of the programs it delivers, making a complete waste of an excellent facility in Wyndham that provides critical support for Aboriginal children in the Kimberley and addresses the gaps in early childhood development.

There are myriad programs that this government is talking about potentially wrapping up into five or six programs in the budget. There are many, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are desperate to know what is going to happen to these programs and for the continuation of these programs that are absolutely critical to closing the gap. It will be a tragedy if we lose the centres that I have just referred to—the family centres that particularly address early childhood development and deliver programs that are absolutely critical to closing the gap.

If we lose these programs, we can kiss goodbye to being able to close the gap by the target date, because, as we know from the report that was tabled in this place a bit over two months ago, we are already behind. It showed that we are making some progress on some indicators, but we are simply not meeting many of the indicators on progress on closing the gap. Unless we have these centres, we will fail to close the gap—make no mistake.

We need to be keeping a sustained input into specific programs that meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander needs and not think that the government can mainstream these programs, which is what I suspect might happen in an hour's time when we hear the budget. They simply cannot, because they do not address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Question agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 18:30 to 20:00

BUDGET

Statement and Documents

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (20:00): I table the Budget statement for 2014-15 and other documents as indicated on the list circulated in the chamber.

The list read as follows—
Budget statement and documents 2014-15
Budget speech 2014-15—Statement by the Treasurer (Mr Hockey), dated 13 May 2014.
Budget papers—
No. 1—Budget strategy and outlook 2014-15
No. 2—Budget measures 2014-15.

I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the documents.
Leave granted.

Senator CORMANN: I move:
That the Senate take note of the Budget statement and documents.
Question agreed to.
Debate (on motion by Senator Cormann) adjourned.

Proposed Expenditure

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (20:01): I table particulars of proposed and certain expenditure, and seek leave to move a motion to refer the documents to legislation committees.
Leave granted.

Senator CORMANN: I move:
That the documents be referred to legislation committees for the consideration of the estimates.
Question agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (19:59): I table the portfolio budget statements for 2014-15 for the Department of the Senate, the Parliamentary Budget Office and the Department of Parliamentary Services. Copies are available from the Senate Table Office.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (20:01): I table portfolio budget statements for 2014-15, and portfolio supplementary additional estimates statements for 2013-14, for portfolio and executive departments in accordance with the list circulated in the chamber. Copies are available from the Senate Table Office.

The list read as follows—

Budget Related Documents—13 May 2014

2014-15 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS)
Agriculture portfolio
Attorney-General’s portfolio
Communications portfolio
Defence portfolio
Department of Veterans’ Affairs
Education portfolio
Employment portfolio
Environment portfolio
Finance portfolio
Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio
I rise tonight to talk about Youth Connections. Last Friday, I had the pleasure of meeting 17-year-old Tanika, who lives south of Hobart. I met with Tanika to talk about her experience of the vital Youth Connections program which has been provided by Colony 47 in Tasmania since 2010. Tanika was referred to the Youth Connections program by Centrelink. She was in year 11 and was not attending school because of the challenges for her within the school environment. Tanika met Anita, from Colony 47, and her life was transformed. Anita was able to talk to Tanika one-on-one about her future. Tanika said she wanted to work in aged care, and Anita was able to point her in the right direction and explain how she could study and work too. Tanika is now enrolled in a Certificate III in Aged Care and has been successful in obtaining voluntary work in that field. Tanika told me that the Youth Connections program had helped her achieve more than she ever could have achieved on her own. She said:

I'm finally getting a chance at the education I've always wanted. Before that, it was too hard. It's made a big impact on my life, in lots of ways. Everything is starting to fall into place now. I'm really glad Centrelink referred me to Youth Connections. I've been able to think about what I'm good at and what I really want to do. I'm going to do my training in aged care and all my family are really proud of me.

Tanika is a wonderful young woman who came across some challenges that made her very vulnerable to dropping out of education and training. This Youth Connections program has managed to help and support her in a way she never thought possible. But Tanika is not alone. Over 400 vulnerable or at-risk young Tasmanians like Tanika have accessed support through Youth Connections. Youth Connections was set up by Labor in 2010 to make sure young people do not drop out of school and end up unemployed or dependent on welfare.
Since 2010, Labor has funded Youth Connections, partnership brokers and career development services—investing more than $700 million over five years. Up to the end of last year, Youth Connections had given almost 75,000 young people the hand-up they needed. Labor designed these youth services to stop young people who have not completed year 12 from falling between the cracks. If someone drops out of school because of family problems, or any other reason, it is vital to make sure they get a second chance. We know how important it is to finish year 12; it reduces the risk of unemployment and leads to getting more highly paid jobs.

If young people drop out of school it can affect their lives forever. Youth Connections has had a great success rate, with 80 per cent of people who access these services being still in education or employment after two years. Colony 47 CEO Therese Taylor told me that Youth Connections has already supported over 400 young people in Tasmania to improve and expand their connection to education. Colony 47 has also provided support for students moving from primary to high school and newly arrived refugees.

But now we have to ensure that this service is not cut by the budget that we have heard tonight. This budget, unfortunately, will go down in history as an assault on young Australians, particularly those who are disadvantaged and at risk. Youth Connections is an incredibly successful program. It will cost Australia more in unemployment benefits, justice and social services if this program is cut. At a time of rising youth unemployment, cutting this— (Time expired)

**Budget**

**Senator POLLEY** (Tasmania) (20:07): So here we are tonight on budget day and we have just heard the disastrous budget that we all thought was going to be evident finally delivered tonight. Shame on those on the opposite side. It has reflected what we have come to expect from the government. That is they are out of touch and they are quite heartless. This budget is short-sighted, cynical and devoid of any vision. It is a cruel budget. It is a budget that will put family budgets under more pressure.

Sadly, the Australian people have been conned and manipulated by Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey. They did what they needed to do to get into power. They said whatever it took to get them elected. They deliberately deceived the Australian community. Not one Australian voted for a GP tax. Not one Australian voted for any change to those people on disability or pensions. Not one Australian voted for higher petrol prices. It is the coalition's dream budget but it is Australia's nightmare.

There is not time this evening for me to spell out the failures of the logic that has informed the Treasurer's budget. There would not be enough time even if I spoke till sunrise. So instead, I will focus on just several aspects of this budget of horrors. Primarily, this is a budget of broken promises. Our Prime Minister promised that no new taxes would be introduced if he were handed control of the country. In fact, it informed part of a repetitious mantra that he took around the country with him prior to the last federal election. Yet here we are tonight, witnessing that he in fact has not only introduced a deficit tax but a deceitful fuel tax. We can see that in the short, medium and long term, families here in Australia are going to suffer the consequences and so will our economy.
Can I just remind you that in a doorstop interview of March 2012 our Prime Minister promised, and I quote, ‘What you get under us are tax cuts without new taxes.’ Well, he deceived the Australian community. Later that year in November he repeated this unequivocal message saying: ‘We are about reducing taxes, not increasing taxes. We are about getting rid of taxes, not imposing new taxes.’ Tomorrow morning the Australian community will wake up and find that they have been deceived. The coalition will claim that these were general comments made well before the federal election, but of course, those public comments are really only the beginning. He said in February last year, ‘I absolutely guarantee’—that is right, he said, ‘I absolutely guarantee to the Australian people that the tax burden will be less under a coalition government.’ The people of Australia will wake up tomorrow and find that that has been a lie.

It is a fundamental breach of the trust of our Prime Minister ‘New Tax Tony’. It is something that the coalition promised us they would never do. During the coalition’s campaign launch speech on 25 August last year the now Prime Minister said the following:

Over the next three years, should we win the election an incoming coalition government will do exactly what we have said we would do. We will be a no surprises, no excuses government. They have breached that election commitment over and over and over with the Treasurer’s budget speech tonight. He has broken his word. It is as simple as that. Perhaps the Australian people should remind him of some of the sanctimonious nonsense comments he directed at former Prime Minister Julia Gillard in recent years. Perhaps we should ask Mr Abbott to make an honest man of himself.

In my own area of responsibility of aged care, those Australians working in the aged-care sector have been let down again by this government. Shame on you. There is nothing there for those hardworking Australians who work in aged care. Shame. I see on the other side, and I ask Senator Fierravanti-Wells—no wonder she is hanging her head in shame. It is shameful what this government has done to the aged-care sector—

Government senators interjecting—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator Polley: and those hardworking Australians that work in that sector.

Senator Fierravanti-Wells: Do not come in here with your sanctimonious—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator Polley: As always, those on the other side talk a lot—(Time expired)

Medicare Locals

Senator Boyce (Queensland) (20:12): I do not know how one continues on after that, except that I rise tonight to share —

Senator Polley: Well do not bother then.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator Boyce: a good news story. The Assistant Health Minister, Senator Fiona Nash, mentioned in the Senate earlier today the unsustainable health system that we have inherited from Labor. However much Senator Polley likes to shout about it, that is the problem. Among the challenges we are facing is taxpayers funding 263 million free services a year. Public hospital funding has increased from $7.5 billion 10 years ago to its current level of $14 billion
a year, and it will go on rising if nothing is done about it. We also face the health costs of an ageing population and the growing burden of chronic disease, obesity, dementia, cancer, diabetes and mental illness. As the Treasurer, Mr Hockey, demonstrated tonight, the coalition is meeting those challenges and delivering on them. We are working to create a strong and sustainable health system for the future good of all Australians.

However, tonight I would like to share a small success story that comes out of our health system. It is a story of success for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, a very vulnerable patient group. The Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local and Queensland National Disability Services have recently cooperated to develop online tools to assist both workers in the field of disability and GPs to recognise and learn about how to assist people with an intellectual disability or developmental delay to access the health system. These are titled *Realising Good Health and Well-Being for People with Disability* and can be delivered face to face, in a workshop environment or online. I was very pleased to be a speaker at the launch of these resources some months ago. I was also pleased that my Labor colleague Senator Claire Moore was able to attend that launch. At that function I made the point that promoting assistance for people with disabilities, particularly in the clinical medical sector, was often quite difficult. Speaking on these tools tonight is one thing that I am able to do to try to assist in the promotion of them; but first I would like to explain why something like this is necessary.

People with disabilities often have more complex health needs than people without disabilities, and they often face extra barriers in accessing the health services they need. For some people with a disability it can be difficult to communicate verbally with their doctor or with the person who is working with them. This makes it much harder for a person with a disability to explain a simple health issue, let alone a complex health issue, to doctors or carers in a way that is easily understood.

As we know, there can also be physical barriers to accessing healthcare facilities. The World Health Organization has developed quite a long list of these, and all of them would apply to health facilities—particularly primary care health facilities—in almost every place in Australia. There is uneven access to buildings, poor signage, narrow doorways, internal steps, inadequate bathroom facilities, inaccessible parking and, perhaps worst of all, examination tables that are not able to be raised and lowered for patients. I have heard stories from women in wheelchairs who were examined lying on the floor of a doctor's surgery because they could not access the examination table. Imagine if that were to happen on a regular basis to others in the community.

As I said, these online tools for both carers and GPs have been developed by Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local and National Disability Services Queensland. This is an example of an effective primary healthcare organisation helping a community. It shows what can be done when organisations such as Medicare Locals work well to support the needs of their communities. The programs that were developed were researched and they identified ways to improve access to primary healthcare services for people with a disability in the Brisbane North and Moreton Bay region.

Over a 12-month period NDS Queensland engaged with a broad range of stakeholders including people with a disability, their families and carers, support workers, providers of disability services, GPs and allied health professionals. Disability workers certainly wanted
greater knowledge of the healthcare system and they needed information on how to identify, achieve and maintain optimum health for people with a disability. A series of workshops was delivered across the region in conjunction with the Queensland Centre for Intellectual and Developmental Disability. The centre is Queensland's leading organisation assisting people with a disability in mental, social and sexual health issues. The tool for support workers is titled Realising Good Health and Well-Being for People with Disability and it has 10 modules. The training package for GPs has 12 modules and it is now part of the Royal Australian College of GPs curriculum on developmental disabilities. There are points for undertaking the course.

The online tool for GPs is made up of 42 lectures, case histories, webinars, videos and a test system that gives participants a final score. There are a range of topics, including annual health checks, sexual health and consultation skills. As I said, these were developed by Metro North Brisbane Medicare Local and National Disability Services Queensland, but now that they are online they are available to all Australian GPs and Australian carers.

At the launch, the head of the Queensland Centre for Intellectual and Developmental Disability, Professor Nick Lennox, explained how this new initiative would be valuable. He said that people with a disability often have to rely on proxies to engage with systems and that those proxies play a vital role in assisting GPs to reach a diagnosis. Professor Lennox said:

Simple things can easily be missed if you don't provide me, as a medical practitioner, with a good story, even if you don't have an intellectual disability.

So the story, your discourse, your personal narrative, about your experience of life and your health is crucial to me arriving at a diagnosis and therefore making any reasonable judgement about what I should do.

So it is very important that both these tools are widely used. I think it is worth looking at the situation that it is trying to address, because certainly people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the poorest health outcomes in Australia. As Professor Lennox commented in an article in the Medical Journal of Australia:

The research is clear that people with intellectual disability have been receiving inadequate health care. A seminal population study clearly demonstrated that they experience high levels of unmet health need, with 42% of health conditions persistently undiagnosed and half of the conditions that are diagnosed inadequately managed. Their life expectancy is much lower than the general population—about 20 years lower for people with severe disabilities.

As Professor Lennox points out, there are half a million Australians—a population at least as large as our Indigenous population—with intellectual disability, who continue to experience poor healthcare while being excluded from most generic research. Thank goodness for the future fund for medical research announced tonight. That will certainly go on to help.

We must do what we can to provide decent treatment for people with disabilities. I am pleased to say that the online tool for support workers has already had 1,243 page views. I would commend the tools to any medical person.

Brain Cancer Action Week
National Palliative Care Week

Senator BILYK (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (20:22): National awareness weeks are powerful tools for raising public awareness of important issues and
encouraging discussion in the community. I rise tonight to speak about two such campaigns: Brain Cancer Action Week, which was held recently; and National Palliative Care Week, which is soon to be held. Both of these awareness campaigns are on important public health issues which are of particular interest to me. They are causes of which every Australian should be aware.

This year’s Brain Cancer Action Week took place a couple of weeks ago, from 27 April to 3 May. Launched in 2010, Brain Cancer Action Week is an initiative of the New South Wales Cancer Council in conjunction with a number of other organisations. I have a close working relationship with two of these organisations—Brain Tumour Alliance Australia and Cure Brain Cancer Foundation—in my role as co-convenor of the parliament’s Brain Tumour Awareness Group.

The other partner organisations are the Cancer Institute New South Wales Oncology Group Neuro-Oncology, Grey Matters and Sydney Neuro-Oncology Group. While several of the participating organisations are based in New South Wales, Brain Cancer Action Week events were held across Australia, in every Australian state and in the ACT.

Cure Brain Cancer Foundation held the Brain Tumour Support and Education Forum at the Menzies Hotel in Sydney on 1 May. The forum was an opportunity for people diagnosed with brain cancer and their carers to learn from experts and ask questions about clinical care, treatment options, current research, clinical trials and support and community services. Parallel forums were held in every state of Australia and the ACT, and the forum was webcast to allow people from around the country to participate.

The keynote speaker, Dr Shivalingam from the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, gave an overview of current clinical care and research for brain cancer. One of the issues which Dr Shivalingam touched on was the need for the various brain cancer care and treatment services to be collocated in specialised neuro-oncology centres, and patients individually case managed so that they can receive the best information and integrated care available. Dr Shivalingam also talked about some of the difficulties in rare cancers, such as brain cancer, receiving research funding under the competitive grants based funding model under which health research grants are currently awarded. For anyone with an interest in the proceedings of the forum, video recordings of all the speakers are available on the Cure Brain Cancer Foundation website at www.curebraincancer.org.au.

Another Brain Cancer Action Week event was the visit of the advocacy group Grey Matters to the New South Wales parliament. They held a forum to address people of influence from across New South Wales to talk about what has been achieved so far in the fight against brain cancer and what the next steps are. One of the speakers at this event was brain cancer survivor and rugby player Julian Huxley. I am sure there a number of people in this building who would know Julian’s mum—Keri Huxley—very well. She has worked tirelessly in her efforts to try and find a cure for brain cancer.

Other events held across Australia during Brain Cancer Action Week included fundraisers and community information sessions. One of the major fundraising events was a 1,000 kilometre bike ride from the Story Bridge in Brisbane to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Nine riders completed the fourth annual Bridge to Bridge Charity Ride, and raised over $18,000 for Cure Brain Cancer Foundation to fund research and awareness-raising initiatives.
During the week, as an awareness- and fund-raising initiative, the Cancer Council New South Wales sold grey ribbons and encouraged supporters of brain cancer action to wear them, with the proceeds going towards brain cancer research projects. In my home state of Tasmania, a morning tea was held to raise money and awareness of brain cancer.

While I have many reasons to be passionate about raising awareness of brain cancer, two in particular stand out. As most people in this chamber would know, six years ago I was diagnosed with, and survived, two brain tumours. While my experience was relatively short compared to that of many brain cancer survivors, I have experienced the fear and uncertainty that comes with that diagnosis.

It has been my ambition, ever since, to do what I can to support other brain tumour and brain cancer patients, and to do all I can to help find a cure and to bring awareness to the issues around brain cancer. The other, perhaps more important, reason is that brain cancer is the No. 1 cancer killer of Australian children. That is right; it is the No. 1 cancer killer of Australian children. I can imagine few, if any, priorities of this parliament more important than saving our children from deadly diseases such as brain cancer, and giving them a chance for a proper childhood. Unfortunately—and I expanded on this in an adjournment speech in March this year—brain cancer receives a disproportionately small slice of cancer research funding. That is an injustice which I hope campaigns like Brain Cancer Action Week will be able to help turn around.

The other awareness week I wish to talk about tonight is National Palliative Care Week, held this year from 25 May to 31 May. This is coincides with Senate budget estimates week, so I will not get a chance to speak on it through that week. That is why I wanted to speak on it tonight.

As a co-convenor of Parliamentary Friends of End of Life Care Group, I am passionate about quality end-of-life care, and I am passionate about palliative care patients having choices about what care they receive and where and how they receive it. On 20 March, in this place, I delivered an adjournment speech about palliative care and the importance of Australian society having better conversations about end-of-life issues. Each year, half a million Australians experience the impact of a terminal illness, yet we are not very good at having conversations about dying. It is not something that comes naturally to us. Unfortunately, this leads to lack of knowledge and preparation when it comes to providing quality end-of-life care.

An initiative of Palliative Care Australia, National Palliative Care Week was established to help raise greater awareness of end-of-life issues. In particular, Palliative Care Australia wanted to encourage people to have conversations with their families and loved ones about end-of-life care when they are well, and not leave it until they are close to death. The theme for National Palliative Care Week 2014 is 'Palliative care is everyone's business: let's work together.' This year's theme is about celebrating the people who work in palliative care—doctors, nurses, volunteers and carers, to name a few—and the important role they play in providing quality end-of-life care. The theme is aimed at educating the community about the various roles in palliative care and it is also about encouraging people to think about what their role might be.

What would you do if your partner or spouse, your father or mother, or another relative or loved one was diagnosed with a terminal illness? Have you had this conversation with them
and talked about what your role would be in their care? In calling on Australians to confront these questions, I refer back to two words in the theme of National Palliative Care Week 2014: ‘everyone's business’. In other words, if you work in the medical profession, you will confront palliative care issues regardless of whether you work in palliative care or in other areas. And if you do not work in the medical profession, you will still confront palliative care issues at some time in your life—for your parent, spouse, child, friend or even yourself.

The key event for National Palliative Care Week will be an education forum and breakfast at Parliament House on 29 May. The breakfast will be hosted by Julie McCrossin and addressed by health-care ethicist Dr Sarah Winch from the University of Queensland. The breakfast will be followed by a full day education forum for health professionals and stakeholders. Some of the many events being held in my home state of Tasmania include information sessions for general practitioners, organised by the home and community care organisation The District Nurses; a memorial service for bereaved carers in Launceston; and a morning tea at the wharf complex in Burnie for patients, carers, volunteers and staff. There will be various promotions for National Palliative Care Week, including full-wrap advertising on buses in Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and Devonport.

A report co-authored by the World Palliative Care Alliance and the World Health Organization titled The global atlas of palliative care at the end of life estimates that a minimum of 40 million people worldwide require palliative care annually. The WHO is meeting in Geneva next week and considering a resolution which urges countries to integrate palliative care into their healthcare systems. This means cementing palliative care into the basic and continuing education and training curricula for all health workers, and ensuring that relevant medicines, including strong pain medicines, are available for patients.

Australia is one of the world leaders in palliative care service provision, yet we are unable to meet the palliative care needs of most patients who need it. Two actions Palliative Care Australia are calling on during National Palliative Care Week are to develop a palliative care workforce strategy, which embeds palliative care into the education and training of all health professionals throughout their careers, and to fund the Palliative Care Foundation scholarship program to support health professionals in furthering their palliative care knowledge and education, which was a recommendation of the Senate inquiry into palliative care. I wish them luck with this campaign, but I will be happy if my contribution to the adjournment debate tonight has achieved one simple thing—that is, to encourage more Australians to have conversations about the end-of-life care of their partners, families and loved ones, and what their role will be. The time to start these conversations is definitely now.

National Broadband Network Select Committee

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (20:32): I rise to make some further remarks on the Interim report of the Senate Select Committee on the National Broadband Network. This report is an indictment of the NBN strategic review. When announcing the strategic review, the minister said: ‘I just want the plain unvarnished facts. We do not want spin. We do not want the company to tell us what they think we might want to hear.’ I regret to inform the Senate that that this is exactly what has happened.

The report confirms that the NBN strategic review was undertaken by personnel and advisers hand-picked by the minister with no independent scrutiny or verification of its final report. This stands in stark contrast to the 2013 NBN Co corporate plan, which was based on
signed contracts and independently audited by KPMG and Ernst & Young. The minister has been told exactly what he wanted to hear. This is no way to spend $40 billion of taxpayers' money and it is no way to plan a broadband network for all Australians.

This minister's patchwork quilt of broadband technologies will be a financial disaster. Let us have a look at the strategic review. It either ignores or fudges when it comes to the favoured MTM model. The strategic review contains no field data to support the MTM model. It relies on nothing more than international benchmarks and estimates. The committee report finds that the strategic review significantly underestimates the costs of the MTM compared to a new fibre build. It underestimates the costs of having to operate two extra fixed-line networks. It underestimates the costs of having to maintain last century's copper technology. It underestimates the costs of migration processes, of IT systems, of running voice services over a network that NBN Co does not own. Across this mess of a broadband plan, the costs are always at every single opportunity underestimated.

What happens when it comes to the revenues? The committee found that the strategic review overestimates the revenues possible on the MTM compared to fibre. That is right, Acting Deputy President Furner: the strategic review underestimates the costs and then overestimates the revenues. NBN Co's caretaker advice to government made it clear that the minister's plans would not be able to generate the revenues that Labor's NBN would generate. FTTN is an inferior broadband technology. It cannot deliver the same products that fibre can. The same is true of HFC networks—no gigabit services in these footprints; no dedicated information rates; an inferior multitask product; no products that Australians can easily migrate to when they need better quality broadband; and, most outrageously given the promises, best efforts when it comes to download speeds.

Mr Turnbull made great claims that he would guarantee delivery of 25 meg down. What did the chair of his company say in a Senate estimates hearing? 'I cannot give any such guarantee.' What did the new CEO say of NBN Co when asked to guarantee Mr Turnbull's promise? 'I would not put my signature to that.'

What we have here is a fraud on the Australian public—an absolute fraud. It is $40 billion. Those opposite, who sit there chuckling right now, are going to spend $40 billion on a network that you cannot guarantee a download or an upload speed for.

Senator Back: You hypocrite! You arrogant hypocrite!

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Furner): Order! There will be order in this chamber!

Senator CONROY: $40 billion to deliver something that cannot guarantee the speed down or a speed up. What a bunch of geniuses! And just for good measure they are the only company, and this is the only country in the world, that are trying to buy a copper network. Do you know what most companies around the world are doing with their copper network? They are selling it because it is worth more for the scrap value than the technology value. There are companies out there buying telcos' copper networks to rip them out off the ground and sell them on the spot market. But no, not in this country. In this country we are going to buy the network and we are going to keep using it. Unbelievable. What a disgraceful waste of taxpayer dollars.
What we saw in the last election campaign was those opposite saying that this was about trust. All promises and guarantees before the election, but after the election no guarantee from anybody who actually understands the technology—no guarantee. And, most importantly, the MTM delivers inferior upload speeds that will disadvantage the millions of small businesses in Australia. That is right: they are going to spend $40 billion to disadvantage small businesses, particularly in regional and rural Australia. But despite all of this, the strategic review somehow assumes that the MTM will generate a similar revenue to an all-fibre rollout. They cannot deliver the top-end products and they cannot deliver the upload speeds that small businesses need, but they can make the same money! Absolute geniuses!

What is of particular concern to those of us on this side of the chamber is that the coalition's plans—and this is another pernicious attack on ordinary Australians—state that they want to see Labor's fibre-to-the-home broadband rolled out in 'high-value suburbs'. So if you are rich enough to be able to spend a bit of money on broadband you get the best network. But if you are in the not-so-high-value suburbs you get the second-rate Mr Malcolm Turnbull network. The second-rate network; that is what Mr Turnbull is condemning the Australian public to.

Effectively, it means that people with more money will access the best broadband network in the world and people with less money will have to make do with an inferior broadband network. This is a betrayal in the 21st century of the most vital piece of infrastructure we need into the future. But Mr Turnbull has put forward his multi-technology mess as some kind of antidote to what he describes, in that other place, as 'Conrovianism'. Labor's fibre-to-the-home NBN—Conrovianism. It is a disease he talked about in the other place.

Well, the big and exciting news for Mr Turnbull is that the world's best broadband technology is being adopted around the world: in New Zealand, in Singapore, in China, in Japan, in Korea, in Spain, in France and in Indonesia—yes, in Indonesia as well. Mr Turnbull claims he knows more about this than the guys at Google. Well, I know who I am putting my money on. Google is building fibre-to-the-home networks in Kansas City, Provo and Austin, and is planning to expand to other cities across the United States. But, unfortunately, Conrovianism seems to be approaching pandemic levels around the world, because all those countries are building fibre networks. Not one of them is buying a copper network off an incumbent telco—not one of them.

I want to be very clear about this: Labor decided to have fibre to the home because the advice of the experts told us that fibre to the node was not a cost-effective path. The strategic review actually reveals that a committed and active management can deliver—this is in Mr Turnbull's own document—a fibre-to-the-home network on the basis of the last considered corporate plan, 2013-16. The strategic review has not made the case for a two-stage build as proposed by the coalition.

The committee's interim report recommends that NBN Co management be unshackled to continue rolling out fibre to the premises free from Mr Turnbull's political interference. I recommend the report to the senators, and I am sure I will be revisiting this issue.

**Domestic Violence**

**Senator WATERS** (Queensland) (20:43): I rise tonight to speak about a confronting issue, one that has been taboo because it is so awful and so unjust that Australians would
prefer to pretend that it is not happening. But it is time that all of us faced the awful truth about the scourge of violence against women and children happening right here in our homes, our streets, our cities and our nation.

It has been in the media a lot lately: the escalating numbers of women and children who have lost their lives through violence by men. So many women, so often. Those horrific stories have left the community shocked and outraged, and yet the cases that get reported are only a fraction of what Australian women face. Domestic violence is insidious, pervasive and mostly hidden.

Each year, May is Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month. The reported statistics, themselves bound to underestimate the real extent of the problem, are that one in five women have experienced domestic violence by a partner since the age of 15. In Australia, two-thirds of all women who are murdered are killed by their husband or live-in partner. Domestic violence is more than just physical or sexual abuse, of course; it is also about control. Domestic violence is about social, financial, emotional and verbal manipulation, and control to make women powerless.

It scares me that it can be so difficult for women to get out of situations of domestic violence. After years of abuse, a victim will often be isolated from their friends and family, cut off from financial support, have no options for alternative housing, and may be emotionally dependent on the person who has manipulated them into the situation. The work of organisations such as White Ribbon, which encourages boys and men to lead social change in the anti-domestic violence movement, is so important. Because of the prevalence of abuse in our society, we are going to need a significant cultural shift if we are going to curb domestic violence. Many men are aware of domestic violence occurring within their communities, and I applaud all those men who have stood strong amongst their peers to stop violence against women. And I encourage all men to do so whether at the pub, at work or in the home. It is vital we end this pattern by breaking the silence and speaking out against controlling or sexist behaviour and violence.

The Greens strongly support the White Ribbon campaign for working with men to try to deliver lasting cultural change. But it is also time for women to break the silence. We need to help our sisters, mothers, grandmothers and friends speak out against domestic violence, and support them in seeking help. We need to make the taboo public, to face its prevalence and to bravely say enough is enough. As one small contribution to domestic violence prevention month, I have started a social media campaign to encourage women to anonymously share their stories so that we can help increase awareness of the prevalence of domestic violence in our society. I committed to sharing those stories to make sure they get heard. And they are heartbreaking. I only have time to share a couple of them tonight. Obviously, they have been edited and the names have been changed.

A young woman in her 20s wrote to me. Let's call her 'Eve'. She said:

I have been with my now ex for almost 12 years. I have suffered at his hands, beatings, floggings, verbal abuse, emotional abuse.

I remember meeting him at 17. At first our relationship was great. Looking back, I realise the little things he did slowly made me lose confidence and gain fear for upsetting him.

He grew up thinking violent attacks on your partner were normal; I did not. By the time I wanted to get out of the relationship I was heavily pregnant and my family didn’t know how to support me. I was
so scared, I stayed. Being pregnant certainly didn't stop the violence. I can remember at eight months being whipped with a metal dog chain; survival and protecting my stomach were my only concerns. The lows were followed by the sorries and affection, the promises that never seemed to be fulfilled,

I loved the nice caring person he could be but feared the person he could become, drugs and alcohol making him a much more violent and aggressive person.

The violent beatings continued for years. Eve escaped and he followed. One night he beat her, kicked her and assaulted her two-year-old, for which he at least received a year in jail. She lost the baby that she was carrying due to the assault. After being in the relationship for 12 years, Eve, finally, permanently separated from her husband after escaping a particularly violent episode. She says:

I cannot live my life waiting for the day he decides to kill me. My kids need me.

Three weeks after the episode, she felt ashamed to go out in public because of her bruises. And when she did go out in public, she was judged. She was asked what she did to provoke him. It is up to this parliament to make sure that people like Eve get the support that they need and it is up to every Australian to ensure that women are never blamed for the abuse perpetrated against them.

Another story I will share tonight is from a woman that we will call 'Joanna'. She is worried that domestic violence is wrongly seen as a problem that only affects a certain type of person. She was brought up in a normal family, she had a normal social life with friends and she was happy with her body and with her life in general. When she was in her mid-twenties she met a man and, shortly afterwards, moved away from her home town to be with him. He turned out to be a heavy drinker. She said:

It was not long before he started telling me that I was overweight and had me scared to eat. I was only a size 8 and weighed 53 kilograms. Eventually he hit me, not once but a few times. He would hold my head up against the tiles in the shower and make me swallow water until I was choking. I left him; he was not happy. He threatened that he would make my life a misery if I did not go back to him, so I moved back in.

One night after he had been drinking with a mate at their home she says:

He asked me to come into the bedroom. He began to use my head and my body as a punching bag, throwing my head up against the heavy brick walls. I was screaming and begging for help but his mate stayed in the lounge room and ignored my pleas for help. Eventually, two off-duty policemen that lived upstairs came to my rescue. He ran off and they took me to hospital. I had a face like the elephant man and my nose was broken.

His mate was horrified when he saw me but he had sat by while it happened. This is where the problem lies: the acceptability of this type of behaviour amongst men. I moved out, he found me and threatened to kill me. I kept moving and, thankfully, he gave up. Twenty-five years later, I still cringe when I walk down the main street in case I see him.

As Joanna says, the problem lies with the acceptability of this type of behaviour amongst men. While the government's election commitment of $1 million for White Ribbon is welcome—assuming it is indeed in the budget papers tonight—much more is going to be needed to drive the deep cultural change needed to tackle domestic violence. The total federal budget for women's safety, which includes the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, was just $29½ million in this current financial year. By way of comparison, when the then government in 2011 decided to prioritise improving services and
social awareness and acceptance of mental health issues—another deserving issue—they put $2.2 billion towards the problem.

The Greens support the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children but we share the concerns of many groups working in the sector that the plan needs to be implemented more rapidly and it needs to be funded. The Greens are committed to supporting women’s shelters; funding integrated domestic violence response programs; increasing the Newstart allowance and single parenting payments—unlike what we saw tonight—and addressing the rental affordability crisis that sees women and children escaping violence condemned to homelessness because of the shortage of up to half a million affordable and available rental properties. We also need to ensure that there is real affordable and available access to legal justice for women and we need to address the even greater amount of domestic violence that Aboriginal women face. We need to double the funding for Indigenous family violence prevention programs and to increase the funding for Indigenous legal services.

We need to give women and children the support they need and give them the ability to escape from an abusive household. They then need to be able to afford to stay free from violence. A budget that does not do that is a budget that continues the silence on domestic violence and condemns those women and children to violence. The Greens and domestic violence prevention experts across the country will be scrutinising the budget papers released tonight to see where this government stands when it comes to stopping the scourge of domestic violence in our communities. When a government decides to spend $12 billion on joint strike fighters, it had better find some more money to help women escape violence and to make preventing domestic violence a national priority.

During this month I will be seeking to hear more from the organisations working directly with women and children impacted by domestic violence and to learn more about what our governments and the broader community need to do. I will be visiting victim support centres and be briefed by community organisations working in Queensland, and I encourage all senators to do the same. No-one should live in fear and enough is enough. It is time for all of us to be the answer.

World War I

Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (20:52): This is the fifth of six speeches I intend to give to the parliament regarding my grandfather’s role on the Western Front during World War I. It is entitled ‘France Again and the War Ends’. In my previous World War I serialisation my grandfather, Sergeant Edward Farrell, was stationed at the Overseas Training Battalion in Longbridge Deverill, Wiltshire, in England. He still enjoyed occasional leave, often using this time to travel to London. In one letter to his fiancee, my grandmother Emily, Edward reported on an air raid. He wrote:

I was as scared as anything and my teeth played God Save the King. We had not long to wait. The anti-aircraft guns became louder and nearer until they had the barrage right above London. Hundreds of searchlights groped trying to pick up the Germans. When one would nail them several others would be on him quick and you could see a speck away up in the air. Above the terrible din and the whirring noise of whistles, the falling bombs could be heard and then it would become the explosion. Well, this kept up for about an hour or more. When the guns eased up a bit they sounded the all clear and my pulse gradually came down from 250.
Edward was about to embark for France for the second time, a posting that filled him with little joy. On 31 May Edward again found himself near the frontline and on 11 June he wrote to Emily:

Last night there were almost 30 Allied aeroplanes over our lines at once, including the little party of night bombers on their way across the Rhine. We camped on the fringe of a nice thick wood which the sun does not penetrate. A nice comfortable dugout but just now there is a summer shower on. All around us are some of our big guns going day and night. They make an awful row. At all times the buzz of the plane is in the air. The Germans drop shells in the vicinity intermittently during the day and a few bombs at night. High up can be heard the 15 inch shells on their 16 mile or so journey into deserted Amiens.

On 19 June he sounded very deflated in his regular letter to Emily:

Had painful news tonight as a mate was killed yesterday. Every day the sordid list comes through of the number of killed and wounded. It is just like an invoice or a letter that would go through your hands at the office. Isn't this business rotten? Often I think of the painful telegram at the other end to someone.

On 9 July Edward wrote from Amiens:

By joves, I saw a nice sight in the sky the other evening. Over 60 of our planes all visible all at once.

In early August Edward wrote to Emily:

Am in a bonzer dugout just now deep down in the bowels of the earth. It is just about bombproof, I think, and that's saying a lot. Quieter in the air lately as the weather has been too crook for flying. We get a thunderstorm nearly every day and plenty of rain and mud. The day before yesterday I saw one of our airmen bring down two German balloons in flames. I see some of our own treated the same too every now and then.

On 10 August Edward headed a letter to Emily with 'The Germans on the run'. It was, of course, the Battle of Amiens, and over four days Australians won five Victoria Crosses. 'I would like to drop into Glenelg very much and be able to tell you all about the two days of chasing the Germans as I could never describe it on paper,' he wrote to Emily. 'The grimness, the grandeur, the awful scenes of carnage and yet the queer fascination of it all.' After the battle had concluded the French President of the Allied War committee, George Clemenceau, visited the headquarters of the Australian 4th division near Corbie and he said: 'When the Australians came to France the French people expected a great deal of you. We knew that you would fight a real fight but we did not know from the beginning that you would astonish the whole continent. I shall go back tomorrow and say to my countrymen, "I have seen the Australians, I have looked in their faces. I know that these men will fight alongside us again until the cause for which we are all fighting is safe."'

On 31 August Edward wrote:

Strike, we have been kept well on the move lately. Don't know when I have slept in the same hole two nights running. We are in a crowd of hurrying Germans across the Somme. He is not lingering much as we are making it too warm for him on the flanks. It is very sickening, though. A few days ago and just as we got into the front line it was early hours of the morning. A few of us were going through the trench that the Germans were shelling. We had that 'hurry on' that is noticeable where the shells are and I am bothered if I do not stand on a stone or something and twist my ankle. Crawled along and stuck it out for about an hour but then had to go to the aid post and stop behind. It is not very bad but I won't be able to carry on for a couple of days yet.

He also wrote several days later:
We have had some severe storms and a couple of mornings ago in the early hours it was a trifle over the odds. Some lovely thunder and then came the gale that wrecked our happy home and we got washed out.

The next letter was dated 6 October:

Events are moving all right. You people probably know these things more fully and earlier than we do. What we do know and know very thoroughly is what is going on along the ridges and in the trenches in our own vicinity. The other night I know the Germans punctuated a Hail Mary from me with bombs—while I huddled close—very close—into a hole half full of cold water.

Later, when he left the front line:

Perhaps the nicest thing back here is that there are no air raids. And there are apple trees all around us, and of course they get plenty of attention. The Froggies don't seem to take much care of the gardens and leave the trees and ground to go wild as they please. All the same, they seem to bear fruit very well.

Mrs Froggy in the farmhouse is a dear old soul except when the boys pinch her apples—which is all the time.

We get milk and butter off her too, and it was tres bon having dinkum milk on porridge or Anzac pudding. Butter, too, and toast—yes, truly. We get the milk for about 5 pence a pint and the butter about 5 or 6 shillings a pound.

On 17 November Edward wrote joyfully to Em:

The war is over!

Have only one object in view now, and that is to get home and I'd like to hop on an aeroplane this minute labelled 72 Jetty Road.

Suppose it will be a few months yet, though, and we don't know anything definite yet except this—we're off this week to the Rhine garrison in Germany somewhere in the vicinity of Koblenz and will go through Belgium—and I suppose there'll be a bit of marching too.

But it was not to be. After marching and travelling by troop train around France and Belgium, he wrote on 13 December that he was heading back to England.

In London on 22 December he wrote to Em describing the last days of the war:

As things warmed up—and at Bellincourt they did warm up too—I was able to shake off the horrible feeling of death. But I did get a piece of shell or a bullet—don't know which—through my water bottle that day.

He reported to Em:

I find London has altered very little as yet, except as regards the street lighting. The streets are now fairly bright at night and there is no more restriction on the windows being blacked out.

Everyone you meet is glad the war is finished—but they still retain vivid memories of air raids. No wonder the women folk here went mad on Armistice Day.

The last letter, from London, was dated 29 December—and it is now history that Sergeant Edward Farrell returned home and married his Em.

Western Australia Senate Election

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (21:02): I rise tonight to pay my respects to the people who took on the 2014 election campaign in Western Australia in support of the Greens—took it on and won. Senator Milne was asked in an interview last year what objectives the Greens were setting for the 2013 election. She predicted we could win back every sitting green MP, including Adam Bandt in Melbourne, with a chance of gaining a new
senator in other states, including Victoria. With the welcome arrival of Senator Janet Rice a few weeks from now and a big swing to Adam in Melbourne, it seemed that we had done it—except, as it turned out, in WA we were hanging on by our fingernails and slipping bit by bit.

Without the urgent assistance of Brian Walters, Mark Cox and a small team of Greens volunteers with legal experience to secure the recount, the story would have ended there. The disappearance of a stack of votes towards the end of the recount, however, threw the whole process into confusion. Our legal team of Ron, Francis and Mark got us through the High Court rollercoaster with the only outcome that did not involve some form of disenfranchisement: a fresh election for the Western Australian Senate.

While this was all unfolding, Australians were getting a sharp dose of political shock treatment from the incoming government, an administration composed almost entirely of reactionary middle-aged white men that immediately began taking leave of its election commitments and its senses. Polls were turning sharply against the Liberals and the Nationals even as the temperatures rose through the angry summer of 2013-14.

Unknown to most, small teams of volunteers were moving door to door through Perth's suburbs in the heat of December and January, asking what people thought of the government's plans to dismantle our clean energy laws. Ogy Simic's careful organising laid the template for what was to come. As it became increasingly obvious that we were headed for a new election, the party put its fortunes in the hands of one Jess McColl—I think, the single best decision we made throughout the whole course of the campaign. Senator Rachel Siewert, my friend, mentor and Western Australian Senate colleague drove a grounded collaboration that I now really look forward to continuing.

Under Jess's extraordinary management, the team began to scale: first with one of the most motivated and motivating people I have ever met—the formidable Tim Losurdo. Jess, Ogy and Tim built the core of a strong, flexible organising model that was being stress-tested under the pressures of an election campaign even as they were building it. The months that followed tell the story. This small team inspired 35 neighbourhood organisers to get out every few days and have face-to-face conversations, one door knocked at a time, street to street, until there were 300 people on the streets and knocking on 28,000 doors. This was backed by our home-grown research team, led by Chilla and Norm, to make sure our efforts were well targeted and that no-one's time was wasted.

While this was happening, the genius technology team were busy—Ant and Grahame in particular, building a sophisticated electorate mapping system and a full-featured call centre in 48 hours out of cast-offs and gaffer tape. This allowed a rapidly expanding team of 250 volunteers at two sites in WA to make 50,000 phone calls over the course of the campaign. By election day we had 12 distributed call centres interstate with volunteers ringing into WA to have simple conversations about the importance of every single vote.

The after-images of the campaign have now begun to run together: being roped up a 40-metre Karri tree in Challar forest to spend brief moments on a platform in the canopy and, nearby, the levelled stump of a tree at least 300 years old, felled and fed into a wood chipper a few weeks earlier. I recall the management and staff of Solar Gain, who may lose their jobs and their business if this government goes ahead and sabotages the renewable energy target. Some of the strongest memories remind me of how many creative artists and musicians came to our aid—people like Richard and Prue and the folks at 303 for the crowd source remix of
Our Speech, or Looch and the screen-printing team who simply appeared and got to work. This was by far the most fun you could have on a campaign. There were Eloise, Sam, Travis and Leslie and all the bands who threw in their time and energy for the ScottStock benefit at the Rosemount Hotel; Gillian Catlow and the performers who made the Concert for Common Sense such a beautiful evening; and Anton and the Death Disco Crew with the improbable and utterly mad Ludapalooza at Capital nightclub—with warm thanks to Emma Sulley for photography. Thank you to John and Danni, for all your support and for everything you do, and to Abbe May for opening the His Majesties 2.0 event with such heart. The old story about Perth's isolation provoking a vibrant and highly original music and arts scene—it is all true.

To the home team, the people who put everything into this work: I cannot thank you enough. Trish, Sarah, Chantal and Ray, backed by our office interns and by wonderful volunteers—Amy and Troy, Molly and Ruth, Sebastian and Guy in particular—kept everything moving in the thick of the campaign. We were entirely fortunate to welcome talented visitors from interstate—Shaun, Brad, Roseanne, Anna, Holly and Paris—each bringing a specific talent or a specific skill, or even a specific whisky.

We took a strong and diverse line-up of Senate candidates into this campaign. To Christine, Ian, Sarah, Jordon and Judith: one day, I hope, you will get to speak your own minds in this chamber.

Somehow we managed to be everywhere. The office crew, Rowena and David, Jenny, Jay and Jean, went above and beyond. Robyn managed to get us a presence at practically every community event in the state, and Ozzy was there long after everyone else had packed and left to run the scrutineering effort.

In the weeks leading up to the election, Patrick, Tim and Ryan and the team spent hundreds of hours marshalling booth volunteers, so that when Giz and the crew at the warehouse took delivery of tens of thousands of how-to-vote cards, we could land the best-coordinated election day presence we have ever seen.

Thank you to my dear family: to Graham and Jude, for the long hours in the warehouse and creativity behind the scenes, and to Glen, for bringing Riley to enjoy his first ever democracy sausage on 5 April.

We owe a debt to you, Noel Nannup, for your words and inspiration as we launched the next phase of the WA 2.0 project in front of 900 people at His Majesties Theatre: this is why I do this work. Thank you to Rose for bringing it all together, and for the care taken by our policy team, led by Chantal Caruso and Clare Ozich, to inform our ideas with evidence and creativity, and to groups like Sustainable Energy Now, who again inform this work with a deep reservoir of evidence and industry experience. Sarah, backed up by our media team, including Redman, Sarah and others, then took this work and got it on TV and in the paper, lifting our profile even further.

A number of my party room colleagues made it out west: Richard, Pete, Larissa and Penny. To Adam and the Melbourne crew: thank you for advice and inspiration. I cannot overemphasise how much heart it gave to people in WA to know that the whole country was looking out for them.

Finally, thank you to Senator Milne and your team, including those who made it out west to lend a hand directly—Emma, Erin, Peter and Wendy. Senator Christine Milne celebrates 25
years in politics today. We simply could not have done this without your advice and inspiration—Christine, this one is for you.

We recorded the strongest result we have ever achieved in Western Australia: 15.6 per cent. That is nearly 200,000 people who have trusted us with their vote, many of them for the first time. For every two Liberal voters in Western Australia, there is a now a Green voter. In Foreign Minister Julie Bishop's seat of Curtin, the Greens outpolled Labor and now make up just under a quarter of the vote. In South Fremantle, we are half the vote, and in Subiaco North, 40 per cent. We are fully a third of the vote in Scarborough Central, Darlington and Melville booths. And this not a simple inner-city phenomenon. Our vote doubled in Beldon and Nollamara, and some of our best results were recorded in Broome, on 27 per cent; Margaret River, on 36 per cent; and Denmark, on 33 per cent. This is at least in part due to those people who spent every spare minute over those final weeks to walk the streets and connect to their communities. They have started something that goes on well beyond this campaign.

So, to you, tonight, I get to say thank you—in particular, to those young people who have trusted us with your first vote: that really matters to us. And to older voters or those with other political affiliations who shook off your dismay at the degraded state of politics and pitched in to help get us there: thank you. I am proud of this result. I am proud of the people who delivered it, and I am daunted at how far we yet have to travel.

I also would like to thank and acknowledge those other candidates, their staff and their families, whose lives were also put on hold through this entire process, and to also acknowledge my colleague Louise Pratt, who is here tonight, who deserved at least another six years in this place.

I got a text message from Jess Beckerling at Challar Forest last week. Those campaigners have prevailed. With the first heavy rains of the season in the south-west, there will be no further destruction of that precious place. Challar stands, at least for now.

This is the beginning. Now we build a movement to send Mr Abbott into the history books as a failed one-term Prime Minister. If the Western Australian election of 2014 showed anything, it is that people do not just want a different government; they want a different kind of government. And it is up to us to deliver that together. I thank the chamber.

Budget

Senator O’NEILL (New South Wales) (21:12): Today the budget reveals the truly twisted priorities of the Abbott government. They doubled the deficit. They forged a Commission of Audit report written exclusively for and by the top end of town, and invented a budget crisis as a cover to impose an ideological agenda on an unsuspecting public. And today, the coalition have now officially drunk their own Kool Aid. Make no mistake: this is an extreme budget from an extreme government completely out of touch with ordinary Australians.

I am going to make a prediction: to paraphrase British politician Gerald Kaufman, this budget is 'the longest suicide note in history'. To every coalition marginal seat backbencher, sweating profusely at the prospect of telling their constituents to go and get stuffed, essentially, I say this: voting for the budget is like a turkey voting for an early Christmas. You will be voting for a lie—a stunning mistruth, which each and every one of you repeated ad nauseam prior to the election; a now absolutely broken promise of no new taxes.
Despite railing in opposition about the need to keep your commitments, Tony Abbott and the coalition have now cynically chosen to abandon all pretence of keeping their word. Let me be clear: this is a budget of entirely broken promises. It is a book of bad ideas, and, sadly, a manuscript of shattered dreams.

Families are shuddering in fear at the cold, cynical, deceptive mess that this Abbott regime has unleashed on them: the schoolkids bonus slashed, Gonski school funding abandoned, the family tax benefit cut—and for what? So that millionaires can get paid $50,000 in taxpayers' cash to have children. What a joke.

Pensioners and workers are shaking with anger at the sheer hypocrisy this government expects the Australian people to swallow. Tradies will be forced to keep on the tools until 70—70! Commuters on the Central Coast and in regions around Australia are looking at getting on a train and working until they are 70—commuting until they are 70. My heart goes out to these workers everywhere at this cruel and callous prospect. It is a heartless policy, written in the comfort of an office on cushioned chairs surrounded by air conditioning and, at the end of it all, celebrated with a Cuban cigar or two. Put this to a vote on a work site, and you would be kicked off instantly.

I do not know about you, but I think most 70-year-olds would be hard pressed to put in eight hours, five days a week, of hard manual labour in the hot sun. But that is exactly what this budget is seeking to do to so many, especially the army of tradies who hail from places like where I live on the Central Coast and other regional areas around the country. That is the option that they have before them—that or falling into poverty.

By introducing this budget, the coalition has shown a blatant disregard for those amongst us who do manual labour. The increase in the pension age will put more and more older Australians into poverty, forcing them onto the lower Newstart payment for years. To expect ageing bodies to endure such backbreaking work is an absolute stretch of possibilities, and it is an insult to those people, who have already given so much through their hard work to this nation. But to force people to suffer the indignity of unemployment instead of the dignity of the old age pension is a really cruel joke.

To add insult to injury, pensioners, families and hardworking commuters have been driven to despair by Tony Abbott’s great big new taxes. Despite promising before the election, ‘I absolutely guarantee to the Australian people, absolutely guarantee to the Australian people, that the tax burden will be less under a coalition government,’ Tony Abbott tonight is hitting families, pensioners, workers and commuters with great big new tax hikes. These new taxes represent a clear and unequivocal set of broken promises.

The GP tax, the ‘deceit’ tax and the petrol tax are three pillars of the coalition’s deception of Australian voters. Australia will be the poorer and the sicker for it. The deficit and petrol taxes are a tax on hard work, a tax on aspiration and a tax that hurts the very people who put their all in to provide for their families, to save for a well-earned holiday at the end of the year and to give help to their children and provide for them the best opportunities for their future.

The GP tax is a particularly cruel blow to Australians, who, prior to the election were promised, over and over and over, that a vote for the Liberal Party would mean ‘no cuts to education’, ‘no cuts to health’, and ‘no cuts to pensions’. There was simply no truth in those comments. It is simply cost shifting by the Abbott government that will make health care
much less equitable and much less affordable for every Australian. Make no mistake: with the GP tax, the Abbott government is dismantling universal health care as we know it in this country.

There is no way to put Labor's outrage at this GP tax other than to say we are at war with the Abbott government. Labor will now at this time, as we have had to in the past, fight for the sickest and the poorest. We completely reject Abbott's tax on sick people, asking the acutely and chronically ill to pay and pay and pay now, in their illness and distress, for research in the future. It is simply inexplicable. Australians should get the health care they need, not just the health care that Tony Abbott has decided they can afford. Tony Abbott's GP tax will certainly mean that more parents will be out of pocket when they take their sick kids to the doctor, or families simply will not get there when they are in need.

These great big new taxes are a very shallow, knee-jerk reaction from a government that knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing. Investing in the people of this nation, investing in health and education, is clearly a foreign concept to these people, who in this budget have ripped over $80 billion from education and health over the next 10 years. I would think that even members of Joe Hockey's elusive North Sydney Forum are wondering today whether they are getting their money's worth. But we do not know who they are, so we will not be able to ask them.

In perhaps the cruellest cut of all, it is with a heavy heart that I note the Abbott government's abolition of Youth Connections. This program has seen more than 90,000 young people from across Australia—and hundreds of locals—access hands-on skills training, educational opportunities and personal support to help them get back into work or school. For less than $80 million a year, this vital program, Youth Connections, supported over 67 organisations across 113 service regions right across the country. They employed 750 specialist youth workers. This program will close by the end of the year, its students locked out of education, their needs ignored and their dreams shattered by a cynical government that seeks to rip the heart out of this country.

Cutting these sorts of programs—and there are tens of them—is not a saving at all. We all pay a very heavy price when young people slip through the cracks. These are more than cracks; these are gaping holes in the social fabric of Australia that have been constructed by a cynical government that simply does not care about ordinary working Australians. This has been, sadly, a time of youth unemployment, and cutting services to young people is incredibly short-sighted.

Australians are not going to forget this budget of broken promises and shattered dreams, and certainly the young people who are now going to be forced to be unemployed for six months before they can collect any support from the government are going to be extremely disadvantaged. Talk about taking hope away from a generation! You could not have configured a better model.

Labor will fight for ordinary Australians. Labor will fight this callous budget. Labor will fight these sickly tax hikes at every turn. And we will fight for those people who, sadly, were deluded into believing the promises of a Prime Minister who said, over and over and over again, that there would be no cuts to education. He has cut. He said there would be no cuts to health. He has cut. He said there would be no change to pensions. Well, they are changed forever with the mantle of this government and its budget that it has put before the Australian
people tonight. It is a disgrace and it is impacting on Australians in the most shameful way. Labor will be fighting this budget tooth and nail.

Budget

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (21:22): Tonight, dreams have come true for the coalition in the budget that has been delivered. Wealthy Australians will be left largely untouched by this budget, but disadvantaged Australians will be even more disadvantaged because of it. Australians who are already doing it tough will be punished and will do it tougher. If you are old, if you are a student, if you are disabled, if you are unemployed or if you are sick, you have been targeted in this budget by a callous government that promised one thing before the election and did the opposite after the election. Despite the promises made by the Prime Minister before the election, we have seen attacks on health and education and we have seen the introduction of new taxes. There is a new tax, the so-called debt levy tax, despite the clear promise of the Prime Minister himself that there would be no new taxes as part of the 2014 budget. There will also be a freeze or a reduction on family tax benefits, directly targeted at poorer Australians.

The clearest indication yet that this government hates Medicare and the universal healthcare system, of which Australia should be so proud, has appeared in this budget. It has always been clear to Labor that the coalition would like to bring about the demise of Medicare, the demise of universal affordable health care for all Australians. Tonight we have seen the introduction of the $7 co-contribution payment. That is $7 that Australians will have to pay if they want to visit a GP and seek some other services. All of the evidence is that having to pay an up-front payment for medical care dissuades people from seeking that care. All of the evidence is that preventative health care and early intervention prevents escalation of illness and, of course, prevents escalation of the costs associated with treating illnesses at more advanced stages. Seven dollars per visit to a GP is not much on the salaries of those who work in this place, but for a family or a person on a low income it is a great barrier to better health outcomes.

Introducing a co-payment for GP visits will not see any significant cost savings. It will see the beginning of the end of Medicare. Medicare was introduced by the Labor government, and we understand that is the primary reason the coalition government wants to get rid of it: it was a good Labor initiative that benefits all Australians. The groups of people who most benefit from universal health care like Medicare are the most disadvantaged groups in our communities, including and in particular Indigenous people, low-income earners, those with severe mental health problems and the aged. All of those people will be hurt by the government's announced $7 co-payment.

There has been discussion as part of this budget that Australia's healthcare system is careering out of control. That is not true; it is not factual. Australia spends 9.1 per cent of its gross domestic product on health care, and that is comparable to other countries such as Sweden, Britain, Spain, New Zealand, Canada and France. They all spend more than we do in Australia. The United States spends much more, at 17 per cent of its GDP.

The biggest growth in Medicare Benefits Schedule expenditure has been growth in visits to specialists, not to GPs. To prevent visits to specialists you need to ensure that people have access to preventative health care and primary health care that ensures that they do not get to
the stage of an illness where they do need to visit a specialist and incur the significant costs to the health system.

I was particularly disappointed tonight to get confirmation at last that Medicare Locals are to be shut down by this government. That is despite clear, articulated promises from the health minister and the Prime Minister himself that Medicare Locals would not be attacked in this budget, but they have been. Tonight we heard that 61 Medicare Locals are to go. I would like to point out to the Senate some of the great benefits of Medicare Locals and, in particular, a Medicare Local with which I am familiar in South Australia. The Country South SA Medicare Local is based in Murray Bridge, in the federal electorate of Barker. I visited that organisation last year and saw the value of what it does in coordinating primary healthcare services and preventative healthcare services for a rural and regional community. Barker is a seat that extends from the Barossa Valley, through the Murray and down to the south-east of South Australia—all areas which struggle to provide healthcare services by virtue of distance and the difficulty in attracting healthcare providers to those regions.

The Country South SA Medicare Local works cooperatively with GPs, aged-care services, ancillary care services, nurses and primary healthcare deliverers to ensure that the region's needs are met and that the services that the community needs in the electorate of Barker are delivered in the most efficient way. In the short time that the Country South SA Medicare Local has been in operation it has initiated a number of great programs. I would like to outline a couple of those to the Senate, because they are the programs that are now at risk because of this government's attack on health services. The Medicare Local strongly supports Aboriginal healthcare programs and empowerment of the local Aboriginal community. It works in partnership with Indigenous organisations to ensure that healthcare services are targeted at that Indigenous community and make the best use of the services that are available.

The Country South SA Medicare Local has also funded a number of mental health programs throughout the region—as I said, from the Riverland to the south-east—and provides services throughout Mt Gambier. Those services are across the disorder spectrum, from high prevalence low-level disorders such as anxiety and depression through to low-prevalence complex disorders requiring clinical intervention. If it were not for the Medicare Local coordinating the provision of those services, many regional South Australians would miss out on services, particularly to assist them with mental illness. The Medicare Local has also provided funding to general practices in the area for enhanced after-hours services and it has assisted providers to set up and run services where they are needed and at times when people can access them.

Another great innovative trial conducted by Country South SA Medicare Local was to work with a nurse practitioner model of care so that patients can receive access to GP services utilising a nurse practitioner. That has greatly increased the services available in regional areas—where, as we all know, it can be hard to attract a GP workforce. Another initiative of Country South SA Medicare Local is the work that is done on providing health care services by telehealth and e-health. I have seen those programs in action and understand what a great innovation it is, particularly for rural and regional South Australians in areas like the seat of Barker, who otherwise would not have access to those very important primary health care services.
Those are some of the things that Country South SA Medicare Local has provided and they are some of the programs that are now at risk because of this government's budget that we have witnessed tonight. The people of Barker have been dudded by this government, by the Prime Minister, by the health minister and by their federal member of parliament, Mr Tony Pasin. The Prime Minister promised before the election that there would be no cuts to health or education, and no new taxes. He said, 'We will do what we have said we will do,' and then did exactly the opposite. He has introduced new taxes and he has made cuts to health services. He has targeted Medicare Locals, which are a great Labor innovation.

I am sure that further examination of the budget by other senators will reveal more broken promises by this government and Prime Minister. I can assure the people of Barker that Labor will continue to hold this government to account. We will detect all of the broken promises made by this Prime Minister, by his ministers and by members of parliament who purport to serve the people of Barker but tonight have left the people of Barker disadvantaged and worse off.

**Nigeria**

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (21:32): On 14 April, 200 schoolgirls, most of them between the ages of 16 and 18, were abducted in an overnight raid on the government girls secondary school in Chibok, north-eastern Nigeria. This abduction was claimed publicly in a video by the Boko Haram terrorist group, which is well-known in that part of Africa. The group's leader, Abubakar Shekau, in his video, threatened to sell the girls into sexual slavery or forced marriage. He said: 'I abducted your girls. I will sell them in the market, by Allah. Women are slaves. I want to ensure my Muslim brothers that Allah says slaves are permitted in Islam. I will marry off women at the age of 12. I will marry off a girl at the age of nine.'

This leader has spread his message of terror across the world. And it is not a recent activity. Naturally, the world has been appalled by the abduction of these young women. 'Boko Haram', from the Hausa language, means 'Western education is a sin'. This particular group has been active in terrorism in the region for a number of years. To the best of our knowledge, the group was established in 2002. It has a particular strategy of targeting children in education because, as the name suggests, it has a particular view about the access of young people to education which may move them out poverty and into opportunities for the future.

This is not peculiar to Nigeria. In fact, Nigeria has a long history of supporting and acknowledging the role of education. Living in Australia are many people of Nigerian background who are very highly educated. These people have joined their voices to the international group that is saying what has happened is horrific and must stop.

In this place we have talked for many years about the particular need for young girls to have access to education. Natasha Stott-Despoja, our new Ambassador for Women and Girls, has written an article in which she has linked this activity in Nigeria to some of the international statistics. This activity is not hidden and it is happening across the world. We know that 65 million girls across the world are out of school and, globally, one out of five girls of lower secondary school age does not attend school. Every year, 10 million girls are forced or coerced into marriage. That is about one girl every three seconds. One in three girls in the developing world is married by the age of 18, and one in seven is married before they reach the age of 15.
Through the activities of the Millennium Development Goals, countries across the world, including Nigeria, have worked intensively within their own communities to look at the issues of education and forced marriage. This abduction has brought into stark relief the whole concern about people hiding behind culture to actually take part in war. Across the world, there has been a response, talking about the fact that this particular terrorist group proclaims that they are living the Muslim life, that they are proclaiming their support for Allah. The Muslim people in Australia, and across the world, reject this activity. Unfortunately, this public focus has reinforced some of the hatred and division across the world that blames Islam for activities that are strictly reprehensible and are hated by the people who practise the Muslim faith.

In the social media response that has grown up in response to this, there has been an outburst that says: 'We want to bring back our girls'. It is positive and encouraging to see people across the world joining in this campaign, including people in this place. What we see also is that this is unifying practising Muslims, who are feeling that their own faith is being attacked by the behaviour of Boko Haram. The social media campaign has also unleashed views that I find particularly offensive. Some of the comments that have been put on social media, in response to the issue that have come out of the work by Natasha Stott-Despoja and others, claim that the response is building up a gender divide.

There is no contest about what is horrific. This group is a terrorist group and its activities in Nigeria and in the neighbouring countries have attacked boys and girls. There is no contest here. We are not favouring one gender over another. What we have seen is a response to an horrific incident, and this particular abduction of 200 young women at the same time is a very blatant public attention-grabbing exercise by the group. It has achieved that—it has actually focused attention on the issue. But this should not lead to people who are looking at the incident fighting amongst themselves by saying, 'This group has also attacked young men.' What we are talking about is the issue of terror, and what has occurred in Nigeria in this case is a terrorist activity.

The media has revealed that even since 14 April, when this abduction took place, there have been other issues in Nigeria. People have been killed by car bombs and other young women had been attacked. We know that this group is trying to make their name in the terror hierarchy to say that they now have power in the group. We appreciate the fact that nations across the world have offered assistance. We know that there is support from the UK, from the US and France—and I believe only as recently as this afternoon, Israel—where specialist groups have said they will share their response to the issue with the Nigerian government.

The impressive thing about how this came to the attention of the western world was not that this was announced publicly by the Nigerian government. Rather, the parents of the young women themselves used their media contacts and social media to tell the world what had happened to their daughters. And it was the resilience, the passion and the commitment of those parents that ensured that this was not hidden. With the assistance of people working in Nigeria, they were able to get this message across the world so that we can all be part of sending our support to those parents and families to ensure that we share their demand to bring back their girls. I believe that that shows that there is cooperation now, certainly in terms of looking at the activities of the terrorist group and working together in an antiterrorist
strategic way, to ensure that activities such as these are identified as illegal and that every effort will be made to bring the perpetrators to justice.

This morning there was a video that came out from the leader of this group, Boko Haram, which portrayed the 'amazing conversion' of a number of the young women to the Muslim faith. Obviously, it neglected to identify that the young women at the school were both Muslim and Christian, so this was not specifically taking people and forcing them into the Muslim faith. But in a strong history of 'victor takes all', we have seen forced conversions into religion over centuries of warfare and terrorism. One of the saddest things I have ever seen was this morning's video with young women standing up, portraying that they are now changing their faith and they understand that they should now be married and move away from education. That is a message to all of us that see that to know that this is wrong. We can never respond to terrorism. We must share in the international response which says we will work together to ensure that the girls are brought back. And when they are brought back, we must ensure that they are given support in their families and their communities. All too often when women are caught up in acts of terrorism or are victims of war they are then lost when returned to community. I do not believe that will happen in Nigeria, because in fact it is the families who have stood up most strongly for their own children.

When we use social media, we must use it to ensure that we work for unity and to bring forward a strong message. To put our own prejudices and our own hatred into the social media means that the people who are acting as terrorists have actually won. We are better than that in the international community. We can respond to this horror by ensuring that we understand that what has happened is wrong. These young women need to be found. They need to be supported, and I join my voice to the international campaign to bring back the girls.

**Trade Unions**

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (21:42): I want to speak tonight about the Abbott government's ideological bent against unions. We have seen an unprecedented attack on unions in this country by the Abbott government. Of course, when we talk about fraudulent activity, it applies right across our community and no-one on this side of the House wants to protect anyone who has broken the law. The law is there to act in people's best interests and make sure that those who are guilty are brought to justice.

But that is not what the Abbott government is on about. They are attacking unions in an unprecedented way in our community. Unions are one of the pillars of our civil society and unions do contribute to a civil society, to a fairer society. But the Abbott government wants a new society where individuals compete against each other and fend for themselves. And after tonight's disgraceful budget, the Abbott government is very clear that it wants to build that sort of individual society. What I know and what I know voters in Western Australia will realise when they read the papers tomorrow and listen to the news tonight, is that for a whole lot of people in our community, life just got a whole lot tougher.

But this ideological bent against unions was well and truly on display today when Senator Back got up to speak in defence of the government's Fair Work amendments. Senator Back forgot to mention a number of the key points that came out of the Senate inquiry into the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Bill in his attack against unions. He forgot to mention that in fact, leading business groups and unions are opposed to the government's Fair Work
(Registered Organisations) Act amendments. But of course, what we know about the Abbott government, borne out by their budget tonight, is that they never let facts get in the way of a good story. Labor introduced a Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Bill. When we did that, the Abbott government, and indeed Senator Back and others, accused Labor of lacking accountability because they believed the time frames were too short. Indeed, in his speech in the second reading debate today, Senator Back accused Mr Shorten of 'laziness and incompetence.' This brings me to the heart of what I want to speak about tonight, which is the laziness and incompetence of the Abbott government.

The government would have us believe that good unions are okay and that they want workers to belong to these sorts of unions. But those of us on this side are not fooled by that rhetoric—not one bit. Senator Back in his speech today devoted a lot of time to talking about Craig Thomson and Michael Williamson—former officials of the Health Services Union who have been dealt with quite properly under the laws of this land. The good senator went into the details of their fraudulent activities and he mentioned the amount of a million dollars, and then he flipped the picture and he started to paint a picture of his mother when she was in a Perth nursing home. Senator Back said quite correctly that his mother had received the best possible care, and he said what an excellent job the aged-care workers had done in looking after his mother. Senator Back went on to say that they had seen their union fees going for many years to the sorts of activities that Mr Williamson and Mr Thomson had either admitted to or had been found guilty of. Again the Abbott government has shown their complete laziness and incompetence, because the union Senator Back was referring to was not the Health Services Union; in fact, it was my union, United Voice. So here he is, casting aspersions upon a good union in Western Australia, somehow trying to convince people in this place and those listening that those 'excellent carers'—in his words—are members of the Health Services Union when in fact they are members of United Voice.

Senator Back went on to say he interviewed a woman from Eastern Europe, and he said that her union fees had been misused by the union and had gone to the likes of Craig Thomson and Mr Williamson. Again we see the laziness and the incompetence of the Abbott government. If they had just checked the simple facts—'Gee, I wonder if it is the Health Services Union in Western Australia'. No, it is not. It is United Voice. Senator Back owes an apology to the members of United Voice who work in that aged-care facility and to all the other members he slurred with his comments. In fact, I would go further and say that he should make an apology to the ordinary members on the executive of United Voice for accusing them of fraudulent activity.

But wait, there is more; Senator Back did not stop there. He went on to tell us a story about the Australian Workers Union that he heard in Kalgoorlie last year. He was told a story about a million dollars going missing. Senator Cameron was in the Senate at the time and he interjected and was very clear in his speech subsequently referring to Senator Back. He said that if Senator Back had information about what he alleged was fraudulent activity around this million dollars, he should take it to the police. In fact, Senator Cameron challenged him and asked him whether he had. Rather than sitting here, under the privilege of parliamentary privilege, accusing unions like United Voice and the Australian Workers Union of some kind of fraudulent activity, if he has got proof in relation to the Australian Workers Union, he
should take it to them. I spoke to the Australian Workers Union today, and it is a bit of an urban myth. So I suggest again that the Abbott government get its facts right.

Then Senator Back attacked the MUA. The MUA has just spent 12 months trying to negotiate for deckhands for a tugboat operator in Port Hedland. For 12 months they have been negotiating an enterprise agreement, and they used the legitimate clauses under the Fair Work Act and surveyed workers and members of that union, who agreed unanimously to take industrial action. And somehow, according to Senator Back, that is wrong—when after 12 months of negotiation members fail to reach agreement with their employer, they take a ballot and agree to take industrial action. Again, don't let the facts get in the way of a good story: Senator Back forgot to mention that they have to give their employer three days' notice of intended industrial action. As for the other facts Senator Back missed out, let's see what those members are not able to get their employer to agree to. These deckhands currently work 12 hours a day—and, under the Abbott government's proposal, they will be doing that until they are 70. Not only that; they work not five days straight, not seven days straight, not even 14 days straight, but 28 days straight without any annual leave. The sticking point in that agreement is the four weeks annual leave that they are missing out on. And Senator Back implies that these members are somehow holding the country to ransom. As I said: don't let facts get in the way of a good story.

I am thankful tonight that I can defend unions like United Voice, the Australian Workers Union in Western Australia where this ridiculous million-dollar story came from, and the MUA, whose members are taking legitimate, protected industrial action. These are members who work 12 hours a day, 28 days straight, and all they want is four weeks leave a year when the average is six. It is quite disgusting to see the ideology and the hatred of unions on display by members of the Abbott government. As I said at the beginning: it is time that Senator Back and others who hold these views without any facts apologise to those hardworking workers who are doing their best and are taking legitimate action. He owes them an apology, and he certainly owes those aged-care workers in Western Australia an apology for slurring their good character. I can assure senators that they are low-paid members and the Abbott government took money out of their mouths so they will not be getting the wage increase they thought they would.

Jones, Mr Henry

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (21:51): I rise tonight to speak of a good man; a humble, hard-working man—a man who made a real difference for his community and in the management of water in Australia. I speak of Henry Jones, who we lost as a champion of the River Murray and of his community in South Australia recently.

He is someone who made an enormous difference in the life that he led. Henry's love for, and knowledge of, the river—particularly the Lower Lakes, Alexandrina and Albert, and the Coorong region—was life long. As a young boy he would go and spend time with his mother’s family in the Riverland and throughout the system. Of course, he was part of many generations of commitment to that region. His was a childhood spent learning how to fish and learning about the river, its estuary and systems.

When he finished school he took up residence on the banks of Lake Alexandrina at Clayton. Clayton Bay is nestled there on the bank of the lake in South Australia. It was 1961;
there was no electricity at Clayton, and he was the first permanent resident to establish there. Two years later he married his wife Gloria—a marriage that would last 50 years—and they built the home where they raised their family: daughters Christine, Susie and Julie. They have given a lifetime of service to their local community, which was built around them—so much under their own influence.

As a commercial fisherman operating in the Lower Lakes and the lower Murray system for more than half a century, Henry Jones witnessed firsthand the declining health of the environment and river systems, including the disappearance of Murray cod, silver perch and catfish from the Lower Lakes and Coorong. When drought closed the Murray mouth for the first time in 1981, Mr Jones decided it was time to act—to spread the message about what was happening in his area of the Murray-Darling Basin at the mouth of the River Murray, and to be someone to move and create positive change.

Henry has often been described as a man of few words. He would be embarrassed at the many words that have been spoken about him since his passing. Yet when he did speak he used his words wisely, and people listened. His considered presence, his learned knowledge, and his practical experience of the region and the river made you want to listen to him.

Anne Hartnett, a friend of Henry's, reminisced at his funeral, saying: 'Those of us who have lived here for some time remember Henry passionately delivering his 'dead, dead, dead' speech about everything that would die if the river is continually starved of water and not cared for. Now, after 33 years of Henry's advocacy, we have to believe there are a lot more critters alive and living more comfortably than there would have been without the voice of Henry Jones.'

Anne was one of many people to recognise that Henry never gave up his fight to protect the River Murray. People tell me that shortly before he passed away, despite being very unwell after a long battle with cancer, he was still intently reminding them from his sick bed that the work to protect the river system needed to continue, and he urged people not to lose ground or sight of what governments had achieved and promised to achieve, in recent years.

Always warm, always gentle and always humble, he was a man to be respected and admired. But he was a man who gave freely of his time in his cause and for his community and our great river system. Henry was a long-standing representative on many Murray-Darling Basin Commission committees and, later, Murray-Darling Basin Authority committees. The Murray-Darling Basin Community Reference Group, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority Native Fish Advisory Panel, the River Murray Advisory Committee, the Living Murray Community Reference Group and the Basin Community Committee all benefited greatly from Henry's contribution.

Through these groups he gave thousands of hours to provide knowledge and perspective on issues related to the fisheries and the lakes that he lived alongside, and worked in. In 2008, he was awarded a Pride of Australia Medal for a lifetime of achievement in fostering Australian values and making Australia a better place to live. In 2012, Henry sat on the steering committee overseeing a project to assess the benefits of the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan. He contributed considerably to evaluating the commercial and recreational fishing aspects of the reforms. As a Basin Community Committee member he attended meetings of the Independent Audit Group for Salinity, and was thanked by the Basin Salinity Management
Advisory Panel for his significant contributions to the 2009-10 Independent Audit for Salinity.

Henry attended many public meetings in the development of the Basin Plan throughout the Murray-Darling Basin, travelling beyond his home base at the lower reaches of the system. And he helped to ensure that all voices were fairly heard, in a considered and calm manner, through the basin community consultation processes. This is a particularly outstanding contribution given the contentious nature of the reform and the sometimes heated atmosphere at public meetings which occurred during the development of the plan. Henry was able to defuse these meetings through his calm discussions on the sidelines.

Henry, with wife Gloria, was also a great host. Although, through his part in the river system's management, Henry spent time attending and organising all of these meetings, if you turned up to their home you would not only be greeted warmly by Henry and Gloria and ushered into a lovely room of their home surrounded by maps and images of the lakes and river, but you would be met by the delicious aroma of the spectacularly cooked Coorong mullet that Henry would have caught himself in the river system. Meanwhile Gloria would generously serve up salads and wine to accompany the meal and ensure that Henry's message of reform was not only well heard but well lubricated. It was a generosity that I enjoyed, and that I enjoyed in the company of his local MP, Jamie Briggs. I know that many other members of this place, who have been part of the reform process, enjoyed that generosity over the years, as well.

But that hospitality was nothing, of course, compared with the knowledge, experience and insight that he brought. In January 2013 the MDBA awarded Henry a River Murray Medal, and earlier this year he was named a state finalist in the Senior Australian of the Year Awards. The River Murray Medal is usually granted to staff within the MDBA or other relevant river management agencies, for their outstanding services to the River Murray. Henry's award was the first time there was a compelling case to award the medal to a community member instead, and he was most worthy.

Beyond his immediate actions with the MDBA or its predecessor organisation, Henry held leadership roles as chairman of the South Australian fishing industry council, spokesperson for the Rivers, Lakes and Coorong Action Group and councillor for 10 years with the district council of Strathalbyn. He established the country fire service in his home town of Clayton and was captain there some 20 years. He was included in the book One place, many stories: Murray-Darling Basin prepared by the Department of the Environment, a book showcasing water aspects of the basin, its environment, industry and communities which features notable people who have made a significant contribution to the basin, and there are few more notable than Henry Jones.

Henry and his wife Gloria were invited to this place by then federal minister for the environment Tony Burke to be present in the parliament when the Basin Plan was passed into law in 2013. His passion and tireless pursuit for the health of the Lower Lakes, River Murray and Coorong, his leadership in developing his community and his commitment to his strong beliefs will be sorely missed. Henry lost his battle with cancer on 15 April at the age of 72. Fittingly, his funeral was held on 19 April in the Clayton Bay community hall, reflecting his personal commitment to that area. As his wife Gloria said, 'It was fitting that he died at 3 am
on Tuesday, as we always get up at 3 am on Tuesdays to take the fish to the market.' Henry, thank you for all you have done. Rest in peace.

**National Party Victoria**

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (22:01): I rise to comment on a fabulous event held last weekend, the 98th Victorian National Party state conference, which was held at the Lakeside Centre at the Benalla showgrounds. These showgrounds I remember well, but I will not go into details, Acting Deputy President Stephens. Let's just say I used to ride horses and the Benalla agricultural show was a great place to take your pony out on a Saturday morning. It will be the last state conference before the Victorian election on 29 November. It opened with a function organised by the Young Nationals and youth remained a theme throughout. It is a period of renewal for the Nationals in Victoria and we have great crop of new, vibrant young candidates vying for a place in the Victorian parliament and in history, as four of our longstanding members retire at the next election.

Sonia Smith is our candidate for Buninyong. Buninyong actually replaces the current seat of Ballarat East. Sonia is a lawyer in Ballarat and runs a small farm with her husband at Navigators, and has said, 'We'll be moving mountains to make sure jobs are being created, bringing government, metro-based businesses, to our regions.'

Steph Ryan is our fabulous young candidate in Euroa. Euroa is a new electorate created due to the abolition of the districts of Seymour and Benalla, and encompasses most of the north-east area currently represented most ably by Bill Sykes. Steph is 27 and has extensive experience as a strategic policy adviser for the Nationals in government and says she ‘will bring fresh ideas to parliament’. She has the energy and passion to deliver for the entire community. I have been out on the campaign trail with Steph and she is definitely kicking some goals in the local community.

Emma Kealy is our candidate for Lowan, where the longstanding member Hughie Delahunty is retiring. Emma is the CEO of Edenhope hospital and lives in Edenhope with her young family. Emma says she has a strong vision for the future about making sure that we focus on the three things we need from government: infrastructure, investment and innovation. I am sure Emma would have loved to have heard the Treasurer's speech tonight about the federal government's commitment to infrastructure, investment and innovation in a similar way.

Scott Turner is our candidate for Ripon. He is hoping to become the first Nationals MP to represent the western Victorian seat of Ripon, as the current ALP member retires. The seat itself has been redistributed to include a lot of the former seat of Swan Hill, held by our deputy leader Peter Walsh. Scott is a 44-year-old former Richmond Tigers defender and now human resources manager in Ararat. Scott says, 'In footy terms, I am in it to win it. I am enjoying it at the moment. Come campaign time, it is going to be crazy which will be like finals fever.' Spot the cliche?

Greg Barr is our candidate for Shepparton, where our retiring member, the former Minister for Local Government and Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Jeanette Powell, has served the local community with distinction. He is a former policeman and lives in Katandra with his
family. Greg says, 'I am committed to working with our agricultural sector, business, local government and community groups.' He has a strong standing within that local community.

One of the most important debates at our state conference was on a motion put to it by the Victorian Women's Executive relating to food imports. This follows the difficulties experienced by the fruit-processing industry in regional Victoria. Our fruit-processing industry is anchored around the Goulburn Valley and one iconic brand still operating there today, thanks to the state government, is SPC Ardmona, employing 870 workers with over 160 growers supplying the cannery. Obviously, the employer multiplier is much wider, being estimated at 2,700 jobs across the Goulburn Valley as a result simply of the economic activity of SPC Ardmona.

Like other manufacturers, it has been shaken by a series of factors over which it has no control, principally the rise of the Australian dollar, which appreciated 50 per cent between 2009 and 2013, leading to a flood of cheap processed fruit imports and the decimation of the company's exports. Rising energy costs, in part because of the carbon tax, made it even harder for the industry to survive. The fruit industry is vitally important for regional Victoria. According to the government fruit industry profile, 1,310 agricultural businesses in Victoria stated their primary activity was growing fruit or nuts. In 2010-11, the gross value of fruit production was $1.4 billion and that included 129,000 tonnes of apples and 109,000 tonnes of pears. Eighty per cent of our national pear crop is actually taken from the Goulburn Valley. In 2011-12, around $194 million worth of Victorian fresh or dried fruit was exported.

The national state conference motion on food imports called on the government to implement measures that require all fresh and processed food products imported into Australia to meet the same stringent environmental and health requirements as our own local product.

The stringent water management and land management practices that our farmers must adhere to are important. They are an important way to ensure that our natural resources continue to sustain us and our food-producing capacity into the future. Our farmers are the frontline of our natural resource management and do a fantastic job, knowing, I think, from a very personal perspective that how they treat the land will have generational impacts on their families and their farms' profitability.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan negotiated through state and federal governments over the last year has been a breakthrough in how to manage water. It means that Australia leads the world in how to manage water resources most effectively. The drip irrigation, for instance, used by fruit growers in the Goulburn Valley is second to none, minimising water loss through the timing of irrigation, the measurement of soil moisture and individual plant needs. This is a very sophisticated approach to using our most precious resource. Similarly, the types of chemicals that our landholders can use to grow their products are restricted, rightfully, to those dosages and types that ensure human health is protected and, indeed, the health of our soils.

The reality is that these practices add additional costs to producers and, consequently, processors and consumers right throughout our supply chain. A Productivity Commission inquiry into the types of regulations that agricultural value chains are subject to—and rightfully so, particularly when it comes to environmental regulation—actually received a variety of submissions around the imposts. The Virginia Horticulture Centre said:
First and foremost imported produce being traded within Australia should meet the same or more stringent regulations and standards as domestic produce.

Agricultural imports still do not undergo the same treatment as domestic food, and they called for a strengthening of import protocols to ensure that Australian food and safety standards applied equally to Australian and imported food.

Some of the types of regulations that food growers are subject to include the National Pollutant Inventory, water access regulations, livestock regulations and identification, export certificates, food safety regulations, quarantine regulations, livestock movement regulations et cetera. These are very important to ensure that we use our environment sustainably but they do add an additional cost, and I think that we actually need to start accounting for that.

Rather than fearing pursuing application of environmental standards as a consideration in global trade agreements, Australia could be leading the way in environmental best practice. This way, we will achieve a fair deal for domestic producers while still complying with our international obligations.

For its part, the Victorian Liberal and Nationals government responded promptly and effectively to the difficulties in the fruit-processing industry in regional Victoria, and has in fact ensured its future. The lion's share of the package agreed with SPC is coming from the parent company Coca-Cola Amatil, at $78 million. The state government investment of $22 million requires tough conditions for SPC-A in having to keep at least 500 workers for three years. It will also have to reimburse the taxpayers if it closes its doors. The government's contribution will be phased in over three years, and will be attached to infrastructure investments.

Deputy Premier and Nationals Leader Peter Ryan is the architect of this excellent package, but it could not have happened without a huge amount of work and goodwill from many stakeholders. SPC Ardmona's problems did not arise because of poor product: people do want to buy high-quality processed fruit made in the Goulburn Valley, as demonstrated by the very successful SPC Sunday Twitter following that has ensued.

The state conference not only supported our agricultural industries and regional Victoria more generally through those specific motions but the Deputy Premier actually announced the Victorian freight rail plan at the conference. The Victorian Liberal and Nationals government has not only chosen the smart way to support local food producers supplying the domestic market but it is also clearing the transport arteries which allow us to export. Two-thirds of our agricultural products are exported. The Nationals have always been focused on infrastructure's role in getting our fabulous product off the farm, out of the processor's doors and out into the world market. I think that our contribution from the infrastructure minister tonight, including the long-awaited Brisbane to Melbourne inland rail link, with $300 million—$48 million in the first year—and the second Sydney airport, will both contribute to the freight task.

That is why in his keynote address to the state conference the Leader of the Nationals in Victoria and Deputy Premier Peter Ryan announced a $220 million upgrade to standardise freight rail between Mildura and Geelong:

By converting the existing broad gauge tracks to standard gauge, the Murray Basin Rail Project will deliver modern rail infrastructure and transform Victoria's freight network to meet the increasing demand for freight services.
It was welcomed by Peter Toohey, the VFF president, who was also in attendance at the state conference.

Similarly, the *Sunraysia Daily*, the local daily up there in Mildura, said it was the news north-west Victoria has been waiting for for more than a decade. The newspaper went on to say:

Mr Ryan’s announcement presages a new era of fast, reliable rail freight in the state’s north-west, and a major boost to the region’s economy—where rail has gone, history shows economic development invariably follows.

The editor also wrote:

It is also a major achievement and timely development for the Member for Mildura, Peter Crisp, who has been lobbying State Government to repair and standardise the Melbourne-Mildura line since he was first elected in 2006.

The ability to deliver food from paddocks to ports quickly and efficiently is vital if we are to seize the food export opportunities arising from economic and demographic growth in Asia.

Thanks to the Nationals in government, the Prime Minister is well aware of those challenges. That is why Mr Abbott said in regional Australia earlier this year:

If our country is to prosper for decades and indeed in the centuries ahead, we are going to need a strong and dynamic agriculture sector. I think that farming is going to be a very, very significant part of our economic future.

At some point we may not be exporting as much iron ore but we want to be exporting plenty of foodstuffs to the growing middle class of Asia. We have got a tremendous opportunity but we have got to keep the farming sector strong to make that happen.

And, indeed, deliver the infrastructure that will allow us to get that product to the ports.

The previous government said Australia could become 'the food bowl of Asia'. This was strong rhetoric, but as so often happened with that government, it was all spin and no substance. You cannot become the food bowl of Asia when you are hit with higher import tariffs than your competitors because you do not have competitive trade agreements. For six years Labor dithered and failed on free trade agreements with Korea and Japan.

The Abbott-Truss government, thanks to the work of Minister Robb, has achieved both in just six months. And a free trade agreement with China is around the corner. As ministers and prime ministers have said, these free trade agreements actually represent opportunity. They actually open the door and have to be signed only when they are in our national interest.

As the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering put to its Innovating for our Food Future: Mining Boom to Dining Boom food issues seminar in Sydney on 1 May:

It is not realistic to expect Australia to be the food bowl of Asia, but it can become the 'delicatessen of Asia', by producing high-value products that trade on our natural advantages and meet the needs of consumers, but at competitive prices.

At that forum, Mr Gary Dawson, Chief Executive, Australian Food and Grocery Council, said that over the past seven years Australia had lost almost half of its key import markets in Asia and its global competitiveness ranking had reduced. We had left the door open for our
competitors. We have a unique geography that we are all very aware of but, by going to sleep at the wheel, others have been able to get the march of us, which is why the Japanese free trade agreement was such a fabulous outcome—particularly given the iron triangle that does exist within the Japanese agricultural sector.

Another problem with Labor's approach was that when it said 'Asia', it only really meant 'China'. China is an important customer for Australia and will continue to grow, but it is not the only one. China represents 18.3 per cent of Australia's agricultural export market: $6.7 billion in 2011-12. However, Japan remains extremely important, with 12 per cent or $4.4 billion in the same year. Having just come back from Japan where I talked to the locals and saw the response in the local newspapers, Japanese farmers actually make French farmers look quite soft. When we talk about the iron triangle within the Japanese agricultural sector, there is a very strong, real, persistent gerrymandered link between regional electorates, the parliamentary system and the bureaucracy that is unparalleled. So, for us to actually get our foot in that door, it is hats off to Minister Robb.

Japan is Australia's single biggest export market for both beef and dairy products, and Australia's second-largest trading partner overall. Japan imports 300,000 tonnes of Australian beef annually or 26 per cent of all beef exported. Australian beef was estimated to have occupied 32 per cent of the total beef market in Japan in 2013. And that is before the recent free trade agreement which has cut tariffs. It is the big-ticket item. Under the free trade agreement the 38.5 per cent Japanese tariff that currently applies on frozen beef will be halved to 19.5 per cent over 18 years, with deep cuts in the first year.

The agreement also significantly increases the amount of duty-free cheese that Australia can send to Japan, by 20,000 tonnes per year. The issues of food security and energy security were also raised with me by the foreign affairs department in Japan on my recent visit. They are concerned about issues on the seas, the Senkaku Islands and a little further south, and about ensuring there is freedom of navigation to ensure that their food and energy needs are met. Australia has a strong role to play in delivering both those commodities to one of our longest standing friends in the region. Australia's reputation for high-quality food production and Japan's demand for high-quality and safe foods, presents an opportunity for the food industries of both countries to work closely to meet the requirements and expectations of each other. Australia is a reliable producer of food that meets the quality and security demands of Japanese consumers.

I am passionate about education and I did take the opportunity to visit a couple of universities in Japan, but I want to touch briefly on trade issues. I had the opportunity to meet with Meat and Livestock Australia, who were very keen to discuss the importance of the free trade agreement with me and what it meant to our product there. I was actually able to see Gippsland beef on the shelves of a Japanese supermarket, which was fantastic. I would suggest that anybody who does not know what Genki is should get on YouTube and have a look because it is Meat and Livestock Australia's new promotional tactic into the Japanese market and it is quite fabulous—if not a little bit funny.

I was in Japan as a result of the Asialink Conversations, an initiative of the University of Melbourne. We were able to discuss a variety of regional security, education, energy and cultural issues with the ASEAN nations and Japan. Time does not permit me to go into the detail of those but the keynote speaker was Julie Bishop.
This journey took me from my state conference in Benalla, where we are passionate about the fabulous food produced in regional Victoria, about the issues faced by our producers, and what the Nationals are actually doing to get our product out of the farm gate, through our processors and out onto the world market so that our environmentally sustainably produced and safe agricultural product can be enjoyed by more and more people. But we need to reduce the cost of production for our farmers and we need to advocate for the high environmental standards that they are subject to to be a condition of producing food throughout the world. We are forging ahead as a government with FTAs with China. We need more cultural, education and business exchanges to make this work. (Time expired)

**Wran, Hon. Neville, AC, QC**

Senator FAULKNER (New South Wales) (22:21): Almost 2,000 years have passed since the Roman philosopher Seneca wrote, 'Life is like a play: it is not the length but the excellence of the acting that matters. Neville Wran's first love was acting. He thought to make a career of it. And it is a blessing for the Australian Labor Party that he was not a better thespian. But it is important tonight, on the first occasion that the Senate has sat since his death, that we remember Neville Wran, his performance on the political stage and the contribution he made to the Australian Labor Party, his state and this country.

Neville Kenneth Wran was born on 11 October 1926, the youngest of eight children to Joseph and Lillian. His father was a merchant seaman, we are told an affable and gregarious man from whom Neville was to inherit his larrikinism. From his mother it is said came the ambition that would propel him from humble origins to the New South Wales premiership. Ambition was Neville Wran's fuel; the vehicle was education. Wran was dux at Drummoyne High. The reward for his effort was a scholarship to Fort Street Boys High, a place where Doc Evatt preceded him and Michael Kirby soon followed. From Fort Street, Wran won a scholarship to study arts and law at Sydney University. But life took on a new trajectory thereafter. For a decade he worked as a solicitor, often negotiating on behalf of workers in matters of industrial compensation. Jim McClelland, Lionel Murphy and Ray Gietzelt became acquaintances. In 1956 Gietzelt encouraged Wran to go to the bar. By 1968 he was a QC.

In 1970 Pat Hills and Reg Downing from Labor's Right and the Left's Lionel Murphy and Ray Gietzelt engineered Neville Wran's entry into the New South Wales Legislative Council. A mixture of good fortune, finesse and fate was to see him rise to become Labor's leader in the upper house within two years. This rapid rise coincided with a time of conservative dominance in New South Wales politics. The Askin government had been in power since 1965 and after Labor's third consecutive state election defeat the party was desperate for someone to lead it out of the political wilderness. So the Right's John Ducker sought support from the Left's Jack Ferguson and Ray Gietzelt in making Wran leader—electoral misery makes strange bedfellows. The safe seat of Bass Hill was cased and Neville Wran was preselected unopposed as Labor's candidate. On 17 November 1973 Wran was elected as member for Bass Hill. While Wran won Bass Hill, the general election saw a fourth defeat for New South Wales Labor.

Neville Wran was to move quickly and decisively in the wake of that election defeat, nominating for the state parliamentary Labor Party leadership just three days later. The 1973 New South Wales state parliamentary Labor Party leadership ballot between the incumbent, Pat Hills, and challengers Neville Wran and Kevin Stewart was won on a countback. On the
morning of the ballot Arthur Gietzelt reminded Jack Ferguson that in the event of a tie after the distribution of preferences the winner would be the candidate who polled the greatest number of primary votes. Jack confirmed the countback practice with the caucus returning officer, Vince Durick, before the vote. Wran polled 18 votes, Hill 17 and Stewart nine. After the distribution of preferences it was Wran 22 and Hills 22. Returning officer Durick duly declared Wran the winner on a countback of primaries.

The new leader wasted no time. He brought energy and determination to the parliamentary leadership. He focused on issues vital to people's lives—health, education and public transport—and perhaps for the first time since Bill McKell New South Wales had a Labor leader who focused on the needs of those west of the Great Dividing Range. Wran's verve and skill were rewarded when Labor formed government in 1976. It was a narrow victory again but its significance should never be underestimated. Wran's victory showed that Labor was still viable when many doubted its future. Graham Freudenberg has argued that the election of the Wran government only months after the dismissal of the Whitlam government spoke to one of the enduring themes of Australian history, the Australian Labor Party's struggle for legitimacy. The Wran government's stability, reassurance and responsibility demonstrated that legitimacy and ensured that the narrow victory of 1976 became overwhelming majorities, the Wranslides of 1978 and 1981. In 1978 the ALP received 57.8 per cent of first preference votes. In 1981 it was 55.7 per cent. Wran would win again in 1984 with a diminished primary vote but a commanding majority nevertheless.

Wran was a winner, Wran was powerful, but he used power for a purpose. Neville Wran's premiership did bring reform to New South Wales. The Wran government democratised the New South Wales Legislative Council, introduced public funding for election campaigns, established antidiscrimination laws and implemented gay law reform. The Wran government built important infrastructure, including electrifying the railways from Sydney to Wollongong and Newcastle, developing Darling Harbour and the Sydney Entertainment Centre, constructing Parramatta Stadium and the Sydney Football Stadium and modernising the coal industry in New South Wales with new coal loaders and rail lines.

The Wran government made an immense contribution to the arts in New South Wales, including programs that saw great artworks displayed in Western Sydney at the Riverside Theatre and the Campbelltown City Gallery. New wings were built at the State Library, the Australian Museum and the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The Powerhouse Museum and the Wharf Theatre were opened and the Premier's Literary Awards created.

The Wran government protected the New South Wales natural environment and preserved many heritage buildings. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, the Heritage Act and the Coastal Protection Act were passed and the Land and Environment Court was established. The Historic Houses Trust was founded and Macquarie Street and the Hyde Park Barracks restored. Much of the native forest in northern New South Wales was conserved.

Neville Wran's dominance of political life in New South Wales was so pervasive that his departure came as a shocking surprise. In 1986 he left politics undefeated and unbowed to cries I will certainly never forget of 'No, no, no' from Labor Party annual conference delegates on the floor of Sydney's Town Hall. He left the political stage on his own terms at a time and temper of his choosing—a rare feat in public life.
Life after high office was taken up with chairing the CSIRO and engaging in successful business ventures. His loyalty to the cause of Labor did not diminish. He continued to work hard and to travel far in the Labor interest. In 2002 the Hawke-Wran review into the Australian Labor Party lamented the limited life experiences of the political class—an observation that remains as poignant today as it was more than a decade ago.

Neville Wran was hard to know—outwardly charming yet intensely private; sophisticated, yet faithful to his roots; erudite, yet earthy in extremis. He was a performer equally at home in company boardrooms as he was in the backstreets of Balmain. The cadences and patois of Depression era Sydney lay just beneath the surface of the suave QC.

Neville Wran's family and friends and party farewelled him at a funeral service at the Sydney Town Hall on 1 May. Paul Keating, Rodney Cavalier, Michael Kirby, Bob Carr, Jill Wran and other members of Neville's family did him proud. Rodney Cavalier told a story at the funeral that said much about this extraordinary politician. Rodney recounted that one day in question time Neville became irritated beyond endurance by the constant interjections of a backbencher from the Nats. Neville stopped mid-answer. He was a master of the studied pause, a prolonged silence, permitting the noisome to flay against the rock of his calm. He said, 'Can I say this, Mr Speaker: if the member continues to interject then I will be forced to acquaint this House with his behaviour in the past fortnight—behaviour that, even by his standards, is particularly wicked.' The member fell silent and, I am told, changed colour. Afterwards Rodney asked Neville what he had on the fellow and was told: 'Nothing. Nothing at all but it's a safe bet with a bastard like that he has done something wicked in the past fortnight.' This anecdote was retold faithfully—though, I can inform the Senate, with countless expletives deleted!

My own relationship with Neville Wran changed markedly over the years. He found my views about his government—expressed privately and publicly when I was a party official in the early 1980s—offensive. He was right. I was too harsh and I certainly said some things that I should not have. But time healed those wounds. In recent years we had the odd lunch together. He journeyed to my office from time to time for a chat and a cuppa. It was a privilege to talk with Neville Wran about contemporary politics and the challenges facing the Labor Party.

Neville Wran was intensely private. He kept a studied distance between himself and others, with few exceptions—perhaps only Lionel Murphy and Jack Ferguson, apart from Neville's family, were able to bridge that gap. But countless citizens of New South Wales and Labor Party members were to benefit from his political leadership. His contribution to the Australian Labor Party and the state of New South Wales was huge.

Neville Kenneth Wran passed away on 20 April this year. He was 87. Former Prime Minister Paul Keating, speaking at Neville's funeral, said this:

I doubt there would be a soul here who would not believe the public of New South Wales owes him a great debt. Because, the Labor Party certainly does.

If life, as Seneca said, is like a play, then Neville Wran's was a great performance. It was an honour to join with other party members and follow Neville's coffin as he left the Sydney Town Hall—the scene of so many of Neville Wran's political triumphs—for the last time. Vale Neville Wran—a Labor giant.

Vale Neville Wran—a Labor giant.
Mining and Hydro-electric Power Projects

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (22:39): Tonight I will speak on two projects. They are separated by thousands of kilometres, but both highlight the problems of a one-sided view of the economy—that is, that mining and power production take precedence over all else. Time and again, we see large companies that propose dangerous projects claim they will benefit the local community, but, meanwhile, they walk all over those communities. These companies often ignore local industries as their activities damage the diversity of local economies and the local environment. Internationally, we need to develop a stronger economic diversity that does not prioritise big corporate interests at the expense of our communities.

The two issues I will cover are the proposal for an antimony mine by Anchor Resources and its owner, China Shandong Jinhunda, in Wild Cattle Creek near Dorrigo; and a hydro-electric power station in Chile’s Patagonia—clearly, this is far in distance, but very relevant, as it is part-owned by the Australian company Origin Energy. Both of these projects threaten local communities, environments and economies, and should not go ahead.

On my recent trip to Coffs Harbour, it became apparent that a number of people are very concerned about the prospect of reopening a 100-year-old antimony mine in the region. Anchor Resources, owned by China Shandong Jinhunda, is currently scoping the region for antimony, as well as gold and copper.

Antimony is a toxic element which works on humans in a similar way to arsenic. In fact, arsenic is a by-product of mining antimony. Antimony mining has a problematic history, with older mines known to leak, as well as often leaving the areas in which they are developed uninhabitable. In fact, we know that older mines have resulted in major contaminations for over 40 years.

The Hillgrove mine on the Southern Tablelands serves as a concerning example. In 2009, a spill of up to 3,000 litres into a nearby creek contained high levels of antimony, arsenic and lead. The company was fined $50,000 by the Land and Environment Court. But of course this cannot undo the environmental damage. Then, as recently as 2011, a sediment erosion control dam at another antimony mine near Hillgrove overflowed, releasing arsenic, copper and zinc into the Macleay River which will be detectable for millennia.

Anchor Resources have already recorded elevated levels of antimony, 126 times the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council’s guidelines for drinking water, in the waterways near their exploration lease. It is evident that the risk of pollution from antimony mining is very real, and, not surprisingly, local communities are deeply concerned about this. The mine is on the Dorrigo Plateau, a location combining steep terrains with high rainfall—sometimes, as high as three metres per year. As my colleague in the New South Wales Parliament John Kaye has pointed out, this makes containing any run-off very difficult. It is not a good combination for mining such a poisonous substance. Further still, it is within the Nymboida River catchment which is where the rivers feed into the 30,000 megalitre Shannon Creek Dam rise. This catchment provides drinking and potable water for more than 100,000 residents between Coffs Harbour and Clarence Valley. As we see with coal seam gas and long-wall coalmining, the threat to water is clearly evident. At a time when we are facing the prospect of increasing weather events from climate change, actions that jeopardise our water supplies are downright criminal. Carol Vernon, the Greens deputy
convenor, a local resident in this area and a former candidate for the seat of Cowper, has raised her concerns about the antimony mine. The rainforests in the region are part of the World Heritage listed Gondwana Rainforests of Australia—one of New South Wales's answers to the gorgeous forests of Tasmania. It is home to a range of four rainforest varieties. One of the unique aspects of the Australian landscape is the variation, and here you can see a variety of ecosystems within quite close range. The Dorrigo Plateau really is unique.

Not surprisingly, these forests are rich habitat for vulnerable species, including red-legged pademelons, spotted-tailed quolls, powerful owls, wompoo fruit doves and sphagnum frogs. Dorrigo Environment Watch have located both the giant barred frog and the stuttering frog near drilling sites. They have had their data validated and have called on the New South Wales government to submit a notice of action to the Australian government to enact the EPBC. Unfortunately, I would hazard a guess that, if the federal government's response is anything like it has been to Tasmania's World Heritage listing, this area is in trouble.

I have noted that the federal member for Cowper, Mr Luke Hartsuyker, has called the standard battle cry for the mining industry: 'It'll create jobs.' Yet Mr Hartsuyker ignores the very real risk that the mine would pose to the industries which are already prominent in the regions, industries that support many more jobs than the mining sector would potentially create in this area. It is home to Australia's southernmost cane fields and to tourism and is a rich area for prawn fishing. These are diverse industries which underpin the local economy. Should they be affected by mining, the consequences would be dire.

Of course, the company have moved to reassure residents, listing all of the processes which they will have to go through, feasibility and regulation, but we know that most companies see these as box-ticking exercises and indeed try to assert a right to mine once they have put in the forms. A recent article on the topic in The Conversation points out that they know only too well the risks involved.

China is the world's largest supplier of antimony, about 75 per cent in 2011. In 2009, an accident at a Chinese antimony mine owned by Hsikwangshan Twinkling Star Co. Ltd, then the world's biggest producer of antimony, led to 26 deaths. The company followed by closing down their antimony mines, sending the price skyrocketing.

The evidence is clear: mining antimony is dangerous. It is dangerous to the local environment, to the local economy, to water supplies and to its workers. The intention to mine antimony at Wild Cattle Creek is all about money. There is no doubt that communities will continue to campaign to prevent the mine from going ahead. I would like to commend the work of Dorrigo Environment Watch, and my colleagues John Kaye and Mark Graham, who are following the developments in the region and working to raise awareness and ensure that the antimony mine being proposed does not go ahead.

A similar campaign is underway on the other side of the world, in Chile, where Patagonia Sin Represas are also working for their communities to try to stop a number of damaging developments that also threaten their water resources, their communities and the diversity of their economy. The broader region of Patagonia, in the far south of South America, is not an official territory. It is actually shared by Argentina and Chile. Most Australians would probably think of it as a place of adventure, somewhat remote. It is the dream getaway for those looking for hiking adventures in a pristine environment surrounded by glaciers and lakes. The area has a thriving tourist industry of about 300,000 visitors each year.
Unfortunately, this industry and Patagonia's natural environment are under serious threat from a multitude of proposed dams from multinational companies seeking to fundamentally and permanently alter the landscape for their profit. The HidroAysen project proposes to build five dams, flooding about 6,000 hectares of land on two fast-flowing rivers that run into the Pacific, two on the river Baker and three on the river Pascua. Because of sustained community opposition, the project has already been delayed for four years and is now under review by the Chilean government. But this is only one of many projects to threaten the area.

Another, the Rio Cuervo project, is somewhat closer to home. That is because this project is part owned by the Australian company Origin Energy, which recently bought the hydro-electricity development company Energia Austral, inheriting a share in the project, along with Glencore Xstrata, which controversially pushed through the Anvil Hill coalmine in the Hunter region. That became such an embarrassment for them that they chose to change its name to Moolarben.

The Rio Cuervo project will flood 13,166 hectares, building three dams—the first on the Cuervo River, with two more on the Blanco and Condor rivers. The reservoir will destroy the Yulton and Meullin lakes as well as several other lagoons and their unique ecological characteristics. The Yulton lake is clear water, possibly the largest in Chile that has not had species introduced. There are over 40 conservation species in the project area. One is the huillin, a southern river otter that is already listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as endangered because of accelerating habitat destruction and degradation. The IUCN states that the particular populations in Chile's fjords and islands are likely to reduce by 50 per cent over the next 30 years. Origin Energy needs to explain to its shareholders and the people of Chile and Australia whether it has considered the impact that the Rio Cuervo project might have on this.

Despite popular ideas about hydro-electricity, it is not sustainable. It diverts water from natural streams, changing its flows and affecting all of the ecosystems that live off them. As the water from this project is taken from the Cuervo River to be used in turbines, by the time it is returned to the river 14 kilometres downstream it will lose about 98 per cent of its water flow, impacting the adjoining Aysen Fjord. This is likely to impact on the local fishing industry, another major industry in the region which is under threat, and clearly could result in job losses. The power from the plant will require 1,700 kilometres of transmission lines from the Aysen region to Santiago, the capital of Chile. One thousand kilometres of this will be above ground, requiring a corridor that will be cut through the region and permanently damage the local environment.

One of the things about these beautiful mountainous regions is that they are often near fault lines. The area of Puerto Aysen is no exception. It is an active fault line which was at the epicentre of a major 6.1 magnitude earthquake in 2007. There is potential, then, for the movement of large quantities of water to impact on this, as well as for seismic activity to impact on any power stations built in the region.

As with many such projects in Australia, it is an understatement to say that the community in Chile is deeply concerned about this issue. There have been protests of up to 40,000 people, and they have not been confined to the region of Aysen. People all over Chile are actively opposing these projects. There have been street protests and many other actions and interactions with the government, sending a clear message of opposition.
It is true that Chile has an oil shortage and is reliant on imports. As we have also seen in Australia, the companies play on this, creating their own public relations campaign, showing television ads where the lights suddenly go out. The reality is, though, that the damaging proposals currently being presented are not as necessary as the companies make out. There are alternatives.

Hydraulic experts in the region have noted that a run-off river hydropower design could produce around 85 per cent of the power of the proposed project without the dramatic impacts that would result from the Rio Ceurvo project. If only the companies were willing to invest in an ever so slightly smaller project they could provide worldwide environmental leadership. Instead, there is a familiar story: Origin and Glencore Xstrata are sidelining community processes for their own profits.

In terms of democratic process, this project has some serious questions to answer. In May 2012, Chile's Supreme Court revoked the approval of the project because they did not submit all of the required documentation, forcing the company to reapply for their approval. In addition, the allocation of water rights to the company goes against the official national policy, which suggests that water should not be used for productive activities. Water in Chile is privatised, which in essence means Origin and Glencore Xstrata are getting special treatment at a huge cost to the public.

The dam projects and the power station go distinctly against the agreed development strategy that has been negotiated between business, community and government. This strategy states that the key activities in the area should be fisheries, tourism and agriculture. The company did not even address the impacts its project would have on these alternative industries. The citizens of Aysen participated in this development strategy process in good faith only to have multinational companies, including this Australian company, ignore their wishes.

The communities in the region are small. Many live in remote places. The Rio Cuervo project threatens to riddle their land with new roads, powerlines, large infrastructure, and a temporary but very large influx of mostly male workers who will have to be brought in from outside the region. In this regard, the Rio Cuervo project is a terrible mark on the reputation of Australia—depicting us all, once again, in a colonial light.

I remember when Origin Energy first began offering power to Australian homes. They actually had a good reputation as one of the few companies then who would offer proper renewable energy. How they appear to have changed since then, both here and in their business model, which seems to just replicate the multinational push to squeeze communities for their resources to maximise profits at any cost. I am sure that the people of Australia will be empathetic to the plight of those in Chile facing this major fight against corporate giants.

The Greens will be monitoring the situation in Aysen. Together with the fantastic group Patagonia Sin Represas—Patagonia Without Dams—we will continue to make the Australian public aware of the issue. Many Australians would be concerned to see such a pristine and beautiful region under threat from an Australian company. Not only will Origin Energy damage its international reputation if it continues to be involved in this project but its reputation here is also under question. Origin should pull out now. The Rio Cuervo project should not go ahead.
I would like to quote Patricio Segura Ortiz of Patagonia Sin Represas, who asks:
When you look at a mountain full of forests do you see furniture and plywood or do you see a national park? Is a river the vein of our natural resources or is it nothing more than a producer of megawatts?
The executives of Origin, Glencore Xstrata and Anchor Resources have many questions to answer. For all their power, communities from Australia to South America and beyond have put these companies on notice. There are ways to maintain our environmental integrity. It contributes to the economy already. What we need is smart solutions and a diversity of industries to support our economy. Most importantly, we need to sustain ourselves. We need health, we need water, we need clean air and we need biodiversity. And we need a government that will stand up to mining companies and assist citizens to have their concerns listened to and acted on.

Justice

Senator MARSHALL (Victoria) (22:57): Eighteen years is a long time to wait for some form of justice to be delivered. Eighteen years ago, on 9 March 1996, Corinna Horvath, who was 21 at the time, was assaulted in her own home. Her front door was kicked down, she was thrown to the floor and repeatedly punched in the face. These punches broke her nose, led to extensive facial bruising, a chipped tooth and made her lose consciousness. You would think that such an attack would be investigated and justice served. Her problem, however, was that the people who assaulted her in her home were eight serving police officers in the Victorian police force.

Police officers entered her home without a warrant for arrest. After the initial assault, she was handcuffed, dragged out of her house and taken to a police cell. After 20 minutes of ignoring her pleas, she was finally given medical attention and an ambulance was called. She was then taken to Frankston Hospital for treatment. A week later, she was readmitted after an artery in her nose shattered. Surgery and a five-day stay in hospital was required to repair some of the damage done by the police officers. She subsequently experienced anxiety, depression, loss of confidence, stress, interference with her relationship, poor memory and concentration and, of course, a fear of police. Her long journey for justice commenced from that day.

The assault was reported to the Ethical Standards Department of the Victoria Police. Soon after the complaint was lodged, local police laid 11 charges against Corinna, all of which were ultimately rejected by the courts. Almost a year later, the internal police investigation found that the forced entry allegation could not be substantiated. However, they did recommend an internal disciplinary charge against one of the officers—a charge ultimately discontinued by the police themselves in mid-1998.

In June 1997, Corinna filed for damages against the state of Victoria and the individual police involved. The trial occupied some 40 sitting days, hearing a substantial amount of evidence from a large number of witnesses, including the plaintiffs and the four police defendants. In February 2001, County Court Judge Williams handed down his decision. In his concluding remarks, Judge Williams said that, overall, it was ‘a disgraceful and outrageous display of police force in a private house’. He said the officers' conduct ‘showed a most high-handed approach accompanied by excessive and unnecessary violence wrought out of unmeritorious motives of ill-will and desire to get even’. In conclusion, he found police at fault of assault, unlawful arrest, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution, and found that
the police told lies on matters of major significance. If any other individual was found guilty of these crimes, they would be facing a long jail sentence. False imprisonment carries a maximum penalty of 10 years jail, and causing serious injury intentionally carries a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment and up to 15 years jail for perjury.

Judge Williams ordered damages of $270,000 be paid to Corinna by the state of Victoria and the police in 2001. In April, the state of Victoria appealed the decision. The state denied vicarious liability on the basis that police were acting pursuant to an independent discretion conferred upon them and therefore were not acting as servants or agents of the state. The November 2002 Court of Appeal decision found that the state was not liable; however, the police were still individually liable. Subsequently the police involved declared bankruptcy, and Corinna received no compensation for the unlawful trespass and assault.

If the assault had been conducted by anyone other than the Victoria Police, Corinna would have been entitled for compensation under the victims of crime tribunal. Corinna failed to receive any compensation, and the $270,000 awarded in 2001 is the equivalent to $375,000 in today's money—enough to help her move on from the harrowing events of 1996.

In addition to being denied compensation for the unlawful actions of police, even more importantly, Corinna was denied the justice of seeing the police investigated and charged for their actions. Clearly, the independent judiciary found against the police, but this did not lead to any action against them. Members of the Victoria Police are not subject to any real external and independent examinations of complaints or accusations of misconduct. The internal review conducted by the Ethical Standards Department of the Victorian Police led to no officer being disciplined. None of the officers who beat Corinna Horvath lost their jobs; in fact, some were promoted and two are still working for Victoria Police. There was no public release of the internal police investigation, no appeal process and neither Corinna nor any other person was invited to make a submission. The finding by the police internal review contrasts sharply with the strong findings of serious misconduct by Judge Williams.

Australia has been a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights since 1980. In 2008, Corinna submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Committee that her human rights had been breached by the actions of the Victoria Police and the subsequent actions taken by the state of Victoria. Article 2 of the international covenant states that signatories undertake:

(a) To ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity;

(b) To ensure that any person claiming such a remedy shall have his/her right thereto determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities or by any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy.

Specifically, Corinna argued that article 2 of the charter was breached as Victoria had not provided an effective remedy for breaches of her human rights by the Victoria Police. She received no compensation, and there was no action taken against the perpetrators of the assault. She asserted that the state failed to effectively investigate, prosecute and bring to account police offenders.

The state permitted the officers involved to continue to be employed in positions where their unacceptable behaviour could be repeated. Now, 18 years later, the human rights
committee, on examining her case, found that the state of Victoria has violated Corinna's human rights. The committee found that the state of Victoria failed to show that the proceedings undertaken by the internal review of the matter met the requirements of an effective remedy. Specifically, the human rights committee noted that the investigation conducted by the Victoria Police did not call Corinna or other witnesses to give evidence; that Corinna was refused access to the file; that there was no public hearing; and that, once the civil proceeding finding was made against the police, there was no opportunity to reopen or recommence disciplinary proceedings.

The human rights committee found that the state of Victoria does not have a statutory scheme that provides adequate compensation for human rights abuses and that this is incompatible with section 2 of the covenant. The committee notes that under the convention the state of Victoria must make changes to domestic laws and practices that are necessary to ensure their conformity with the covenant.

The human rights committee has asked the state of Victoria to provide within 180 days information about the measures taken to give effect to the committee's views. I call upon the Victorian government to immediately adopt changes required to ensure that Victoria is compliant with our international human rights obligations and establish a proper independent body to investigate police and, if needed, prosecute police.

The current body responsible for oversight of complaints against police, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, known as IBAC, is, by their own report, inadequate to properly investigate complaints made against police. In the recently published special report following their first year of operation, IBAC concedes:
A low percentage of complaints to IBAC will result in an investigation by IBAC.
And:
In reality, many of these will be referred by IBAC to another entity for investigation …
In their report of April this year, they examined four cases of complaints against police. In the first, a complaint regarding alleged assault and racial abuse by police, IBAC advised:
After applying assessment criteria based on OPI’s legislative responsibilities, it was determined that the matter should be referred to Victoria Police for investigation.
In another matter, IBAC investigated a complaint regarding an alleged assault by police that occurred near Stawell. An internal police review of this complaint had been conducted by the senior officer at Stawell station and found no wrongdoing. This contrasted with the finding of the magistrate, who was strongly critical of police and found that police had assaulted and unlawfully detained the victim. The IBAC review found that the senior duty officer at Stawell had been deficient in investigating the complaint and:
Witness statements or contact details had not been obtained. Exculpatory evidence had not been considered. Only evidence that would support a prosecution of the complainant had been considered.
In conclusion IBAC found:
Victoria Police's oversight and review of the investigation was inadequate.
And yet, under its current powers, IBAC cannot make binding recommendations to Victoria Police or prosecute police for any wrongdoing. IBAC itself in April this year asked the parliament of Victoria to increase its powers. Specifically it is asking for 'the extent to which IBAC must be reasonably satisfied before investigating complaints' to be reviewed. The
current threshold of requiring a 'prima facie evidence of an indictable offence being committed' is too high for it to investigate matters. IBAC is also seeking the ability of IBAC to conduct preliminary enquiries or investigations.

Seventy-three per cent of IBAC's complaints are police related matters. In total around 3,500 complaints have been made against police to IBAC and inherited from the Office of Police Integrity, the OPI, the precursor to IBAC. This is a significant number of complaints. IBAC has a limited budget, with fewer than 30 investigators. It is clear that, if we are to see proper independent investigation of complaints made against police, there need to be significant changes made to the powers and budget of IBAC if they are to be able to carry out that role.

The police have the power to stop and detain citizens and use force if necessary. This is a grave power and, as a community, we must ensure that those we empower do not abuse this power. According to a 2008 OPI report into police use of force, an incident involving the use of force occurred every 2.5 hours in Victoria. In 2009 there were 4,166 incidents of the use of force, and in 2011 there were 3,735 cases. The 2009 OPI report estimated that these statistics were underreported by 20 to 70 per cent due to failure to fill out use-of-force forms at every incident.

We have a significant number of incidents of police using force against citizens. We also have a significant number of complaints made against police. According to the police complaints database, more than 1,418 individual police employees were the subject of one or more complaints about assault between 2000 and 2008. Between October 2005 and August 2009, the Flemington & Kensington Community Legal Centre received over 50 reports of human rights abuses against African and Afghan Australians in the Flemington and surrounding regions. These include reports of police punching people while they are handcuffed, throwing objects at people, slamming people's heads against interview walls, excessive batoning, using capsicum spray as a punishment, assaulting people with torches and assaulting a person during an interview with fists until they lost consciousness. Injuries sustained as a result of these allegations included broken teeth, cuts, bruising, scarring, ongoing and permanent back pain, arm pain, black eyes, severe headaches and eye injuries.

Many of these reports were made as official complaints to the Office of Police Integrity. In all cases they were found to be unsubstantiated following the internal police investigation. In all cases the ethical standards division referred the complaints to Victoria Police members based in the same region from which the assaults had occurred. In six of these cases, police subsequently charged the individual after they made the complaint. Charges laid included the use of threatening words, resisting police, hindering police and assaulting police. The threat of further charges being laid is a deterrent to those wishing to complain about police misconduct.

The Koori Complaints Project 2006-2008 analysed the investigation by police into 13 years of Koori complaints made against police in Victoria. One hundred and three Koori individuals lodged complaints in the period between 1991 and 2006. Forty per cent of these complaints concerned assaults made by police. Only 1.2 per cent of the assault complaints were 'substantiated' as a consequence of internal police investigation. In 70 per cent of Koori complaint files reviewed, local police conducted their own investigation. In one particular case in 2001, a Koori man alleged that he was picked up with batons under his arms and rammed head first into a wall and kicked repeatedly to the head whilst he was on the ground.
The complainant was later released and then conveyed to hospital by his wife. He was then flown to Melbourne, where he remained in hospital for a further six days. As a consequence of the assault, he suffered, among other things, permanent brain damage, a stroke and dementia due to head trauma. The complainant's allegations were investigated by the local police and subsequently determined to be not substantiated.

It is clear, in examination of the number of incidents of police assaults against citizens, that we have a serious problem in Victoria. In investigating this issue, I was astounded by the number of people I spoke to who were able to relay personal stories of police misconduct affecting either themselves or people that they intimately knew. I myself have a family member who has been a victim of police misconduct. Case after case of police misconduct is not being found by internal police investigations—investigations that were mostly conducted by the police stations or the region where the officer resides. It appears that the lack of accountability for their actions has led some officers to feel as though they are above the law, safe in the knowledge that, even if someone does make an official complaint, they will be protected by an internal process. It will be seen as an internal disciplinary matter—with at worst, a warning issued by a supervisor—not the criminal matter it should be seen as.

But the issue is far wider than the reported cases. It goes to the everyday actions of some police officers at the point of stopping or arrest. It goes to the regular stopping of people; the harassment, the verbal abuse or the insults; taking an individual and dropping them off tens of kilometres from home—the 'starlight express' as some Indigenous communities call it, as the practice is so common; helping someone fall over onto the ground or into a divvy van during stopping or arrest, smashing their face and breaking their nose—injuries that police can easily blame on clumsiness or drunkenness.

I acknowledge that policing can be a difficult and challenging role. That is why the state invests heavily in training and professional development. It is why we pay our police well and provide supportive employment conditions. But policing can and must be done with integrity; Victorians expect no less.

I again call on the state government of Victoria to create an independent body to investigate complaints against police and to have the power to prosecute police for their misconduct. This may involve expanding the scope and budget of IBAC.

The UN Human Rights Committee has shone a light on the Victoria Police force and the inaction of the Victorian government. After 18 years of personal pain, maybe Corinna Horvath may finally see some justice, and, for close to six million Victorians, reassurance that their rights will be upheld and the hope that police will think twice before handing out their own punishment at the point of stopping or arrest.

Masterman, Evelyn Loois
Nigeria

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (23:16): I rise tonight to give my condolences, respect and deepest gratitude to a very special Tasmanian, Evelyn Loois Masterman AM, who sadly passed away on Monday 5 May 2014 just weeks before her 107th birthday. I offer my condolences to her family and friends, and my deepest respect to Eve. I am so grateful for having known her and learnt of her life and contribution to the community.
Eve was born in the United Kingdom and moved to Tasmania with her family in 1912. Following school, Eve taught French and history in England and Switzerland before returning to Tasmania at the outbreak of World War II, where she helped translate for French Antarctic crews arriving in Tasmania. Eve was the first Tasmanian Parliamentary Librarian in 1945, a role she held for some 20 years.

She worked tirelessly for social justice, peace and the environment to the day. Eve joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in the 1940s. I would like to detail some of her involvement in WILPF to give an indication of her dedication and commitment to her ideals. From 1963 until 2013, Eve Masterman is mentioned practically every month in the minutes of WILPF Tasmania's meetings, unless she was overseas. As an active member, Eve was quietly and effectively working as president or secretary—or in one executive position or another—except treasurer, which she would never undertake. With her skills as a librarian, Eve was convener of the branch's library book subcommittee for over 40 years, working with the State Library of Tasmania and WILPF's other peace libraries, regularly donating hard copies of books connected with peace and human rights and making sure the books were displayed and carefully cared for. Eve was outspoken and fearless, and often did research for submissions and wrote to the media or to politicians on issues of concern at both state and national level.

Eve was a member of the Australian Section's national executive, both when Tasmania was acting as the national executive on three occasions and when she was a Section vice-president or a Tasmanian representative on the board.

From 1963 until 2013, Eve shared her poems and regularly gave wonderful talks to WILPF and to the community on her bushwalking trips, her travels and her volunteer work in various countries. Once the Quaker peace forest was established at Berriedale in 1991, Eve made this a personal responsibility and visited frequently—often daily—even during her 105th year to plant and weed, especially in her latter years when she was not travelling quite as much. Eve's last visit to the park with WILPF members was for the tree-planting ceremony on the International Day of Peace on 21 September 2013.

Eve took part in virtually every event in which the branch was involved: in rallies, vigils, seminars, workshops, protests, fundraising stalls—you name it—supporting other groups' events, always representing WILPF's aims, interests and concerns.

Eve represented the Australian Section at several of WILPF's international congresses and, on at least one occasion, she stayed on in Geneva working voluntarily in the WILPF international office for some months. Beside regular donations, she quietly gave large donations for WILPF international's work in needy countries and their local work.

WILPF have lost a most outstanding member at all levels of the organisation; a member whose life was embedded in and actively lived in peace; a life of courage, of quiet wisdom and of great enjoyment, and who, with Bronwen Meredith and Audrey Moore, provided that solid core of the Tasmanian branch of WILPF and around whom a stable membership has remained together since 1963.

Besides her Human Rights and UN International Peace Awards, as well as her local awards, Eve received an AM in the Order of Australia in 1976 and is a member of the Tasmanian women's honour roll. She has been well recognised as a wonderful and respected
example of a great contributor to the community. The members of WILPF will deeply miss her physical presence, although it is certain that her spirit will live on and inspire all members to work into the future for an end to war and violence and for a world of peace.

I first got to meet Eve in the early 2000s when I joined, and later became president of, the United Nations Association of Australia Tasmanian Branch. I gained my first understanding of the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom by going along to a WILPF meeting and getting to know Eve and also Bronwen Meredith, Audrey Moore, Hilary Martin, Linley Grant, Aileen Walters, Margo Roe, Doreen Shenman, Doreen Battey, Lesley Alcorso, 'Yabbo' Thompson, Pegg Walter, Margaret Wood, Jean Panton OAM, Joy Gough, Rosemary Brown, Kay Binet, Jo Upcher, Dr Jenni Bond and Pym Trueman. Little did I know then the impact that these women for peace would have on my future career.

Their commitment to peace was unwavering, and yet, despite all the atrocities going on in the world, they would start their meetings by acknowledging all the good things—the wins, however small, that had taken place in the name of peace. It lifted my spirits and gave me a sense of hope and belief about realising peace in our world. The next thing I knew I was out marching with these incredible WILPF women through the streets for International Women's Day, United Nations Day, anti-war marches and, really, any other reason to march for peace and social justice—the WILPF women were out for it. They were such an inspiration to me and continue to be.

Eve was an integral part of the WILPF team and the peace movement and she stood for everything decent about humanity. In recognition of her contribution, the WILPF Tasmania branch established the Eve Masterman Peace Poetry Prize. She was also a member of Alliance Francaise, an organisation I also have a strong connection to, and an inaugural member of Service International. Eve received the Australian Peace Prize in 1986 for her work with WILPF and the United Nations award in 2001 for her lifetime of dedication to the cause of peace and loyalty to the United Nations and its Tasmanian association.

Even at 106 years of age, Eve had an incredibly strong spirit. Every day, she went to the Berriedale Peace Park, a place she was instrumental in establishing so many years ago. Eve remains an inspiration to us all, and I am privileged to be putting on record here tonight her incredible contribution to the Tasmanian community. Rest in peace, Eve Masterman; you will be greatly missed.

I now want to turn to another important matter currently facing humanity. While much of the discussion in parliament this week is on the budget, it is important that we take the time to address an issue that has shocked the international community. A month ago, families of more than 200 girls in Nigeria were told their daughters had been abducted. Other than video messages containing threats, they are still waiting for news of their wellbeing, some four weeks later. As my colleague Tanya Plibersek stated, the situation is horrific. It is every parent's worst nightmare. Our thoughts are with the girls, families and friends.

Labor has called on the Abbott government to do all it can to assist, including using our position on the UN Security Council to help drive an effective international response. Labor offers every support possible. I commend the work of UNICEF in supporting the campaign to raise global awareness along with organisations like Amnesty International and Civil Society around the world and the Twitter campaign #BringBackOurGirls. UNICEF has backed the
efforts of the Nigerian community to make their government take action and work to bring the
girls home.

Nigeria is a country with significant natural resources but its impoverished northern
regions, where socio-economic indicators are lower than in the rest of the country, provide a
fertile ground for recruitment by extremist groups such as Boko Haram. Unfortunately, given
the Abbott government's cuts to foreign aid, Australia is increasingly unable to offer its
assistance to remedy these problems, which is a terrible shame. Just as the families pleas for
help from not only the Nigerian government but also, importantly, the international
community have met with little substance of assistance, the region's historical request for
greater support in areas of education, good governance and the strengthening of civil society
has also received negligible response.

Only last year, the Abbott government cut $4.5 billion of Australian foreign aid that is
essential to the creation of stable nations by supporting good governance, creating and
supporting civil organisations and supporting women's education and reproductive health
programs—all the things that are important to creating harmonious and cohesive communities
that help to change the conditions in which groups such as Boko Haram take root. Yet tonight
we have heard even further cuts to our foreign aid program. Australia's ability to assist in
creating positive change has been severely curtailed.

Despite this, there are important ways that we can highlight the plight of these young
women and raise our consciousness of their situation around the world. One important way is
to set down their names in the historical record to ensure their identities as individual women
do not go unheard, so I will do that now. These girls are Blessing Abana, Yayi Abana,
Deborah Abari, Deborah Abbas, Hauwa Abdu, Ilyi Abdu, Safiya Abdu, Sieker Abdul, Awa
Abge, Deborah Abge, Kumma Aboku, Hamsatu Abubakar, Mairama Abubakar, Hasana
Adamu, Naomi Adamu, Amina Ali, Asabe Ali, Mary Ali, Comfort Amos, Deborah Amos,
Mary Amos, Rifkatu Amos, Ruth Amos, Saraya Amos, Esther Ayuba, Saratu Ayuba, Hauwa
Balti, Awa Bitrus, Christiana Bitrus, Godiya Bitrus, Na'omi Bitrus, Rahila Bitrus, Ruth Bitrus,
Nguba Buba, Maryamu Bulama, Abigail Bugar, Yana Bugar, Gloria Dama, Maifa Dama,
Muwa Daniel, Talata Daniel, Filo Dauda, Mary Dauda, Saratu Dauda, Patiant Dzakawa,
Saratu Emmanuel, Lydia Emmer, Monica, Enoch, Aisha Ezekial, Rifkatu Galang, Halima
Gamba, Aishatu Greme, Comfort Habila, Lydia Habila, Liyatu Habit, Febi Haruna, Tabitha
Hyelampa, Ladi Ibrahim, Rahap Ibrahim, Hanatu Ishaku, Ruth Ishaku, Zara Ishaku, Hauwa
Ishaya, Hauwe Isuwa, Awa James, Deborah Jafaru, Ladi Joel, Esther John, Jummai John,
Joshua, Yana Joshua, Rebeca Kabu, Ruth Kollo, Hauwa Kwakwi, Rakiya Kwamtah, Kauna
Lalai, Aisha Lawan, Fatia Lawan, Maryamu Lawan, Ruth Lawan, Kauna Luka, Na'omi Luka,
Rebecca Luka, Gloria Mainta, Kabu Mallu, Rebeca Mallum, Laraba Maman, Asabe Manu,
Kwadugu Manu, Esther Markus, Saratu Markus, Aishatu Musa, Awagana Musa, Hanatu
Musa, Hauwa Musa, Helen Musa, Maryamu Musa, Palmata Musa, Rejoice Musa, Saraya
Musa, Hauwa Mutag, Kume Mutah, Lugwa Mutah, Ruth Ngalad, Hauwa Neki, Rachael
Nkeki, Hanatu Nuhu, Pindar Nuhu, Grace Paul, Jummai Paul, Laraba Paul, Ladi Paul, Mary
Paul, Saraya Paul, Deborah Peter, Hauwa Peter, Rhoda Peter, Naomi Philimon, Mwa Malam
Pogu, Salomi Pogu, Tabitha Pogu, Yana Pogu, Luggwa Samuel, Saraya Samuel, Serah
Samuel, Luggwa Sanda, Rejoice Sanki, Margret Shettima, Yanke Shittima, Tabitha Silas,

Each of these young women has the full potential of their life before them and a future of empowerment and education, which both Nigeria and the international community owe to them. To do so, we must make sure that they are delivered safely back to their homes, their school and their families. Bring back our girls.

Senate adjourned at 23:34

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The following documents were tabled:


Norfolk Island Administration—Financial statements for 2012-13—Independent report of the Australian National Audit Office.


Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA)—Report for 2012-13—Corrigendum.


Tabling

The Acting Deputy President (Senator Whish-Wilson) tabled the following documents received on the dates indicated:


Gene Technology Regulator—Quarterly report for the period 1 October to 31 December 2014.

Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse—Royal Commission—Report of Case Study No. 1—The response of institutions to the conduct of Steven Larkins, dated March 2014.


Indexed Lists of Departmental and Agency Files

Tabling

Pursuant to the order of the Senate of 30 May 1996, as amended, the Acting Deputy President (Senator Whish-Wilson) tabled the following documents received on the dates indicated:

Indexed lists of departmental and agency files for the period 1 July to 31 December 2013—

Statements of compliance—

Australian Taxation Office.

Treasury portfolio.