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SITTING DAYS—2014

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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

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<td>Abetz, Hon. Eric</td>
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(5) = Final term
(8) = Final election term
(10) = Second term
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Pursuant to section 42 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, the terms of service of the following senators representing the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory expire at the close of the day immediately before the polling day for the next general election of members of the House of Representatives:

- **Australian Capital Territory**
  - Lundy, K. (ALP)
  - Seselja, Z.M. (LP)

- **Northern Territory**
  - Scullion, N. G. (CLP)
  - Peris, N.M. (ALP)

(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**

- AG—Australian Greens
- ALP—Australian Labor Party
- CLP—Country Liberal Party
- DLP—Democratic Labor Party
- IND—Independent
- LP—Liberal Party of Australia
- NATS—The Nationals
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
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Brett Mason</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Employment</td>
<td>The Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></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><strong>Treasurer</strong></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><strong>Minister for Agriculture</strong></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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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Education</strong></td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</td>
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Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
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Wednesday, 25 June 2014

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

BUSINESS
Consideration of Legislation

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (09:31): by leave—I move:

That government business orders of the day Nos 1 (Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No.1) 2014-15 and related bills) and no.2 (Appropriation Bill (No.5) 2013-2014 and a related bill) may be taken together for their remaining stages.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015
Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2014-2015
Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2013-2014
Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2013-2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (09:32): I rise to speak on the appropriation bills. In a legal sense, the annual appropriation bills are at the core of any budget. They make appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, the CRF, for the government's activities. So in a technical sense, these underpin the budget. But when it comes to economic and social philosophy, when it comes to values and principles, we do find something else at the core of the Abbott government's first budget, something quite rotten. We find a perverse approach to economic policy—an approach of talking the economy down, of propagating a fabricated budget crisis and damaging consumer confidence, an approach which will increase the cost of living for middle Australia, making people pay more for basic needs like visiting the doctor and buying medicines. At the same time as it makes people pay more, the budget increases the tax impost on ordinary Australians—from the Prime Minister who said, 'No new taxes.' It cut benefits and concessions for those who are most vulnerable like pensioners—from the Prime Minister who said, 'No changes to the pension, no cuts to health, no cuts to education.'

At the core of this budget is a hardline agenda of dismantling Australia's social safety net. It is as simple as that. At the core of this budget is a perverse approach to social policy as well as to economic policy, a harsh philosophy of slugging low- and middle-income earners while cushioning the wealthy and big business. If senators opposite do not agree with me, I refer them to Senator Macdonald's intervention in the debate on the deficit levy bill last week. It is a philosophy of entrenching privilege for those who can afford the best quality education and...
the best quality health care while reducing educational opportunities and curtailing access to health care for low- and middle-income earners. This is a budget of broken promises, a budget of deep unfairness, bad economics and big lies. It is a budget which will take this nation backwards.

The budget's deep unfairness starts with its attacks on Australians who work hard. It attacks families struggling with the cost of living, parents who want a better future for their children, young people who want to go to university—all of them attacked by this budget. The budget's unfairness continues with its attack on the weak and the disadvantaged. It attacks the elderly, those on the age pension and self-funded retirees. The pensioners of this country were promised by Mr Abbott, 'There will be no changes to the pension'—all a lie. It attacks the vulnerable, people who are sick, people with disabilities and their carers, war veterans and Indigenous Australians. The unfairness of the government's policies can be illustrated with one simple contrast. This budget will make a couple on an income of $65,000 a year with two children more than $6,000 a year worse off. Yet, at the same time as this government is slugging low-income households, it is giving millionaires $50,000 for having a baby. There is a Paid Parental Leave scheme for the well-off, but there are higher taxes, higher charges and lower benefits for low- and middle-income earners. This tells us everything we need to know about where Mr Abbott's priorities lie.

This is a budget with a cradle to grave assault on fairness. It hits ordinary Australians at every stage of their lives. It hits child care, with $450 million of cuts to out-of-school hours care; it is cutting the number of places for before and after school care. It hits schoolchildren, cutting $6½ billion from the Gonski school funding reforms. Remember, these were funding reforms that Mr Abbott promised Australians he would not roll back. He promised Australians he would not cut. He said, 'We said we are on a unity ticket with the Labor Party when it comes to school reforms.' University students will pay more to go to university. Working families are hit hard with the slashing of the family tax benefit. As the former Prime Minister John Howard has pointed out, this amounts to a tax hike on low- and middle-income Australia. A new petrol tax will slug working families $2.2 billion over four years. There is a new GP tax of $7 every time a family visits the doctor and a new medicines tax of $5 every time they go to a chemist to fill a prescription. Labor's schoolkids bonus is scrapped. Eligible families are losing money for children going to school—$410 per primary school child per year and $820 per secondary school child per year.

For those struck down by illness or facing disability, the government replaces the helping hand with a slap in the face. Indexation of the disability support pension is cut, leaving more than 800,000 people with disabilities worse off. These are people who receive less than $20,000 a year in pension payments. People who lose their jobs are hit. Workers under 30 who lose their jobs will be denied income support for six months—six months!—leaving these Australians with no income to put a roof over their head, let alone pay for things such as phone calls or travel to the job interviews that the government says they have to do. People who have retired from the workforce after paying taxes all their lives are also hit by this unfair budget. The government is cutting the age pension and making people work until they are 70 before they can receive the pension. Self-funded retirees are also hit with the government cutting funding for concessions for seniors health card holders. These are cruel cuts. They represent an attempt to change the face of Australia; to increase the cost of living;
to slash our social safety net; to throw out the idea of a fair go and to entrench inequality; and
to make this nation a more unfair, a more unequal and a more uncaring society.

The budget is not only unfair social policy. We say it is also bad economics. For a start,
this is a budget built on an economic lie, the myth that the Commonwealth is facing a budget
emergency. We know that this is a Prime Minister who has an addiction to scare campaigns.
We remember the claim from Mr Abbott that whole cities would be wiped off the map. From
claiming that those cities would be wiped off the map to a fictitious budget emergency, the
reality is this is a man who sacrifices facts in the pursuit of a political objective.

Nations with budget emergencies do not receive AAA credit ratings with a stable outlook
from all three credit rating agencies, as Australia did under Labor. We are only one of 10
economies in the world with such a rating from all three agencies. This puts us in the
company of other countries with strong public finances, like Germany, Canada, Sweden,
Singapore and Switzerland. So much for Mr Abbott's confected budget emergency—which is
the entire economic and fiscal rationale for this budget of harsh cuts and broken promises.

The government's scare campaign about the Commonwealth's finances is economically
irresponsible. What sort of message does it send to international financial markets for the
Prime Minister and the Treasurer of our country to declare over and over again a budget
emergency? This fabricated budget emergency will be deterring investment from abroad and
it has also eroded consumer confidence at home. The Westpac Melbourne Institute's
consumer sentiment index has fallen by 17 points over the last seven months—17 points!
Let's remember Mr Hockey before the last election saying solemnly, with his serious face on,
'We have to restore confidence.' Well, in seven months there has been a drop of 17.4 points in
consumer confidence and sharp falls in May and June following the announcement of the
budget. This is what happens when a government spends months falsely claiming the nation's
finances are in an emergency and then brings down a budget which cuts the living standards
of the vast bulk of householders in this country. Depressing consumer sentiment in this way
can only have a negative impact on economic growth in the short term.

It is as if Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey have forgotten that, when you are in government and
you are a senior economic minister or the Prime Minister, your words have a real effect. They
have an effect on the real economy. They have an effect on market confidence. They have an
effect on consumer confidence. But all of that is ignored because the pursuit of a political
scare campaign is regarded as more important than the national interest. One thing you can
always say about this Prime Minister and this government is that they will always put their
political interest ahead of the national interest.

When it comes to the medium term and the economic reforms, Australia needs to keep
growing for the future. This is an extraordinarily short-sighted budget. As our population
ages, Australia needs to boost workforce participation, improve our workforce skills and lift
our workforce productivity. But the budget contains policies which are bad for participation,
bad for skills and bad for productivity. It cuts $80 billion from schools and hospitals over the
next 10 years—cuts which will jeopardise our future economic prosperity.

Employers need our young people to emerge from schools with a quality education and the
skills needed to make a contribution in the workforce of tomorrow; yet we have a budget that
is slashing school funding. What effect will this have? It will have a direct impact on the
education of the next generation of Australians. It will mean fewer teachers in classrooms. It
will mean fewer opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds getting a quality education. This isn’t just unfair; this does not just deny opportunities to the individual concerned; it is bad for workforce skills and productivity.

This budget makes $5 billion in cuts to universities and higher education. Those cuts will also hurt our economy. It will mean higher student fees, less public investment in university teaching per student and increasing debts for students—with higher interest rates on those larger debts. Our future competitiveness will depend on having enough graduates in disciplines like science, technology, engineering and mathematics; yet we have a government whose approach is to cut investment in universities and to deter people from going on to higher education.

The radical and drastic health cuts in this budget—again, the cuts the Prime Minister promised would not happen—will also have adverse long-term economic impacts. You do not foster workforce participation and productivity by undermining access to health care; yet that is what this government is doing. You do not ensure the health dollar is spent most effectively by undermining primary health care, which is precisely what this budget does through the new GP tax and medicines tax.

Low-income earners, we know, are especially sensitive to co-payments. A recent report by the COAG Reform Council found that 5.8 per cent of Australians delayed or did not see a GP because of cost and 8½ per cent reported that cost was a barrier to filling prescriptions.

The new GP and medicines tax will make this situation worse, deterring more people from going to the doctor, and that is the whole aim of the government's policy. When they talk about sustainability of Medicare, when they talk about the growth in the health budget and when they say we need to do what they are doing—imposing a GP tax—what they are actually saying is: they want to have fewer people going to the doctor. They want to deter Australians from going to the doctor.

The whole aim of the government's policy is to deter low- and middle-income earners from going to the doctor when they are sick. This will mean that medical conditions, which could be treated relatively inexpensively when diagnosed early, will go untreated and risk developing into more serious health problems. This not only inflicts more harm on individuals requires more expensive medical treatment down the track.

As the COAG Reform Council has observed, effective primary and community health help to keep people out of hospital—this is a fundamental principle of health economics, one that the government does not want to heed. The GP tax will result in more people needing to go to hospital, and it is just one example of the flawed economic thinking behind the tax. The budget cuts to investment in health, universities and schools are bad economic policy as well as bad social policy.

As I said at the outset, budgets reveal the values and priorities of a government. Budgets also reveal the character of those who lead governments, and what does this budget reveal? It reveals a Prime Minister who did not tell Australians the truth about his plans before the last election; a Prime Minister not just breaking one promise but every promise he made before the election; a Prime Minister who promised no cuts to health and no cuts to education, but Mr Abbott is now cutting $80 billion from Australian schools and hospitals; a Prime Minister who before the election promised no new taxes—now here he is hiking petrol tax, imposing a
new GP tax, imposing a medicines tax and increasing the top marginal rate of income tax; a Prime Minister who promised no change to the pensions and now he is cutting pensions; a Prime Minister who promised no increase to university fees who is now increasing university fees; a Prime Minister who before the election promised no cuts to the ABC, no cuts to SBS and now has presented a budget which will cut funding to the public broadcasters by $240 million and that is only the first step; a Prime Minister who said the government would not slash foreign aid but presents a budget which slashes foreign aid by $7.6 billion; and a Prime Minister who said that he would be the Prime Minister for Aboriginal affairs and who presents a budget that cuts half a billion dollars from Indigenous Australians.

Perhaps the biggest of the big lies was Mr Abbott's claim that he would reduce the cost of living for Australian families, because this is a budget which dramatically increases the cost of living for low- and middle-income earners. NATSEM research has shown the budget would leave a range of typical low- and middle-income families thousands of dollars a year worse off—huge impacts on people who are already finding it hard and are working hard to make ends meet.

The Prime Minister's great crusade before the election was to repeal the carbon price in the name of easing cost of living pressures and now he is introducing tax hikes and cuts to payments that will leave families thousands of dollars a year worse off. In the face of overwhelming public opposition to this budget, the Prime Minister has compounded his own deceit with yet more lies. He has tried to pretend that the budget does not cut pensions by playing word games. At least the Minister for Finance, who presented these appropriation bills, has been honest enough to acknowledge that reducing indexation of pensions does indeed mean you are cutting benefits and pensions. In the Senate last week, Senator Cormann said:

Now obviously and necessarily, reducing government payments, reducing the spending growth trajectory, will impact on people—individuals, families, pensioners, organisations, states and territories—who receive payments from the federal government.

In fact the Prime Minister's deception has now reached breathtaking levels because last week in the House of Representatives he made the risible claim:

This is a fundamentally fair budget.

Well, it is nothing of the sort—it is a fundamentally unfair budget.

Consistent with longstanding principles, the opposition will not oppose the passage of these appropriation bills, but when the government brings forward its broken promises like the GP tax and the cuts to pensions into this parliament, Labor will fight with everything we have against these socially regressive and economically damaging measures. We on this side of the chamber will continue to stand up for the fair go.

**Senator BILYK** (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (09:50): I too rise to speak on the appropriation bills, the bills which form the backbone of the Abbott government's first budget. This is a budget of cruel cuts. It is a budget built on lies and broken promises. This is the budget where the Abbott government demonstrates to the Australian people, if they haven't already realised it, that the government they got is not the one they thought they had elected. Mr Abbott went to great pains to assure the Australian people that, despite declaring a need to make savage cuts, he would protect and defend their vital public services. On the eve of the election Mr Abbott, hand on heart, promised 'no cuts to education,
no cuts to health, no changes to pensions, no changes to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS’. With the exception of 'no change to the GST', every single one of these promises has been broken, and the rhetoric coming from the government's front bench, especially the ministers with financial portfolios, suggests that the GST promise could end up being broken too.

The Abbott government declared, through its Treasurer, Mr Hockey, that 'the age of entitlement is over'. Yet they have shown that the age of entitlement is well and truly alive when they are pushing a paid parental leave scheme which delivers the biggest entitlement scheme in history, one that writes out $50,000 cheques to millionaires to have babies. Add to that the entitlement for billionaire miners to make super profits without giving the rest of Australia its fair share, and the generous tax cuts for Australia's 16,000 richest superannuants. I guess what Mr Hockey really meant was that the age of entitlement is over for the people who really need the support. After all, it will be the 3.6 million lowest earning workers who will be paying through their superannuation taxes, the millions of age pensioners and the seniors who have to work till they are 70 who will be doing the heavy lifting, as Mr Hockey would put it, to pay for the entitlements of billionaire mining magnates and millionaire mums.

Of course, even after the election, we still hear those opposite—without a hint of irony—claim that they have to take drastic action to fix some fictional budget disaster. I say it is ironic because those opposite, shortly after coming to government, doubled the deficit through a series of spending decisions and pessimistic forecasts. And the now government claimed in opposition they wanted to 'end the waste'. Yet they are engaging in some incredibly wasteful spending, such as their gold-plated Paid Parental Leave Scheme and their $9 billion unsolicited gift to the Reserve Bank, both of which were contrary to expert advice, from the Productivity Commission and Treasury, respectively. This reckless fiscal management is true to the form of their predecessors, the Howard government, in which the current Prime Minister was a minister, and which the IMF exposed as the most wasteful government in Australia's history.

Mr Abbott said he wanted to lead a government of no surprises. He said the Australian people were 'sick of nasty surprises' and that he wanted to lead a government which, instead of breaking promises, would 'underpromise and overdeliver'. Instead, what the Australian people see are broken promises and nasty surprises at every turn. You see, the 2013 federal election and the 2014-15 federal budget together tell a story: it is the tale of the two Tonies. First there is the pre-election Tony, or fake Tony. This was the Tony who railed against cost of living pressures. This was the Tony who decried debt and deficit, and declared that he would 'fix the budget' and 'end wasteful spending'. This was the Tony who extolled the virtues of honesty and preached day in, day out about the evils of breaking promises. This was the Tony who said he would spend his first week as Prime Minister in Arnhem Land—which, by the way, turned out to be his first broken promise.

The Liberal-National coalition was at such great pains before the election to elevate the fake Tony that their frontbenchers started waxing lyrical about the 'Tony they know' and what a great bloke he was. They even held back the real Tony and the real coalition agenda until after the Western Australian by-election and the state elections in South Australia and Tasmania, by sitting on the report of their commission of cuts. Now, with this budget, we see the real Tony. We see the Tony who breaks promises, who subjects struggling Australians to
abject poverty and abundant cruelty and whose dismissive response to the outcry of the Australians who elected him is, 'Where's the problem?'

Of course, you have all heard this line of argument before, but there is a particular reason that I wanted to make a contribution on the bills. What I want to do today is not talk about the statistics and how a family on X dollars will be worse off by Y dollars; not talk about the overwhelming evidence from welfare organisations, professional medical associations and other community groups about how this budget will severely attack the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our society; and not even talk about the cuts to programs and services such as health and education, Landcare, the ABC, the Arts, the CSIRO, social services and Indigenous programs. What I want to do in my contribution today is give a voice to some of the ordinary people who have contacted my office and who wish to tell their stories about how this cruel budget is going to hurt them.

I will start with a pensioner couple in a rural area in my home state of Tasmania. This couple spoke recently at a forum organised by the Tasmanian Council of Social Services to discuss the impact of the Abbott government's $7 GP tax. One of them has several chronic health conditions. This means she has to have regular appointments with her GP and various specialists. This couple is already struggling to get by with mortgage payments of more than $400 a fortnight. Being from a rural area, they have to travel into town for specialist appointments, which can cost them about $40 for just one week.

They explained to the forum that they found the Treasurer's suggestion that $7 is a couple of beers or a third of a pack of cigarettes deeply insulting. They do not drink or smoke. In fact, they have very little discretionary spending. To them, $7 might be a few loaves of bread, a couple of bottles of milk or a small bag of cat food for their cat. This couple are going to be hit from several directions by this budget should all the measures pass the Senate. Not only are they concerned about the GP tax, but they could also face higher fuel costs when they travel to Hobart to visit specialists. As custodial grandparents for a teenage boy, they also face the prospect of losing family tax benefit part B and the schoolkids bonus. They are also concerned about the challenges their grandson will face if he relies on youth allowance after leaving home.

This couple are active participants in their local community centre, their local branch of the pensioners' association and a variety of other community organisations. They are absolute icons of their rural community. If they lose the capacity to participate in their community not only would they lose but also the community as a whole would lose. This couple have not only shared their own story with me but they have also expressed their concern about people in their community who they have come across through their volunteer work. They mention, for example, those who rely on their local GP for health care and or the people who rely on the local community centre for something as simple as a phone call to Centrelink.

Another person who has conveyed their story to my office was a mother living in a rural area whose youngest child had just turned nine. Her husband has a modest income and the family is only just scraping by. The cuts to family tax benefit part B alone could see the family losing more than 10 per cent of its income. She and her husband have three children in their care. They also have a grandson in Sydney, who they see very rarely because they could barely afford the travel. In her words, 'The only time we get to see our grandson is when someone dies.'
One small luxury her children have, if you could call it that, is participation in weekend soccer games; yet if the budget measures go through she will not be able to afford the registration fees. She quite reasonably regards the weekend sport as an important outlet to develop the health and fitness of her children and for them to socialise with other kids. A trip to the cinema is, in her words 'out of the question' even if they could afford the petrol to get into the city. To illustrate how reliant the family is on their income for the bare necessities, when the woman recently turned 50 and was asked by her dad what she would like for her birthday she asked for new tyres for the family car. That was her 50th birthday present—car tyres from her dad. Imagine how this family is going to struggle, not only losing income from family tax benefit but also paying a GP tax every time a family member visits the doctor and paying additional fuel tax on their car trips. Imagine how they would struggle to pay for school fees and uniforms with the loss of the schoolkids bonus. These are two comprehensive examples of families who are going to suffer if the measures in the Abbott government's budget are implemented in full. In both cases, a particular budget measure on its own could plunge these families into severe hardship, not to mention a combination of several measures.

I will now provide a few quotes from other people who are concerned about the impact the budget will have on them. These are from people who have contacted the Labor Party or contacted my office to share their concerns. From a 50-year-old mother on Newstart allowance:

These cuts will affect myself and my family from every angle. My son is 10 years old. Having Family Tax Benefit B cut is going to disadvantage him in many ways. Even the basics like staying warm, a hot shower and having fresh fruit and vegies in the fridge will be luxuries. Already, any activities outside of school hours are unaffordable. We live on a day-to-day basis. We have discussed, many times, the importance of continuing to higher education, but my hopes of keeping our future dreams alive have faded to the point of a creeping depression setting in. I cannot see how this move will help break the 'welfare cycle' as I see nothing in the future for us but a poverty driven life that I will be powerless to break.

This one comes from a teacher at a school in a very disadvantaged area in the South of Tasmania:

I teach at a low SES school where the students often come to school hungry and tired. There is a high rate of mental illness that results from the trauma these students have suffered. Their parents are impoverished and there seems to be a high rate of illness. Teachers are often blamed for poor performance results in NAPLAN, but if you knew these students you would know that learning isn’t as simple as it is for other students. When you are malnourished, tired and your focus is on other things, absorbing information and concepts is very difficult.

This budget is going to make things a whole lot worse for these students.

A pensioner told me in an email that she had visited the doctor six times in the last two weeks, which would have cost her $42 with Mr Abbott's GP tax. As she explained to me:

I would not have spent that $42 on beer or cigarettes. It would probably go towards my power bill, or food.

I also had a disability support pensioner with a chronic health condition call my office and explain that he simply would not be able to afford visits to the doctor or medication. In other words, he simply would not be able to afford to have his condition treated. I have mentioned a few examples of parents who would struggle with the changes to family tax benefit part B.

One single parent who emailed me said that the money she receives through this payment, to
her, is 'survival'. She said that if she lost this payment, she would not be able to afford her rent and her family would be at risk of homelessness.

These are just a few of the many examples of how the Abbott government's budget, if implemented in full, will literally plunge families into poverty. The Abbott government is trying desperately to sell their rotten budget as a necessary evil. The rhetoric from those opposite suggests that Labor does not accept the need for savings. Such rhetoric overlooks the fact that we did make savings in government. Over the course of our time in government, Labor put forward $180 billion in savings—to fund our budget promises. Many of those savings were vigorously opposed by the then opposition, now government, despite their continued rhetoric about a 'budget crisis'.

You see, budgets are about priorities. Budgets are about choices. Our argument with the government is not about the need to make tough budget decisions; it is about the quality of the decisions they are making. The proposition that the government has no choice but to attack the social fabric of Australia in order to balance the budget is, quite frankly, ludicrous. The government has plenty of alternatives available to them. For example, they could scrap their gold-plated Paid Parental Leave scheme—the one which the Productivity Commission said would be wasteful and have 'few incremental benefits' over Labor's scheme. They could drop their generous tax breaks for people with superannuation balances over a million dollars. They could retain the mining tax, which ensures that mining companies which make 'super profits', from a resource that can only be dug up once, are required to provide the rest of Australia with a fair share of the revenue from that resource—a resource which belongs to the Australian people. Instead, they choose to cut essential services like health and education and attack the living standards of pensioners, families and jobseekers.

The government have not been forced to cut pensions. They have not been forced to tax the sick. They have not been forced to slug motorists and uni students. They have made a conscious choice to do so. Austerity is not an excuse for cruelty. Yet when Labor makes the quite sensible suggestion that the government should be standing up for the poor, the sick and the vulnerable, the government accuses us of 'class warfare'. US billionaire Warren Buffett had a refreshing take on this catchphrase 'class warfare'. In an interview in November 2006 with the New York Times, Mr Buffett said, 'There's class warfare, all right; but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning.' Mr Buffett's comments could easily be applied to Australia.

Since the 1970s, the share of income for the top one percent of earners has doubled. For the top 0.1 percent, it has tripled. The richest three Australians control more wealth than the poorest one million, and this budget will make it worse. Modelling by NATSEM, the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, shows that under this budget the 20 percent of Australians on the lowest incomes will see their incomes fall by an average of 2.2 percent. That is right: 20 per cent of Australians on the lowest incomes will see their incomes fall by an average of 2.2 per cent. By contrast, those in the top 20 percent will lose only 0.2 percent of their incomes. That is right: those in the top 20 per cent will lose only 0.2 per cent of their incomes.

With their cry of 'class warfare' is the government seriously suggesting that it is a declaration of war to defend the basic safety net and equality of opportunity to which Australians are entitled? To me, the only form of class warfare is that which suggests
removing the safety net from those who need it in favour of tax cuts and income support for millionaires and billionaires who do not. To suggest that government income support—whether it be in the form of payments or tax concessions—should go to the Australians with the highest need should not be a controversial suggestion. This government calls it 'class warfare'. We on this side have another term for it: 'fairness'.

Having outlined how cruel the Abbott budget is, having outlined that we see this budget as representing a multitude of broken promises, I will echo what Senator Wong said in her contribution—that Labor will not be opposing the appropriation bills. We do not intend to throw the baby out with the bathwater and reject this budget in its entirety. To block supply would be to deny funding to vital public services, and we will not use thousands of hardworking public servants as human shields in our fight against this cruel budget. However, we will be opposing and fighting hard against these cruel budget measures when they come to this place in the form of separate enabling legislation.

We will fight cuts to pensions, cuts to family payments, cuts to assistance for job seekers, increased university fees and the Abbott government's new GP and petrol taxes. We will do so on behalf of, and in defence of, the people whose stories I have just told and the millions of ordinary Australians like them.

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (10:07): I rise today to address the issue of the appropriation bills. A budget reflects the vision for the nation that the government of the day has, and it puts into clear view the values that underpin that vision for the nation. Frankly, where you put your money tells you where your priorities are. It is the same for a household; it is the same for a government. You put the money there and it shows people what you think is important.

The Abbott government has made it very clear that it is steering Australia on a cold-hearted path where the gap between those who have and those who have not grows ever larger. The Abbott government's budget reflects that our Prime Minister's vision for this country is a vision of the past. It is a vision that says, 'Let's leg-rop Australia to the 19th and 20th centuries. Let's keep this country as a dig it up, cut it down, ship it away economy. Let's keep on hollowing out manufacturing and losing manufacturing jobs. Let's ignore the major, overwhelming issue of our time—global warming—and we don't care about what it is doing, particularly in rural and regional Australia, to agriculture, let alone the environment. Ignore all that, because essentially we want to protect the vested interests of the people who donate and vote for the Liberal Party.' That is essentially what this budget has done. It is about protecting the vested interests of the old order. It is not new. Machiavelli identified it in the 15th century.

There is nothing harder to bring about than change, because the vested interests of the old order fight like partisans to keep their vested interests. Those who believe in a new way are lukewarm in their support, because people do not believe in things until they have actual experience of them. That is what is going on with this budget. The vested interests of the old order have been itching for a coalition government to get back in so that they can absolutely nail down their wealth and interests. That is why this budget is driving Australia towards being a plutocracy, a country in which the wealth, the wealthy and big business own and run the government for their own interest. That is what is happening here.
In order for that to happen, we are seeing a massive, permanent hit on low-income earners, on the unemployed, on the sick, on students—on the future. That is because the future of the country depends on transitioning out of the things that make the vested interests of the old order rich—that is, transitioning away from a resource based economy and investing in a country that says, 'In this century we are going to do everything to protect our ability to survive on this planet, and that means looking after the environment in the face of global warming, doing what we can to slow it down and to adapt to what is already in place' but at the same time saying, 'Well, what sort of society do we want?' In addressing global warming you actually get to rethink what sort of society you want. Do you want a society that is more equal? Do you want a society where everyone gets a good education, regardless of who their parents are, where they live or where they were brought up, where everyone has an equal opportunity, where there is no discrimination on the basis of race, sexuality or gender? Any discrimination should go. We have an opportunity to rethink everything. Of course, that includes the design of our cities and our transportation systems. We have so many opportunities.

This budget is essentially the Abbott government locking in the vested interests of the past, their wealth and their wealth sources against those who want to transition to a better future that addresses global warming and inequality. These are two of the things the World Economic Forum has identified as being the overwhelming threats to the stability of the planet in this next decade. The Abbott government is moving to dismantle universal health care, defund access to quality public education, strip away money from Indigenous programs, push young people into poverty and saddle students with ever-increasing higher-education debt. It is forgoing the billions of dollars in revenue from carbon pricing—the big polluters paying for their pollution, which is driving global warming. Instead of that, the Abbott government is ripping up the safety net and the social contract that has been central to safeguarding egalitarianism in this country. We are going backwards on the idea that people in Australia have equal opportunity. In a budget, you should be trying to fix that, not actually lock it in and drive it harder.

Contrary to the stack of budget papers that were released last month, we Greens do not want this country run for corporations. We do not want a country in which you have BHP turning up in the Treasurer's office saying: 'Don't you dare touch our fuel tax credits, because we're capable of running exactly the same campaign against you that we ran against Kevin Rudd when and destroyed his ability to bring in the superprofits tax on the big miners. Don't do it. Don't touch us.' And so that is exactly what happened. BHP is not going to be touched; none of the big resource based industries are touched. In fact, they are going to get their fuel tax rebate just as they wanted.

This is one of the things the government can do; big corporations can avoid tax, and they do. But they cannot get out of it if the government determined not to give them back their fossil fuel subsidies and their fuel tax rebate. But, no, that has not happened.

And while I am on the subject of the fuel indexation: if you are going to put in a price signal it has to drive transformation. Saying to people, 'We are going to take money from people who have no options with public transport, who drive old, inefficient cars. We are going to take money from you, and we are going to put it into more roads so we can have more congestion, more urban sprawl and less sustainable cities,' makes no sense. It is quite
extraordinary that the Greens have pushed for years for mandatory vehicle fuel efficiency standards—and we still do—and yet in the last period of government the Labor Party would not move on mandatory vehicle fuel efficiency standards and neither what the coalition. Why? Because the cars we were building in Australia would not have met standards like that.

We were allowing the transport fleet in Australia to go backwards, whereas in other countries they are moving on fuel efficiency standards. When President Obama talks about fuel efficiency on the G20 agenda he is talking about mandatory vehicle fuel efficiency standards, and good on him! We intend to push that here, because the best way of transforming things is, of course, getting a more efficient vehicle fleet and getting more public transport so that people have the option of driving less and, when they do drive, of driving more efficiently.

But we have a scenario where the Abbott government tried to confect a budget emergency. Explain to me, someone, how you can say that there is a budget emergency when at the same time you say, 'We are not going to fix the mining tax. We want the big miners not to pay any of this extra profit that they are making,' and at the same time say, 'We don't want the polluters to pay. In fact, we're going to raise a couple of billion dollars out of your pocket to give to the big polluters.' That is what the supposed Direct Action actually does.

We have people ringing our offices constantly, telling us about the hardship that they are experiencing because of this budget. We have people ring us and tell us every day that they cannot afford it. We have had students write to us, saying that they simply will not be able to go to university because it is already a challenge if you live rurally to get to uni and be able to meet the accommodation and extra costs and this will make it nearly impossible now.

So we will send these budget measures back. We will vote against what the Abbott government wants to do. We will send back all of their harsh cuts in every shape or form that we can. But there are some who have suggested—such as Andrew Wilkie and the Palmer United Party—that the Senate should block supply and should stop the ordinary annual services of government being delivered, which would mean that they would grind to a halt in a progressive weight from 1 July. That includes hundred and 150,000 federal public servants not being paid. These are the public servants who not only would suffer personally but are also the ones who make sure that government services like Medicare payments, or social security pensions or welfare payments are paid to people who need them. If you decide that you are going to stop the ordinary annual services of government you are going to shut down those offices and people are not going to be able to access those services.

The rejecting or delaying of appropriation bills means that, without those annual appropriations, there is no source of funding for delivering the wide range of services that government agencies deliver and, whilst the funds might be there to pay the pension or to pay tax refunds and a whole range of other government payments, there are no funds lawfully available to pay for the administration of those payments, whether they are through direct salary, systems administration costs or contractors. So, effectively, if Andrew Wilkie and Clive Palmer have their way, a range of vital services that government delivers—everything from air services and other transport safety services, quarantine protections, customs and border operations, law enforcement and regulatory services, the administration of the federal courts and tribunals, a multiplicity of research activities and the conduct of international
relations—could all be compromised by the unavailability of funds to be able to have people deliver them.

While it is expected that essential services would be maintained and employees would continue to work for deferred salary, the impact on the economy and the financial system through the failure of the government to pay its bills and honour its contracts cannot be underestimated. That impact would be acerbated by the inability of individual Commonwealth employees to pay their bills or buy goods and services. If you are realistic about this, people live from pay to pay. They have to pay a mortgage. What is a Commonwealth Public Servant going to do if they do not get paid? Are they going to default on their mortgage? How are they going to pay their rates? How are they going to pay their energy bills? How are they going to buy food? These are the realities.

Let there be no doubt that we are absolutely going to take it up to the Abbott government on this budget. We have already given a clear indication that we are going to do everything in our power to keep the clean energy package and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. In supporting the retention of that, we have set up a double dissolution trigger—and, if the government wants to go to an election, it can. Blocking appropriation bills means that the government has the choice of just going to a House of Representatives election. A double dissolution trigger means that you can secure a re-election for the whole parliament. We have already set up one trigger, and it is now up to the Abbott government. Of course, as soon as we set up the trigger, we heard the government say 'Just because we've got a trigger, we wouldn't pull it.' That is because the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, knows that the community finds this budget totally abhorrent.

It is interesting that it is always the far right wingers who are the ones who create instability and uncertainty in the community. If you look at what the Tea Party did in the United States, bringing that country almost to the brink in terms of the financial relationship there, you can see what happens if you start threatening ordinary annual services of government. Of course, in Australia it was the Liberal Party who forced the constitutional crisis in 1975. They only threatened to block the budget; they did not actually do it—and that brought on that major constitutional crisis. The Greens are here as very strong and reliable people in this parliament. We have demonstrated through balance of power in state governments around the country and in this parliament that we will absolutely take it up to the government. We are going to vote down every one of their cruel budget measures that come through this place, but we are not going to cause a constitutional crisis.

We will, however, set up a double dissolution trigger and have that potential to go to an election. If the government are prepared to go to an election, good, because the people will show them very well that they do not support the unfair and regressive measures that the government are proposing. Just to reiterate: the Greens will block and vote against the attacks on universal health care and vote down the $7 GP co-payment; we will block the cruel changes to the living and studying allowance for young people and students; we will vote against and block the unfair and regressive user-pays model proposed for our universities; and we will do everything we can to stop the destruction of the clean energy package—which again goes to the question of whether you want the past or whether you want the future. We are very much focused on the future of our nation, of looking after people, of creating jobs, of attracting investment in renewable energy and new jobs, in spending money on research and
universities, in developing the knowledge based economy in supporting the creative industries—that is where we want to go—and we absolutely condemn the government's attack on science, research and evidence based policy.

We do not support in any shape or form the crippling cuts to CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology and rolling together the National Environmental Research Program and the Australian Climate Change Science Program. We cannot continue to produce world-class research if the government keeps threatening the research budget every year. It is the wrong way to be going in Australia and, in terms of Tasmania, we now have a world world-class hub of marine, climate and Antarctic researchers and we should be strengthening that. Instead of that, the government is smashing it with cuts to CSIRO, and we are going to see a further 18 jobs go making a total of 16 in the last year. We are strong supporters of CSIRO and we are not going to support those savage attacks.

Nor do we support the attacks on the ABC and SBS and the next round: we are told that the $45 million is just the start and there will be another $45 million out of the ABC and SBS. Australians love the ABC and SBS and do not want to support these cuts but it shows the values. This shows the Rupert Murdoch agenda coming out of the government. It shows what the Institute of Public Affairs wants to do to shut down and cut down the public broadcaster and SBS, and we all know why that is the case, and of course the Australia Network is something that Ruper Murdoch has long wanted to shut down.

The Greens want the big miners, bankers and polluters to pay their fair share first and we could raise $79.2 billion in revenue and avoid all these cruel measures in the budget if we actually did get those super profits tax on the miners fixed; if we got tax avoidance from these discretionary trusts dealt with, if we retained the carbon price; if we actually dealt with this issue of past and future; if we actually put a levy on the big four banks; and if we imposed a levy on thermal coal. We need to actually make decisions that set us up for the future not leg- rope us to the past. I reiterate: the Greens in this budget will stand absolutely up to the Abbott government's attempt to lock us into the wealth and the resource based economy dictating unfairness. (Time expired)

**Senator McEWEN** (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (10:27): I am pleased to be able to contribute to this debate today on the appropriations bills before the Senate and to make some comments about the Abbott Liberal government's budget—a budget that is a litany of broken promises.

It has taken Prime Minister Abbott less than nine months to make so many Australians disenchanted with his government as they realise that the promises that were made before the election are now to be broken; in fact that they were lied to before the election. Before the election they were promised no cuts to health, no cuts to education, no cuts to pensions, no cuts to the ABC or SBS and no new taxes. Those promises have been broken—broken too is the pledge from the Abbott government not to cut the jobs of more than 12,000 public servants and the promise not to make further cuts to overseas development aid—and all of this on the back of another lie about the state of the federal budget and the confected emergency about the state of budget.

There is no credible economist who supports the federal government's continued lie that Australia' budget is in a dire situation. It is not, and we should not be making decisions based on a lie. In my home state of South Australia, we have been hit particularly hard by the
government's backflips; however, it is regional South Australia that will really feel the brunt of these actions. In fact, rural and regional South Australians will be worse off after $18 million was cut from our road funding. Every local council in South Australia has written to South Australian senators complaining about the devastating effect that that cut to funding will have. We can thank in part the member for Mayo and the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Jamie Briggs, a South Australian himself, for the fact that rural and regional roads across South Australia will be stripped of vital funding. Surely, as a South Australian, Mr Briggs would understand how important it is to have the vast regional road network in South Australia adequately funded to keep those roads safe for regional and rural South Australian drivers.

Furthermore, the member for Barker, Mr Tony Pasin, whose local electorate covers much of regional south-east and north South Australia and the Riverland, has not stood up for the people who voted for him either. Rather than fighting for his local region, fighting to protect the vital infrastructure linking South Australia's regional towns, Mr Pasin is out there giving the message to rural and regional councils and residents that the Abbott government only cares about the safety of motorists travelling on roads within Adelaide and the city's surrounds. This is a budget that defies belief. It has inflicted or will inflict suffering on almost every part of the community. From the fuel tax to the GP tax to the increase in prescription medicines, no-one will avoid paying more because of this cruel budget. I listened in disbelief to fellow South Australian, Senator Birmingham, a Liberal senator, in this place last week when he spoke in a positive light about the budget, mentioning how good it would be for South Australians and all Australians. Senator Birmingham said in his speech, 'Australia should have a society where we look after those who need it, provide opportunity to all those across Australia and reach out to give a helping hand to those who are in need.' What riled me most is that I do not disagree with that comment from Senator Birmingham, but for him to then go on and say that somehow this budget would deliver that is incredible—

Senator Ludwig: Incredulous.

Senator McEWEN: and incredulous. Mr Acting Deputy President, I would ask Senator Birmingham through you: how do you not realise that, in order to reach out and give that helping hand to those people in need, you cannot start by cutting their benefits, particularly those of unemployed people. That does not assist them to get back into the economy. That does not assist them to get back to work; it throws them on the scrap heap. How do you not realise that the Abbott government's vicious cuts will hit South Australians hard, in particular, by slashing funding to South Australian hospitals, with some $655 million having gone from South Australian hospitals? How many beds will have to be closed in South Australia? How many extra people are going to front up to the emergency services department in South Australian hospitals because they cannot afford the $7 GP tax? The South Australian government has done some modelling on this already. They estimate that waiting times in emergency departments in South Australian hospitals will increase threefold because people are forced to go to the emergency departments of hospitals because they cannot afford the $7 GP tax.

I have had quite a bit of correspondence from people across South Australia complaining about the budget and giving me their personal account of how it is going to negatively affect them. Sue, who lives in the Barker electorate, said that as a chronic asthmatic with
osteoarthritis in both knees and her wrist, she will be unable to afford to pay the $7 GP tax every time she needs to get a prescription. Furthermore, she said that, on top of that, rather than having to pay more to fill those prescriptions, she will just have to live with the pain. Julie, who lives in Boothby, is a single mum with two children, who works four days a week and is also a full-time student. She lives in public housing. She has seen a 25 per cent increase in her food bills and cost of living over the last year. Her six-year-old daughter has diabetes, so Julie has added financial pressures from her medication requirements and utilities expenses. She said:

If any more financial burden is passed on to me, such as costs of medical visits, increase in diabetic pump consumables, the loss of Family Tax part B, we will be in a very serious dilemma.

She is not alone. Any additional expenditure for Julie and her daughter will be something that she will find unbearable, and clearly something else will have to give so that she can afford to purchase those essential medications for herself and her daughter. Julie further stated:

I don't think the present government—
that is, the Abbott government—
has ANY idea what it is like for those who ARE doing their best to do all the right things and STILL not being able to get ahead, or in their case, being a lot worse off. It is the difference between putting food on the table, or going to the doctor or even having to access charities—
go begging to charities—
to obtain food or assistance.

Unfortunately, Julie's and Sue's stories are just scraping the surface of the number of South Australian people that will be affected by this unfair and cruel budget. I have heard plenty of other stories from people in similar situations.

Perhaps most significant for me was the reaction of people who live in Barker, a regional seat and one of my duty electorates. Barker has always been a Liberal-held seat. In the days and weeks following the budget, the Letters to the Editor section of the newspapers were anything but Liberal-leaning, I have to say. It was extraordinary to see in those letters and messages to regional newspapers in Barker the amount of anger aimed at the coalition government that bubbled up and spilt off the pages. It was unlike anything I had seen before in South Australia. Clearly people who live in the regions know they have been duded by the government that they supported, because the government lied to them before the election.

Another thing that has resonated in particular with regional South Australians is the cuts to the ABC. As we all know, the ABC is valued, if not loved, by regional Australians, who understand how important it is to have an independent broadcaster subsidised, if you like, by government and by the taxpayers of Australia to provide essential news services and other information services in regional Australia. We know that privately owned news media and other media outlets are withdrawing from providing comprehensive services into regional Australia. Again, I have been inundated with comments, emails and letters from people in regional South Australia and the Barker electorate saying, 'Please, protect our ABC.' Before the election, the Prime Minister clearly stated that there would be no cuts to the ABC. We have heard that quote reiterated many times in this chamber. And what was one of the first things Prime Minister Tony Abbott did? He cut $232 million from the ABC budget. The managing director of the ABC has clearly indicated that this is going to have an adverse effect
on the services of the ABC. We also know that that is not the end to the cuts to the ABC. There is more to come.

I want to touch on a couple of other facets of the budget—in particular, the threat the budget poses to the vital defence industry in South Australia. We know that defence industries in South Australia contribute $2.5 billion to the state's economy and will employ over 38,000 people by 2020, if they are funded properly. But after the budget the future of those jobs in South Australia is in doubt. South Australia currently holds 25 per cent of the nation's defence projects, including the largest defence project on record, the Air Warfare Destroyer Project. There is also the Future Submarine Project. We have been asking the Minister for Defence what will happen to that, and what the impact will be in South Australia. So far we have had no solace from the responses of the Minister for Defence, who is clearly preparing to walk away from South Australia. In South Australia we also have the significant presence of the Defence Science and Technology Organisation at RAAF Base Edinburgh, another defence installation vital to the South Australian economy. We are concerned about the future of that magnificent research institution. As I mentioned in the chamber last week, we are desperately worried about the future of the shipbuilding industry in Australia and desperately worried that shipbuilding in Australia will be tossed aside by this federal government in favour of purchasing ships from overseas.

I also want to highlight the effect that this budget will have on our veterans. The government seems quite happy to gradually erode our veterans' pensions and benefits, despite that fact that the Prime Minister, before the election, said that there would be no cuts to pensions. This budget clearly includes cuts to pensions, and to veterans' pensions as well. The Veterans' Affairs budget itself has been cut by more than $100 million, down from Labor's record $12.5 billion in the 2013-14 budget. The Seniors Supplement for veterans will be scrapped. The supplement helps them pay for energy, telephone, internet, rates, water and sewerage, so its scrapping will just add to the pain of trying to live on a pension. Veterans will also suffer from the reductions in other support measures relating to medical and pharmaceutical benefits in various local and state government concessions, unless state governments step up to the mark and fund them out of their own budgets. It is disappointing when we see coalition members ready to wrap themselves in the Australian flag and declare their support for Australian veterans on one hand and then on the other hand support a budget that targets veterans who rely on pensions to live.

Last week's South Australian state budget revealed the true cost to South Australia of the Prime Minister's broken election promises—a massive $5.5 billion in cuts to our schools and hospitals over the next decade and a $123 million cut to pensioner concession funding over the next four years. Liberal cuts are going to really hurt South Australian families. On this side of the chamber, we are prepared to stand up for South Australian families and we will continue to fight against the worst aspects of this budget. As has been said, we will support the appropriation bills. That is a responsible thing to do, but that will not stop us fighting every step of the way to restore fairness and equity to the Australian budget. There is no need for a budget that is unfair and cruel, as this one is. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues to ensure that we ameliorate the worst aspects of this budget. I call upon coalition senators from South Australia to stand up for their state.
Senator LUDWIG (Queensland) (10:43): This is a budget you would go hoarse on; it is that bad. I rise to contribute to the debate on the appropriation bills.

The Prime Minister called this budget a 'fair budget'. He believes that this budget is fair on the Australian people. He could not be more wrong. This is a budget of broken promises and twisted priorities. It is a budget that attacks the fundamental basis of the Australian social contract. The Treasurer has claimed that Australia has 'lifters and leaners', trying to split people in two. He is trying to divide that social contract. He has made a high political value of the cost per working Australian to support those on welfare. Lifters and leaners: a not-too-subtle coded attack on the poor, those people who are unwell and the most vulnerable Australians. With all of the rhetoric from the big, dancing Treasurer you would think that if the budget were to be cruel, it would at least be consistent. Yet, the budget is as inconsistent and unfair as it is cruel. It is because at the heart of this budget lies a real stinker—a real betrayal of the hard-working Australians who are being attacked by the budget. The Paid Parental Leave scheme—this friendless policy which the Prime Minister calls his 'signature policy'—hands out to those who need it the least. His backbench knows it; his Cabinet knows it; and, quite frankly, the Australian people get it, too. They know it. The PPL is bad policy; it is fundamentally unfair; and it is tearing this government apart.

The government claims that there is a budget emergency, and so let's walk through the facts about this emergency. I do not hear any siren in the background. The claimed emergency is of such grave magnitude that they have cut $80 billion from health and education, imposing a $7 tax when you visit your doctor or get an X-ray and an increased cost for medicines. Attacks on the elderly and people with disability and their carers by cutting pensions and by changing the indexation arrangements to carers payments and disability payments form the centrepiece of this broken promise. What a centrepiece it is: it attacks young people by increasing HECS fees and people on Newstart and youth allowance by forcing them to wait six months before receiving any support. From the young people starting out of life to those senior people who have contributed so much to this nation, they are all being made to suffer for this unfair budget full of twisted priorities and cuts because of the siren in the background—this so-called emergency.

The emergency is so severe the government wants to introduce a massive rolled-gold Paid Parental Leave scheme—that is how this emergency is framed. This scheme is economically irresponsible, inherently unfair, poorly constructed and, could I say, the best example of the ideological confusion that grips this Abbott government. It does spark outrage from those opposite; they should be as outraged as I am with this Paid Parental Leave scheme and its unfairness. I reckon they would find it hard to convince their electorate, but I hear rumours that they are hiding from their electorate when it comes to these issues. Mr Abbott's scheme is so unfair that, for example, women earning $100,000 or more will receive the new maximum of $50,000, while a woman on the minimum wage receives $16,000. It is pretty easy to work out who is much better off; it is plainly and simply not right.

I think those who questioned the then opposition leader Mr Abbott at the debate at the Rooty Hill RSL put it well. One man asked the Prime Minister why it was fair that a forklift driver from the Mount Druitt area should pay taxes to fund the parental leave of a lawyer in North Sydney. In contrast, before Labor introduced a fair Paid Parental Scheme for the first time in our history, only 55 per cent of women were able to access paid parental leave. This
was a dreadful situation for working mothers, as they often had to take unpaid leave or, worst of all, leave the workforce completely. Today around 95 per cent of working mothers have access to paid parental leave, because Labor built a scheme which was fair, affordable and, most of all, which supported those who needed it the most. The Productivity Commission said in its 2009 report to government that:

... a flat rate payment is appropriate in an Australian context and has the virtue of simplicity and affordability.

It went on to say:

Payment at a flat rate would mean that the labour supply effects would be greatest for lower income, less skilled women precisely those who are most responsive to wage subsidies and who are least likely to have privately negotiated paid parental leave. Full replacement wages for highly educated, well paid women would be very costly for taxpayers and, given their high level of attachment to the labour force and a high level of private provision of paid parental leave, would have few incremental labour supply benefits.

I think that independent source sums it up well. It is a strange day when a Liberal government wants to ignore the findings of a Productivity Commission report. I find it strange, because the Productivity Commission has, in my opinion, always fallen on the more conservative view, and yet the coalition have shunned it. It has put them at the wrong end of this book.

It is important to emphasise, though, that this Paid Parental Leave scheme is not an idea that has organically developed from within the Liberal and National Party room. It is not part of Liberal party philosophy, and I do not think I have ever seen it on their manifesto. It did not come about from thorough analysis and policy development from inside the government. This is the Prime Minister's own costly answer to a political problem—namely, the lack of trust women place in him personally. The problem with the Abbott Paid Parental Leave scheme is that it essentially acts as an income support payment without the means testing that other welfare payments currently receive. Contrast that with what they are now doing and saying in the welfare area. It stands in contrast to that. For a government that speaks a lot about ending the age of entitlement, introducing a gold-plated Paid Parental Leave scheme that is unfair, badly targeted, and expensive—I will let those opposite judge how contradictory that is, because they are being told that every day when they return to their electorates.

Let us not forget that when Mr Tony Abbott was overseas, it was Mr Joe Hockey doing the rounds, crying about the burden on taxpayers in funding welfare programs—Mr Abbott did a hospital pass to Mr Hockey to sell this. The Paid Parental Leave scheme was crafted for political purposes and without any evidentiary base as to its efficacy. Contrast this with the current Paid Parental Leave scheme introduced by Labor. After the Howard government had done nothing for years, Labor acted. We faced opposition too, of course: let us recall what Mr Tony Abbott said about it in 2002: ‘Compulsory paid maternity leave? Over this government's dead body; frankly, it just won't happen'. That is what he said—an amazing turnaround for this guy. He knew that his scheme was so unpopular and so unfair that it would not even get approval from the shadow cabinet, let alone the coalition party room. So he just announced it—brought you all on board; told you all about it after the event—to the bemusement of many shadow cabinet ministers at the time. He certainly blindsided his own backbench. We have had Senator Williams—rightly—point out that this scheme is too expensive. Senator
Boswell, Senator Bernardi, Senator Smith and others also note their reservations and their opposition to this unaffordable scheme. To understand the full workings of this government and this Prime Minister, I think it is worth reminding the chamber of the words of Senator Ian Macdonald in this place a few months ago.

This Prime Minister is working on what I would call an old style, Soviet command-and-control structure. It is quite amazing for those opposite to talk about their own government in this way. Even the Greens do not have this sort of Communist dictatorial nonsense; I would accept it from them, but for the Liberals and Nationals, who are never happier than when they are reliving the Cold War, this is a strange way to act. I thought I had seen it all, but Mr Tony Abbott's ragtag bunch of misfits have found new and innovative ways of putting the 'fun' into dysfunctional. So let us remember Senator Macdonald's words from December last year, which really explain the dysfunction at the core of this government. He said:

I was particularly disappointed as my many inquiries to the Prime Minister's office, which seems to have an almost obsessive centralised control phobia over this and every other aspect of parliament, responded to me when I kept inquiring with, 'We will let you know when the terms of reference are eventually decided.'

And he went on to say:

I will not have unelected advisers in the Prime Minister's office telling elected politicians, who are actually in touch with their constituencies, what should and should not be done.

This just shows the chaos, the venom and the anger in the Liberal party ranks over this dog of a budget.

I want to spend a little bit of time working through the labyrinth of illogicality as to how this exorbitant Paid Parental Leave scheme will supposedly be funded. Bear with me for a little bit, because I suspect the only way you can fully understand the funding mechanism for the scheme is by clinging tightly to the misfiring synapses within the Prime Minister's brain. The first thing the coalition proposes to fund the multibillion-dollars-a-year scheme is to cut company tax across the board by 1.5 per cent—hold onto your horses on that one! That is right, in order to fund a massive new spending and entitlement scheme, the first thing the government will do is to cut taxes. Then the Prime Minister plans to impose a levy of 1.5 per cent on all Australian companies with a taxable income of more than $5 million. So they are saying, 'we will cut 1.5 per cent of taxes, and we will find a 1.5 per cent levy to put back'—I assume—in its place. So if you run a company with a profit of more than $5 million, you receive a tax cut that is immediately followed by—let's face it—a tax rise. As part of this preposterous funding plan, the government will undo a significant Hawke-Keating reform by reintroducing double taxation to company profits distributed to shareholders as dividends. The respected financial journalist, David Love, described well the taxation scheme that existed until Hawke-Keating government in his book, _Unfinished Business: Paul Keating's Interrupted Revolution_. He says this:

For decades, investors in Australian companies had paid tax twice on company incomes. They had paid it in the form of company tax when company income was declared, and they had paid it again in the form of personal income tax when company income was distributed.

For generations of mostly right-wing treasurers, the Australian capitalist had gone on blindly paying tax twice on his equity capital. This was largely because conservative treasurers had been too lazy or incompetent to pick up the anomaly.
Senator Farrell: Or both!

Senator LUDWIG: Or both. Paul Keating set to work getting rid of this preposterous circumstance, which has forced mum-and-dad investors and small, family-run businesses to pay tax twice on company income. These days, when dividends are distributed to shareholders—whether they are small private investors like self-funded retirees or families that run successful businesses—individuals receive a franking credit for the company tax already paid on that income—that is sensible.

The ATO currently recognises that dividends have already been taxed at the company rate and therefore individual investors receive a franking credit when dividends are distributed. That means that an investor who has had a marginal tax rate of 37 per cent will only be taxed at seven per cent for the dividend that they receive—clear. But the Treasurer and Prime Minister are planning to bring back double taxation in order to fund this Paid Parental Leave scheme. They are going to hit mum and dad investors again.

Now people who receive dividends from companies which are liable to pay the 1.5 per cent levy will no longer receive a franking credit for that 1.5 per cent. Mum and dad investors who listened to John Howard and bought Telstra shares and had a marginal tax rate of 37 per cent will now pay 8.5 per cent tax on any dividends they receive—another slug. You think it will not be seen? It is there. Mums and dads will feel it, let me tell you.

Paul Keating did Australia a great service by removing double taxation, and it is quite astonishing that a government such as this—a conservative government, which, at least up until a few years ago, championed the ability to say that they were for mum and dad investors—would consider reintroducing that appalling position. It is even more galling that it is being done to pay for an excessive paid parental leave scheme that will deliver very few benefits. For a party that professes to be in favour lower taxes, it is frankly absurd to be reintroducing double taxation. But there we have it. That is what they are doing.

I would encourage those opposite to recognise that that is exactly what they are signing up to: to double taxation again. But, given the conservatives' history in this area, it should not come as any great surprise; it just places Mr Joe Hockey in his rightful place in the long line of lazy and incompetent treasurers that we have had from the conservative side of politics. He dances on the 'best day of his life' as he cuts support and funding for the most vulnerable in the community; that is his signature tune. Mr Abbott's signature tune is an unaffordable Paid Parental Leave scheme.

This bizarre funding mechanism does not even cover the entire cost of the scheme. As Laura Tingle pointed out prior to the 2013 election:

Having finally undertaken a more serious costings exercise than it did in 2010, it emerges this levy will only finance slightly less than half the cost of the scheme.

In fact this government is so unsure as to how it will pay for the Paid Parental Leave scheme, it is not even in the budget. It cannot be found. It is a signature policy, the one that they have been promoting for so long, but it cannot be found in this budget. Instead, it is locked up in the contingency fund, because the government is still working through how to fund it. So, be aware: double taxation might be the first tranche of some other innovative ways this high-taxing Liberal government will find to tax the Australian people so as to be able to cover an unaffordable Paid Parental Leave scheme that is plated in gold.
The Prime Minister and the Treasurer have had four years to figure out how to pay for this extravagant scheme—three years in opposition and now almost a year with the full resources of the Treasury department to help them—but they are still unable to find a coherent funding mechanism. Quite frankly: give it up.

Senator LUNDY (Australian Capital Territory) (11:03): If the Abbott budget were to be summed up with one word, that word would be 'unfair'. Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey have unfairly attacked Australia's most vulnerable citizens, through a whole series of measures in this budget, and in doing so they have knowingly broken their election promises and sacrificed the interests—and, indeed, the wellbeing—of young people, older people and people already living with disadvantage. To make matters worse, they have manufactured a 'budget crisis' in a pitiful attempt to try and justify these savage cuts. This manufactured budget crisis is a serious and committed attempt by them to mislead the electorate and justify the enormity of the cuts that they are seeking to put through in this budget.

It is also a budget that, I believe, attacks the values that Australians believe to be perennial values. Often, as major political parties, we are challenged about being too much alike. I certainly know that we get that from the cross-bench. In some parts, a universal commitment to free education, to investing in education, and a universal commitment to the sustaining of public health care are things that people, I think naively, took for granted—not from the Labor Party but from the coalition, who went to the last election promising that many things like this would not change. They went further, promising explicitly that their commitment, for example, to our education reforms that came about through the Gonski review would not be touched, and would not change, and that they were going to stand with the Labor Party in the commitments to those education reforms. I will talk about higher education shortly. But, as I said, this budget does undermine the fundamental values that I think many Australians—in retrospect, naively—thought that the coalition would also stand for once they attained office.

The inequality of this budget and the fabrication of the budget crisis is a reality and, I think, has been now realised by the Australian people. In recognising this, there is a great deal of anger in the community, and I, like many of my colleagues—and, I am sure, many coalition senators—have been contacted by voters who placed their trust in the Liberal Party at the last election and feel mind-blowingly betrayed. Voters looked at their policies—as I know many people in my constituency do—very closely. They looked at them from their own perspective, for sure, but they also put them to that general decency test, as they put every government to when they consider casting a vote for them.

I believe that, in the area that I represent, the Australian Capital Territory, the inequity and unfairness of this budget is more apparent than ever. I know that all around Australia people are concerned. They are angry. They are very worried about their future, their parents' future and their children's future. But here in the ACT we are being asked to carry a disproportionate cost in relation to job cuts coming about as a direct result of these budget cuts. It is not just jobs. It is also about health and education. For example, cuts to the states' and territories' health funding mean that the ACT health budget will take an instant hit of some $47 million on 1 July 2014. This is the equivalent of 390 nurses' salaries and more than 2,800 elective surgeries. This is the first instalment of a $240 million reduction in health funding flagged to hit Canberra over the next four years.
To put this in perspective, the New South Wales government is also losing $1.2 billion in health funding over the next four years, which works out, if you want a simplistic analysis, at about $165 per person. In the ACT, the $240 million worth of health cuts is equivalent to the loss of $627 per person in health funding, approximately four times that of the state within which the ACT sits.

Education is also taking a hit in this unfair budget. We have 62,500 primary and secondary students here in the ACT whose education outcomes have been put in jeopardy—and not just theirs but those of the future generations of students who will move through our education system as well. We know the cuts to higher education in particular are going to disproportionately impact on Canberra again because we have a high proportion of higher education students. There are 37,000 higher education students here in Canberra. That is one in 10 Canberrans engaged in one form or another of higher education. Each one of these Canberra students contributes to our local economy both as a consumer and very often as a casual or part-time worker. They are also carers and contribute to community and family life. These students are facing a double whammy of increased costs and greater debt.

The coalition's proposal to deregulate university fees and their plans to raise interest rates on HECS debts while at the same time lowering the minimum repayment threshold will cause university fees and debts to rise. It will inevitably lead to a situation where students will weigh up how much debt they are prepared to incur and how long it will take for them to repay it when deciding whether or not to undertake tertiary education at all.

This is an attack on the values and system established firmly by the Whitlam and Hawke governments of the past, sustained by previous coalition governments. It is a system built around the principle that someone's merit rather than their wealth is what should determine their opportunity for higher education. Cuts of this magnitude are reminiscent of the previous Liberal government's cuts after the 1996 election. But back then the principle of maintaining one's ability to access higher education based on merit was not undermined to the extent that it is in this budget and these budget proposals. I remember Senator Vanstone having stewardship of the portfolio of higher education at the time and the way in which across there, probably not too far from where Senator Cormann is sitting now, she announced stewardship over a substantial raft of cuts to higher education research and development funding. So for someone like me who has been here now for quite some time, including in the first term of the previous coalition government from 1996 to 1998, it is like deja vu. It is like deja vu seeing this first round of budget cuts emanating from a government that has abandoned the principle of education in this country being based on merit rather than on personal or family wealth.

As there was back then, there was an explicit commitment by the leader of the coalition that there would be no changes to government funding for higher education. Now, like then, we see that commitment being completely abandoned, seemingly without a second thought and certainly without a peep of protest from either the frontbench or the backbench of the coalition government. This is a sad indictment on politicians representing the coalition who I know believed the rhetoric that they heard from their leader, which was that a promise was a promise and promises would be honoured. All around the electorate we heard them make much of those promises and now we see example after example in this place of those promises, principles and values being recklessly abandoned. They stand up here and make no apology for that.
I am also very worried about young Canberrans who are not in higher education but have decided—I think very wisely—to devote themselves to developing their skills in vocational programs, such as apprenticeships, to go into a multitude of trades. Before the election, Mr Abbott promised the 9,000 apprentices and trainees who call Canberra home that under his government they would receive more financial assistance to learn their trade and find employment. But, instead, the Abbott government has cut over $1 billion from programs that supported apprentices. Tools For Your Trade payments, currently to the tune of $5,500 for each apprentice—and you only need to go to the local hardware store to understand the costs incurred by young tradesmen and tradeswomen if they seek to kit themselves up for a life in their chosen trade—have been abolished in the budget, as have numerous mentoring programs that supported apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is a continuation of the litany of broken promises.

Of course, there is more. Another area of significance for the ACT economy is the commitment to research, development and innovation here in the ACT. I acknowledge the ACT is a substantial beneficiary of the physical location of organisations such as the CSIRO. I think our whole society benefits from the presence of so many scientists among us. But the CSIRO is going to be cut by $115 million. This will cost the organisation some 420 staff in the next 12 months and an estimated $49 million in external revenue. The CSIRO Staff Association believe that, in response to these cuts, management will cease research in neuroscience and geothermal energy as well as cut back research into astrophysics, radio astronomy and carbon capture. Surely in just this short list of five areas of scientific research you can see the folly of such a cut. All of these areas are likely to produce not only great scientific outcomes and benefits to our industry and our society but I suspect some really strong export revenues as well. These are the areas of scientific research that will drive our future economic growth and yet this thoughtless cut, this broken promise, is going to undermine our very capacity as a nation to leverage our brains in this knowledge economy and to create an optimistic and prosperous future. As I said, the CSIRO have a strong presence here in Canberra and the impacts of these cuts will be felt throughout the community.

Research for information technology has also been savaged in this budget—eight programs which support Australia's continued innovation within the information technology sector. It is hard to say 'sector', because information technology is the core of every sector these days. In attacking information technology investment in R&D and innovation, the government is actually attacking the heart of every sector, every business place, from the public sector right through to mining. It is IT that drives their business processes; it is IT that sits beneath the data that is used, whether it is for exploration in our offshore oil and gas fields or whether it is environmental data being collected so we can assess the prospects for our agricultural sector. This data, this information technology that empowers every sector to be smart in the way they do business, has been attacked. This includes Commercialisation Australia—a $213 million grant program for start-ups—and the Innovation Investment Fund, which co-invests and supports our capital venture sector to make sure that our smart start-ups find their way into the market. Without these programs, which were designed through successive governments to address a market failure in the Australian economy, I am concerned that this market will fail again. Commercialisation Australia, for example, has supported over 500 companies and provides that vital lifeline to start-ups that have proven technology but need to expand their
ability to prove their product, take it to market and start deriving the kinds of growth revenues and export revenues that allow our economy to continue to grow.

I have spent a fair bit of time looking very closely at the IT and related industries, and we are in so many sectors the best in the world. There are bright Australians all around the world, leading the way in technology—and here we are, through this unfair budget, spiking the very foundation of where our brightest people come from. We are denying Australia the opportunity to build these successful companies from scratch, and we are saying to these bright people, 'We don't want you, go and find your fortune and your success offshore.' In this way, these measures in this unfair budget are directly contributing to the brain drain that we all stand up here and lament on a regular basis.

NICTA is another casualty. NICTA will be defunded from 2016 under this budget. I hope that all those PhD students and all those clever people who are now working to create new wealth-creating companies based on fantastic Australian technology can, between now and the 2015 budget, convince the Abbott government cabinet to continue funding for NICTA, because they deserve it. NICTA was a product of the Howard government, and it came about as a response to the lack of consolidated and focused effort in driving PhD student opportunities and driving opportunities for commercialisation specifically of IT start-ups in the Australian economy. It was a coalition solution to a market failure that prevented Australia from capitalising on what we were great at—IT. Now this government is saying it is not going to fund the very response to a national need to grow our economy that they came up with in the first place. What folly! Surely on the coalition side there is someone with a little depth and a little corporate knowledge that understands the stupidity of these measure and the damage they will do.

I turn to the Public Service. In the last 24 hours we have heard further reports from the CPSU about another attack on the very conditions of Australian public servants. The Australian Public Service is one of the strongest performing in the world. We know that despite the misinformation promoted by the coalition government it is one of the most efficient public services in the world, and it is one of the most effective. We know, because of our experience in government, that you need a strong and efficient and effective Public Service to get the job done and to serve Australians' needs. We had a program in government of making sure the Public Service was extremely efficient. The Labor Party does not accept that our proposed measures to extract those efficiencies in any way led to the magnitude of job cuts that constitute yet another broken promise by this government. Senator Seselja, my fellow ACT senator, said on 4 July 2013 on ABC local radio with Adam Shirley:

The Coalition have been good enough to put their policies on the table and that policy is to, across Australia, reduce the size of the public service by 12,000 through natural attrition. Now my job should I be elected to the Senate will of course be to hold the Coalition to that promise … that's the way it should occur—that's what the Coalition has said in their policy.

Of course we know that Senator Seselja has failed, and we now know that there was never an intention to limit job cuts to natural attrition. We now know that the job cuts on the books extend to 16,500 and what we know from the analysis from the Community and Public Sector Union and evidence gathered through the commission of cuts, or Commission of Audit Senate select committee, was that the CPSU believes that could be as high as $25,000.
This is a double hit for many people in Canberra, because we are also enduring a hiring freeze. Combined with the attacks on conditions, this is an arbitrary—and I believe, an ideologically-motivated—effort to shrink the public sector on some misguided belief that you can say: ‘Click your fingers—smaller government. That is what we believe in.’ The real world is not like that, and perhaps after a few more months in government you will find that you cannot actually do the things that you say you will do, because you do not have a workforce capable of doing it.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank the ACT government for their thoughtful and clever budget in making sure that, in response to an unfair and disreputable federal budget, they have been able to mitigate much of the damage that has been done. (Time expired)

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (11:23): I thank all senators who have contributed to this debate, though listening to the contribution by Labor senators, I have to say it is very sad to see that Labor continues to be in complete denial about the debt and deficit disaster they left behind after six years of bad government. Labor created the budget mess that we are now dealing with. Labor created the budget mess that we are now working very hard to fix. But instead of taking responsibility for their mess by helping us to fix it, here they are—even more reckless and irresponsible than they were during their six years in government.

We know that in their first five budgets in government, Labor delivered $191 billion in accumulated deficits. Labor spent $191 billion more than they raised in revenue in their first five years in government and left us with a final budget—the 2013-14 budget—which projected another $123 billion in deficits. They put us on a trajectory that was taking us to a government debt of $667 billion within the decade and growing beyond that. Government spending as a share of GDP as a result of the decisions made by the previous government was heading for 26.5 per cent when our current tax revenue as a share of GDP ratio is below 22 per cent, with the long-term average at about 23.7 per cent. That is clearly unsustainable, clearly unaffordable and clearly unrealistic for the future.

Now here we are with the Labor Party recklessly and irresponsibly opposing $5 billion of their own savings—savings they initiated in their last budget; savings they banked in their last budget; savings they failed to legislate because they were either too lazy, too incompetent or in too much confusion and chaos, given all of the leadership turmoil that took place post the last budget. Whatever the reason, they failed to legislate $5 billion in savings they had already banked in their last budget. Now we are doing the heavy lifting and the hard yards to do their work for them, they are turning around and saying: ‘No, we are going to oppose that.’

All up, Labor is currently opposing nearly $40 billion in savings measures. Do we have an alternative plan from Labor on how they would fix the budget mess they left behind? No, we do not. There is no alternative plan—just politics, just reckless and irresponsible posturing that is even worse than what we experienced during a period of government that was bad enough for Australia—the Rudd-Gillard government.

Clearly what Labor wants us to do after $191 billion in deficits in their first five budgets, after another $123 billion in projected deficits in their last budget, is to continue to borrow from our children and grandchildren to fund our lifestyle and consumption today. Labor wants us to continue to borrow from our children and grandchildren so we can give the money away
in various cash handouts which Labor does not want us to remove. That is incredibly reckless and irresponsible, because what will the effect be? The effect will be to reduce opportunity for our children and grandchildren, to force our children and grandchildren to pay the price for Labor's cash handouts today with interest, either through higher taxes then or through lower spending then. There are no two ways about it: at the end of the day, government cannot keep spending money that it has not got, and that is a fundamental truth that Labor just does not seem to understand.

The point that every senator in this chamber has to reflect on is that, while you might think that some of the measures in our budget are tough, if we do not start making the decisions required in order to get our spending on a more sustainable, realistic and affordable growth trajectory today, those decisions will only become harder. It will not become easier from here. If we continue to borrow from our children and grandchildren to fund our lifestyle today and in order to give cash handouts, it will only become harder when, ultimately, we have to make decisions to get Labor's budget mess back under control.

In conclusion, I was listening to Senator Lundy's remarks there and I was struck by how she said that she had been here during the period when the Howard government delivered its first budget back in 1996, and how all of this was deja vu. What I would say to Senator Lundy and to all Labor senators, and indeed to all senators in this chamber, is this: just reflect on where that journey led us. In 1996—it is indeed deja vu—we had a coalition government which, like us, inherited a budget in a mess, courtesy of a previous Labor government. We had a government that had to make tough but necessary decisions in order to get us back on track, in order to ensure that government spending was sustainable and affordable into the future.

And where did that lead us? It led us to a very strong economy, to the government having no debt and to a strong surplus. The Howard government not only paid back all of Labor's debt and delivered surplus budgets but were able to deliver tax cuts and improved benefits and services on the back of their sound financial management. That is exactly what this government wants to do; that is exactly what this government is committed to. We are committed to repairing the budget mess we have inherited from Labor and to imposing sound financial management principles on our budget so that, over time—as we get our budget back under control, as we build a stronger more prosperous economy where everyone has the opportunity to get ahead—we can again, on the back of a sound and strong fiscal position, make the sorts of judgements that we have been able to make in the past.

That is the journey we are on. We are not doing any of this for fun. We are doing it because it has to be done and because not doing it now will only make it harder to ensure that we can live within our means in the future. With those few words, I commend these bills to the Senate.

Question agreed to.

Bills read a second time.

Third Reading

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi) (11:31): As no amendments to the bills have been circulated, I shall now call on the minister to move the third reading.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (11:31): I move:
That these bills be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bills read a third time.

**Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Removing Re-approval and Re-registration) Bill 2014**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Senator FARRELL** (South Australia) (11:32): The opposition will be supporting the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Removing Re-approval and Re-registration) Bill 2014. However, we do have one amendment that we will move at the appropriate time.

There could be no greater responsibility for government than to ensure the health and safety of its citizens. The regulation of toxic chemicals is part of that process and we must accept nothing less than world's best practice in this area. That is why the former Labor government developed and delivered landmark reforms which markedly improved the effectiveness and efficiency of our regulatory system. We had three terrific agriculture ministers in that six-year period—Minister Burke, Minister Ludwig and, most recently, Minister Fitzgibbon.

While in government, our initiatives included providing the regulator with greater enforcement and compliance powers and resources; removing impediments to engagement and data sharing with the regulators of other countries; improving the consistency, predictability and transparency of agvet chemicals assessments and better aligning regulatory efforts with chemical risk; reducing red tape by reforming assessment processes for agvet chemical applications for approval, registration and variation; improving the timeliness of agvet chemical approvals, registrations and chemical reviews by, amongst other things, preventing 'gaming'; removing disincentives and providing greater incentives for companies to invest through improved intellectual property protection; and, finally, establishing a mandatory review of the legislation every five years.

The one contentious matter in the bill is the removal of the yet-to-be-implemented mandatory re-registration scheme. The Labor Party will not be opposing the revocation of this initiative. We will not, from opposition, try to argue that re-registration is the only way to ensure the system is as robust and effective as it can be. Many have argued that, in the absence of significant additional funding, the re-registration scheme will divert limited resources away from the main game—the risk based review processes. It needs to be remembered that the APVMA has more than 11,000 products registered under its regime and receives some 3,000 new registrations each year. Because of this, reviews take place in order, and on the basis of assessed risk. The APVMA is a world-class organisation and home to some of the world's best scientists in this field. The opposition has confidence in their work and we know they welcome the additional powers Labor's 2013 bill delivered to them.

I have seen emails suggesting that there are chemicals on the market that have never been assessed. This is patently untrue. These so-called 'grandfathered products'—those that were
brought across from the old state regulatory regime—have been assessed by state regulatory bodies, and the APVMA is working its way through re-assessments in order of priority. Under the regulatory system, suggestions that any of these products are particularly harmful—whether the suggestion comes from a regulator in another country, the supplier, an NGO or, indeed, a citizen—can be brought to the attention to the APVMA, and if it is found to be of high risk the product will be pushed up the priority list. I have also seen suggestions that the number of grandfathered chemicals totals 5,000. This is also not true. There may be 5,000 products, but the active chemicals common to so many of them number around 300, 180 of which have been identified as high priority, and of those approximately 80 have been reassessed.

I believe both Labor and the coalition want the same thing—the best regulatory system for ag-vet chemicals we can deliver. This is important both for the people who use the chemical and for those who consume the foods on which they are sprayed. It is also important to the agriculture and veterinarian sectors. To do their work successfully they need chemicals, and they will have the ongoing opportunity to use them only if we have public confidence in the regulatory system that guarantees their safety.

One suggestion the opposition has today is for the government to explore the establishment of an Inventory Multi-tiered Assessment and Prioritisation (IMAP) framework that the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) has established. IMAP identifies and rapidly assesses existing chemicals of concern. Stage one of IMAP is assessing chemicals based on characteristics agreed by stakeholders including: chemicals for which NICNAS already holds exposure information; chemicals identified as a concern, or for which regulatory action has been taken overseas; and chemicals detected in international studies analysing chemicals present in the blood in babies' umbilical cords.

It is important that there is continual discussion looking at the work of the APVMA to ensure the Australian population can retain confidence in the safety of the ag-vet inventory in Australia. Furthermore, it is important for the government to appropriately resource the APVMA to apply this framework and any possible reviews that follow.

Except for one amendment, which I will move now, the opposition will be supporting this legislation. I move:

At the end of the motion, add:

but the Senate calls on the government to:

(a) explore the establishment of a systematic process of assessment within the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) for existing agriculture and veterinary chemicals similar to the Inventory Multi-tiered Assessment and Prioritisation process established under National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme; and

(b) appropriately resource the APVMA to apply the framework and conduct reviews.

Senator BACK (Western Australia—Second Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (11:42): I rise to support very strongly the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Removing Re-approval and Re-registration) Bill 2014. There are a couple of points I need to make. Firstly, nearly all the costs of the APVMA are borne by industry, not just the costs associated with the regulation and approval of licences et cetera, but pretty well all of the costs associated with the agency are allocated to industry—better than 90 per cent. So anything at all that reduces costs to industry, while at the same time preserving the
integrity of the APVMA and the role they undertake, must surely be in the interests of all parties, including those of us here in the Senate. This is what the bill is aiming to do.

The other point that is important to make is that during the Senate's inquiry into this matter there was evidence to the effect that there are chemicals still in use here in Australia that have long been banned in other countries—European countries, the United States of America, South Africa, New Zealand et cetera. I want very clearly to put the record straight. That is not the case. Many of these chemicals are in fact not banned and they are not unsafe. The circumstance simply is that there are veterinary and agricultural chemicals used for pesticides, disease control et cetera that actually do not need to have a use for several years. In the case of animal or plant diseases, there might be seasonal conditions, for example, that remove the need for the use of that chemical over a number of years. But the chemical sits there and is still useful and still needs to be available to agriculture—to farmers, producers and pastoralists—in the event that climatic, seasonal or whatever other conditions pertain that require their use.

This legislation was going to call for regulator reapproval and re-registration of a lot of these chemicals, placing the manufacturers and the distributors of those chemicals into a circumstance of having to ask if it was in their commercial interest to go through the process of having to apply for reapproval and re-registration, when indeed the chemical may not be needed. That is the circumstance that has happened in Europe and in other places. Those manufacturers and those who distribute these chemicals have just simply taken a commercial decision of saying, 'We cannot justify on commercial grounds the continued registration and re-registration, therefore they have been allowed to lapse.' That is a huge difference from a chemical being unsafe.

In the interests of time, I will not go through other points that are entirely relevant, except to say that industry generally wants to see an APVMA which is credible, ethical, devoted towards the interests of industry and devoted towards the interests of human, animal and related health and environmental safety and security issues. We want to see all of those, but we do not want to see an APVMA tied up in red tape, unnecessary regulation and unnecessary costs.

I come back, again, to the fact that the industry pays pretty well all of the costs of APVMA. For that reason, I urge my colleagues here in the Senate to endorse, approve and pass these amendments so that, once again, we can have a circumstance in which all players are engaged happily, ethically, professionally and safely in the interests of Australian industry, environment and community.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (11:46): I cannot support the measures in this bill for the reasons I will outline. Over far too many committee inquiries and estimate sessions, I have heard time and time again that Australia's chemical assessment regime has let us down. I cannot support any proposal that may weaken our system even further. One longstanding example is the issue of the pesticide carbendazim. While it is banned for use in Australia, a minimum residue limit is allowed for imported citrus, including fruit juices.

As growers in South Australia's Riverland, the Riverina in New South Wales and Sunraysia in Victoria have pointed out, if the pesticide is banned in Australia—presumably for health and safety reasons—why are supposedly safe levels of it allowed in imported fruit juice concentrate? If there is a supposed safe level—as there appears to be, according to the
APVMA—then why can't growers here use it? I am not suggesting that they should, but there does appear to be a double standard that is doing our citrus growers in the eye in respect of this. I think that is wrong.

There are many, many examples of these inconsistencies, which highlight the gaps in our regulatory system. Most recently, as part of an inquiry into honey bee health in Australia, the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee received evidence from the APVMA regarding the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, or neons—not to be confused with neocons! There are significant concerns developing overseas about the impact of these types of pesticides on bee health. In particular, the European Commission has suspended their use on flowering crops that are attractive to bees.

This issue of colony collapse disorder is absolutely fundamental, because if we are seeing the collapse of bee colonies because of the use of pesticides, that goes beyond the impact on the honey industry, which is significant in itself. It goes to the issue of pollination. It goes to the issue of something like 75 per cent of our agricultural produce, because of the impact on pollination. These are big issues. The Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee is looking at these issues right now and will be handing down a report shortly. These are fundamental issues about the future of agriculture in this country.

The APVMA first began reviewing the impact of neons in 2012. A report was finally released in February this year, although it seems the APVMA still has not taken action and wants to conduct further research into insecticides in general before implementing any protection measures. I am not criticising the officers of that authority, but I am concerned that they do not have the resources to be able to do their job properly or with the urgency that is required on occasions. While this thoroughness is to be congratulated, the amount of time it has taken the APVMA to conduct this research—which is still not complete—is simply not good enough.

This goes to the future of agriculture in this country. It goes to fundamental issues about the sustainability of agriculture. I do not want us to be in a situation where the level of colony collapse disorder is so great—and biosecurity is another issue that needs to be considered in the context of this—that because of pesticide use, arguably, as in China's Sichuan province, pear growers are pollinating by using a sharpened bamboo stick with a feather on the end of it in lieu of bees. We need some sharpened bamboo sticks here to metaphorically prod both government and government agencies to deal with this.

In a BBC News Science and Environment report headed 'Widespread impacts of neonicotinoids impossible to deny', Matt McGrath—the environment correspondent for BBC News—says that:

Neonicotinoid pesticides are causing significant damage to a wide range of beneficial species and are a key factor in the decline of bees, say scientists.

Researchers, who have carried out a four-year review of the literature, say the evidence of damage is now "conclusive".

The scientists say the threat to nature is the same as that once posed by the notorious chemical DDT. That appears to be the scientific consensus. We know it is a serious problem and that it can cause a serious issue with our agricultural production, yet we are still waiting for action on this.
This is particularly true given that no safeguard measures were put in place when these concerns were first raised. Measures including limiting the use of neonics and other pesticides or putting strict spray-drift boundaries in place would have provided a safety net while the review took place and could then have been removed or strengthened as required.

What raises the bigger question in the article published on BBC News yesterday was the report on a new scientific study that had shown the significant impacts of neonics on bee and environmental health. It shows conclusive damage in relation to the use of these pesticides. But how will the APVMA react to this information? How will it be considered or taken into account under the measures proposed in this bill, if there is no requirement for chemicals or pesticides to be reviewed?

Some submitters to the bee inquiry also raised concerns about the independence of the information the APVMA uses to assess chemical risks, which tends to come directly from the manufacturers. I am not saying that the manufacturers of these pesticides are bad people; on the contrary, they have a business to run and they have a role to play. But they also have a vested interest—they want to sell more of this stuff. I am not saying that they are doing so irresponsibly, but I am suggesting that it would be foolish for us to simply rely on the manufacturers. We ought to have some independent, robust assessment. For the APVMA to be pushed into a position of relying so heavily on manufacturers is itself very risky.

I note that the Australian Greens have proposed some amendments in respect of this bill. I will be supporting those amendments, as I believe they at least provide a safety net for some of the more hazardous chemicals assessed by the APVMA. I hope that both the government and the opposition will recognise that, at the very least, we need these safeguards in place. I am looking forward to Senator Siewert’s contribution in relation to this. It is your contribution, Senator Siewert?

Senator Siewert: Yes.

Senator XENOPHON: Yes, it is. I just didn't want to get the wrong senator from the Australian Greens. I understand that the ALP have previously supported these measures but are now backing away from them. It would be good to get an explanation from the Australian Labor Party as to why they are backing away from measures which appear to be quite sensible and measured and which deal with these risks.

I do have concerns about the opposition second reading amendment, however. A call for the establishment of a ‘systematic process of assessment within the APVMA for existing agriculture and veterinary chemicals’ that is similar to the NICNAS scheme is worrying, because it prompts the question: why don’t we have one already? If all the ALP is trying to do is do a feel-good second reading amendment that actually does not do any good because it does not require any really changes in relation to that, then why bother? It is a bit of a con on farmers, on the electorate and on the broader community that is concerned about this issue. Perhaps this might have been more useful if it had been establish during the former government’s overhaul of the APVMA in 2010.

Successive governments have failed to close the loopholes in Australia's agvet chemicals regulatory system. I acknowledge the government's aim in terms of reducing red tape and, in general, I support that aim if the red tape is there for no good purpose. But if we are talking about a regulatory framework in respect of pesticides and chemicals that is about protecting
our farmers, that will prevent colony collapse disorder and that will prevent the sorts of international concerns as outlined by the BBC just yesterday on the widespread impact of neonicotinoids, then we should do something about it because, if I can say colloquially: if we stuff up our bee population then Australian agriculture is stuffed because of the impact of pollination. We need to be very careful about this. We cannot forget that sometimes red tape is not just red tape; sometimes it is the steel barrier at the top of a cliff.

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales) (11:55): I would like to make a brief contribution to this debate on the Agriculture and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Removing Re-approval and Re-registration) Bill 2014. AUSVEG represents 9,000 vegetable and potato growers, and early last year AUSVEG public affairs manager, William Churchill had this to say after Labor, the Greens and Independents combined to increase the regulation of agriculture and veterinary chemicals in Australia:

AUSVEG has slammed Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor for voting in favour of a bill seeking to increase the regulation of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals in Australia, a move which has infuriated Australian vegetable and potato growers. In an exemplary display of putting personal politics before good policy, Mr Windsor has succeeded in punching every farmer in the country below the belt …

The legislation before the chamber will right the wrongs. It implements the coalition's 2013 election commitment to remove re-registration and includes additional reforms to improve the efficiency of agvet chemicals regulation. It will remove red tape for farmers and other businesses. It will stop unnecessary costs and burden that should only occur when an unsafe product warrants the regulatory oversight. The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Association already uses the activities, assessments and decisions of overseas regulators and reviews peer-reviewed science.

On Monday, 23 June the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee lodged its report in the Senate. The report said that the Department of Agriculture noted that without changes to the Agvet Code, the re-registration requirements due to come into force on the 1 July would lead to significant costs to both industry and the APVMA. It would increase APVMA's costs by $2.2 million per year once the initial rollout is complete.

I am very wary of chemicals on the farm. My wife, Nancy, has done the course that we have to do, and I follow her advice when it comes to chemicals. I am very aware of digoxin, so when I had to spray a paddock just two weeks ago I got a contractor to do it. It is a dangerous chemical and it must treated with respect.

In summary, these agvet chemicals legislation amendments will save the agvet chemical industry $1.3 million in time and fees annually by removing duplication and unnecessary red tape. I just find it amazing that they want to change the size of a chemical container. Imagine if I go to buy a 10-litre drum of a particular sheep drench and they want to put it out in a 20-litre container. The red tape and associated costs to do that will amount to just another cost which we will pay for. The cost is always passed on to the consumer—while we are trying to remain internationally competitive. Here is the problem.

APVMA estimate that re-registration would cost them an extra $2 million per year, as I have mentioned. Industry has calculated that removing the re-approval and re-registration scheme will save them up to $9 million annually in red tape and associated costs. I commend my colleague the Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, for introducing legislation to stop
another layer of Labor-Greens red tape that burdens users of agriculture and veterinary chemicals. Farmers want to get on with the job.

We do respect chemicals. We know they are basically essential in the production of food. You cannot grow a crop of wheat with weeds; you grow either one or the other. Many chemicals that simply have not been a problem have been used for many years. Roundup is a classic example, which I use often myself. We know that we have a strict oversight of registering chemicals, and that is exactly how it should be. To deregister chemicals that in time prove to be very dangerous and harmful to human health would be wrong. But we have strict scrutiny of how these chemicals are tested, researched and finally registered. To come back to reregistration every few years is just another cost, and, as I said, who pays for it?

In winding up, I commend former Senator Barnaby Joyce, now Barnaby Joyce MP, Minister for Agriculture, for removing this cost burden. We want to see more profit at the farm gate—that is our goal. We have already seen decades of cost increases after cost increases. It is time to remove costs but keep those strict regulations in place so that farmers, vegetable growers et cetera deal with safe chemicals that are most importantly safe for the consumer. No-one has an agenda or a goal to harm the consumer. The consumer must be protected from any sort of dangerous chemical, and that system is already in place. That is why I commend this legislation, and hopefully we will see the passage of it very soon.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (12:01): I would also like to contribute to this debate on the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Removing Re-approval and Re-registration) Bill 2014 and say at the outset that we will be opposing this legislation and standing up for the amendments that were passed last year, which we strongly believe make a much better and safer process for this country. I am extremely disturbed by this legislation, in particular by the reasons put forward by the government and, I must say, by the opposition's backflip.

The Greens continue to stand behind the long-overdue reforms to the APVMA made just nine months ago, which commence full implementation on 1 July. Re-registration is the heart of those reforms, which significantly overhaul the reassessment process for a range of highly toxic chemicals and pesticides. We need to remember the context we are talking about here. This will specifically enable a process in this country to much better deal with toxic chemicals and pesticides. As I said in my contribution to the second reading debate on the previous agricultural and veterinary chemicals legislation, as the science evolves we understand a lot more about chemicals and pesticides. It is important that the APVMA is able to use that information in the reassessment process.

The other reforms to the APVMA that we passed last year, and that remain untouched, are also important. They reduce the extent to which chemical companies can game the system and they increase the ability of the APVMA to obtain the data it needs. They were long-overdue reforms. But they were minor reforms that will help the APVMA deal with difficult industry players, rather than provide a framework for the APVMA to do a proper and cost-effective reassessment that will take the nastiest chemicals off the market rather than expose another generation to their potentially devastating effects. While they were important reforms, the government is gutting the heart of those reforms by getting rid of the re-registration process, which is being ably abetted by the opposition.
As a result of work done in the last parliament, the APVMA was given the power to review and quickly remove highly dangerous and unmanageable pesticides from the market if they failed to meet today's scientific and regulatory standards. The government is now working to undo these important reforms under the guise—I repeat under the guise—of ‘red tape reduction’.

The improvements to this legislation are one of the legacies of the ALP—and, frankly, I reckon that they should be embarrassed that, just nine months later, they are backflipping on this issue. It is inexplicable that they are doing that and that they backed the majority committee report recommendation that the re-registration process they put in place just nine months ago be scrapped. Again, the opposition should be embarrassed about the weak excuses they put forward today. They put forward the excuse that there is not enough money to implement it, rather than actually standing behind their legislation. They should proudly own their legislation, because they did a good thing. To try and bat away the fact that these grandfathered toxic chemicals were not assessed is quite frankly just not true. Some of these chemicals were tested by the states prior to the APVMA, but only a small number, and most information has actually been lost. That is why the Productivity Commission said that the majority were grandfathered without assessment and need to be looked at. The Productivity Commission report in 2008 stated:

The effectiveness of the industrial chemicals and agvet schemes is limited given that all existing chemicals were grandfathered, without modern assessment—

Remember that—‘modern assessment’—

at the inception of the schemes. … So far only a tiny fraction of existing chemicals have been assessed. Initiatives to greatly accelerate the pace of review under both programs are warranted.

So the ALP will grasp at any excuse to move away from these important reforms. It is a disgrace. They should stand up for them. If they stood with us, we could still knock this legislation off. So I urge the ALP, right now, to have a rethink about what they are doing on toxic chemicals in this country by being weak-kneed and backflipping on their important reforms made just nine months ago.

There is still an opportunity to defeat this legislation and enable the APVMA to begin its important work on 1 July on reregistering chemicals. There is still an opportunity to demonstrate that we understand how important this process is. As I said, this depends on whether the opposition decides to stand up, grow a backbone and support the legislation that is so important to this process.

The reason these changes are so important is that the improved regime allows us to systematically and effectively reassess chemicals that may have unmanageable risks. It takes into account the new developments in toxicology and regulatory best practice since the APVMA was put in place in 1996. Reverting to the old, slow, ad hoc system will continue to put at risk public health, the environment and trade from pesticides that have never been adequately assessed.

A number of chemicals in Australia today have been removed from use in other countries—despite what Senator Back tried to put forward. The risks are simply impossible to manage, or it is not possible to prove that the chemicals are safe. The old system saw thousands of chemical products grandfathered into the National Registration Scheme for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals without ever being properly assessed—as I have just
articulated and contrary to what Senator Farrell just said. Reassessments by the APVMA are ad hoc and have been taking upwards of a decade to complete.

The government wants us to return to an ad hoc system. It is vital that our regulator responds quickly to new information, including benchmarks set internationally. Sadly, this is not currently the case. Ad hoc reassessment regimes are hit and miss, create uncertainty for industry, stigmatise some chemicals while missing others and put our community, environment and farmers at risk. Stronger, systematic, reassessment standards provide transparency for industries that rely on pesticides, while also ensuring that market signals favour safe pesticides rather than those that have a high level of risk. Four years of extensive consultations and hundreds of thousands of tax payers' dollars went into developing the re-registration process as an effective approach for the APVMA to address the problem of inadequately assessed pesticides from the past.

Despite what the other side would have you believe, re-registration is a sensible approach to the problems associated with chemicals in Australia. The Queensland government—and it is very rare that I quote the Queensland government in support of something—gave evidence to the committee inquiry in which they noted that:

In Australia, there are a large number of uses of AGVET chemical products that were approved by the registration systems of the States and Territories, prior to the formation of the APVMA that have not been reassessed by modern risk assessment principles.

One of the great promises of national registration was that the 'grandfathered' products would be reassessed. There has been limited progress in reassessing the uses of these products under the APVMA Chemical Review Program.

I would also suggest that that highlights the fallacy of Senator Farrell's claims that these products have been reassessed by the states, because here is the Queensland government saying they have not been.

Re-registration has been embraced in a number of comparable countries, such as the UK, Canada and the USA. Chemicals are part of our farm industry. I know that. I appreciate the points made by others that there is an enormous number of farmers who are reliant on chemicals right now. I know that. I am from an agricultural background and I know very well that farming today relies on chemicals. However, there is more reason to make sure that farmers have access to chemicals that are appropriate and as safe as possible rather than exposing them, the environment and their produce to unmanageable risk from some of these chemicals. This does not happen with industry incumbents—those big agrichemical companies who are driving this repeal instead of farmers—who are not pushed to innovate new chemicals. In other words, we do not get new chemicals if big business, who have vested interests, and big chemical companies want to keep producing and pushing the chemicals that are much more risky. We need to make sure that we have safe chemicals that farmers can use.

The cost of these chemicals is more than the sales price at the register. They have long-lasting impacts on farmers, the land, the people who eat the produce, the rivers, our water and our lakes that the chemicals end up in. We have begun to realise that chemicals like diuron are bad for the reef. It is running off farmland and travelling a long way without breaking down. It is a cost to the environment; that is the cost of that chemical.

We have begun to realise that prolonged exposure to chemicals like paraquat is very likely to be the source of a large number of cotton farmers who have developed Parkinson's disease.
These are long-term costs. Why are we allowing individuals or our precious environment to pay this price while big chemical companies continue to make large profits and avoid making further innovations for the Australian marketplace?

The Greens are not calling for these reforms because we want to see every farm in Australia denied access to pesticides tomorrow; we are calling for these reforms because, in a strong, smart country like Australia, we can do better than slowly poisoning ourselves and our land. Unless we have a proper process, that is what will continue to happen, and we will have to fight chemical by chemical and take decades to deal with it.

We have just been dealing with the issue of fenthion in this Senate and we have heard growers from around the country talk about the extensive process and uncertainty for the industry. That is what is going to happen and continue happening for each of these chemicals—renewed, prolonged uncertainty about a chemical. The growers are in doubt. The chemical producers are in doubt. We are going back to the old way of doing business—just when we are on the cusp of getting a proper systematic approach to deal with unmanageable risk.

Some people seem to think that just because we have this chemical regulator that the choices it makes and the timelines that it follows must be the best that we can expect. That is just not right and it is not true. There is something crossed between incredulity and naivety that allows people to believe that the government and its agencies would not let anything truly bad happen. That is just not true. But the evidence is clear: the APVMA has not removed the nastiest chemicals from the market, despite growing evidence that they are unmanageable. In other words, if you revert to the old system, you will not get miracles; rather you will get prolonged debate and drawn-out processes for some of the nastiest chemicals on the planet. These chemicals have not been removed because the APVMA lacks the processes and the clear direction from government to do so. Whenever it puts a chemical on its review list, it is constantly hounded by those who stand to lose profits, it is denied access to the information it needs and it bears the burden of proving the chemical is unsafe—rather than the chemical companies having to prove that the chemical is safe.

It takes years and years for these chemicals to be assessed and even then we know that the assessments lead to a stalemate due to a lack of information. Consider the farce of the Fenthion review. We have been debating this issue last year, where MP after MP got to their feet and talked about the need to get a better way of doing this. All of a sudden we seem to not want a better way of doing things. The proposed re-registration scheme is an improvement on the status quo. We need a systematic process because otherwise we go back to fighting chemical by chemical.

There is a list of active pesticide ingredients of at least 100 items that meet the criteria for highly-hazardous pesticides—the FAO and World Health Organisation criteria. We are not talking about radical criteria; these are among the most conservative in the world and we are failing to take them into account. If we lose re-registration, we lose the ability to put criteria around the APVMA's re-assessment process. There are at least four vital criteria that the legislation and associated regulations need to address. The first one is: the toxicity to humans and wild life—that is, dangerous poisons with a high potential for causing harm at low exposure. Then there are the chemicals that bio-accumulate in fatty tissue and chemicals that remain intact for exceptionally long periods of time and do not degrade. The fourth concerns
chemicals that do not rapidly degrade and are measured at levels of concern in locations at a long distance from release.

When I corresponded with the then agricultural minister last year, I was told that DAFF's initial assessment is that there are around 42 substances that would meet these criteria. That correspondence was tabled during the Senate debate, but it appears that its good intent has been lost. For these reasons, I am determined to move amendments which will give the APVMA some additional criteria by which to judge the items that it needs to re-assess. The Australian Greens are introducing an amendment into section 31 of the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code, 1994, which will put these criteria firmly into legislation and provide guidance to the APVMA about where to focus its re-assessment efforts.

We are going backwards with this legislation. The steps that were taken last year were essential, in our opinion, to help put a proper process in place to re-assess those 42 substances that are considered to have unmanageable risk. We are going back to the bad old days of a slow battle for each chemical. Some of those chemicals have been banned or restricted overseas. They are some of the most dangerous chemicals that we are potentially exposing humans and the environment to. The re-assessment process that is being repealed here allowed for a more systematic approach. The Greens will be supporting the ALP's second reading amendment, because it is better than nothing, but I will also be moving my amendments, because they at least put some process around what the government is trying to do. This is bad legislation and it takes us backwards, a move from this government that should not surprise anyone. I am surprised that the ALP has so quickly stepped away from the important reforms they introduced last year. They should be ashamed and explain to the community why it is acceptable that there will be no systematic approach to unmanageable chemicals that are still being used in this country.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (12:20): The Greens' contribution would lead you to think that we are going back almost to the days before regulation existed. I must say that the Greens pretend to be the friend of the farmer; they trot around the countryside suggesting they are the farmer's friend. But my experience is that they put in place red tape and green tape that cost farmers time—and time is money—and that has a negative impact on the industry. They would be more than happy if we went back to horses and carts and farmers' markets, but we do live in the modern age and we do have an issue in producing food and fibre to feed Australia and the increasing demand in export markets. We need to have a sensible process in place to deal with necessary agricultural and veterinary chemicals.

Under this measure and some of the measures introduced in the last parliament which we supported there are strong and established systems to review agricultural and veterinary chemicals. Those systems look at the risks to safety and at the performance of the chemical. The mechanisms were actually strengthened by the previous government, and we supported those changes. Senator Siewert talked about the time taken—well, the previous government's 2003 act strengthened chemical review arrangements by improving time limits, flexibility and transparency; reviews need to be completed within time frames. In opposition, we have participated in discussions with industry players around a number of agricultural chemicals. I can recall discussions around Dimethoate and the concerns around access to that chemical. It was being reviewed because there were concerns about its safety. That review has been
completed, and access to the chemical is now restricted. Senator Siewert talks about Fenthion: we have also participated very closely in the process of the review around that chemical—a review implemented because there were concerns about its safety. So to suggest that we are going back to the Dark Ages is, I think, a bit of a stretch.

With regard to the discussion around chemicals being banned in Europe: you need to be very careful of the Greens' language when you are listening to these claims. The Greens will claim that chemicals have been delisted or banned, when what has happened in fact is that their registration has lapsed. And why has it lapsed? Because the re-registration process is so costly—there is no return for anybody who goes through the re-registration process. This is actually a backdoor way of taking some chemicals off the market. These are chemicals that have been utilised safely for a long period of time. There have been no concerns raised about their efficacy or safety. So we need to be very careful of the language we use; the Greens talk about banning or delisting when, in a lot of cases, it has been a lapsing of the registration which has effectively taken the active ingredient off the market.

There needs to be a sound and solid framework around the management of agricultural and veterinary chemicals. The government is looking to strike a proper balance. We do have systems in place. We do have adverse reporting systems in place so that if there is an activity or an event that requires attention, it can be managed; it can trigger a review of the chemical. We do take into account—despite what Senator Siewert has said—what is happening in other jurisdictions around the world. We do take notice of new science. That can be put into the process, and can trigger a review of a chemical. But we do not need a mandatory process where every chemical has to come up for re-registration every five or seven years—that is unnecessary red and green tape. I would like to congratulate the opposition on coming around to supporting our view, because it provides a sensible balance: between the strengthened provisions which they put in when they were in government—and that we supported; and reasonable access to the necessary agricultural and veterinary chemicals that are available to industry here in Australia, so that we can meet our obligations. The government is concerned to ensure that we have an effective mechanism for the approval and registration of ag and vet chemicals in Australia.

We made a commitment at the election that we would remove the re-registration provision. We did not support it in opposition; we saw it as unnecessary duplication and as red and green tape. We know that environment groups have been trotting around the countryside over a long period of time, trying to align the government with these sorts of provisions and, unfortunately, the previous government—with its close relationship with the Greens at the time—fell for it. They fell for the trap. So I congratulate them on taking this one small step away from the alignment with the Greens. It is timely and it is worthwhile. The government is committed to reform in this area—further reform—so that we continue to have a strong system for the registration of agricultural and veterinary chemicals—one that is efficient and one that is cost-effective for our industry, but one that maintains efficacy and ensures that agricultural and veterinary chemicals are fit for purpose, and safe—for people and for the environment. So we will continue to drive reforms. We need to ensure that new, safe and softer agricultural and veterinary chemicals are available to the Australian agricultural sector, and we will continue to do what we can to ensure that that comes to pass. I congratulate the
government on their stance on this piece of legislation and I look forward to their support. I commend the bill to the Senate.

Question agreed to.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Boyce): The question now is that the motion moved by Senator Scullion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [12:32]

(The Acting Deputy President—Senator Boyce)

Ayes ......................40
Noes ......................10
Majority ...............30

AYES

Back, CJ
Bilyk, CL
Boyce, SK
Bushby, DC
Carr, KJ
Dastyari, S
Farrell, D
Furner, ML
Lines, S
Macdonald, ID
McEwen, A
McLucas, J
Nash, F
O'Sullivan, B
Polley, H
Ryan, SM
Singh, LM
Stephens, U
Thorpe, LE
Urquhart, AE

Bernardi, C
Birmingham, SJ
Brown, CL
Cameron, DN
Colbeck, R
Edwards, S
Fawcett, DJ
Gallacher, AM
Lundy, KA
Marshall, GM
McKenzie, B (teller)
Moore, CM
O'Neil, DM
Peris, N
Ruston, A
Seselja, Z
Smith, D
Sterle, G
Tillem, M
Williams, JR

NOES

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

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (12:35): I will be seeking leave to move the Australian Greens' amendment, but, Senator Xenophon, are you going to ask some questions?
Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:35): Thank you. I just have some questions in respect of the bill. In terms of legislated risk-based re-registration schemes, is the government aware that they operate in other jurisdictions such as the United States, Canada and the European Union? How do they differ from what is being proposed in this bill? Is it the case that we will be out of kilter with some of these other countries—our trading partners, and countries with which we share similar values in terms of regulation and in having a system to protect consumers and the farming sector from the use of chemicals that can have a negative impact on the agricultural sector?

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (12:36): Thank you, Senator Xenophon. Yes, we do have a different system from other jurisdictions’, but we do a number of things. We have a risk-based system of assessment here in Australia. We take note of decisions in other jurisdictions. We are aware, obviously, that there are other approaches in other jurisdictions. Ours is not legislated, whereas theirs is. But, as I said in my contribution earlier on the legislation, we do take account of decisions and activities in other jurisdictions in respect of both registration and reviews of chemicals.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:37): I thank Senator Colbeck for his answer on behalf of the government. I am trying to establish this. If I have not understood it properly, I apologise, but it seems to me that the re-registration schemes in the USA, Canada and the European Union are to ensure that older pesticides on the market are subject to the same standards that apply to pesticides registered today. Is what is proposed in this bill consistent with what is occurring in the United States, Canada and the European Union or are we moving away to a different process to that of our allies and trading partners of the USA, Canada and the European Union?

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (12:38): Thanks, Senator Xenophon. We do have a different system. But, as I said a moment ago, we take the decisions of those other jurisdictions into account. That is an important element of our scheme. But ours is not a compulsory re-registration scheme. As I also said in my contribution earlier, one of the effects of the compulsory re-registration scheme in other jurisdictions is the loss of some chemicals because companies just do not re-register them. Their registration lapses and so industry loses access to chemicals that have been safely used for a long period of time. Companies choose just not to re-register them. So we are actually taking note of what is happening in those other jurisdictions. We cooperate with them. We have a different system, yes, but our system will not take off the market chemicals or actives, as they are termed, that just do not get re-registered because of the pure economics.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:39): Again, I thank Senator Colbeck for his answer. I think Senator Colbeck knows I hold him in high regard in respect of agricultural issues. I am not trying to pick a fight with him. I am just concerned. I have a genuine concern that we are moving away from a similar type of scheme to what operates in the United States, Canada and the European Union and that the consequence of that may be that we do not have adequate scrutiny of some chemicals where it is not just a question of economics and red tape—if that is the issue for a company—and the re-registration fees being too high. Presumably if it is an effective chemical it will stay on the market because it is of economic benefit to both the company and the farmers who use it. That is one issue.
The other issue is that we have the inquiry into Australia's bee population and the effect of pollination services. I referred in my second reading contribution to the impact of neonicotinoids. There is a real concern that colony collapse disorder is materially linked in part to the use of pesticides. I think Senator Colbeck, given his passionate advocacy for agriculture in this country, knows better than most what the impact of that will be on pollination. A significant proportion of agricultural production in this country will be affected if we continue to see a decline in our bee population. I am concerned that in practical terms this bill will mean less, not more, scrutiny of neonicotinoids. I have a real fear as to what that will mean for our bee population and the ongoing impact on Australian agriculture because of the pollination it provides.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (12:41): Senator Xenophon, particularly here in Australia I would not agree with you about a decline in bee population. I know that there are issues, particularly in Europe. I have read the report that you have read in relation to that. A lot of the issues around bee decline in Europe relate more to hive management than agricultural chemicals. I am very sensitive to that because I understand that somewhere north of 60 per cent of our horticultural pollination is done by wild bees and so maintaining that population is very important.

We do have a different system. We do watch and we do interact with other jurisdictions. We have an adverse reporting system. So, if there is an event, that process itself—the adverse reporting process—can trigger a review. So there are a number of safeguards in place. It is not that we are operating in isolation. We have looked at what happens in other jurisdictions and seen the impact on those markets. We are very cognisant of that. We did that during the Senate inquiry into this piece of legislation before the election. That is why we took the position that we did then, and we maintain that position now. We are very conscious of the need to have safe access to chemicals with good efficacy for agriculture but also to protect the environment and, as you quite rightly say, bee populations. But we believe that this provides the right balance.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:43): I thank Senator Colbeck for his answer, but a report just yesterday from BBC News in London by Matt McGrath, their environment correspondent, talked about neonicotinoid pesticides causing significant damage. It referred to a number of reports and said:

Researchers, who have carried out a four-year review of the literature, say the evidence of damage is now "conclusive".

In the context of this recent report—and I am not sure if Senator Colbeck is familiar with it and I do not blame him if he is not; it only just came out overnight—will this regulatory regime mean that action on neonicotinoids and their impact on bee populations will be slowed down? Will it take longer? We heard Senator Siewert's assertion that sometimes review processes can take up to 10 years.

 Senator Siewert: Longer.
 Senator SIEWERT: Some have been over 12.

 Senator XENOPHON: Some have been over 12 years. The question is: what will the practical effects be in terms of this worldwide literature and research on neonicotinoids? What
will the impact of this bill be in the context of those international concerns about neonicotinoids?

Progress reported.

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

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

**Paid Parental Leave**

**Senator BOYCE** (Queensland) (12:45): I want to take one of my last opportunities to speak in this place, in my last few days here, to talk about paid parental leave. I had been anticipating that I would have the chance to do this when we moved amendments to the former government's Paid Parental Leave scheme, for which amendments there is currently legislation before the House. This legislation will simply amend the current scheme, under which the payments made to people on Paid Parental Leave will be made by the Family Assistance Office, not by the individual employers themselves. It was typical of the former government that they found yet another cost to impose on business by making them pay for the administration of the government's Paid Parental Leave.

This legislation has yet to come before us, but I will not have the opportunity to speak on it so I want today to put on record my very strong support for the coalition's Paid Parental Leave policy. This is a policy that we have taken to two elections. The scheme that we are proposing would pay up to $50,000 for six months to women who have left the workforce to have children. I have already made the mistake I have criticised so many others for by talking about the Paid Parental Leave scheme being for women—it is not for women; it is for parents. We need to be clear about the fact that it is paid parental leave, not paid maternity leave. The scheme will pay, as a minimum, the minimum wage for six months, up to $50,000. The critical difference between the scheme the government is proposing and Labor's scheme is that our scheme includes superannuation. I would hope it is well known that older women tend to be amongst the poorest in our community, partly because they work in lower paid jobs, they have broken careers so that they can have children and they work part time more often than men. It is a very serious problem, and our Paid Parental Leave scheme will go some way towards redressing the imbalance.

I would like to mention some statistics for superannuation held by women. The average Australian woman retires with less than half the superannuation of her male counterpart. The mean super balance for women at retirement is $112,000, compared to $190,000 for men. The gender pay gap keeps women's superannuation balances low. Women working full-time currently earn, on average, 17½ per cent less than men working full-time. Women live an average of five years longer than men, and therefore need more rather than less superannuation if their savings are to last the distance during their retirement. Even now, women tend to retire a few years earlier than men—yet another reason why women need more superannuation than men. A female on average salary who takes a six-year career break retires with about $77,000 less super than a male counterpart. Currently, very few retired women have any super left. Research done by the Institute of Superannuation Trustees in 2011 showed that more than half of the retired women who took a lump sum payment did not have any super left after two years. Only six per cent of retired women had any super after 10
years. We need to find ways to improve super. One of those ways, as I have said, is to include it within the Paid Parental Leave scheme, which is a very important change proposed by our government.

I would like to expand on why I see the Paid Parental Leave scheme as being so important—and important irrespective of the economy. I would argue that the Paid Parental Leave scheme is not a net impost on the economy—in fact, it is a net positive for the economy. It will encourage women to go back to work and it will give women greater savings to retire with. Hopefully in the years to come our Paid Parental Leave scheme will bring us to the point where both men and women take paid parental leave. It is obvious, and I think we can point to instances in Europe, that, if men and women in the workforce both have broken careers, if both work part time, then it is accepted that both will want to have time off to go to school concerts and pick kids up from child care and we will change the way our workforce functions. Men will not be preferred over women, because they would no longer be seen as being the more stable employee who will be there at seven in the morning until nine at night. Men will be accepted as needing the same sorts of allowances for their family life as women when they have young children.

I was struck by a recent article in The Australian headed 'Wednesday a daddy day for German leader.' The Vice Chancellor of Germany, Herr Sigmar Gabriel, has announced that he will be taking Wednesday afternoons off so he can collect his two-year-old daughter from child care and spend the afternoon with her. While this was uncommon enough to rank as a major story in the newspapers not only in Germany but also here, it is a major step forward from where we are in Australia. I can just imagine what would happen if the Prime Minister were to announce that he was going to take Wednesday afternoons off to spend with children—there would be an amazing amount of shock and outrage at that.

Until we can move to that sort of system where it is anticipated that mothers and fathers will have time out of the workforce and their careers affected, we are not going to get to the stage of having equality within the workplace, or economic equality for older women as they move into their retirement. In 2011, CEDA—the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia, which is hardly seen as a radical or left-wing group—published Women in Leadership: Looking below the surface. This publication reported there is an unconscious bias towards women in leadership. They point out that there is a need for organisations to understand this unconscious bias and how they can go about equipping themselves to challenge it and to find new models of thinking.

This is the area I was alluding to when I spoke about the subtle sexism that I believe exists not only in corporate organisations but also within Parliament House. Women are underutilised in our corporate organisations, especially at senior levels, and a reflection of that is their average wage rates being what they are. We need to think hard about how we are going to address the problems that we have in this area, and it comes down to many things that we need to understand. CEDA talks about understanding the nuances in the culture that exist 'under the surface', and they make the point that this can be a challenging and threatening experience for organisations, because we are in fact asking people to change the way they think and perhaps even the way they go about their work practices.

Hopefully, using an evidence-based approach will reduce the likelihood of defensiveness and blame, and it brings up issues that are often uncomfortable for an organisation to face. We
need to get that happening first and we need to think about what the cultural norms are within organisations. It could come down to things as simple as scheduling meetings between 9:30 am and 2:30 pm so that people who are working part-time with school-age children have the opportunity to go to that meeting without having to make other plans or feeling that they are not pulling their weight—or being seen by colleagues as not pulling their weight—because they cannot make it to a meeting.

We also need to challenge the organisational norms. Many women talk about what they see as 'the imposter syndrome'—women who feel out of place in leadership roles because they do not share the culture of some of the men in the place with regard to what gets talked about and what is seen as important. We need to do so much work in this area to get to the stage of dealing with the unseen barriers of the unconscious bias that exists.

While I think the government's paid parental leave scheme is a good policy on its own standing, I also see it as the first step towards ensuring that we end up with a situation where both men's and women's work patterns will include taking leave, working part-time and in some cases forgoing promotions, as women often do for the sake of their families. Then we will have a system where people will understand what parity really means and we will develop this within the organisational culture of Australia. I hope I do not need to point out that not only is this a better system for children and for women but it is also a better system for men. When men have the opportunity to fully be part of their families, we end up with a better community.

I also wanted to briefly mention some of the ABS data, which shows that women's superannuation is in fact increasing—we are getting there. The number of women who have superannuation has increased from 42 per cent in 1993 to 66 per cent in 2007, but that growth has been very modest for lower income earners. In some cases, women in the bottom 25 per cent of earnings have no superannuation at all, so there is also the argument that we should allow superannuation to be paid on incomes of less than $450 a month, especially over shorter periods of time, as that is the earning capacity of women who are out of the workforce looking after children.

The ABS data, which unfortunately is only available for 2009-10 superannuation balances, shows that men in the 45-54 age group have two-and-a-half times more superannuation than women in the same age group. For the 55 to 64 age group, men have three times more super than women. So the need to assist older women to quickly develop their super—and to develop a system which allows long term for some significant improvement in the super of younger women—is critical.

I want to end by saying that I would be devastated if we were not able to put the government's new Paid Parental Leave scheme into action. I expect at least the Greens, whose policy this is, to support it.

Budget

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (13:00): I rise today to talk about a number of issues that arise out of the Abbott government's harsh and cruel budget. It is quite interesting that the government does not seem to think that we are asking enough questions during question time and that we are not talking enough about the budget. What Labor senators and MPs have been doing is going out into the community and talking to those many hundreds and thousands of
groups that are directly affected by this harsh, cruel budget. When you look across the youth area, there is not one organisation working with youth that has not been badly affected by this harsh, cruel budget, a budget that the Abbott government keeps trying to describe as fair—but they do not seem to have many takers on that front.

I will start with a program called Youth Connections. It seems that the government—and perhaps Senator Ryan in particular—does not really understand what Youth Connections does. It is a program with a huge success rate, not just in engaging with young people but in keeping young people in employment and education. Youth Connections works with and supports young people who are disaffected, young people who are not in education or employment.

I want to talk about two Youth Connections programs in particular, both in Western Australia—one out in Midland and one in the northern suburbs of Perth. Midland is quite a built-up community, but large parts of the Swan Valley would best be described as rural. Within that catchment area of the Swan Valley, there are places which are remote simply because they lack adequate public transport and so on. This Youth Connections service, which is run and sponsored out of the Rise network—another amazing organisation in Western Australia—has a fabulous success rate. I would urge Senator Ryan in particular, and perhaps other Western Australian senators, to have a look at the Youth Connections program at Midland and see for themselves exactly what they are chopping off, what access they are denying to the young people currently being assisted in the Midland area.

This program works with children as young as 11. Imagine a child of 11 who has already been so turned off by school that they are not in school and are roaming the streets. By chopping the Youth Connections program, the Abbott government is leaving those children with nothing. The schools they attend, the primary schools in the Swan Valley and Midland area, certainly do not have the resources to engage with those children and get them back into school. Even if those areas had truancy officers, that is not going to cut the mustard. Truancy officers can force children to school—there is no doubt about that—but whether the children stay at school and engaged in learning is a whole different question and one the Abbott government seems to be completely denying.

Youth Connections in that area has re-engaged those very young children with school. All of us know that, in order for children and young adults to be successful, they have to have a basic education. So being able to engage with those young people at such a young age, get them back into school and keep them in school is a very worthy project. It is not a project which should—by any stretch of the imagination—be chopped.

The other area where Youth Connections has been very successful is in engaging teenagers who have fallen out of education, become disillusioned with the school system or have not been able to get into a job. It has been really successfully in engaging with these young people—and let us be clear that these young people are not lazy. Let us get away from this image that we have to force students to go out and earn or learn. Some of the problems of the young people in that program were simply the result of dysfunctional families. I met an amazing young woman, part of Youth Connections at Midland, who had really significant mental health issues, so she had not been able to engage with employment. But it was through no fault of her own—she had been raised in very difficult family circumstances. Youth
Connections had successfully been able to engage her, very early on, with some mental health programs.

Let us be very clear: when we chop Youth Connections, we are simply denying young people that opportunity to engage in an appropriate way. Forcing that young woman into employment, or forcing her into a situation where she had no money, would not have assisted her in any way. But Youth Connections, who were able to work with her, to support her and to get her help where she needed it, have enabled that young woman—who is a shining star, a true example of how successful these programs can be—to go on and be successfully employed. She is a very articulate young woman. But she herself says that, without that support from Youth Connections, she has no idea where she would have been by now.

And this is not an expensive program. As value for money, it is right there. It ticks all of those boxes. With someone like the young woman I met out at Midland, the Abbott government's earn-or-learn approach is not going to work. She was not able to be successfully employed, because she had a whole lot of issues. The opposite of that would be that she would be punished and left with no income, whereas Youth Connections has been able to work with her over a short time period to get her the help and support that she needed, and she is now a successful young woman.

Whilst I am giving you random examples, the runs are on the board for Youth Connections program. It has something like an 80 per cent success rate across the country. We have not seen that anywhere else. And it is not just the one approach that works with young people, or indeed with anyone. We need to have a variety of approaches. What the Abbott government is doing with this harsh and cruel budget is chopping off those chances.

The young woman I spoke to was despairing about what would happen to other young people whom she knows are in difficult circumstances. Indeed, she talked about her own brother, who needed additional support. She was very worried about what would happen to him come the end of the Youth Connections program.

I also met with Mission Australia, who also work with youth who have a raft of significant issues. I met three young people there. One young women, an incredibly bright and articulate woman, had been a drug user, and at that point she had been free of drugs for one week. She had been part of a Mission Australia project before, but had fallen back into using drugs, so this was her second try. Mission Australia told us that it is quite common for young people not to succeed in giving up alcohol or drugs on the first attempt, but then succeed on the second or third attempt. Mission Australia takes a nonjudgmental approach and the young people are welcomed back in. I had every confidence that this young woman was going to be able to succeed the second time around.

But, again, Mission Australia were telling us that some of their programs are at risk. These are programs in which they support young people in whatever way they need support to enable them either to go back into education or to find jobs or accommodation. Of the three young people we met, one had just been successful in picking up employment. This was a young man who had previously been unemployed, and under the Abbott government's harsh, cruel budget regime would just be left without any income. He had picked up employment and was very proud of himself. As part of that employment he was being given an opportunity to study at TAFE and pick up a certificate.
The third young person I met was a man who, like the young woman, had had issues in his life to do with substance abuse. He had turned himself around, again with the very strong support of Mission Australia, and was looking forward to studying at TAFE. He was going to be taking up a place at Foyer, a youth accommodation service, on Oxford St in Leederville. It was made possible in part by the funds available under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. So, again we have a young man who has been given an opportunity and was going to pick up accommodation at Foyer, where he would not just be given a room but also given the support he needed. All of that is now at risk because of the government's dogged approach. To them there is one way for youth—it is earn or learn or you will be without any income. Of the seven young people I saw a couple of weeks ago who do not particularly fit any of the government's criteria, all of them would have been much worse off under the government's new earn and learn program, because they needed that support, and that support is now being ripped away from them.

The other service we looked at on the morning I met with these people is one called Youth Futures, which operates in the northern suburbs of Perth. It has had amazing success with young people, again through Youth Connections funding. Almost 700 young people have gone through their service, and they have had a very high success rate—it is something up around 80 per cent. All of that will be chopped come the end of this year, because the Abbott government, with its harsh and cruel budget, has seen fit not to give the Youth Connections program any more funding. It is not an expensive program, it is certainly not layered with red tape, and it is a very successful program.

Seemingly the hallmark of the Abbott government is not to look at facts and figures; it is pure ideology—that was a Labor program and irrespective of whether it was successful we have to chop it down because it was Labor's idea and therefore it is not anything we could agree to. That is the kind of summation I have come to when I look at programs like Youth Connections, which has a solid track record and is doing amazing work with young people in our community who are falling through the cracks, and will continue to fall through the cracks. But, nevertheless, it is being chopped, cut up and discarded, and nothing is being put in its place. Job Services Australia cannot take the place of Youth Connections. It simply does not have the staff, the reach or the connections.

One of the things the Midland Youth Connections service does is go into shopping centres and talk to young people who congregate there. We have all seen these youths when we go into shopping centres—young people who are disconnected and are hanging around in there. Would they have been able to go in and successfully engage with those young people and create that connection? There is no way Job Services Australia can do that. It just cannot. It is one size fits all. The Abbott government's chopping of Youth Connections is again an example of one size fits all.

I do not know if Senator Ryan was really suggesting that somehow the trade tools allowance was replacing Youth Connections. If he was he is sadly mistaken. The two programs are completely unrelated. The tools program means that you are in work and you need some support. Whether I agree with it or not, that seems to me to be the essence of the program, whereas Youth Connections is engaging with disengaged young people—young people who have fallen out of school, who have fallen out of work and who need that
additional support in whatever form. Sometimes it is accommodation. Sometimes it is health issues. It can be a range of issues. That is what Youth Connections does. It is successful.

I would urge the government to relook at Youth Connections and not simply just say, 'We are going to cut it because that was a Labor program and we are ideologically opposed to that.' This is about the future of the young Australians who the Abbott government is simply throwing on the scrap heap. They are throwing them on the scrap heap. Those young people I spoke to are very concerned about their own futures post 31 December, when Youth Connections will disappear.

**Euthanasia**

**Medicinal Marijuana**

**Senator DI NATALE** (Victoria) (13:15): Recently, I have been reflecting on some of the valedictory speeches that we have heard in this place. It is not going to be long before I have to stand up and give mine. I do not want to look back on my time in this place and think that I should have tried harder, I should have shown a bit more political courage, I should have stuck my neck out a little bit or I should not have played it so safe. Before I got into parliament, I decided that I would try to tackle some tough issues and some of the issues that in fact drove me to come to this place.

There is always a reason not to do stuff. When you find yourself in this chamber, there are always reasons not to do things. You might be worried about offending a particular group. You might be worried that your own constituency does not support your views on an issue. You can do it later. Maybe it is not core business; maybe this a fringe issue or an issue that distracts from the main game. There is always a reason not to do something. It is also easy to get caught up in this place, in the fishbowl that is Parliament House, and start to think that the views in here in fact reflect the views of the community. One thing I have learnt over my short time in this place is that they do not—on so many issues.

That is why I felt compelled to act over the past fortnight on two difficult but important social issues. They are two issues that have one thing in common. They have a profound influence over the lives of people who are sick, who are suffering and who are dying. They also have this in common: they represent the individual stories of people who have shown tremendous courage and tremendous dignity in coming out and speaking about things that we often feel very uncomfortable about talking about. Those two issues are the issues of medicinal cannabis and dying with dignity.

I was very moved to hear the story of the Haslam family. Lucy Haslam, a former nurse, and her husband—who is a policeman with a long history of drug law enforcement—live in Tamworth, New South Wales. Their son, Dan Haslam, is 24. He has terminal bowel cancer. He has had it for a number of years. His suffering has been compounded by horrific chronic nausea, weight loss and pain. He tried a number of drugs and he eventually resorted to medicinal cannabis. It had a significant effect on his nausea where other drugs failed. It helped to improve his appetite and stop weight loss.

Lucy and her husband made the decision that the law would not stand in the way of them performing their duty as parents and relieving the suffering of their son. So they became criminals, by ensuring that their son had access to medicinal cannabis. More than that, they have made the decision to go public—a courageous decision—and to campaign for reform so
that other families do not experience the same diabolical circumstances that mean that either you obey the law or you watch someone suffer needlessly.

Why is it that they are in this pernicious situation where, instead of getting a script from a doctor to get access to medication that relieves them of their suffering, they have to find a dealer and purchase a product of uncertain strength and purity? Why is it? It makes no sense. At face value, this is a medication like no other. Many of our most successful medications come from plants, such as digitalis, which provides relief for people with serious heart conditions. We grow poppies in this country so that we can provide hospitals and doctors surgeries with important pain-relieving medication. Yet when it comes to cannabis and the potential remedies that it offers, we have a blind spot.

I hosted an event in parliament last week and Lucy was good enough to travel here and to speak to a number of parliamentarians. She spoke alongside Alex Wodak, a doctor. Through clinical practice, he has become an expert on the real medical potential of cannabis. The science is clear; the jury is in. It is a medication that has been demonstrated in a number of clinical trials to be of significant benefit for nausea, for preventing weight loss, for stimulating appetite, for muscle spasticity and for some sources of pain. One of the most encouraging aspects of that event was that we saw members of parliament from right across the political divide attend and show an openness and a willingness to engage in the evidence. That is something that is far too often lacking in this place. Ultimately, they concluded one thing. That is that it is cruel to deny people access to this effective treatment.

The second issue is even more sensitive. That is the issue of dying with dignity. It is an issue that essentially ensures that each and every one of us will have access to choice over the circumstances of our own deaths. It is a difficult issue. There is a taboo around discussing death in this country. But I have got news for people: death is contagious. We are all going to catch it. It is something that we are all going to face. The real question—and it is tough question—is how we die. As a doctor I wrestle with it, because you are balancing your responsibility to give somebody the choice that they seek in relieving their pain and suffering with your responsibility to try and prolong life. Ultimately, my responsibility as a medical practitioner is to respect people's wishes about their pain and their suffering and to ensure that they have the choice when that pain and suffering becomes so intolerable that no amount of medical help will relieve it.

Given the choice that we have when it comes to dying, how many of you would choose to end your lives in a sterile hospital room, in unbearable pain, drugged into a semiconscious state, poked full of holes and tubes and lying there drowning in your own secretions and gasping for air when the alternative may be a peaceful death at home, with your family—a death where you are able to have a very deeply emotional good-bye, where you are able to say the things to your loved ones that you want to say; a death that is unhurried; a death that involves drifting off peacefully but being surrounded by the people you love and the memories that make you who you are. For people in Australia that choice is not an option. In fact, it is even worse: it is illegal.

Yesterday, I hosted an event in this building where we heard from three people with a terminal illness, who had very, very powerful stories. We heard from Peter Short—a man who has recurrent oesophageal cancer, a man in his fifties, a successful businessman, who has decided that he wants to choose the circumstances in which he dies. We heard from Max
Bromson, a man with metastatic bone cancer, who sometimes describes the pain that he is experiencing as 'unbearable' and 'off the scale'. We heard from Cath Ringwood, a lady with leukaemia and breast cancer, who made it very clear that her experience as a palliative care nurse ensured that she would never choose a slow, drowning death by pneumonia, which is one of the options that may befall her. One thing that all of these people had in common was that they were living their life to its fullest potential, right now. All of them want to ensure that they live the most fulfilling and the longest life possible. Simply knowing that they had the choice to control the circumstances in which they died made their current journey a less painful one. For them, simply having that choice was empowering. More importantly, these people have made it very clear that, in the final months that they have left, they want to spend their time ensuring that everybody is offered that choice. Again, on the face of it, one would assume this is the most basic of human rights—the control over our own deaths, the ability to seek medical assistance to exercise that control. This is a control that hurts nobody else. It is a decision that is a very personal one. It is classic Liberal philosophy: respect for the rights of the individual. As one person said yesterday: is our life the property of the state or does it belong to us?

We all come to this place often with the best intentions. We come here with a good dose of political capital—and we have earned that political capital. It is a trust that is invested in each of us by our communities, and we build on it by showing integrity, by working with others and by being responsive to the people who have put us here. We show it and earn it by demonstrating leadership and by ensuring that we have the nation's best interests at heart, not our own. But that political capital is of no consequence if we are not going to ensure that we exercise what we can to get the change and the reform through this parliament that will impact so directly on the lives of the people whom I have heard from over recent weeks. There will always be barriers. This is a difficult issue to talk about. It is not the main game. It is a fringe issue. There is a very powerful religious lobby in the parliament. We have a toxic political environment. It is very hard to get past the political divide that separates us here, but it is incumbent on each and every one of us to do what the Australian people put us here to do, and that is to listen to them, to not dodge tough issues and to get these reforms through.

I have to say that I have been encouraged by the huge support, again from across the political divide, on hearing about my campaign to introduce dying with dignity laws in the federal parliament. There has been a tremendous response to it. In fact, Alannah MacTiernan has indicated that she wants to co-support any legislation that ensures people have access to that choice. On the issue of medicinal cannabis, Sharman Stone and Melissa Parke, who co-convene the group which I am involved with to help bring Lucy Haslam to the parliament, have indicated that they want to work with us to get this reform through. They want to look beyond the partisan blinkers that so often blind us to the opportunities that we have here to do good things for people who are dying, who are sick and who are suffering. It is our responsibility to do that job.

Ultimately, I am optimistic. I am optimistic because of the support we have already received and I am optimistic because, even though there are barriers, there is one thing with both of these issues that politicians cannot ignore, and that is that they have overwhelming public support. One thing that politicians in this place do is listen to community sentiment. When that voice becomes so overwhelming, so loud and so strong, politicians cannot ignore
Those voices are growing. They are becoming louder. They now have access to this place and, ultimately, we owe a duty to listen to them.

**Battle of Bannockburn: 700th Anniversary**

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (13:29): Seven hundred years ago, on this very day, the armies of Robert the Bruce, then King of Scotland, and Edward II, King of England, were respectively celebrating and lamenting what was to be the last major battle between the Scots and the English, where the Scots actually were militarily successful. The Battle of Bannockburn was a significant Scottish victory in the First War of Scottish Independence and a landmark in Scottish history.

Stirling Castle was under siege by the Scots, and King Edward assembled a formidable army to relieve it and a pitched battle took place just south of Stirling Castle. The decisive Scottish victory was even more significant in that the Scots were considerably outnumbered with estimates ranging from between 5,000 to 10,000 Scots against 14,000 to 25,000 English.

The 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn comes a few months before Scottish people will vote on whether to sever their union with Great Britain which has been in place since 1707. This time, however, the decision on whether the Scots should be part of the English crown will be determined by ballot rather than battle. And, regardless of the outcome of the ballot, one could well speculate on who will actually win that war. While this significant anniversary will be celebrated by those of Scottish lineage all over the world, tonight a special celebration is being held in this very building. The parliamentary Scottish group, led by self-appointed coordinators Senator Cameron, Senator McKenzie, Mr Ferguson, Mr Scott and myself, are hosting a Scottish dinner in the parliamentary dining room where over 100 paying guests—who defy their Scottish tradition by paying a modest price—will enter into the fun and frivolities.

To celebrate this occasion, there will be the traditional Address to a Haggis before everyone partakes in this wonderful Scottish culinary tradition. The Deputy British High Commissioner will be giving the Toast to the Lassies and other speakers will give a brief explanation of the upcoming referendum in Scotland on devolution.

In honour of this significant Scottish anniversary, I am today wearing the traditional Scottish attire which, for those interested, I might add is the tartan of the MacDonnells of Glengarry. As a fifth generation Scot, whose forebears—as best I am able to calculate—left their homes in the highlands at Bohuntine, about 25 kilometres north-east of Fort William, over 160 years ago, I think I am entitled to wear the tartan of MacDonnell of Glengarry or perhaps MacDonald of Keppoch.

This is not the first time I have worn the Scottish national dress into this chamber. On St Andrew’s Day in 1995, on the final day of parliament for that year, I wore the Australian tartan which, as I said in a speech at the time, made use of the five colours of the land most used by Australian Aborigines—that is, ochre, red-brown, black, white and cobalt blue—giving the Australian tartan an overall warm appearance reminiscent of the great outback. Some of the Scottish tradition and the Aboriginal culture can meet, and did so in the form of the tartan.

It is interesting to note that links between Scotland and Australia stretch back to the first British expedition under the command of James Cook who was himself the son of a Scottish
ploughman. It was during that voyage that Cook named two groups of Pacific Islands in honour of Scotland: New Caledonia and the New Hebrides. Interestingly the first European to die on Australian soil was a Scot, Forby Sutherland, from Orkney, an able-seaman who died on 30th April, 1770 of consumption. He was the first European to be buried on the colony by Captain Cook who named Sutherland Point at Botany Bay in his honour.

The first Scottish settlers arrived with the First Fleet in 1788 and three of the first governors of New South Wales, John Hunter, Lachlan Macquarie and Thomas Brisbane, were all Scots. The majority of Scots who arrived in the early colonial period were convicts. Eight thousand-odd Scottish convicts were amongst the 150,000 transported. That is only about five per cent and the fact that there is such a relatively small number of Scots in the transportation figures stems from the fact that Scottish courts were unwilling to punish, by deportation to Australia, crimes under Scottish law that were deemed to be for lesser offences. Scottish law was considered more humane for lesser offences than English and Irish laws.

Scottish immigrants in the early nineteenth century were farmers and land owners who chose to emigrate willingly due to the Scottish economic recession of the 1820s. By 1830, over 15 per cent of the colonies' total population were Scots which increased in the middle of the century to somewhere around 25 per cent of the total population. In the 1850s, 90,000 had emigrated, which was far higher than the British or Irish populations at the time. Literacy rates of Scottish immigrants ran at 90 to 95 per cent.

At the 2006 census, 130,240 Australian residents stated that they were born in Scotland. Some 1.8 million Australians, including myself and my wife and many who will celebrate with us tonight, claimed Scottish ancestry. All over Australia, many towns and communities are named after Scottish towns and notables including Brisbane, the capital of my home state, and the town in which I live, Ayr.

A number of prominent Australians over history claim a Scottish heritage. Time permits me to name only a few: Angus Houston; James Boag—of Tasmanian Brewery fame; Thomas Brisbane; Andrew Fisher—former Prime Minister; George Reid; Thomas Livingstone Mitchell; John Dunmore Lang; Mary Gilmore; AB Patterson—the composer of the Australian song Waltzing Matilda; together with Malcom Fraser; Dame Nellie Melba; St Mary MacKillop; and Crown Princess Mary of Denmark—all had Scottish parents.

Of course, I could not let a speech on Scotland pass without acknowledging Senator Doug Cameron and the man he replaced, former senator George Campbell, two Australian citizens of Scottish birth to have graced this Senate. I should also mention that former senator Rod Kemp, who was a founding member of the Parliamentary Scots, has continued his love of his Scottish heritage as a now prominent member of the Melbourne Scots.

Clearly, over Australia's post-1770 history, Scots have made a very significant contribution in so many ways to the governance, culture, science and business of our nation.

With the generosity of Diageo, with an impressive range of fine malt and blended whiskies, with the help of our wee lassies Elaine Cameron, Joan Scott and Lesley Macdonald, and with the attendance of a wonderful in-house piper and dancer, Claire Smith and Ryan Post, the Scottish Parliamentary Group will tonight be celebrating the contribution to Australia of those of Scottish descent and, in particular, will be remembering a significant part of Scottish history that took place 700 years ago today.
Budget

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (13:38): I rise in the matter of public interest debate to speak to the tens of thousands of Australians who are finding their voice and who are coming together from across the country to speak out against the contempt their government—our government—has shown and continues to show against its own people. These tens of thousands of Australians understand that this is a cruel and dishonest budget. These tens of thousands of Australians are angry because this budget launches unmistakable class warfare on low- and middle-income earners. These tens of thousands of Australians understand that waiting until the election to remind people of the true colours of Prime Minister Tony Abbott and the Liberal coalition government is too late. These tens of thousands of Australians have already started their campaign. I thank you all and urge you to continue your campaigns.

Your campaigns are reminding Australians that, after 23 years of continuous economic growth, the services and conditions that make our society one of the most fair and equal in the world must never be taken for granted. Your campaigns are empowering Australians to get informed, to not allow this government to fabricate crisis, to not allow this government to demonise groups within our society, to not allow the powerful to divide the community against itself and to not allow its campaign of fear to gain traction.

Your campaigns are proving that we are indeed living in 2014 and not 1984. We have technology on our side. Your messages are highlighting that there is no budget emergency. You understand that nations with budget emergencies do not receive AAA ratings with a stable outlook from all three credit-rating agencies, as Australia did under Labor. Your messages are highlighting that there is no debt crisis. Australians understand that the Australian government has low levels of debt by world standards which, according to the International Monetary Fund, are around five times less than the average for the developed world.

Australians understand that responsible governments run budget surpluses when the economy is strong and deficits when the economy is not as strong. Labor allowed the government to go into deficit in 2008-09 because the global financial crisis was threatening to plunge our economy into recession. Australians understand that Labor's action, with the support of a clear majority of Australians at the time, stimulated the economy, kept Australia out of recession and supported hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Australians have heard from world experts in economics, such as Nobel laureate, economist Joseph Stiglitz, who described Australia's stimulus package as one of the 'best designed' of any advanced economy. In contrast, when the Liberals came to government and realised there was no budget emergency, the government actually fiddled with the numbers and increased spending in such a way that, over the budget estimates, they had doubled the deficit.

Australians understand that the budget's debt and deficit figures have been inflated by Treasurer Hockey through a combination of spending decisions and changes to economic assumptions, such as unemployment projections. These political changes doubled projected budget deficits by $68 billion and have also blown out debt figures. When Mr Hockey and his MPs and senators claim a debt crisis, Australians know that they are the ones who cooked the books.
Australians also understand that education and disability reforms were funded in full. In the 2013-14 budget, Labor took the unprecedented step of releasing 10-year figures for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Gonski school reforms, demonstrating how they were funded over the long term. The coalition has reversed a number of Labor's savings measures and now claims the education and disability reforms represent a fiscal time bomb. Australians understand that this is another obvious attempt by Mr Abbott, Mr Hockey and the coalition to justify breaking election promises on schools and disability. These messages are informing Australians of what is fact and what is fiction, what was promised before the election and what the people did not vote for.

I repeat Mr Abbott's pledge, in an interview on the day prior to the election: 'No cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS.' Mr Abbott also said in that interview that the election was like a grand final and:

... there's only one try in it, either side can win ...

Mr Abbott, Australians know that the try you kicked was because of an illegal tackle that was unsighted by the referee. And, like when a result does not go a footy fan's way because of a missed decision, the Australian people are mad. Labor is holding Mr Abbott to account for this promise and the many other commitments he made throughout the campaign that he is so happy to dismiss now that he is in government.

Mr Abbott's promise of no cuts to health is being broken on so many fronts. Most obviously, the cumulative $50 billion of cuts to hospitals and health services over the coming years is a clear breach of this promise. But cuts extend to making Australians pay more for services. This budget plans for a $7 tax on GP visits, as well as an increase to PBS co-payments of $5 for general patients and almost $1 for concessional patients. These are payments that people on low incomes just simply cannot afford and, in the case of the GP tax, the money is not even going back into the health system. The money is going into an offset account of consolidated revenue where it will act as an offset on government debt until one day in the future when it reaches an optimal amount and starts paying out on an undisclosed amount for undisclosed medical research. It is one of the great con jobs of this budget. The money is not going to medical research next month or next year, and Australians know that and they are not happy.

The GP tax is designed to send more people to state and territory run hospital emergency departments, and of course the Abbott government is hoping that the states and territories will put their own taxes on entry into the emergency rooms—two simple con jobs that Australians understand and they are calling them out for the deceit and spin they are.

There is the increase in petrol tax by bringing back biannual indexation to CPI, a tax that will disproportionately hurt regional families the hardest because of their lack of options on transport, attacks that Mr Abbott said to President Obama was at least on one level part of the price of carbon, a move that would let the big polluting industries off millions of dollars and transfer the cost to Australian families.

There are definitely changes to the pension in this budget. Mr Abbott's new pension indexation system will cut payments for millions of age pensioners, carer payment recipients, disability support pensioners and veterans from 1 July 2017. The plan is to break the link
between average wage increases and pensions. Instead, pensions will only increase in line with inflation. If this had been in place for the past four years, a single pensioner would be more than $1,500 a year worse off today.

Mr Abbott's new pension system also freezes the means test thresholds on all pensions, which means more people will be bumped off or incur a lower rate of the pension. Finally, without any public consultation, Mr Abbott is raising the pension age from 67 to 70, a move that will give Australia the oldest pension age in the world, a move that is coupled with the cut to the low-income superannuation co-contribution, which Labor introduced to give low-income Australians, predominantly women, the same tax incentive to save for their retirement as people earning five and ten times their wage, a move that would take the burden off the pension system in the long term.

Mr Abbott's promise of no cuts to education; is being broken on so many fronts. Firstly, there is the long-term $30 billion cut that will put pressure on teachers, on parents and, worst of all, on students. There are cuts to the schools from 2018 through reduced indexation of federal government payments. Despite promising a unity ticket on Gonski, Mr Pyne and Mr Abbott have done all in their power to use weasel words and get out of their commitment. Despite state Liberal governments supporting the plan, despite parents supporting the plan, it did not fit with Mr Pyne's class warfare on public education and had to go.

The budget increases university fees after Mr Pyne said in August 2012 that the coalition has 'no plans to increase university fees'. The facts are that the coalition plans to: more than double the interest payable on student loans from CPI to six percent; increase the student contribution to university funding by 20 per cent, put extra pressures on regional universities in particular; deregulate course fees, which could see a $20,000 degree quadruple or more overnight; and for the first time, the budget allocates public funding for private universities.

Labor will oppose the cuts to the family payments, the cuts to Newstart and youth allowance and the cruel move to not allow Australians under 30, who are by no means young, access to income support for more than six months in every year. The rhetoric, another three-word slogan of course, is that taking people off income support will make them 'earn or learn'. Of course at the same time the government is increasing the costs of learning, cutting employment services for young people and providing incentives to businesses to employ older Australians.

The budget has also savagely cut government assistance for carers, for housing and homelessness, for child care and for legal aid. All carer payment recipients will suffer from cuts to their payments. This is a heartless attack on vulnerable people from a government who promised no change to carers' pensions before the election. The impact on women is significant given the gendered nature of caring. Cuts to homelessness services affect some of our most vulnerable community members. Women and girls make up about 60 per cent of all clients of homelessness services and about a quarter of services' client load is attributable to children and women fleeing domestic and family violence. This budget also takes the axe to the early education and care parents rely on every day, while funding $50,000 payments to mothers who do not need them through his extravagant parental leave scheme. Legal Aid supports some of the most vulnerable women in our community—mothers and grandmothers who need to go to court for child custody matters, child protection and family violence. The
cuts outlined in the budget will mean more women representing themselves without any legal advice or guidance in the courts.

I have received a large number of stories from Australians from all walks of life, stories that are uniting Australians where their government is seeking to create division. I want to share Kelly's story with the Senate today. She says:

My name is Kelly, and I live in Queenstown, Tasmania I have to attend a college 2 hours away from home and live in the boarding house. In addition to my full time studies I have two jobs just so I can get by. My mother is disabled and without a job yet and my father was abusive and lives in another state, so, like I said, I have to support myself.

In addition to somehow keeping myself a float and helping my mother both financially and physically, I am also trying to save for university next year.

These new taxes aren't helping.

On top of all my personal financial struggles, I can't afford to pay to go see a doctor, and I'm afraid of how these education budget cuts are going to hinder my fellow students and I in our pursuit of our own lives.

I'm absolutely devastated about these cuts to the ABC stations, because contrary to many beliefs, my age group does actually watch it, and enjoy watching it.

These are only the tip of my fears for the short and long term future for myself, and my country.

Something must be done.

Kelly.

I want to thank Kelly for her honesty in coming forward and telling her story, and I am sure there are lots of other stories around like Kelly's.

But I do want to assure Kelly that we are not standing still. The online organising that is going on at full speed across the country is being backed up with opportunities for the public to come together at respectful and inclusive events and not feel that they are threatened and alone. I thank all of the community members, the trade unions, the organisations such as the Salvation Army who will be left to pick up the pieces of people's lives after this budget, the GPs and the many others who have organised and participated in these events and all those who have events in the pipeline.

The Australian community will not forgive this government for this cruel and dishonest budget, and we will not stand by and support the measures in the budget such as the GP tax, the cuts to university education, the cuts to health, the extra impositions put on pensioners and the problems associated with state budgets now having to fund the concessions. Labor will not stand by, and I want to assure people like Kelly and the many hundreds and thousands of others who have written from around the country that we will not stand by and let this cruel and twisted budget get through without a fight. We will continue to stand by them, we will continue to stand with them and we will support these people in every measure that we can by voting down these measures within the budget. It is onerous, it is awful, it is cruel and it is twisted, and it is not what was promised to people prior to the election.

**Australian Public Service**

**Senator BERNARDI** (South Australia) (13:53): If ever a cure was needed for insomnia, Senator Urquhart is it, as is testified by the people sleeping in the gallery after her impassioned attack on the budget. I rise today to speak about Public Service wage bargaining,
specifically the stance of the Australian Services Union and its tax branch secretary, Mr Jeff Lapidos. Mr Lapidos has recently gained notoriety for his trenchant opposition to tax office employees working an extra nine minutes a day in return for a pay rise. An extra nine minutes a day would take the average working week at the ATO to 37½ hours per week—hardly an imposition. I note it would only bring ATO employees into line with 72 per cent of APS employees covered by 74 other enterprise bargaining agreements which stipulate a 37½ hour working week. Once again, this is hardly an imposition. I also point out that the general community standard, as per the National Employment Standards, is for 38 hours per week of work. But more troubling was Mr Lapidos's threats that:

Any industrial action will be designed to hurt the commissioner and the government as much as we can. Even the *Canberra Times* was moved to editorialise as follows:

A proposal that public servants work an extra nine minutes each day towards that end does not seem onerous, particularly given that many more senior bureaucrats already work far longer hours anyway, many of which are unpaid.

... the thinking that a public servant’s work obligations are governed by the bundy clock or time sheet ... is perverse. In cleaving to it so dogmatically, the ASU and its members might care to recall an industrial incident in Melbourne last October somewhat similar to that foreshadowed by Mr Lapidos. After factory workers were asked to vote on a package of measures to fund pay rises—including one authorising a decrease in Sunday overtime pay from double time and a half to double time, the union took legal action. It was successful in preserving the status quo, but their members ultimately lost everything when their employer, Toyota, announced shortly after that it could no longer profitably make cars in Australia.

I concur. I have repeatedly made the point that union officials like Mr Lapidos are jeopardising members' jobs for their unsustainable wage demands.

What is Mr Lapidos actually asking for? He wants all pay points to increase by four per cent each year compounded, with allowances increasing by the same amount. He wants an extension of the Christmas closedown. He wants 15-minute tea-breaks for morning and afternoon tea to be included in the EBA to recognise this longstanding custom and practice. He wants employees to be able to use flex leave with a tea-break without prior approval so 'employees do not risk being on unauthorised absence if they return late from their break'. He wants personal leave both with and without pay without the requirement for documentation to be extended from 8 to 15 days. He wants superannuation contributions to be increased from the 15.4 per cent of salary already made. He wants flextime to allow shift workers to take additional breaks for private purposes such as 'to move a car or to take a smoking break.' He wants additional security arrangements to escort employees to the closest train station, bus stop and parking facility at the end of a late shift. He wants no hot-desking, he wants more working from home, he wants better mobile phone reception and he wants any other claim the ASU deems necessary.

*Senator Dastyari interjecting—*

*Senator BERNARDI:* Unlike you, he is, Mr Dastyari. Moreover, Mr Lapidos seems to think that his members have an automatic right to a share of savings from the ATO restructuring and downsizing, rather than this benefit going to taxpayers. For his information, the government's policy for bargaining in the Australian Public Service requires any
remuneration increases to be offset by genuine productivity gains. It is wrong to automatically equate productivity improvements with a cut to employees' conditions. Agencies are not required to increase working hours under the bargaining policy, but clearly some are considering it as a productivity offset for increasing remuneration.

Clearly, the ASU's Tax Office negotiating position is completely out of touch with community expectations and, unfortunately, Mr Lapidos does not seem to get this. He was also reported in the Adelaide _Advertiser_ as saying his union already had, 'secret' industrial action in mind that could stretch over months. He was quoted as saying: 'it'—industrial action—'will be designed to make it difficult to implement workplace change and affect the government's collection of revenue.' He was also quoted as saying:

It might only cost them a few hundred million dollars a year, but if we can do that, that will suit us.

What a dinosaur this man is!

Surely the time has come when unions and management can try to negotiate win-win situations. In the current parlous economic situation bequeathed to us by Labor, union officials should realise that job security is paramount and that excessive demands and threats of industrial sabotage—never a good idea at the best of times—will cost everyone, public servants included.

I conclude by noting that on 13 June the Australian Public Service Commission released the 2013 _APS remuneration report_. It shows that, in the last decade, annual increments in the median Australian Public Service wage totalled 42 per cent, compared to movements in the CPI which totalled only 28 per cent. In other words, over the last decade the average Public Service wage outstripped inflation by 14 per cent and outstripped increments in the private sector by six per cent. With the country so deep in debt and deficit thanks to the Labor Party, clearly, Mr Lapidos and the ASU and the CPSU need to get some perspective. They need to be relevant and they need to be reasonable, and by doing so they will protect the jobs of all of their members.

**Senator Cameron:** Work Choices is on its way back!

**The PRESIDENT:** Order on both sides!

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

_The PRESIDENT (14:00):_ I draw to the attention of honourable senators the presence in the gallery of the Australian Political Exchange Council, 18th Delegation from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. On behalf of all senators, I wish you a warm welcome to Australia and, in particular, to the Senate.

_Honourable senators: _Hear, hear!

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Veterans' Affairs**

_**Senator FARRELL** (South Australia) (14:00):_ My question is to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Ronaldson. Can the minister confirm that the Abbott government is scrapping the seniors supplement for 29,000 war veterans, and that the last scheduled payment for these veterans who have served our country so well will be tomorrow, Thursday, 26 June?
Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:00): Forty-one questions later I finally get something from the Australian Labor Party.

Senator Kim Carr: What about an answer?

Senator RONALDSON: Senator Carr has just interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Interjections are disorderly, and I remind the minister that he needs to address the question and address the chair.

Senator RONALDSON: I was indeed answering the question and Senator Carr interjected. Have a guess how many questions there have been since Senator Carr asked a question on industry. Forty-eight. Senator Carr, who stands up here on occasion and talks about industry—

Senator Farrell: Mr President, I rise on a point of order. Senator Ronaldson wants more questions. What we need is more answers. Can you please ask him to answer my question.

The PRESIDENT: That is not a point of order. I cannot instruct the minister how to answer the question, but I do direct the minister's attention to the question.

Senator RONALDSON: I love your work, Don. I do, on a serious note, want to wish Senator Farrell my very best for what lies ahead. Can I just say this in relation to Senator Farrell. The matter he is talking about does not take into account what we will be doing for veterans in relation to the abolition of the carbon tax. What I say to Senator Farrell—

Senator Kim Carr: That's your answer?

Senator RONALDSON: Forty-eight questions, Senator Carr. What a remarkable performance. What I will say to Senator Farrell is that in relation to veterans' families—

Senator Wong: Mr President, I rise on a point of order. Over a minute has expired since the question was asked. The question was about the seniors supplement. It is an important issue for war veterans. I would ask the minister to do as the standing orders require and be directly relevant to a question about the payment, or lack of payment, of the seniors supplement to war veterans.

The PRESIDENT: I did draw the minister's attention to the question at the 1½-minute mark. I do so again, but I also point out that interjections do not help the conduct of question time, and people responding to interjections do not help question time either. The minister has 46 seconds remaining.

Senator RONALDSON: I thought I was answering the question. But, in any event, I think it is important for the chamber to note that the seniors supplement that Senator Farrell is referring to is only paid to those DVA clients whose income and assets mean they do not qualify for a service or age pension. I thought Senator Farrell might actually have included that in his question as well. What this government inherited, of course, was a budgetary situation that required us to adopt measures across portfolios to address Labor's debt legacy. That of course has impacted on all Australians. For Senator Farrell and the Australian Labor Party to talk about their concerns with veterans— (Time expired)

Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (14:04): I assume that means that the answer to my question was yes. I ask a supplementary question: will the veterans now undergo hardship because they will lose up to $870 annually, money which helps them pay for life's essentials?
Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:05): Senator Farrell, if I actually thought you were serious about this then I might have a completely different answer. The reality is that for a representative of the Australian Labor Party to talk about the impact on veterans or talk about the impact on the general community is, quite frankly, the absolute height of hypocrisy. What we have done in this budget is try to ensure the sustainability—

Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order on relevance. We are operating as a team on this issue today. The specific question, as the minister knows, is about the hardship for losing $870 a year. I would ask you to draw the attention of the minister to the question.

The PRESIDENT: The minister still has 34 seconds remaining. I do draw the minister's attention to the question. Minister, continue.

Senator RONALDSON: Despite the best endeavours of the dream team, I will actually continue my answer. What I will say to Senator Farrell is that, when you reflect back on your time in this chamber, I wonder whether you, indeed, will finally acknowledge that the actions of the Australian Labor Party required this government to make decisions—not decisions we wanted to make but, regretfully, decisions we had no choice but to make. When I look again at your record in relation— (Time expired)

Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (14:06): I assume the answer to that question was yes. I ask a further supplementary question. How much will the government save by axing this seniors supplement for the nation's war veterans? Has the minister written to these veterans to let them know that this Thursday's seniors supplement is scheduled to be their last, thanks to the Abbott government's broken promise?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:07): I will tell you what I will not be doing. What I will not be doing is running around this country telling gold and white cardholders that they will pay the $7-copayment, which the shadow minister has been doing.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am waiting to give Senator Moore the call as Senator Moore is on her feet.

Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order: relevance. These were two very direct questions about specific savings and about whether the minister had written to the veterans who will be affected by the payment loss.

The PRESIDENT: The minister has still 46 seconds remaining, and I do draw the minister's attention to the question.

Senator RONALDSON: The question was about savings. What I am saying to the chamber is that the cross portfolio requirements that we were faced with to try and bring this nation's finances back into some semblance of order required some decisions not that we desired to make but which we had no choice to make. The Australian Labor Party—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Moore is on her feet.
Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order: relevance. It was a specific question about the cost.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Moore is trying to take a point of order.

Senator Moore: The question was about the cost. The minister has 17 seconds and I do not want to miss this opportunity to get the answer.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I drew the minister's attention to the question at the 46 second mark and I do so again.

Government senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! On my left. The minister has the call.

Senator RONALDSON: Senator Brown interjected before, 'You did not have to.' Senator Brown, what I will say to you in relation to this matter—

Government senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Resume your seat. On my left. Before calling the next questioner, I draw to the attention of honourable senators the presence in the gallery of a former president of the Senate, Alan Ferguson.

National Security

Senator FAWCETT (South Australia) (14:10): My question is to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis. Can the Attorney-General advise the Senate what steps the Australian government is taking to keep Australia safe from the threat of returning foreign fighters and violent extremism?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:10): Thank you, Senator Fawcett, for the opportunity to inform you of the steps the government is taking to deal with the threat of returning foreign jihadists. As you would know, the terrorist group—

Senator Wong interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator BRANDIS: I thought this matter had bipartisan support, Senator Wong.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Brandis, ignore the interjections. They are disorderly. Address your comments to the chair. On my left, there needs to be silence. On my right.

Senator BRANDIS: As Senator Fawcett would be aware, the terrorist group ISIL has lately taken over several cities in north-western Iraq as well as some of the border crossings between Iraqi and Syria. ISIL is a listed terrorist organisation in Australia under the Commonwealth criminal code. Our intelligence and law enforcement agencies are working closely with international partners to combat the threat posed by ISIL and other terrorist groups operating in Iraq, Syria and the region.

Any Australians found to be members of terrorist organisations or to have been involved in terrorist activities overseas will be arrested, detained and prosecuted in accordance with Australian law. I can tell Senator Fawcett that we estimate that up to 150 Australians are believed to be involved in the conflict in Syria and now in Iraq. They expose themselves to
punishment of up to 25 years imprisonment. And those penalties apply as well to persons who affiliate themselves with or provide support to those foreign fighters.

The government has also cancelled the passports of individuals who are assessed to pose a threat to our national security. The government will continue to use that tool to detour individuals from travelling overseas to engage in violent conflicts. The government will also shortly be bringing forward additional legislative measures.

Senator FAWCETT (South Australia) (14:13): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Could the Attorney-General inform the Senate what those additional legislative measures are?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:13): Yes, I can indeed. The government has decided to give effect to important recommendations of the report of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security in its inquiry into potential reforms to Australia's national security legislation. I might remind honourable senators that the recommendations of that report, which was the work of the last parliament, had bipartisan support. In particular, I will be introducing legislation in the next sitting fortnight to give effect to the recommendations in chapter 4 of that report. They are the recommendations which deal with the powers of Australia's national security agencies. That legislation has been developed in recent weeks and, as I say, I will be introducing it in the next sitting fortnight.

Senator FAWCETT (South Australia) (14:14): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Will the Attorney-General advise the Senate what role leaders of Australia's Muslim community can play in supporting the government's efforts?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:14): Members of Australia's Muslim community, in particular their leaders, play a critical role in helping communities to acknowledge the devastating events in the Middle East and in helping those communities to understand that it is illegal under Australian law for any Australian to provide support to those activities.

Yesterday I opened the National Imams Consultative Forum at Old Parliament House. I told the imams that the Australian government is taking strong action to protect Australia's national security and that part of that approach involves partnership with them to ensure that their communities remain committed and resilient and safe. The imams are committed to working in partnership with the government to raise awareness of these issues, to provide alternative pathways to individuals who might otherwise be minded to take action in response to the conflict and to raise awareness of the dangers of participating—(Time expired)

General Practice

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (14:15): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health, Senator Nash. Given the minister's failure to answer my question in this chamber last week, I ask again: can the minister confirm that when patients go on the anticoagulant medication Warfarin they usually require a large number of visits to determine whether their blood is too thin or thin enough for this treatment? Is it not true that with the $7 GP tax this could add up to hundreds of dollars for this life-saving treatment?
Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:16): As I have indicated to the chamber, it is a matter for practitioners to determine whether or not they will charge the co-pay. This government is absolutely committed to implementing its budget agenda, including ensuring the sustainability of the health system into the future. The GP co-payment is consistent with the principle that underpins the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which has been in place for decades. This government is absolutely committed to ensuring—unlike those opposite when they were in government—that we will have a health system that is sustainable into the future.

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (14:17): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. How many patients on Warfarin will not seek the care they need and forfeit their life-saving medical care as a result of these costs?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:17): The arrangements for patients and the number of patients will depend on the practitioners and whether or not they choose to charge the co-pay. This government has been extremely clear—extremely clear—that we are committed to implementing our budget agenda, which includes ensuring a sustainable health system into the future. We see an MBS system that 10 years ago was costing us $8 billion, that now is costing us $19 billion and that in 10 years time will cost us $34 billion if we do not take the measures we are taking to ensure we have an appropriate system in place.

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (14:18): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I refer to the Minister for Health, who has said, ‘We are not for negotiating on co-payments.’ I ask: does the government remain committed to the $7 GP tax?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:18): The government is committed to implementing our budget agenda. We inherited from the previous Labor government an economic mess that this government has the responsibility—unlike those opposite—to fix.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order on my left! I am waiting to give Senator Wong the call. Senator Wong.

Senator Wong: Mr President, I raise a point of order on relevance. The question was very specific: is the government committed to the $7 GP tax? That was the question that was asked.

The PRESIDENT: The minister still has 44 seconds remaining. I am listening carefully to the minister's answer. At this stage there is no point of order.

Senator NASH: As I said, the government is committed to implementing our budget agenda to fix the economic mess of the previous Labor government, which included the Leader of the Opposition, as the then minister, wasting $300 million purchasing water from Twynam which actually did not exist. That was only one occasion of waste and mismanagement from the previous Labor government, and that is why this government is taking the responsible decisions to fix the economic mess.
Taxation

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (14:20): My question is to the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Cormann. This week I was made aware by Micah Challenge of the fact that developing countries lose $160 billion of revenue through multinational tax evasion every year. No doubt other senators in this chamber also received that information. Your government has led Australians to believe that they are taking action on multinational tax evasion through the G20. Will the Australian government sign an information-sharing agreement for global action on multinational tax evasion, which countries including Germany and Britain have already signed?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:21): I thank Senator Whish-Wilson for that question. As he rightly points out, this government is committed to ensuring that multinational businesses who operate in Australia, and indeed who operate in other parts of the world, pay appropriate levels of tax in relation to the profits that are generated either here or in other parts of the world. As Senator Whish-Wilson also indicated, it is appropriate for these sorts of issues to be resolved at an international level, because if we were to take unilateral action then of course we would put at risk our capacity to grow our economy more strongly. Unilateral action would potentially impact our international competitiveness, which is why the Treasurer, Mr Hockey, is pursuing the issues that Senator Whish-Wilson has raised very proactively and energetically through the G20 fora. As you would be aware, Australia right now has the privilege of chairing the G20. We had a meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors in Sydney earlier this year, and that will be followed up with a leaders' forum in the great state of Queensland later this year. I am confident that we will be making—

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (14:23): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. It has been reported that despite Glencore and Xstrata having coal revenue of almost $15 billion over the past three years—that is revenue from their Australian coal operations—it pays almost no Australian company tax. Does the minister agree with this assessment? And does the minister find this an acceptable situation?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:23): Consistent with well-established practice, it would be completely inappropriate for me to talk about the specific tax affairs of individual taxpayers. But I would again make the general point that we would expect that all businesses, including multinational businesses operating in Australia,
pay their fair share of tax in relation to profits that are generated in Australia. That is something that we continue to pursue in order to ensure that that appropriately takes place. The most appropriate way to pursue these important issues is through international fora like the G20, which is what the Treasurer, Mr Hockey, is doing very energetically as we speak.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (14:24): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Is the minister able to give the Senate today a current estimate from the government of multinational tax already avoided in Australia? Is the government prepared to name and shame corporate tax avoiders?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:25): The government will continue to act in the national interest on all matters, including in relation to the broader issues he raises. I do not believe that the suggestions that Senator Whish-Wilson has made here today are particularly constructive or would be particularly effective.

Health

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (14:25): My question is the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Nash. Can the minister advise the Senate of what the government is doing to address the problems of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:25): I thank the senator for the question and her very real interest in this area. I am pleased to inform the Senate that the government is announcing today that it will be providing $9.2 million to a foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, or FASD, plan. Measures contained in the plan will allow the government to implement targeted approaches to better prevent and manage FASD.

As part of the investment, the action plan will provide practical support to women who are alcohol dependent that is aimed at reducing—with a view to ultimately ceasing—alcohol consumption. And $500,000 has been dedicated to the implementation of the FASD diagnostic tool, which is being developed by the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. A further $100,000 will be allocated to a technical FASD group chaired by Professor Elizabeth Elliott AM. It will advise the government on implementing future FASD programs and promote national evidence based research in ways to manage the impact of FASD. It will also improve information exchange and continue to build on and promote the results of the NHMRC Targeted Call for Research on FASD.

The government will be providing up to $1.5 million to develop best-practice interventions for alcohol dependent women. These targeted grants will allow further research to be undertaken to develop best-practice intervention guidelines for specialists and GPs. The government will be providing a further $3.1 million in grants to drug and alcohol services to better support alcohol dependent women. An additional $4 million will be provided to the New Directions: Mothers and Babies Services program.

I would like to acknowledge the work that the member for Murray, Dr Sharman Stone MP, has done in this area. This announcement today identifies and reinforces the government's commitment to addressing the significant challenges associated with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (14:27): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Will the minister inform the Senate of how the government's decision to spend half a million dollars on the development of a diagnostic tool will help GPs to diagnose FASD?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:28): The diagnostic tool is being developed by the Telethon Institute in collaboration with a group of clinical experts and consumer representatives. The institute has been contracted to conduct a clinical review and trial before the tool can be released nationally. The tool is due to be released for use in 2015 along with user and referral guidelines to ensure that babies or children who are diagnosed with FASD can be appropriately referred to support services.

Having a FASD diagnostic tool means that paediatricians have a level of certainty about diagnosing the disorder, which includes a spectrum of health and cognitive impairments. It will also allow our GPs, particularly those in rural and remote locations, who do not have immediate referral pathways to specialists, to make a proper diagnosis. Data will be collected on the tool, leading to a better understanding of the prevalence of FASD in Australia.

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (14:29): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question, and I would really appreciate hearing the answer to it. Can the minister advise the Senate how the government's Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Action Plan will support the prevention and management of FASD, particularly in Indigenous communities?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:29): The FASD Action Plan will promote consistent messages through primary care providers about the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy, including the prevention of alcohol related harm, and continuing activities through awareness of the risk of FASD. The action plan builds the knowledge and capability of non-government alcohol and drug services and primary care services to provide practical support to pregnant women who are alcohol dependent through compassionate and effective interventions. It will also enable the development of guidelines to support diagnosis and early management of FASD through close consultation and partnership with key professional colleges. FASD health promotion resources and interventions will be developed to reduce alcohol related harm during pregnancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The new direction services will be supported to implement these interventions, access health promotion resources and collect data on alcohol use in pregnancy.

Tobacco

Senator PRATT (Western Australia) (14:30): My question this afternoon is also to the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Nash. I would like to ask: how many Australians died from smoking related illnesses last year?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:31): I will take the specific figure on notice, but I can assure the chamber that this government is absolutely committed to tackling smoking. Smoking causes a cost to this nation on social and economic grounds of around $31.5 billion a year. I would think that it would be something that would be bipartisan across this chamber—that the government and the opposition should ensure that every effort is being made to reduce smoking rates across the nation.
Senator PRATT (Western Australia) (14:31): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. What quantum of funding has the Abbott government cut from anti-smoking programs in its first budget?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:32): This is about outcomes, and the quantum of funding that this government puts towards tobacco and the cessation of smoking rates is absolutely the priority. Unlike those opposite, we do not spray around buckets of funding with no relativity to outcomes. That was all we saw from the previous Labor government—a succession of policies on the run, of funding announcements with no requirement—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Nash, resume your seat. When there is silence we will proceed.

Senator NASH: Unlike those opposite we are going to focus this government's efforts on ensuring outcomes.

Senator Moore: My point of order is on relevance. The question was about the quantum of funding that has been cut. I would ask you to draw the minister's attention to that question.

The PRESIDENT: The minister has 23 seconds remaining; and I do draw the minister's attention to the question.

Senator NASH: There have been a range of budget measures relating to smoking in the budget. We are absolutely committed in the budget to ensuring we get better health outcomes for all Australians.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator PRATT (Western Australia) (14:34): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister confirm that the National Party still accepts tobacco donations and has in fact received more than $350,000 in tobacco donations over the last decade? Why is the minister from a party that accepts tobacco donations responsible for tobacco issues?

The PRESIDENT: The minister can answer as much of the questions as relates to the portfolio.

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:34): I can advise the chamber that matters of donations are in the purview of the federal and state organisation of the National Party.

Budget

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:35): My question is to the Minister for Finance and the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Cormann. Can the minister update the Senate on the government's efforts to repair the budget and deal with the debt and deficit left by the previous Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government?

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:36): I thank Senator Edwards for that question. Senator Edwards is quite right, of course. Labor did leave behind a debt and deficit disaster after six years of bad financial management. The coalition did
promise that we would repair the budget through 'operation budget repair' in the same way as we are stopping the boats through Operation Sovereign Borders.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: When there is silence, we will proceed. Order on my left!

Senator CORMANN: Thank you very much, Mr President. It is very sad really; Labor continues to be in complete denial about the debt and deficit disaster they left behind. They are in complete denial about the mess they left behind—

Opposition senators: Operation Budget Repair!

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cormann, resume your seat; you are entitled to be heard in silence. When there is silence, we will proceed.

Senator CORMANN: We have to remember that in 2007, Labor inherited a strong economy and a strong budget—no government net debt; a $20 billion surplus; more than $50 billion in Commonwealth net assets—the government was collecting more than $1 billion in net interest payments. And of course, after just six short years of Labor's bad financial mismanagement—Labor's wasted mismanagement—we are here, looking at $191 billion in deficits after Labor's first five budgets and $123 billion in projected deficits in Labor's last budget. But of course, whenever we got a budget from the Labor Party, we knew that it was not worth the paper it was written on—it was deteriorating within weeks. Just in the three years that Senator Wong was the finance minister—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cormann is entitled to be heard in silence. Order! If you wish to debate the issue, the time is after question time.

Senator CORMANN: In the three short years that Senator Wong was the finance minister, the budget position deteriorated by more than $107 billion, compared to the forecast at budget time. So our first job was to find the bottom in Labor's mess. We did that in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook. Our second job was to lay out operation budget repair—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator CORMANN: and we did that in the budget. And of course, the Senate has now passed our budget repair bill—they have passed our appropriation bills. We will continue to work through all of the budget measures as part of operation budget repair in an orderly and methodical process.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator Conroy interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! When there is silence—Senator Conroy on my left—we will proceed. Senator Edwards.

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:39): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question of the minister—and Senator Conroy, economics is not a joke on this side of the chamber. Can the minister—

Opposition senators interjecting—
The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Edwards, you just need to ask a question, not to comment.

Senator EDWARDS: Can the minister advise the Senate whether he is aware of any other plans to repair the budget, and deal with the debt and the deficit—the disaster—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Senator Cameron interjecting—

Senator EDWARDS: which you, Senator Cameron, left behind in the previous government.

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

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:40): There is no other plan. There is only operation budget repair. Labor continue to be in denial, as I said earlier. They refuse to face up to their responsibilities, having left behind a complete mess. Labor is still in complete confusion—not only are they opposing nearly $40 billion worth of savings measures now—first they say they are opposed to the budget repair levy and then they pass it. And now we have the Greens—the Greens are now the party that stands for regular cuts in the fuel excise! In 2001, the fuel excise was about 41.5 per cent; today it is about 25 per cent. And now the Greens tell us that they want the fuel excise to continue to go down and down—that is what the Greens are telling us today. What we would say to the Senate as a whole is: we need operation budget repair to succeed, in the interests of our economy—(Time expired)

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I need silence on both sides.

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:42): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Will the minister inform the Senate: what would be the impact on our economy and other families and pensioners across Australia if we do not repair the budget and deal with Labor's debt and deficit disaster as soon as practicable?

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator Conroy: We need Operation Budget Repair—come on down!

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:42): I have to say, I like Senator Conroy's interjection that we need operation budget repair. And maybe he should have a chat to the Leader of the Labor Party in the other place—Mr Shorten, Labor and the Greens sadly want us to keep borrowing from our children and grandchildren in order to fund our lifestyle and our consumption today. But that will hurt our economy into the future. It will hurt opportunities for our children and grandchildren into the future, because—you know what?—eventually we will have to pay back the cost for our lifestyle spending today. We cannot keep spending more than we get. We are forcing our children and grandchildren to pay for our consumption today—with interest. All of these cash handouts that Labor wants to keep—

Honourable senators interjecting—
The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Cormann, you are entitled to be heard in silence. Debating the matter across the chamber at this hour is disorderly; the time is after question time.

Senator CORMANN: Thank you, Mr President. What I would say to senators all around this chamber is that you might think that the decisions in this budget were tough, but if we do not make these decisions today, the decisions will only become harder. (Time expired)

Future of Financial Advice

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (14:44): My question is to the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Cormann. On 17 June, an ABC 7.30 report covered the government's proposed wind-back of the FoFA laws and how that risks a repeat of the Timbercorp scandal. Why is the government seeking to exempt general advice, execution services, volume rebates and trail commissions on pension products when thousands of Australians are still dealing with the devastating consequences from past financial advice scandals like Timbercorp?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:45): I thank Senator Madigan for that question and for some notice of it, and also for his genuine interest in this important area of public policy. Firstly, let me reassure Senator Madigan that we are not proposing to reopen any loopholes. We are working to ensure that low- and middle-income earners across Australia can have affordable access to high-quality financial advice they can trust, by removing unnecessary and costly red tape which pushes up the cost of advice without delivering proportionate improvements in consumer protections. Secondly, the requirement for financial advisers to act in the best interests of their clients remains in full. Thirdly, the ban on conflicted remuneration remains in full.

Let me direct Senator Madigan to my release on the Future of Financial Advice law changes last Friday when I said:

The Government has supported the ban on commissions and conflicted remuneration for financial advisers since it was first legislated. At no point has the Government sought to re-introduce commissions or conflicted remuneration for financial advisers.

My announcement last Friday of course also made it very clear that employees of financial product providers could not receive either up-front or trailing commissions as a reward or an incentive for product sales related to general advice they have provided. In fact, we went even further by stating that we would explicitly prohibit, in regulations and the legislation, any payment made solely because a financial product of a class in relation to which the general advice is given has been issued or sold to the client and any recurring payment made because the person has given the general advice. We are not proposing, however, to ban all remuneration for services provided. I do not think that anyone would seriously suggest that we should do this. Indeed, even Minister Shorten, when he introduced the FoFA laws in his second reading speech, said:

If … a particular stream of income does not conflict advice, then these reforms do not prevent them from receiving that income.

All of our changes are consistent with that statement. (Time expired)

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (14:47): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer to the minister's claim that he is not bringing back commissions. If that is the case, why
is the government seeking a multitude of exemptions from the conflicted remuneration ban designed to incentivise sales?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:47): As I said in my previous answer, these changes have never been designed to bring back commissions for financial advisers. To remove all possible doubt, the government is prescribing, in both the legislation and the regulations, that any payment related to the provision of general advice cannot be an up-front or a trailing commission. Indeed, any remuneration that would conflict the advice given is to be banned and to remain banned, and, beyond that, we are proposing that parliament give the government regulation-making powers to ban any new form of incentive payment or remuneration which may or may not emerge in the marketplace as a workaround of our financial advice laws, if it is found to conflict advice given and is not covered by the current prohibition. I note, incidentally, that this goes further than the relevant recommendation of the Senate Economics Legislation Committee inquiry's recommendations, and this position will be clearly reflected in all of the associated explanatory materials.

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (14:48): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Why has the minister decided to make sweeping regulations this week prior to the legislation being debated and voted on by the Senate? Isn't the minister aware of public statements from crossbench senators that regulations will be disallowed, and won't pre-empting the debate result in uncertainty for consumers and financial planners alike?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:49): The government is making judgements about what is in the public interest, and of course we are taking action to implement our election commitments, consistent with our regulation-making powers in the Corporations Act. As I stated in my media release on 20 June 2014, in order to provide clarity and certainty for both the financial advice industry and investors seeking financial advice, we will give effect to the policy commitments we made before the last election through regulation wherever that is legally possible. These regulations are to take effect on 1 July 2014. Judgements in relation to the matters Senator Madigan raises are of course a matter for the Senate, and I would not be so presumptuous as to pre-empt whatever conclusions the Senate might reach on reflection and having considered all of the relevant information.

Budget

Senator MARK BISHOP (Western Australia) (14:49): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health, Senator Nash. I refer to the government's decision to cut bulk-billing incentives for medical imaging services and impose a new $7 GP tax. Is the minister aware of the statement by the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association that:

Many people will simply be unable to afford it under the measures announced in this Budget—especially if they have to pay the full cost up front—and many conditions will therefore go undiagnosed.

Minister, is the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association correct?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:50): I am not aware of that specific comment. I am aware that there have been a range of views, since the budget was brought down, on the budget and the measures contained in that budget. The government has been extremely clear that we have
to implement measures to ensure the sustainability of the health system into the future. We have been overtly clear that the measures that we are taking in the budget are to achieve that end. We have inherited an economic mess from the previous Labor government that has to be fixed. As the finance minister just said, if we do not make the decisions now and take the action now that needs to be taken, then we are going to be in a disastrous situation down the track, because it is absolutely vital—and people understand—that we have a sustainable health system into the future.

**Senator Moore:** Mr President, I rise on a point of order on direct relevance. The question referred to a specific quote about the ability to afford the measures announced in the budget. We have now got 54 seconds left in this answer, Mr President, and I would ask you to draw the question to the minister's attention.

**The PRESIDENT:** The minister still does have 54 seconds remaining. I have been listening closely to the minister's answer. At this stage there is no point of order. The minister is to continue.

**Senator NASH:** If the Manager of Opposition Business had been listening, she would be aware that I addressed the question. There is no doubt that we have to ensure that the health system is sustainable. The previous government was not prepared to take the tough decisions to do it and we are.

**Senator Moore:** Mr President, I rise on a point of order on direct relevance after listening carefully to the minister's answer. The question was specifically about the ability of people to afford the measures contained in the budget.

**The PRESIDENT:** Minister, have you finished your answer?

**Senator Nash:** Yes.

**The PRESIDENT:** The minister has concluded her answer; therefore, there is no point of order.

**Senator MARK BISHOP** (Western Australia) (14:53): Mr President, I have a supplementary question for Minister Nash. Can the minister confirm that, under the government's proposed health cuts and imposition of a $7 GP tax, patients could face increased out-of-pocket expenses, including up to $500 for an MRI?

**Senator NASH** (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:53): As the government has been very clear to say, it is up to practitioners whether or not they will charge the co-payment. If those opposite want to talk about cuts, perhaps we should talk about the $1.6 billion that Labor cut from hospitals in 2012. If they want to talk about cuts—

**Senator Moore:** Mr President, I rise on a point of order. Again, it is on direct relevance. There were two questions asked of the minister: one about the impact of increased costs and one about the vulnerability of patients in being able to afford these services. Those have not been addressed by the minister in her response so far.

**The PRESIDENT:** I draw the minister's attention to the question.

**Senator NASH:** I did address the question at the outset of my answer. It was those opposite who raised the issue of cuts. Those opposite wanted to cut $400 million out of medical research funding. If we want to address the issue of cuts, there were a litany from
those opposite when it came to health. This government is absolutely committed to ensuring a sustainable health system into the future and, unlike those opposite, as I said previously, this government will take the tough decisions to ensure that we achieve that.

Senator MARK BISHOP (Western Australia) (14:55): Mr President, I have a further supplementary question for Minister Nash. Minister, won’t increasing upfront costs deter patients from seeking early diagnosis and make our health system less sustainable?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:56): The measures in the government’s budget will ensure a more sustainable health system into the future. It was under the previous government that policies were in place that were going to lead to an unsustainable health system. Unlike those opposite, this government will have in our budget efficient and effective measures that taxpayers can afford. Unlike those opposite, we will make sure that we have improved health outcomes and, at the same time, ensure that we have a health system into the future that is sustainable for the nation.

Indigenous Affairs

Senator BOSWELL (Queensland) (14:57): My question is to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Scullion. Is the minister able to assure the Senate that the government is committed to making a real difference to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:57): I thank the senator for his interest in this government’s efforts to meaningfully engage with our First Australians. Never before have such political energies been focused on turning around the disadvantage in Aboriginal and Islander communities. We have a Prime Minister who is prepared to accept the accountability which goes with being called the Prime Minister for Aboriginal and Islander people. We hear the clutter from the other side. They and their Leader of the Opposition snipe from the sidelines whilst this government gets on with the job of engaging with our First Australians with real results.

Gamaj leader Galarrwuy Yunupingu has invited our Prime Minister to spend a week living with his people on the country around Yirrkala in East Arnhem Land. I will accompany the Prime Minister in September to mark the first anniversary of his swearing-in as Prime Minister. This is a great honour. With the help of the Yothu Yindi Foundation, the Prime Minister will work alongside Yolngu people to listen and take part in practical activities that will directly benefit the community and the Prime Minister's understanding of issues that face them. This is no empty gesture. This is a government that is rolling up its sleeves to work with and listen to Aboriginal and Islander Australians. They are doing it on their terms. The fact that this Prime Minister is prepared to do so is nothing short of extraordinary.

Senator BOSWELL (Queensland) (14:59): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Is the minister able to highlight any particular improvements in student attendance under the Remote School Attendance Strategy?

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (14:59): I would invite the opposition to at least feign some enthusiasm—could they at least be in lockstep with the rest of Australia?
The **PRESIDENT**: Senator Scullion, you will address your comments through the chair and not across the chamber.

**Senator SCULLION**: This government has certainly made a significant commitment to the extent of tens of millions of dollars to lift school attendance rates in remote schools through the Remote School Attendance Strategy, and I am pleased to report that that strategy is taking effect. It has been rolled out in 73 schools in the Northern Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia. Early signs show a sustained upward trend, and this is delightful news for those communities. The average attendance rate is up by 5.1 per cent compared with term one in 2013 in the 40 communities participating in stage 1. Importantly, we are already getting an unprecedented level of data and cooperation through all the participating jurisdictions. I take this opportunity to congratulate everyone who is involved and supporting us in this important initiative.

**Senator BOSWELL** (Queensland) (15:00): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Is the minister able to inform the Senate of any bipartisan approaches to reducing Indigenous disadvantage?

**Senator SCULLION** (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (15:00): Sadly, there does not seem to be a completely bipartisan approach. Instead of congratulating the Prime Minister on his commitment to live and work amongst the Yolngu people, along with the groans from the other side the Leader of the Opposition has used this opportunity to attack the Prime Minister. As the Minister for Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, I make it my business to speak directly to Aboriginal and Islander people across this nation. I know it is important to talk to them on their country about their solutions. I know they want to be part of the solutions, and they are sick and tired of being seen as part of the challenge and as failures. The Leader of the Opposition might sit in comfort in his office in Canberra or in leafy Moonee Ponds in Melbourne, but from there he casts negativity on the Prime Minister's visit to North-east Arnhem Land. What things have the opposition done? Nil, nada, nothing. *(Time expired)*

**Senator Abetz**: I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS**

**Answers to Questions**

**Senator FARRELL** (South Australia) (15:02): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answers given by ministers to questions without notice asked by Opposition senators today.

Perhaps the answers given by Senator Ronaldson would be better described as non-answers. As we know, he wants more questions but we are not getting the answers. Today we asked for some answers about the seniors supplement. We got a lack of answers and a lack of information about what is going to happen so I am afraid I am going to have to tell the veterans of this country what this minister is proposing to do in three very crucial areas of his portfolio. Today we asked him to tell the veterans, but he did not tell them so we will have to. There are three crucial areas where this government is seeking to take away benefits from the veterans of this country. The first, and perhaps the most disgraceful, is changing the way in which the CPI operates in the calculation of veterans' pensions. The Labor Party introduced a scheme where veterans got the best of three methods of calculating increases in benefits. That
gave the best possible result to veterans. This government is proposing to take that away from September 2017.

I would like to refer to a document that records what the minister said about this very thing the government is proposing to do. I have a copy of *The Northern Daily Leader* dated 12 June 2013. The minister was going around holding his forums with veterans groups. There is a lovely photograph of him in the paper, with Senator Williams and Minister Joyce. The minister pledged that he was going to give to the 57,000 diggers across the country who received the DFRB pension the same arrangement that applies now to veterans' pensions—namely, the best of the three results. What did he say about the CPI being the only method of calculation? He said it was outdated and unfair. So the scheme that Senator Ronaldson is going to apply from September 2017 is what he said just over 12 months ago was outdated and unfair. The report of Senator Ronaldson's comments reads:

"CPI has not been a measure of cost-of-living for at least 15 years," he said.

"Aged pensioners don’t have their index assessed in this way so they are falling further and further behind.

“It’s basically unfair where they’re at and they deserve a fair go and we’re going to give it to them.”

That last sentence was right—he is going to give it to them! He is going to take away the fair method of indexation. He boasted before the election that he was going to give fair indexation to DFRB pensions, and he did—but there are only 57,000 of those pensions tied to CPI. Do you know how many veterans pensions receive CPI indexation? There are 280,000.

Senator Bilyk: How many?

Senator FARRELL: It is worth repeating, Senator Bilyk—there are 280,000. On the one hand he has given the scheme Labor introduced to 57,000, and we support that, but he is taking it away from another 280,000 people. Can I tell this chamber, on my second to last day here, that we are not going to cop it. Labor will not vote for the taking way of this benefit. Nor will we vote for taking away the seniors supplement, and nor will we vote for removing the three months back pay for disability pensions. This minister said he wanted to avoid the mistakes of the past, but he is just starting to make them again. (Time expired)

Senator RUSTON (South Australia) (15:07): I too rise to take note of the answers given to questions asked by the opposition today of the government, and I note that all of the questions seem to be about the budget and all of the questions seem to be about some of the measures that we have had to take in this budget to deal with the situation that we inherited when we were elected to government on 7 September 2017—that is, 2013.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator RUSTON: And hopefully again in 2017! Thank you very much, the senators from South Australia. I don't think any of us in this place like to face the fact that savings have to be made across portfolio areas. Sadly, those opposite need to realise that many of these measures that are constantly being complained about—somewhat unfairly and, to some degree, dishonestly on some occasions—are because of the budget position we inherited.

Since 1996 we have had budget after budget after budget that gave more to the Australian people—and in good times when you have budget surpluses, that is a fantastic thing to do. Every government should aim to get budget surpluses so that we can make living standards and opportunities for Australians better. But, unfortunately, when you are running huge
deficits that are constantly increasing, you do not have that luxury. I would point out that those opposite can carp all they like about the savings we have had to impose because we are responsible fiscal managers but just remember: the reason we are doing it is not the actions from this side of the House; it is from your actions when you were sitting over here.

It is worth remembering that $667 billion worth of debt would have been attributed to every man, woman and child in Australia had we continued on the trajectory we were on. That is $1 billion a month to pay for the interest on the debt; and how far could $1 billion a month have gone towards delivering some of the programs those opposite are today complaining about us having to deliver? The fact of the matter is that we have the fastest-growing deficit in the OECD. We can sit here and carry on all we like about the fact that the debt-to-GDP ratio was not as bad as that of other countries, but with the fastest-growing deficit, in a minute we will have.

The other thing I think is worth noting is that, amongst the scaremongering and tactics that have been going on from those opposite, they have not been telling the public the whole truth. To go out there and to scare the horses, our pensioners, people with children who are going to school and those people who might not be in good health without telling them the truth is an extraordinarily irresponsible thing. As an example, 'The budget for health has been cut'—the budget for health has not been cut; the budget for health is not increasing at the same rate as they put into their forward estimates.

Let's have a look at forward estimates. The big problem here is that those opposite are sitting there and carping about the things we are not funding into the future. How extraordinarily hypocritical! I could sit here for the next 25 minutes and give you a list of the programs that they had not funded into forward estimates and, when we chose to accept the fact that they have had to take those programs out of the budget because we simply could not afford some of them into the future, they attack us because we have not put them back into the budget.

There has to be a little accountability on both sides of this House—not just accountability for the government for their budget but accountability for the actions that those opposite took while in government that we have inherited. I will just put it on the table that an awful lot of things happened prior to 7 September 2013 that are resulting in the actions that have had to be taken with the budget today.

To further that issue of hypocrisy is the fact that in some situations those opposite are voting against the very savings that they had put into their own budget. So in taking note of and responding to the questions that were asked today, I would suggest to the House that maybe it would be a little better if we were more productive and proactive about doing some of the good things and in making sure we get this country back onto a good economic trajectory, instead of carping about hypocritical things that those opposite have caused. (Time expired)

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (15:12): I also take note of answers given by Senator Nash to my question to her today. I had to come back into the chamber today to ask a question about the impact of the $7 GP tax on patients who use warfarin, a medication that is required for many patients. While it is a very common drug in Australia, people have to have the appropriate blood tests on a very regular basis so they can be prescribed warfarin effectively
and at the correct dosage. Again today, we did not get an answer to the question: 'Isn't it true that the $7 GP tax could add up to hundreds of dollars to getting this life-saving treatment?'

The minister said that it was a matter for practitioners, which is an intentionally misleading answer, and frankly the same answer as she gave to me last week. But the truth is that, if pathology and diagnostic providers bulk-bill, they not only lose the $5 out of the $7 GP tax but also lose their bulk-billing incentive, which currently runs at $6 for an urban setting and $10 for someone who is in a regional or remote area. There is no way that a practice can simply absorb that reduction in income. It is intentionally misleading for the minister to say, 'That's just a matter for the practitioners; they can just do whatever they want to do.'

The minister then resorted yet again to the 'budget emergency' story. She said that there were burgeoning costs in the health system. She referred to the total health budget many years ago being a certain amount and then compared that to the amount it is going to be in this year's budget. Yes, the population is growing; yes, health costs are growing; yes, people can get better services now; and, yes, it is more expensive to provide modern-day health services. But Associate Professor Brian Owler, the President of the AMA, predicted the minister would say this. In his opinion piece last week he said:

The health budget is not out of control. As a proportion of GDP, Australia’s healthcare spending has remained constant. In 2011 it was 8.93 per cent compared to the OECD average of 9.3 per cent. The proportion of this contributed by the federal government expenditure remains constant at around 41 per cent.

As a proportion of federal government expenditure, health expenditure has actually fallen—from 18.1 per cent in 2006-07 to 16.1 per cent in 2012-13.

It is an absolute fallacy—it is intentionally misleading—to say that Australia's health budget is out of control.

We have a fabulous health system in this country. We are not going to sit over here and watch while the government of the day unpicks the universality of Medicare, the fairness of Medicare and the ability of Medicare to provide quality health services to people wherever they live in Australia—because the people who will be disproportionately disadvantaged by this are people who live in rural and remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and, as I have said many times, the poor and the sick. Why would you tax the poor and the sick of the country to set up a future fund when we do not even know what that fund is going to do? The Department of Health did not have any notice or knowledge of this future fund until April this year—a month before the budget. This is not a planned, structured approach to delivering a health system.

Then I moved to the third part of my question. I gave the minister the opportunity to support her senior minister by answering this question: 'Does the government remain committed to the $7 GP tax?' Not once but twice she refused to answer that question. Minister Dutton said, 'We are not for negotiating,' when he was questioned about this—so Senator Nash did not support her senior minister. I want to know what is happening, what deals are being done and where we are going to end up with this tax. The health of Australians will suffer. (Time expired)

Senator FAWCETT (South Australia) (15:17): I too rise to take note of answers given to questions asked by opposition senators today. As have many of my colleagues on this side, I point out that the reason we have had to take a number of measures—and I understand that
many of those measures are not popular—is the situation the nation has been left in. I will not go through all the figures, because people have heard all that before. What I want to talk about is some of the mismanagement that has led to that situation.

Let us look at something that we hope will be dealt with here in the Senate in the next month—and that is the mining tax. The former government brought in a mining tax that increased sovereign risk and discouraged companies from investing in Australia, which has had a flow-on impact on jobs. In doing so, the former government obtained net revenue from the mining tax of $340 million. In the same period, however, the structural spending the previous government racked up against the mining tax was in excess of $16 billion. That is a huge differential. It is that kind of mismanagement that has led to a situation where, like any responsible household, we have had to take measures which may not be popular. They may not be the measures we wish to take but they are the measures needed to keep Australia's economy on track and important aspects of our community funded.

Health funding has been the subject of many questions today. In South Australia, we see the state Labor government trying to blame the federal government for cuts they want to make to health in this year's budget. In South Australia in 2013-14, hospital services funding was $983.3 million and public health funding was $23.1 million, for a total of just over $1 billion from the federal government. In this year's budget, 2014-15, it is $1,053 million for hospital services funding and $24.3 million for public health—a total of $1.07 billion. That is a substantial increase this year. Going through to the out-years of the forward estimates, in 2017-18 the figure is $2.188 billion. For the Labor Party, whether it be here in opposition or in government in South Australia, to be trying to blame cuts to health in South Australia on the federal government is therefore just completely wrong. The figures in the budget papers show that health funding to South Australia increases, compared to the last year of the Labor government, year on year for the next four years. For Labor to claim it is decreasing—and, more particularly, for the South Australian Treasurer to cut health services there and blame the federal government—is clearly misleading the people of Australia.

As to the claim that co-payments are going to cause people to not seek the health care they need, I remind members opposite that the PBS system is recognised as an affordable and effective system for Australia. But go right back to 1960, when Robert Menzies was the Prime Minister. The co-payment was 50c. When did it start leaping up to higher amounts? It was in 1985, under Prime Minister Hawke, that it went up to $5. In 1986 it went up to $10 and in 1990 to $15. Under the prime ministership of one of Labor's heroes, PBS co-payments went up to $5 and then up to $15—and yet that has not deterred people from seeking the help, the medications, they need. It has not deterred people from getting the health care they need. Bear in mind that $15 in 1990 is worth a lot more than $15 in today's money. So it was a substantial increase for it to go from $5 to $15 under then Prime Minister Hawke. But the point is that it made the system sustainable, and nor did it deter people from seeking the medications they needed.

The aim of this government is to make sure that we have a Medicare system and a health system that meets the priority needs of our community but that is sustainable into the future. We are doing this in the face of a huge debt and deficit that has been left to this country, not only to my generation but also to my children's generation, by the former government. We seek to take responsibility for that as a responsible government. (Time expired)
Senator GALLACHER (South Australia) (15:22): I rise to take note of Senator Ronaldson's answer to Senator Farrell. I think the point made by Senator Farrell is pertinent—it was not an answer; it was prevarication or an avoidance or something similar. But it clearly was not an answer. Senator Farrell clearly and succinctly put the case of advocating one thing and doing another. It is very clear that this minister is really straddling a barbed wire fence. To advocate that for 15 years the CPI was inadequate and then to bring it back is really stretching credibility to say the least. Refusing to answer direct questions about it is probably par for the course. It seems to be a continual theme of question time that we do not get an answer but instead get half a dozen points of order trying to direct the minister towards an answer. But it is always the same old tune: we are the government but it is not our fault. It is a big boys' fault. Someone else did it.

This is an extremely serious and pertinent issue. I know that Senator Ronaldson has received the letter that I am about to make some selective quotes from. I know that Senator Ronaldson has been in correspondence with this person. It is mainly Vietnam veterans who have taken the issue up with the minister, and there has been correspondence to and fro.

A lot of my working life I have associated with or been working with veterans. I have a brother who is a Vietnam veteran. Let's just delve into it a little bit and give them a bit of comfort to know that people in this chamber do understand the situation they found themselves in. They were conscripted in a lot of cases. The gentleman says:

The army introduced us to alcohol and tobacco as a panacea while we were serving. Cigarettes were part of the supplementary rations. At the end of long and arduous operations infantry soldiers were given totally uncontrolled amounts of alcohol in the company booters. If R&C was available, we were advised to avail ourselves, until stupid, with the bar girls in Vung Tau. As a result of Liberal/National coalition government policy, many of us did not fulfil our full potential in life.

That is the nub of this issue. These are people who were conscripts in a lot of cases. We do not see that in Afghanistan. There is no alcohol in Afghanistan. We have good policies. We have progressed in the last 35 to 40 years. There is no doubt about that. But these people, now at the end of their working lives—if they managed to have decent working lives—lost their career opportunities. To repeat, this gentleman says:

As a result of Liberal/National coalition government policy, many of us did not fulfil our full potential in life.

Now, we see a cruel decision against people who have done their absolute best for this country, who have sacrificed a lot of their youth, and who have worked probably in occupations that were more menial than they may have been able to achieve had they not been conscripted and sent to the Vietnam war.

They have written to the minister and asked him to reconsider. They probably had a fair idea that he might take some notice of that given that he has personally held forums on this and advocated for a different position to what is currently afoot. The fact that here in question time he is avoiding answering this question very clearly puts him in a situation that is untenable.

I will finish with the words of the constituent:

And so dear minister we must give you a fail. You have failed miserably to advocate for your constituents. You have too easily accepted the political dogma of your party. You are indeed totally
bereft of the expectations of Australia for the care and respect of those who have served to make our Australia the envy of the free world.

So there is no lack of capacity to articulate this argument directly to the minister, and there is no lack of capacity to oppose these changes in this chamber, as so clearly and succinctly put by Senator Farrell.

The minister should be very well aware that we will not drop an issue such as this. We will advocate for these people who have served Australia in a tremendously great capacity.

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

Question agreed to.

**Taxation**

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (15:28): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Finance (Senator Cormann) to a question without notice asked by Senator Whish-Wilson today relating to tax avoidance.

Listening to coalition Senators Fawcett and Cormann during question time talk about the need to reduce debt for future generations of Australia, I hope they take seriously the question I asked about tax avoidance by large multinational corporations especially, but also by wealthy individuals who shuffle their money offshore through all sorts of dodgy means to avoid paying their fair share of tax.

Micah Challenge is one group I mentioned in my question. I think a lot of people in the Senate will have met with them in the last week. They come here every year. They are a global Christian group that is targeting the Millennium Development Goals—the reduction of poverty by 50 per cent by 2015. Often they come and talk to us about the need for more foreign aid, which sadly has been used as an automatic teller machine by respective governments in this country every time they need to cut debt. What they have targeted this year, and will be continuing to focus on around the G20, is this issue of tax avoidance. They outlined the numbers to me. Developing countries lose $160 billion of revenue through tax evasion every year.

Unfortunately, Senator Cormann could not tell me what is at risk in Australia, or what Treasury or the Tax Commissioner thinks is at risk in Australia. I have read some estimates. It is certainly billions of dollars per year. No doubt through the G20 process our government is going to pursue this aggressively to share information with other countries, so we are in a position to target and pinpoint where this tax evasion is occurring both through multinational corporations, in issues such as profit shifting, and through systems such as the common reporting system—CRS—which is going to be on the agenda in the September meeting of the G20.

That is a system that relies on financial institutions to set up a process where they can actually share information between other countries. That is going to require them to put in place new systems. I would certainly be interested, from the government's perspective, in whether they are just consulting with large financial institutions, in relation to implementing something like CRS, or whether it is going to go to broader stakeholders. Whatever the issue and whatever the process, tax evasion is a very serious issue. I asked the ATO during Senate estimates about numbers such as $500 billion of revenue. That is $500 billion of revenue that
is at risk from tax avoidance and tax shuffling. To put that in perspective, that would certainly pay for several years budget cuts in this country if we were to start looking at how we might reduce tax avoidance. It is a significant amount of money.

The question I asked today has been publicly reported. It was about Glencore Xstrata, which is one of the largest mining companies in the world. It has had $15 billion of Australia operations over three years, primarily in coal, and pays almost no company tax. Is that true? These are the sorts of answers that Micah Challenge are chasing, as are the Greens and no doubt all senators in this chamber who are concerned about the issue of tax avoidance. It is something the government has said that they are taking seriously. I have heard it from a previous senator in the chamber, Barnaby Joyce. I have heard it mentioned publicly by a number of coalition senators.

I think it is a significant matter of public interest not just because it helps us in terms of revenue and retiring our debt but because it also allows a sense of fairness to pervade particularly those groups who are looking after the impoverished and the disadvantaged, like Micah Challenge. Also, the Oaktree Foundation: we have a number of stakeholders who come into parliament to talk to us about how we can help the poor internationally and in this country. An area like tax avoidance is going to be very important.

Is it part of our global trade negotiations and our bilateral talks that we have in other countries? Is it included in these large, complex arrangements? Do we talk about issues such as multinational profit shifting and tax avoidance by high-net-worth individuals? Can we come up with better structures to make sure that the wealthy do not dodge their tax? That is that revenue that is so desperately needed to pay for hospitals, to pay for education and to tackle issues such as homelessness in Australia. Rather than unfair and cruel budget cuts to the people who can least afford it, why don't we take on large corporations and the amount of tax they are paying? I am not sure why a company like Glencore Xstrata could pay virtually no Australian tax. It does not make sense to me. We also know that the government has got rid of taxes through mining taxes and through prices on pollution. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion moved by Senator Whish-Wilson to take note of the answer by Senator Cormann be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

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

Wagga Wagga: Palliative Care Hospice

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

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the absence of a palliative care hospice in the Wagga Wagga, New South Wales district. Your petitioners ask that the House acknowledge the lack of this critical health care facility and support the construction of a 10 bed palliative care hospice in Wagga Wagga associated with the Wagga Wagga Base and Calvary Private Hospitals.

by Senator Stephens (from 137 citizens).

Petition received.
Sharks

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (15:33): by leave—I table a petition containing unique stories on sharks, from 649 citizens, which is not in conformity with the standing orders as it is not in the correct form.

Petition received.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senator Thorp to move:
That the following matter be referred to the Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry and report by 29 October 2014:

The history, effectiveness, performance and future of the National Landcare Program, including:
(a) the establishment and performance of the Natural Heritage Trust;
(b) the establishment and performance of the Caring for Our Country program;
(c) the outcomes to date and for the forward estimates period of Caring for Our Country;
(d) the implications of the 2014-15 Budget for land care programs, in particular, on contracts, scope, structure, outcomes of programs and long-term impact on natural resource management;
(e) the Government’s policy rationale in relation to changes to land care programs;
(f) analysis of national, state and regional funding priorities for land care programs;
(g) how the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture have, and can, work together to deliver a seamless land care program;
(h) the role of natural resource management bodies in past and future planning, delivery, reporting and outcomes; and
(i) any other related matters.

Senator Lundy to move:
That the time for the presentation of the report of the Finance and Public Administration References Committee on its inquiry into Commonwealth procurement procedures be extended to 10 July 2014.

Senators Waters and Moore to move:
That the Senate—
(a) notes:
   (i) the current gender pay gap of approximately 17.5 per cent in Australia,
   (ii) recognition by industry of the need to address the gender pay gap,
   (iii) support by key industry figures for current gender equality reporting requirements within Schedule 1 of the Workplace Gender Equality (Matters in relation to Gender Equality Indicators) Instrument 2013 (the Instrument) under the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012,
   (iv) the Government’s deferral of increases to gender equality reporting matters by delaying the commencement of Schedule 2 of the Instrument in order to consult industry, and
   (v) that such consultation on gender equality reporting requirements is currently underway; and
(b) calls on the Government to retain the existing gender equality reporting requirements contained in Schedule 1 of the Instrument.
**Senator Rhiannon** to move:
That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, no later than 8 July 2014, all correspondence, whether written or in email form, between the Department of Agriculture and the Minister’s office relating to the cattle industry’s compensation claim resulting from the 5 week suspension of live export trade to Indonesia in 2011, and all correspondence, whether written or in email form, between the Minister’s office and the Department of Finance, the Australian Government Solicitor and the Attorney-General’s office, relating to the same matter.

**Senator Milne** to move:
That the following matters be referred to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee for inquiry and report by 4 September 2014:
(a) the work undertaken by the Australian Federal Police’s Oil for Food Taskforce;
(b) the level of resourcing that was provided and used by the taskforce; and
(c) any other related matters.

**Senator Wright** to move:
That the Senate—
(a) notes:
   (i) the findings of the Youth Mental Health Report by Mission Australia and the Black Dog Institute, which states that 60 per cent of young people with a mental illness are not comfortable seeking information, advice or support from community agencies, online counselling or telephone hotlines, and
(ii) the judgement of the High Court in Williams v. Commonwealth of Australia (no. 2), which found the Commonwealth’s National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program to be unconstitutional; and
(b) calls on the Federal Government to bring legislation before the Parliament supporting access to professional mental health support in schools by redirecting funding allocated to the National School Chaplaincy Program from 2015 to qualified mental health workers.

**Senator Moore** to move:
That the Senate notes the Government’s Budget is an affront to Australians’ sense of fairness.

**Senators Faulkner, Bernardi, Rhiannon, Madigan and Xenophon** to move:
(1) That the following matters be referred to the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by the seventh sitting day in March 2015:
(a) progress in implementing the recommendations of the committee’s 2012 reports into the performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS), with particular reference to:
   (i) workplace culture and employment issues,
   (ii) heritage management, building maintenance and asset management issues, and
   (iii) contract management;
(b) the senior management structure of DPS and arrangements to maintain the independence of the Parliamentary Librarian;
(c) oversight arrangements for security in the parliamentary precincts and security policies;
(d) progress in consolidating Information and Communication Technology services and future directions;
(e) the future of Hansard within DPS;
(f) the use of Parliament House as a commercial venue;
(g) further consideration of budget-setting processes for the Parliament and the merits of distinguishing the operating costs of the parliamentary institution and such direct support services such as Hansard, Broadcasting and the Parliamentary Library, from the operations and maintenance of the parliamentary estate;

(h) consideration of whether the distinction between the operations of the parliamentary institution and its direct support services, and the operations and maintenance of the parliamentary estate, is a more effective and useful foundation for future administrative support arrangements, taking into account the need for the Houses to be independent of one another and of the executive government; and

(i) any related matters.

(2) That, in undertaking the inquiry, the committee have access to relevant records and evidence of the committee in the previous Parliament.

Senator Thorp to move:

That the following matter be referred to the Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry and report by 3 December 2014:

The adequacy of arrangements to prevent the entry and establishment of invasive species likely to harm Australia’s natural environment, including:

(a) recent biosecurity performance with respect to exotic organisms with the potential to harm the natural environment detected since 2000 and resulting from accidental or illegal introductions from overseas, including:

(i) the extent of detected incursions, including numbers, locations and species, and their potential future environmental, social and economic impacts,

(ii) the likely pathways of these recently detected incursions and any weaknesses in biosecurity that have facilitated their entry and establishment,

(iii) the extent of quarantine interceptions of exotic organisms with the potential to harm the natural environment, including numbers, locations, species and potential impacts, and

(iv) any reviews or analyses of detected incursions or interceptions relevant to the environment and any changes in biosecurity processes resulting from those reviews or analyses;

(b) Australia’s state of preparedness for new environmental incursions, including:

(i) the extent to which high priority risks for the environment have been identified in terms of both organisms and pathways, and accorded priority in relation to other biosecurity priorities,

(ii) the process for determining priorities for import risk analyses and the process for prioritising the preparation of these analyses,

(iii) the current approach to contingency planning for high priority environmental risks and the process by which they were developed,

(iv) the adequacy of current protocols and surveillance and their implementation for high-priority environmental risks,

(v) current systems for responses to newly detected incursions, the timeliness and adequacy, and the role of ecological expertise,

(vi) the extent to which compliance monitoring and enforcement activities are focused on high priority environmental risks,

(vii) the adequacy of reporting on incursions, transparency in decision-making and engagement of the community, and

(viii) institutional arrangements for environmental biosecurity and potential improvements; and

(c) any other related matter.
Withdrawal

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (15:34): I give notice, at the giving of notices on the next day of sitting, to withdraw business of the Senate notice of motion No. 2 standing in my name for six sitting days after today for the disallowance of the Migration Amendment (Bridging Visas—Code of Behaviour) Regulation 2013. I seek leave to make a short statement.

Leave granted.

Senator EDWARDS: On 13 May 2014, the committee gave notice to disallow this instrument whilst it sought further information on various issues from the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. The committee has received a satisfactory response to its concerns from the minister. The committee's concluding remarks are documented in the delegated legislation monitor No. 7 of 2014. Accordingly, the committee will seek to withdraw the notice of motion to disallow the instrument.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:35): I withdraw government business notice of motion No. 1 standing in my name.

BUSINESS

Leave of Absence

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (15:35): by leave, I move:

That leave of absence be granted to Senator Heffernan for today, for personal reasons.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

Reporting Date

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (15:35): by leave—I move:

That the time for the presentation of reports of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee be extended as follows:

(a) implications of the restrictions on the use of Fenthion on Australia’s horticultural industry—to 16 July 2014; and

(b) future of beekeeping and pollination service industries in Australia—to 16 July 2014.

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

Postponement

Senator WATERS (Queensland) (15:36): by leave—I move:

That business of the Senate notice of motion No. 4 standing in my name for today proposing a reference to the Community Affairs References Committee relating to violence against women be postponed to the next day of sitting.

Question agreed to.
COMMITTEES
Economics References Committee
Reference

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (15:37): I, and also on behalf of Senator Whish-Wilson and Senator Madigan, move:

That the following matter be referred to the Economics References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 October 2014:
The need for a national approach to retail leasing arrangements to create a fairer system and reduce the burden on small to medium businesses with associated benefits to landlords, with particular reference to:
(a) the first right of refusal for tenants to renew their lease;
(b) affordable, effective and timely dispute resolution processes;
(c) a fair form of rent adjustment;
(d) implications of statutory rent thresholds;
(e) bank guarantees;
(f) a need for a national lease register;
(g) full disclosure of incentives;
(h) provision of sales results;
(i) contractual obligations relating to store fit-outs and refits; and
(j) any related matters.
Question agreed to.

Economics References Committee
Reference

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (15:38): I, and also on behalf of Senator Xenophon, move:

That the following matter be referred to the Economics References Committee for inquiry and report by 27 October 2014:
The structure and development of forestry managed investment schemes (MIS), including:
(a) the motivation and drivers that established the framework for the schemes initially;
(b) the role of governments in administering and regulating forestry MIS;
(c) the current policy and regulatory framework of forestry MIS;
(d) the role of some in the financial services industry in promoting and selling forestry MIS;
(e) compensation arrangements for small investors in forestry MIS who have lost life savings and their homes in the face of the collapse of forestry MIS;
(f) the burden on farmers and other agricultural producers who have been left with the uncertainty of timber plantations linked to forestry MIS on their land;
(g) options for reforming forestry MIS to protect investors and rural communities; and
(h) any other related matters.
I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.
Senator WHISH-WILSON: I have been lucky enough to have participated in two inquiries through the Economics Reference Committee in relation to ASIC, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, and also in relation to the FoFA laws. It has become very clear to me that a large number of financial problems are out there in the community and they need to be addressed, effectively, through the Senate system. One of the big problems is, of course, managed investment schemes. Thousands of Australians have lost their life savings to these schemes. This has occurred not just from potentially dodgy financial planners or financial advisers; these schemes are fundamentally flawed. The government has played a significant role over the years in managed investment schemes, and it is high time that we had a close look at them and also at whether and, if so, how the government can play a role in compensating for, or remediating, the damage that these schemes have caused to communities and to individuals.

Question agreed to.

Economics References Committee
Reference

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (15:39): At the request of Senator Conroy, I move:
That the future sustainability of Australia's strategically vital naval ship building industry be referred to the Economics References Committee for inquiry and report by 1 July 2015.

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS
Borderline Personality Disorder Awareness Day

Senator WRIGHT (South Australia) (15:41): I, and also on behalf of Senator Boyce and Senator McLucas, move:
That the Senate—
(a) notes that:
(i) at any point in time, about 1.8 per cent of the general population experiences Borderline Personality Disorder,
(ii) the disorder can be characterised by overwhelming emotions, problems with relationships, impulsive and risk-taking behaviour and a fragile sense of self, and
(iii) a history of trauma, abuse or deprivation is common among those with the disorder; and
(b) with the aim of promoting understanding of the disorder in the community and working towards better treatment options and quality of life for those affected by the disorder, acknowledges that 5 October 2014 is Borderline Personality Disorder Awareness Day.

Question agreed to.

DOCUMENTS
Roe 8 Highway
Order for the Production of Documents

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (15:41): I move:
That—
(a) the Senate notes:
(i) the budget provides for payment to the Western Australian Government of $925 million for the Perth Freight Link which includes the Roe Highway extension,

(ii) Infrastructure Australia has not assessed this project despite the promise by the Prime Minister (Mr Abbott) that all Commonwealth-funded infrastructure projects worth more than $100 million would undergo a cost-benefit analysis by Infrastructure Australia,

(iii) the Minister has not received a full business case for this project, and

(iv) the modelling for the Roe 8 extension by the proponent, the Western Australian Government, demonstrates negligible impact on passenger traffic or heavy vehicle traffic on local roads; and

(b) there be laid on the table, by the Minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, no later than noon on Monday, 7 July 2014:

(i) all communications between Western Australia’s Minister for Transport, Assistant Minister, Treasurer and Premier and the Federal Government in relation to the project being included in the budget, and

(ii) the cost benefit analysis submitted to the Government that demonstrates a 5:1 benefit to cost ratio and underlies the decision for Commonwealth funding.

I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator LU DLAM: This motion refers to the Roe 8 Highway extension, which is proposing to throw four lanes of tarmac through the Beeliar Wetlands and the suburbs immediately south of Perth. It will create an extraordinary freight bottleneck in North Fremantle, just outside the Perth container port. It has had no published cost-benefit analysis, a business plan has not been done and an environmental impact assessment has not been concluded. Yet this government, the one that tells us and has told us constantly for more than a month that they are in the throes of a budget emergency, is proposing to hurl $925 million of taxpayers’ money at a deeply unpopular project. The documents which the Senate will seek to be provided by the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development relate to the correspondence between the state and Commonwealth governments before this reckless announcement was made by Prime Minister Abbott and the actual cost-benefit analysis that was submitted, which apparently demonstrates a five to one benefit cost ratio.

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

The Senate divided. [15:47]

(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes .................34
Noes ...................26
Majority.............8

AYES

Bilyk, CL
Brown, CL
Collins, JMA
Dastyari, S
Faulkner, J
Gallacher, AM
Hogg, JJ
Ludlam, S

Bishop, TM
Cameron, DN
Conroy, SM
Di Natale, R
Furner, ML
Hanson-Young, SC
Lines, S
Ludwig, JW
AYES
McEwen, A (teller)  Milne, C
Moore, CM  O’Neill, DM
Peris, N  Rhiannon, L
Siewert, R  Singh, LM
Stephens, U  Sterle, G
Thorp, LE  Tillem, M
Urquhart, AE  Waters, LJ
Whish-Wilson, PS  Wong, P
Wright, PL  Xenophon, N

NOES
Back, CJ  Bernardi, C
Birmingham, SJ  Boswell, RLD
Boyce, SK  Bushby, DC
Cash, MC  Colbeck, R
Edwards, S  Eggleston, A
Fawcett, DJ  Fierravanti-Wells, C
Fifield, MP  Johnston, D
Kroger, H (teller)  McKenzie, B
Nash, F  O’Sullivan, B
Parry, S  Payne, MA
Ruston, A  Ryan, SM
Seselja, Z  Sindonos, A
Smith, D  Williams, JR

PAIRS
Carr, KJ  Brandis, GH
Farrell, D  Scullion, NG
Lundy, KA  Abetz, E
Marshall, GM  Cormann, M
McLucas, J  Mason, B
Polley, H  Ronaldson, M
Pratt, LC  Heffernan, W

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee
Meeting
Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (15:49): I move:
That the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee be required to convene a supplementary estimates meeting on Thursday, 26 June 2014 from 10 am for a period of no less than one hour for the purpose of asking for explanations from the Managing Director, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and the General Manager Property and Tenancy Services of Defence Housing Australia concerning the performance of the agency and the scoping study investigating options for future ownership.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator FIFIELD: The government will be opposing Senator Conroy's motion. On 3 June 2014 the managing director at Defence Housing Australia and his staff attended as witnesses to the budget estimates hearing in readiness to answer any question to be put by the committee. I am advised that in consultation and with the express agreement of the deputy chair, the chair of the committee dismissed DHA on the second day of the hearing. Senator Conroy agreed to put further questions on notice, as is made clear in Hansard. There is nothing stopping Senator Conroy from asking his questions via the normal process. I note that there have been no events since the estimates hearings that would warrant the expense and disruption for the named officials who would be required to attend.

Question agreed to.

Health Committee Appointment

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (15:51): I move:

(1) That a select committee, to be known as the Select Committee on Health, be established to inquire into and report on health policy, administration and expenditure, with particular reference to:

(a) the impact of reduced Commonwealth funding for hospital and other health services provided by state and territory governments, in particular, the impact on elective surgery and emergency department waiting times, hospital bed numbers, other hospital related care and cost shifting;

(b) the impact of additional costs on access to affordable healthcare and the sustainability of Medicare;

(c) the impact of reduced Commonwealth funding for health promotion, prevention and early intervention;

(d) the interaction between elements of the health system, including between aged care and health care;

(e) improvements in the provision of health services, including Indigenous health and rural health;

(f) the better integration and coordination of Medicare services, including access to general practice, specialist medical practitioners, pharmaceuticals, optometry, diagnostic, dental and allied health services;

(g) health workforce planning; and

(h) any related matters.

(2) That the committee present its final report on or before 20 June 2016, with interim reports as the committee sees fit.

(3) That the committee consist of 7 senators, as follows:

(a) 3 nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate;

(b) 3 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate; and

(c) 1 nominated by the Leader of the Australian Greens.
(4) That:

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

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

(5) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee.

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

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

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

(9) That, in the event of an equality of voting, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

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

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

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

(13) That the committee be empowered to print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [15:52]

(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes ..................34
Noes ..................27
Majority .............7

AYES

Bilyk, CL
Brown, CL
Collins, JMA
Dastyari, S
Faulkner, J
Gallacher, AM
Hogg, JJ
Ludlam, S
McEwen, A (teller)
Moore, CM
Peris, N

Bishop, TM
Cameron, DN
Conroy, SM
Di Natale, R
Furner, ML
Hanson-Young, SC
Lines, S
Ludwig, JW
Milne, C
O’Neill, DM
Rhiannon, L
Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (15:54): I move:
That the Senate—
(a) applauds the World Heritage Committee's decision in Doha on 23 June 2014 to uphold the current boundaries of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area;
(b) notes the damage to Australia's international reputation and Tasmanian tourism as a result of the Abbott Government's attempt to reduce the World Heritage Area by 74 000 ha so it can be logged; and
(c) calls on the Abbott Government to abide by the requirements of the World Heritage Convention to fund the rehabilitation of degraded areas and a cultural assessment of the area.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion moved by Senator Milne be agreed to.
The Senate divided. [15:56]
(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes ................. 34
Noes ................. 27
Majority ............. 7

AYES

Bilyk, CL
Brown, CL
Collins, JMA
Dastyari, S
Faulkner, J
Gallacher, AM
Hogg, JJ
Ludlam, S
McEwen, A (teller)
Moore, CM
Peris, N
Siewert, R
Stephens, U
Thorp, LE
Urquhart, AE
Whish-Wilson, PS
Wright, PL

Bishop, TM
Cameron, DN
Conroy, SM
Di Natale, R
Furner, ML
Hanson-Young, SC
Lines, S
Ludwig, JW
Milne, C
O’Neill, DM
Rhiannon, L
Singh, LM
Sterle, G
Waters, LJ
Wong, P
Xenophon, N

NOES

Back, CJ
Birmingham, SJ
Boyce, SK
Cash, MC
Edwards, S
Fawcett, DJ
Fifield, MP
Kroger, H (teller)
McKenzie, B
O’Sullivan, B
Payne, MA
Ryan, SM
Sinodinos, A
Williams, JR

Bernardi, C
Boswell, RLD
Bushby, DC
Colbeck, R
Eggleston, A
Fierravanti-Wells, C
Johnston, D
Macdonald, ID
Nash, F
Parry, S
Ruston, A
Seselja, Z
Smith, D

PAIRS

Carr, KJ
Farrell, D
Lundy, KA
Marshall, GM
McLucas, J
Polley, H
Pratt, LC

Brandis, GH
Scultion, NG
Abetz, E
Cormann, M
Mason, B
Ronaldson, M
Heffernan, W

Question agreed to.
Solar Energy

Senator MILNE: I move:

That the Senate—

(a) acknowledges the proposal to build community-scale solar thermal plants and install solar photovoltaic panels in western New South Wales, known as the Solar Energy eXchange Initiative (the Initiative), has received in-principle support from 22 councils in the target area, including the unincorporated area;

(b) notes the Initiative would boost local economies, create local jobs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce the need for investment in transmission and distribution infrastructure and, in the long run, reduce power bills;

(c) supports those councils involved in the Initiative and the value that such projects can bring to long-term energy security and the economy in New South Wales; and

(d) encourages all levels of government to work cooperatively to see plans such as the Initiative harness the power of the sun in inland New South Wales to the benefit of ratepayers and residents, the economy and the environment.

The PRESIDENT (16:00): The question is that the motion moved by Senator Milne be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [16:00]

(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes ......................10
Noes ......................48
Majority .................38

AYES

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

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

NOES

Back, CJ
Bilyk, CL
Bishop, TM
Boyce, SK
Cameron, DN
Colbeck, R
Conroy, SM
Edwards, S
Faulkner, J
Fierravanti-Wells, C
Furner, ML
Hogg, JJ
Kroger, H
Ludwig, JW
McEwen, A (teller)
Moore, CM
O’Neill, DM

Bernardi, C
Birmingham, SJ
Boswell, RLD
Bushby, DC
Cash, MC
Collins, JMA
Dastyari, S
Eggleston, A
Fawcett, DJ
Field, MP
Gallacher, AM
Johnston, D
Lines, S
Macdonald, ID
McKenzie, B
Nash, F
O’Sullivan, B

CHAMBER
Question negatived.

COMMITTEES
Abbott Government’s Budget Cuts Committee
Appointment

Senator DI NATALE (Victoria) (16:03): I move:
(1) That a select committee, to be known as the Select Committee into the Abbott Government’s Budget Cuts, be established to inquire into the effect of cuts or changes in the Commonwealth budget, with interim reports as the committee sees fit and a final report on or before 20 June 2016, with particular reference to:
   (a) any reductions in access to services provided by the Commonwealth;
   (b) the provision of other services, programs or benefits provided by the Government affected by the budget;
   (c) Commonwealth – state relations and the impact of decreased Commonwealth investment on service delivery by the states;
   (d) the fairness and efficiency of revenue raising;
   (e) the structural budget balance over the forward estimates and the next 10 years;
   (f) the reduced investment in scientific research and infrastructure and its impact on future productivity;
   (g) public sector job cuts;
   (h) the impact of the budget on retirement incomes and pensions;
   (i) intergenerational mobility;
   (j) the impact of the budget on young people and students;
   (k) the impact of the budget on households; and
   (l) other matters the committee considers relevant.
(2) That the committee consist of 7 senators, 3 nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 3 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, and 1 nominated by the Leader of the Australian Greens.
(3) That:
   (a) participating members may be appointed to the committee on the nomination of the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate or any minority party or independent senator; and
   (b) participating members may participate in hearings of evidence and deliberations of the committee, and have all the rights of members of the committee, but may not vote on any questions before the committee.
(4) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee.

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

(6) That the committee elect as chair a member nominated by the Leader of the Australian Greens and as deputy chair, a member nominated by the Leader of the Opposition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(13) That the committee be empowered to print from day to day such documents and evidence as may be ordered by it, and a daily Hansard be published of such proceedings as take place in public.

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Estimates Committees

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (16:04): I ask that general business notices of motion Nos. 298-305 standing in my name for today relating to estimates hearings and accountability matters be taken together as formal motions.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Is there any objection to these motions being taken together and as formal?

Senator Fifield: Yes.

Suspension of Standing Orders

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (16:04): Pursuant to contingent notice, at the request of the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent me moving a motion relating to the conduct of the business of the Senate, namely a motion to give precedence to general business notices of motion nos 298-305.

In speaking very briefly on this issue I think it is important that we know that the issues around the processes operating in Senate estimates committees are of importance to everyone in this Senate. This is not a side issue; this is an important process about how the Senate estimates operate. We put forward a number of procedural issues and we believe that it is...
important as we move into a new Senate that we are all aware of the rules of how the business of a Senate estimates committee should operate. There have been some issues in recent committees, and I think it is important that we have the opportunity today before we move into the new Senate to look at the issues.

Some of the things that are in Senator Wong's motions are already part of the general practice of Senate estimates. We are wanting to formalise those, so that we together know exactly what will be occurring in the estimates committees. There are a number of separate motions; Senator Wong has moved them together because they all relate to that process. It is important that we have the opportunity to talk about them.

With regard to that opportunity, we have a 30-minute period now for discussion to take place in this chamber—and that we will then be able to look at how the senate estimates will operate; the responsibilities of the chairs, the responsibilities of the officials in this area—they are all important in the way that we as a Senate operate. It is critical that we have a look at that and, very importantly, Mr Deputy President, we should be looking at the timing—so that when we move into the next round of estimates, we are aware of what we as a Senate have agreed to. As we all know, all senators will have a role to play in the senate estimates process. We need to be clear that there is full operation of those Senate estimates—so that the focus of Senate estimates will be the opportunity for questions to be asked—by opposition senators and by other senators—of ministers, and also of the officials who are responsible for that process.

Mr Deputy President, we have the chance today to look at these things. They are clearly on the Notice Paper. They are very straightforward. There is nothing complex about the issues that are before us. We need to know and to have the opportunity to vote on those issues—so that we can accept that a part of the Senate's operations must be through an effective and open senate estimates process. There is no doubt about that. We need to be clear. We need to commit—together—about what the real purpose of Senate estimates is: that we have the opportunity for questions. We sometimes have difficulty here in this chamber, Mr Deputy President, in getting direct answers back, but we know that the opportunity of senate estimates hearings gives all of us the chance to ask detailed questions, and to ask follow-up questions that can sometimes take quite an extended time. In the past, we have had clear arrangements as to timing in that area.

We are asking for the procedures—which can be agreed on together in this place—as to how the senate estimates process operates to then be put in place for the next round of estimates. Then we will be able to see how things operate, and ensure that all senators—and particularly non-government senators—have the opportunity to have their questions asked and answered. This will mean a full opportunity for the debate to continue, within estimates—and it will mean that we are, together, clear on what the process is.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (16:09): I must disagree with Senator Moore at the outset. Senator Moore said that the next half-hour of this debate will be an opportunity to debate the motions that Senator Wong is seeking to move. This debate will do nothing of the sort; this is a procedural motion that the opposition has moved: to seek to suspend standing orders. Mr Deputy President, I will keep my remarks to the procedural matter before us.

The government has denied formality. It is not something that the government does often, or as a matter of course. The reason the government has denied formality to the motions
moved by Senator Wong is because, in the ordinary course of events in this place, procedural motions—whether they relate to estimates committees, which some of these motions do; or other procedural matters, which other of Senator Wong's motions do—would be taken to the Senate Standing Committee on Procedure.

I know that the procedure committee of the Senate is not something that is necessarily on the tip of the tongue of members of the press gallery, or of members of the public, but it is an important committee of this place. To demonstrate the importance of this committee, you only need to look at the membership of the procedure committee, Mr Deputy President, which of course is chaired by your good self. It also is constituted by the President, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, the Manager of Government Business in the Senate, the Chief Opposition Whip, the Chief Government Whip, and by senior senators such as Senator John Faulkner. The reason why the procedure committee has senior representation from across the chamber is because it recognises that there is a role for the Senate as a collective. Through a consensual approach, it seeks to reach agreement on the best procedures for this place. Senator Wong has chosen to not go through that process, which is the usual process when there are procedural matters which colleagues think should be reviewed. Now there may well be some elements in Senator Wong's motions that the government could support but—as we all know Mr Deputy President—there can be other consequences of motions which colleagues do not, necessarily, really appreciate when having a particular change to procedure in contemplation. That is one of the benefits of the procedure committee—that colleagues can talk about these matters; that one colleague from one side of the chamber can modify the view of another colleague from other side of the chamber, and vice versa. That is one of the strengths of the Senate. It is one of the strengths of the procedure committee—that it is a forum where colleagues can put together propositions which can be examined in a comprehensive way, taking into account other implications.

Mr Deputy President, it is disappointing that these motions have been put in this way. As you know, formal motions are basically a thumbs-up or thumbs-down approach to matters. Procedural motions which seek to change the way that estimates committees operate—or that this chamber operates—deserve more than a simple thumbs-up and thumbs-down approach. They deserve the collective wisdom of the leadership of this chamber, as manifest in the Senate Standing Committee on Procedure. I suspect the reason why these motions are being moved in this way, and now, is the simple fact that at this point in time, the Australian Greens and the Australian Labor Party together have the numbers. That is what this exercise boils down to: have numbers, will use them—which is a well-known approach in the Australian Labor Party.

I think it also seeks to deny an element of respect to the incoming crossbench senators, from midnight on 30 June, who may well have views that they wish to express in relation to these procedural motions. And I think their views should be sought. To support a suspension of standing orders, and to facilitate the passage of Senator Wong's motions would be, I think, a mark of disrespect to those incoming crossbench senators. We are interested in their views.

For these reasons, Mr Deputy President, we will not be supporting the motion to suspend standing orders. (Time expired)
Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (16:14): I will make some brief remarks on this debate. The opposition has moved to suspend standing orders because the motions do deserve immediate decision by the Senate, and it is regrettable that the government would not grant leave for the motions to be taken as formal, given that they relate to matters of procedure. These motions are a direct response to the way in which the Abbott government has treated the Senate since it was elected, so I do want to briefly highlight some of the examples of that treatment. The opposition is moving these motions today and seeks to suspend standing orders to move them now because we want to safeguard this chamber's role as a house of review and to enhance the Senate's ability to scrutinise legislation, policy and administration. The motions that we wish to move strengthen the role of Senate estimates committees, affirm the accountability of the Australian Public Service to the parliament and explicitly reject the attempts by ministers in this government to avoid scrutiny. These proposals are a direct response to the Prime Minister's broken promises on transparency and accountability, and the action we are taking today would not be necessary if the Abbott government respected the practices of this place. It is action which is necessary now and it should not be subject to further delay to enable the rights of senators to be protected immediately.

Let me outline why we need to suspend standing orders to enable the motions to be moved. What we have seen since the 2013 election is the government using stonewalling, bullying and evasive tactics in the Senate, including: the Leader of the Government in the Senate suggesting that freedom of information requests were an excuse to avoid answering legitimate questions in this chamber; long delays in providing answers to questions on notice; obstructionist behaviour in estimates hearings; early adjournment of estimates committees without agreement—unprecedented. So if the Manager of Government Business in the Senate wants to come in here and complain, maybe he should talk to his chairs who have behaved in ways during Senate estimates which, frankly, are unprecedented in terms of the behaviour of senators in this chamber. Of course we have had the misleading of the Senate by a minister of this government, which has resulted in her censure but no other censure and no other action being taken by the Prime Minister. The Senate belongs to all senators—and, of course, fundamentally, to the Australian people—not to the government and certainly not to government ministers.

The Manager of Government Business made the point that maybe we should show some respect for the crossbenchers. We agree. We will not be bullying them by writing them letters and telling them that they have to sit till they do what we want, which is what the government has done. We will not be doing that. The opposition will ensure—Labor will always work to ensure—that this chamber works in a way that ensures that every senator can do the job they have been sent to do.

So I ask the government: what do they object to in these motions? What is objectionable? Is it affirming that declining to provide documents or to answer questions on the basis that a freedom of information request has been made for the same material is unacceptable? That is motion No. 298. Is it providing a statement to the Senate about the provision of answers to questions on notice from estimates—motion No. 299? Is it enabling a senator to seek an explanation by a minister for his or her failure to answer questions on notice from estimates by the due date, in line with the procedure for other questions on notice—motion No. 300? Is
it facilitating spillover days to ensure proper consideration of estimates—motion No. 301? Is it allowing additional hearings to take place on estimates—motion No. 302? Is it ensuring that estimates committees meet from 9 am until 11 pm, as scheduled, so long as senators have questions to ask—motion No. 303? Is it upholding the principle that agency heads and departmental officers are accountable to inquiries of the Senate and its committees—motion No. 304? Is it confirming that the chair of an estimates committee hearing cannot unilaterally conclude a hearing when senators still have questions to ask—motion No. 305? Which of those questions does this government find so objectionable?

The motions I propose to move protect the rights of senators, and they ensure that appropriate practices exist in this place to scrutinise the government and that those practices can continue. Labor's move to strengthen Senate procedures will ensure that all senators have the capacity to do the job we are elected to do.

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (16:19): I rise in support of this motion. It is quite clear that there is an orchestrated campaign by the government senators to deny senators on other benches—crossbenchers and Labor senators—an ability to ask questions. Let us be very clear about this: Senate estimates is for the opposition and the minor parties to question the government, not for you to come into the chamber and filibuster. We had the outrageous breach of Senate standing orders recently where a Liberal chair decided, 'We'll close the Senate estimates at 10.30,' and put a motion through a legislation committee to shut down an estimates committee hearing. That conduct is an outrage, and it is clear that it is orchestrated across the government. Each and every one of their chairs has attempted to say, 'We're entitled to 50 per cent'—

Senator Back: Mr Deputy President, I rise on a point of order. I challenge Senator Conroy—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: No, that is no point of order.

Senator Back: as, in my case, as a chairman of a committee—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Back, you are debating the matter. That is not a point of order. Senator Conroy, you have the call.

Senator CONROY: He is suggesting he is not part of this. I accept your word, Senator. But it is quite clear that, if you were to come to a Senate committee hearing chaired by Senator Williams or Senator Connie Fierravanti-Wells or Senator Macdonald, you would see quite a malicious attempt to gag senators. Senator Eggleston even tried it on as well, but, to his credit, Senator Fawcett said, 'No, Senate estimates is for the opposition.' So he could not even muster his own bench—he could not even muster his own supporters. I promised the manager I would be short. But let us be clear: it is an orchestrated campaign that has taken place from those on that side. If you refuse to be part of it, I congratulate you, Senator Back, but your other chairs are all going along with it. It is opposition and minor-party time in Senate estimates. We will be using the spillover days, and we will not be agreeing to the times that are being forced upon us by majority diktat of the government in the future.

The PRESIDENT: The question is the motion moved by Senator Moore to suspend standing orders be agreed to.
The Senate divided. [16:26]
(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes ...................... 34
Noes ...................... 26
Majority ...............  8

AYES

Bilyk, CL
Brown, CL
Collins, JMA
Di Natale, R
Gallacher, AM
Hogg, JJ
Ludlam, S
Madigan, JJ
McEwen, A (teller)
Moore, CM
Peris, N
Siewert, R
Stephens, U
Thorp, LE
Urquhart, AE
Whish-Wilson, PS
Wright, PL

Bishop, TM
Cameron, DN
Dastyari, S
Farrell, D
Hanson-Young, SC
Lines, S
Ludwig, JW
Marshall, GM
Milne, C
O’Neill, DM
Rhiannon, L
Singh, LM
Sterle, G
Tillem, M
Waters, LJ
Xenophon, N

NOES

Back, CJ (teller)
Birmingham, SJ
Boyce, SK
Cash, MC
Edwards, S
Fawcett, DJ
Fifield, MP
Kroger, H
McKenzie, B
O’Sullivan, B
Ruston, A
Seselja, Z
Smith, D

Bernardi, C
Boswell, RLD
Bushby, DC
Colbeck, R
Eggleston, A
Fierravanti-Wells, C
Johnston, D
Macdonald, ID
Nash, F
Parry, S
Ryan, SM
Sinodinos, A
Williams, JR

PAIRS

Carr, KJ
Conroy, SM
Faulkner, J
Furner, ML
Lundy, KA
McLucas, J
Pratt, LC

Cormann, M
Heffernan, W
Mason, B
Abetz, E
Scullion, NG
Payne, MA
Ronaldson, M

Question agreed to.
BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (16:28): I move:

That general business notices of motion nos 298 to 305 be considered together, called on immediately and have precedence over all other business until determined.

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

The Senate divided. [16:29]

(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes ...................... 34
Noes ...................... 27
Majority ............... 7

AYES

Bilyk, CL
Brown, CL
Collins, JMA
Di Natale, R
Gallacher, AM
Hogg, JJ
Ludlam, S
Madigan, JJ
McEwen, A (teller)
Moore, CM
Peris, N
Siewert, R
Stephens, U
Thorp, LE
Urquhart, AE
Whish-Wilson, PS
Wright, PL

Bishop, TM
Cameron, DN
Dastyari, S
Farrell, D
Hanson-Young, SC
Lines, S
Ludwig, JW
Marshall, GM
Milne, C
O'Neill, DM
Rhiannon, L
Singh, LM
Sterle, G
Tillem, M
Waters, LJ
Wong, P
Xenophon, N

NOES

Abetz, E
Bernardi, C
Boswell, RLD
Bushby, DC
Colbeck, R
Eggleston, A
Fieravanti-Wells, C
Johnston, D
Macdonald, ID
Nash, F
Parry, S
Ryan, SM
Sinodinos, A
Williams, JR

Back, CJ (teller)
Birmingham, SJ
Boyce, SK
Cash, MC
Edwards, S
Fawcett, DJ
Fifield, MP
Kroger, H
McKenzie, B
O'Sullivan, B
Ruston, A
Seselja, Z
Smith, D
Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Estimates Committees

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (16:31): I move general business notices of motion Nos 298 to 305, standing in the name of Senator Wong, relating to estimates hearings and accountability matters:

(298) That the Senate—
(a) notes the frequency with which freedom of information legislation is invoked to withhold information from senators and the Senate, not only by reference to grounds of exemption in the legislation but also apparently on the basis that an answer will not be provided if a Freedom of Information (FOI) request has been lodged for the same information;
(b) recalls the observations of the Procedure Committee in its Third Report of 1992 that:
(i) there is no basis in law for the application of the FOI Act to the production of documents to a House;
(ii) if a minister were to regard all of the exemption provisions in the FOI Act as grounds on which to claim a privilege against disclosure of information to a House, this would considerably expand the grounds of executive privilege hitherto claimed;
(iii) the use of the provisions of the FOI Act as a checklist of grounds for non-disclosure does not relieve a minister of the responsibility of carefully considering whether the minister should seek to withhold documents from a House, or from considering the question in the context of the importance of the matters under examination by the House;
(c) resolves that the same principles apply to the provision of information to committees in response to questions asked by senators, which require the same careful consideration by ministers;
(d) declares that declining to provide documents or answer questions on the basis that an FOI request has been made for the same information is an unacceptable response, is not supported by the FOI Act and shows a profound lack of respect for the Senate and its committees.

(299) That—
(1) There be laid on the table, by each minister in the Senate, in respect of each department or agency administered by that minister, or by a minister in the House of Representatives represented by that minister, by not later than 10 days before the commencement of the budget estimates, supplementary budget estimates and additional estimates hearings, a statement showing:
(a) the number of questions taken on notice at the previous round of estimates hearings;
(b) the number of answers provided to the committee by the date set by the committee for answers; and
(c) of those answers not provided to the committee by the due date, the dates on which answers were provided to the approving minister's office.
(2) If the Senate is not sitting when a statement is ready for presentation, the statement is to be presented to the President under standing order 166.
(3) This order is of continuing effect.

(300) That standing order 74(5) be amended as follows, with effect from the first sitting day in July 2014:

____________
CHAMBER
Omit paragraph 74(5), substitute:

(5) If a minister does not answer a question on notice asked by a senator within 30 days of the asking of that question, or if a question taken on notice during a hearing of a legislative and general purpose standing committee considering estimates remains unanswered after the day set for answering the question, and a minister does not, within that period, provide to the senator who asked the question an explanation satisfactory to that senator of why an answer has not yet been provided:

(a) at the conclusion of question time on any day after that period, the senator may ask the relevant minister for such an explanation; and

(b) the senator may, at the conclusion of the explanation, move without notice—That the Senate take note of the explanation; or

(c) in the event that the minister does not provide an explanation, the senator may, without notice, move a motion with regard to the minister's failure to provide either an answer or an explanation.

(301) (1) That, for the purposes of any order setting out a schedule of estimates hearings by legislation committees:

(a) if the order provides for hearings, if required, on a designated Friday, an additional hearing of a committee is taken to be required on that Friday if any 3 members of the committee notify the chair in writing of a requirement for the committee to meet, including for a specified period of time;

(b) if the order does not provide for hearings, if required, on a designated Friday, an additional hearing of a committee is taken to be required on a relevant Friday if any 3 members of the committee notify the chair in writing of a requirement for the committee to meet, including for a specified period of time.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1), a relevant Friday means any of the following, as the case requires:

(a) for additional estimates hearings, the Friday of a week in which committees in Groups A and B are scheduled to meet;

(b) for Budget estimates hearings, the Friday of a week in which committees in Group A are scheduled to meet;

(c) for Budget estimates hearings, the Friday of a week in which committees in Group B are scheduled to meet;

(d) for supplementary Budget estimates hearings, the Friday of a week in which committees in Groups A and B are scheduled to meet.

(3) The operation of this order is subject to the restriction in standing order 26(3) that not more than 4 committees shall hear evidence on the estimates simultaneously.

(4) This order is of continuing effect.

(302) (1) That an additional hearing of a legislation committee considering estimates is taken to be required if any 3 members of the committee notify the chair in writing of a requirement for the committee to meet for that purpose, including for a specified period of time.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1), an additional hearing means a hearing in addition to any hearing required by, or pursuant to, an order of the Senate setting out days for legislation committees to meet to consider estimates or providing for such meetings to be held on spill-over days.
(3) The operation of this order is subject to the restriction in standing order 26(3) that not more than 4 committees shall hear evidence on the estimates simultaneously.

(4) This order is of continuing effect.

(303) That the order of the Senate of 4 December 2013, as amended on 13 February 2014, providing for estimates hearings for 2014, be further amended as follows:

After paragraph (2), insert:

(2A) On the specified Mondays to Thursdays, committees shall meet from 9 am till 11 pm unless a committee completes its examination of items of proposed expenditure earlier and no senator has further explanations to seek.

(304) That the Senate—

(a) reaffirms:

(i) the principle, stated previously in resolutions of 9 December 1971, 23 October 1974, 18 September 1980, 4 June 1984, 29 May 1997 and 25 June 1998, that there are no areas in connection with the expenditure of public funds where any person has a discretion to withhold details or explanations from the Parliament or its committees unless the Parliament has expressly provided otherwise;

(ii) its expectation that officers, including agency heads, will appear before committees in fulfilment of their accountability obligations, whenever their presence is requested by committees;

(b) in relation to the provision of exceptions to the general principle reaffirmed in paragraph (a), notes and reaffirms:

(i) Privilege Resolution 1(16) which provides that an officer of a department of the Commonwealth or of a state shall not be asked to give opinions on matters of policy, and shall be given reasonable opportunity to refer questions asked of the officer to superior officers or to a minister;

(ii) the resolution of 16 July 1975, relating to the powers of the Senate and the accountability of witnesses, and requiring any claim to withhold information from the Senate to be based on an established ground; and

(iii) the order of 13 May 2009 setting out the proper process for raising public interest immunity claims;

(c) notes that:

(i) the statutory values which Australian Public Service agency heads and employees are required to uphold include a requirement to be open and accountable to the Australian community under the law and within the framework of ministerial responsibility; and

(ii) the Constitutional framework of checks and balances under a separation of powers places the Parliament in prime position as the agent of accountability, representing the Australian people;

(d) calls on the Government to issue a general instruction to all public service agency heads and employees about their duty to cooperate with parliamentary committee inquiries, including by formalising the revised guidelines for official witnesses appearing before parliamentary committees (last issued in 1989), a revised draft of which was provided to the Committee of Privileges in 2012 and considered in its 153rd Report; and
(e) requires:
(i) the chairs of legislation committees considering estimates to draw the provisions of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this resolution to the attention of any witness who declines to provide information to a committee on any basis other than those specified; and
(ii) the Clerk to draw this resolution, and the resolutions referred to in paragraph (b), to the attention of the heads of all agencies appearing before legislation committees, prior to each round of estimates.

(305) That standing order 26 be amended as follows:
At the end of paragraph (4), add:
If a senator has further explanations to seek, items of expenditure shall not be closed for examination unless the senator has agreed to submit written questions or the committee has agreed to schedule additional hearings for that purpose.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (16:31): I move:
That the question be now put.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the question be now put.
The Senate divided. [16:33]

(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes ...................... 33
Noes ...................... 26
Majority ............... 7

AYES

Bilyk, CL
Brown, CL
Collins, JMA
Di Natale, R
Gallacher, AM
Hogg, JJ
Ludlam, S
Marshall, GM
Milne, C
O’Neill, DM
Rhiannon, L
Singh, LM
Sterle, G
Tillem, M
Waters, LJ
Wong, P
Xenophon, N

Bishop, TM
Cameron, DN
Dastyari, S
Farrell, D
Hanson-Young, SC
Lines, S
Ludwig, JW
McEwen, A (teller)
Moore, CM
Peris, N
Siewert, R
Stephens, U
Thorp, LE
Urquhart, AE
Whish-Wilson, PS
Wright, PL

NOES

Back, CJ (teller)
Birmingham, SJ
Boyce, SK
Cash, MC
Edwards, S

Bernardi, C
Boswell, RLD
Bushby, DC
Colbeck, R
Eggleston, A
Question agreed to.

The PRESIDENT (16:35): The question now is that the motion moved by Senator Moore be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [16:36]  
(16:37)

Ayes ...................... 33
Noes ...................... 26
Majority ................ 7

AYES

Bilyk, CL  Bishop, TM
Brown, CL  Cameron, DN
Collins, JMA Dastyari, S  Farrell, D
Di Natale, R Hanson-Young, SC
Gallacher, AM Lines, S
Hogg, JJ  Ludwig, JW
Ludlam, S  McEwen, A (teller)
Marshall, GM Moore, CM
Milne, C  Peris, N
O'Neil, DM  Siewert, R
Rhiannon, L Stephens, U
Singh, LM  Thorp, LE
Sterle, G  Urquhart, AE
Tillem, M  Whish-Wilson, PS
Wong, P  Wright, PL
Xenophon, N

NOES

Back, CJ (teller)  Bernardi, C
Birmingham, SJ  Boswell, RLD
Boyce, SK  Bushby, DC
Cash, MC  Colbeck, R
Edwards, S  Eggleston, A
Fawcett, DJ  Fierravanti-Wells, C
Fifield, MP  Johnston, D
Fro另一方面

Kroger, H  Macdonald, ID
McKenzie, B  Nash, F
O'Sullivan, B  Parry, S
Ruston, A  Ryan, SM
The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (16:38): The President has received the following letter from Senator Xenophon:

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 failure to acknowledge that the term 'occupied' in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territories is an objective legal description of the status of those territories.

Is the proposal supported?

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

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The proposal is supported.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (16:39): At the outset, I wish to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a number of members of the diplomatic corps here in Canberra today, which indicates the level of interest of many in the international community over this issue.

This matter of public importance in the Senate today arises as a result of a statement made on behalf of the Australian government by the Attorney-General on behalf of the foreign minister on 5 June 2014 in Senate estimates that:

The description of East Jerusalem as 'occupied …' is freighted with pejorative implications, which is neither appropriate nor useful.

I will now demonstrate conclusively why that claim is false and actually most unhelpful to the process of achieving a lasting peace in the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The term 'occupied' is an objective legal description of the status of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. According to the 1949 Geneva conventions and the 1907 Hague regulations, territory is considered occupied when it comes under the actual authority of the invading military. There are certain objective tests: (1) Has the occupying power substituted its own authority for that of the occupied authorities? Yes. It is a matter of fact that Israel's authority prevails in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. (2) Have the enemy forces been defeated, regardless of whether sporadic local resistance continues? Yes. It is a matter of fact that Israel defeated its military adversaries in the June 1967 war. (3) Does the occupying power have a sufficient force present to make its authority felt? Yes. It is a fact that Israel has sufficient force to make its authority felt. (4) Has an administration been established over the territory? Yes. It is a fact—a poignant fact—that even the Palestinian leaders who wish to enter or leave the occupied Palestinian territories cannot do so without permission from Israel. Even the Palestinian president cannot go to the United Nations in New York, or indeed to anywhere else in the world, without permission from Israel. (5) Has the occupying power
issued and enforced directions to the civilian population? Yes. It is a fact that Israel has issued and enforced such directions. Indeed, Israel's highest court—the High Court of Justice—stated in paragraph 23 of its verdict in the case of Beit Sourik Village Council v The Government of Israel on 30 June 2004 that 'Israel holds the area in belligerent occupation'. Let me say that again: Israel's own highest court stated in 2004 that 'Israel holds the area in belligerent occupation'. I concede that here the word 'occupied' is 'freighted with implications', but to say they are pejorative is factually untrue and legally ignorant.

What are these implications in fact and in law? Here I turn to the landmark 2004 International Court of Justice advisory opinion on 'the legal consequences arising from the construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power in the Occupied Palestinian Territory including in and around East Jerusalem.' Note the words 'occupying' and 'occupied' used by the International Court of Justice. Australia is quite happy to accept the wisdom of the International Court of Justice when it comes to whales, but not, it seems, the Palestinians.

Let's see what the International Court of Justice said in its advisory opinion. It listed the rules and principles of international law which are relevant. First, article 2, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Charter:

All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

Second: No territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be recognized as legal.

Third:
The principle of self-determination of peoples has been enshrined in the United Nations Charter and reaffirmed by the General Assembly.

The court observed that:
The existence of a "Palestinian people" is no longer in issue.

The court stated:
The Wall's sinuous route had been traced in such a way as to include within that area the great majority of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem).

It noted that article 49, paragraph 6, of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that:
The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies. That provision prohibits not only deportations or forced transfers of population such as those carried out during the Second World War but also any measures taken by an occupying power in order to organize or encourage transfers of parts of its own population into the occupied territory.

The International Court of Justice stated unambiguously that:
The Court concludes that the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem) have been established in breach of international law.

The court stated, in relation to the wall:
Its construction severely impedes the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination, and is therefore a breach of Israel's obligation to respect that right.
It also stated:
The fact remains that Israel has to face numerous indiscriminate and deadly acts of violence against its civilian population. It has the right, and indeed the duty, to respond in order to protect the life of its citizens. The measures taken are bound nonetheless to remain in conformity with applicable international law.

In conclusion, the Court considers that Israel cannot rely on a right of self-defence or on a state of necessity in order to preclude the wrongfulness of the construction of the wall...

I now draw the Senate's attention to the fact that not one of the 15 judges on the International Court of Justice dissented from its findings. It is highly instructive that the US judge on the International Court of Justice, Thomas Buergenthal, described his conclusion as a 'declaration', not a 'dissent'. Judge Buergenthal was born in 1934 in Slovakia. He is a Holocaust survivor who was in the Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen extermination camps. He said:

... there is much in the Opinion with which I agree.

This remarkable individual and jurist went on to state:

I share the Court's conclusion that international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and international human rights law are applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and must therefore be faithfully complied with by Israel. I accept that the wall is causing deplorable suffering to many Palestinians living in that territory. In this connection, I agree that the means used to defend against terrorism must conform to all applicable rules of international law and that a State which is the victim of terrorism may not defend itself against this scourge by resorting to measures international law prohibits.

Judge Buergenthal went on to state:

Moreover, given the demonstrable great hardship to which the affected Palestinian population is being subjected in and around the enclaves created by those segments of the wall, I seriously doubt that the wall would here satisfy the proportionality requirement to qualify as a legitimate measure of self-defence.

I draw to the Senate's attention the fact that the protective provisions of the 4th Geneva Convention applied from the moment the international armed conflict began on 5 June 1967. In the 1967 debates, Australia—through our representative to the United Nations, Sir Laurence McIntyre—voted for a General Assembly resolution calling for full Israeli withdrawal in accordance with the principle of the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by war. On the question of Jerusalem, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs addressed the General Assembly in person. On 21 June 1967, he said:

... it follows from the words in the Charter that war should not lead to territorial aggrandisement.

He called on Israel not to take any steps in relation to Jerusalem which would conflict with this principle. In that same General Assembly debate, the United States voted for a resolution that stressed that, for a 'durable peace' to be achieved, 'one immediate, obvious and imperative step is the disengagement of all forces and the withdrawal of Israeli forces to their own territory'.

These statements are highly relevant to the meaning of UN Security Council Resolution 242, which was adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council and which our foreign minister says, paradoxically, we still support. Not a single member of the Security Council
dissented from the principle of 'the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war'. This international consensus means that there can be only minor and mutual territorial adjustments.

We already know, thanks to the so-called Palestine Papers—which are the biggest leak of secret documents in the history of the Middle East conflict—that a solution is already available. The Palestinian negotiating team in 2008 offered a formula where Israel would annex 1.9 per cent of the West Bank in the context of a land swap, allowing Israel to retain within its borders 63 per cent of the illegal settler population. We also know, according to the same leaks, that Israel's negotiating team turned down this offer. Australia, by adopting these rejectionist statements, has given comfort to the extremists and has weakened the position of the moderate and reasonable Israelis and Palestinians. We should instead encourage our great friend Israel to accept the generous offer made in 2008 so that we can have a real, lasting and durable peace in the Middle East.

The statement made by the Australian government on 5 June this year is not only wrong; it is factually untrue, legally ignorant and most unhelpful. (Time expired)

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (16:49):
I have a statement to read on behalf of the government.

The Australian government remains a strong supporter of the Middle East peace process. We maintain our unreserved support for a just and lasting two-state solution, with Israel and a Palestinian state existing side-by-side in peace and security within internationally recognised borders. We continue to urge both sides to resume direct negotiations and stand ready to assist the peace process.

The Australian government has repeatedly acknowledged the historical fact of Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem during the 1967 war. We have repeatedly reaffirmed our commitment to UN Security Council resolutions on the issue, adopted over many years, starting with Resolutions 242 and 338.

The foreign minister had a productive morning tea with Islamic ambassadors this morning to discuss economic opportunities in the Middle East region. The Palestinian head of delegation and the Moroccan ambassador, as Dean of the Arab Diplomatic Corps, both took the opportunity to thank the minister for the government's position on the Middle East peace process.

Statements made by the Attorney-General in Senate estimates on 4 June and 5 June 2014 were a restatement of existing Australian government policy. They were made in his capacity as the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Senate. In particular, the statement which the Attorney-General read on 5 June was a statement prepared in conjunction with the foreign minister and the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and was given with the foreign minister's explicit authorisation. As is apparent from the statement, it begins by reaffirming the longstanding policy of the Australian government's support for the two-state solution. Claims in the media that the Attorney-General's statements were not made with the authority of the foreign minister are completely inaccurate.

There has been no change to the Australian government's position on the legal status of the Palestinian territories. This has been made clear by the Prime Minister, the foreign minister and the Attorney-General over the last few weeks.
But we do not consider it helpful to engage in debates over legal issues nor to prejudge any final status issues that are the subject of peace negotiations. A two-state solution will be achieved through diplomatic negotiations, not legal interpretations of the issue. It has been the clear practice of Australian governments, both Liberal and Labor, over many years to refer to East Jerusalem by its geographic name.

I call upon Senator Xenophon to join the government and the ALP in using geographic names to ensure Australia's support for the all-important peace process is not derailed by political games.

The attempts by the Greens and Senator Xenophon to make political mileage from a sensitive and important issue are deplorable, particularly in the context of current developments, including the kidnapping of three young Israelis and the widening conflict in Syria and Iraq.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Sterle): Do you have a point of order, Senator Xenophon?

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (16:51): I have just been accused, firstly, of political mileage and of linking it to the deplorable kidnapping of three young Israeli students. I ask Senator Ryan to withdraw that. It is disgraceful on the part of Senator Ryan. You are linking me to that. That is outrageous.

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (16:52): I withdraw.

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (16:52): Can I begin by recognising the presence of the Palestinian ambassador and other ambassadors here in the gallery this evening.

I rise to speak on this matter of public importance. If there is one word to describe the deliberate actions of Senator Brandis, Ms Bishop and the Abbott government on this issue, and to be quite frank on most issues, that word would be perverse. Perverse can be defined in two ways: to show a deliberate and stubborn desire to behave in a way that is unreasonable or unacceptable; or, to be contrary to the accepted or expected standard or practice. It is my view that both definitions apply to Senator Brandis, Ms Bishop and the Abbott government.

On 5 June 2014, Senator Brandis made a prepared statement to a Senate estimates committee explaining his comments from the night before—this time, though, with the foreign affairs minister's authority. I quote Senator Brandis's key sentence:

The description of East Jerusalem as 'occupied' East Jerusalem is a term freighted with pejorative implications, which is neither appropriate nor useful.

This government displayed a deliberate and stubborn desire to promote its opinions on the terminology and legality of the occupied territories.

The clear response from the international community was that this opinion was both unreasonable and unacceptable. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Council of Foreign Ministers strongly condemned the Australian government for refusing to refer to East Jerusalem as occupied. The council, which met late last week in Saudi Arabia, blasted 'the orientation of the Australian government not to describe the city as occupied'. The council called on the Australian government to 'respect its commitments under international law', and
urged member states 'to condemn such illegal positions and take necessary measures to respond to them'.

The council left open the possibility of a boycott on Australia's multi-billion-dollar trade to the Middle East. On 19 June 2014, the foreign minister met with a large delegation of ambassadors concerned by the apparent change in terminology and policy of the Australian government. The foreign minister's statement after the meeting read:

At this meeting I provided a letter re-affirming that there has been no change in the Australian Government’s position on the legal status of the Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem.

Our position is consistent with relevant UN resolutions adopted over many years, including UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. UNSC resolution 242 directly refers to occupied territories. If this government is in agreement with the international community on this issue, as the foreign minister claims, it should also be in agreement with the international community on the terminology used, which is that it is entirely appropriate—not pejorative or tendentious, as Senator Brandis said during Senate estimates—to refer to East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as occupied territories.

I think it is clear that the Abbott government fulfils the first definition of perverse. This government was also clearly acting in a manner contrary to the accepted or expected standard or practice. I refer the Senate to House of Representatives Hansard on 5 February 2013. On this day, then shadow minister for foreign affairs and trade, Ms Bishop, did something completely out of character. During question time in the House of Representatives, she asked a question about foreign affairs. The problem with the question was that she did not ask it of the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time. She chose to ask the newly appointed Attorney-General. Her motives are hers to explain. Her question was:

… does the Attorney-General agree with the foreign minister that the settlements on the West Bank are illegal under international law?

The question was ruled out of order in that the then Attorney-General did not represent the then foreign affairs minister in the House of Representatives. First and foremost I would like to acknowledge that directly questioning the Attorney-General on this matter is not common practice and is an example of how the coalition do not appear to take matters of foreign policy very seriously. Furthermore, it is the height of hypocrisy for Ms Bishop to have found it acceptable to ask such questions while in opposition, but within months of her ascension to the role of Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, she said:

I would like to see which international law has declared them illegal.

I wonder what answer Ms Bishop had hoped to get from her question of the then Attorney-General. Did Ms Bishop want the then Attorney-General to confirm the then foreign affairs minister's position, or was Ms Bishop misusing the standing orders to seek to create a wedge between senior ministers of the previous government? Hansard records that Ms Bishop's question of 5 February was her first on this topic in the 43rd Parliament. A week later, on 12 February 2013, Ms Bishop lodged two questions on notice, one to the then Attorney-General, and one to the then Minister for Trade in his capacity as Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs.
The question to the then Attorney-General read:

Can he indicate whether the former Attorney-General (or his department) received a request prior to 18 January 2013 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs (or his department) for advice on the legal status of Israeli settlement on the West Bank; if so, did the then Attorney-General advise that all settlements are illegal under international law, as stated in the AUKMIN2013 Communique.

The then Attorney-General's response was simply:

Neither the Attorney-General nor the Attorney-General's Department have received a request from the Minister for Foreign Affairs (or his department) to provide advice on the legal status of Israeli settlement on the West Bank.

The first question from Ms Bishop to the then Minister for Trade read:

Prior to 18 January 2013, did the Minister seek advice from the International Law Office within the Attorney-General's Department on the legal status of Israeli settlements on the West Bank.

To which the then Minister for Trade responded:

No. Consistent with the Legal Services Directions 2005 (Cth), the Minister for Foreign Affairs sought legal advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The second question from Ms Bishop to the then Minister for Trade read:

What legal advice is the basis for the statement made in the AUKMIN2013 Communique, that 'All settlements are illegal under international law …’

To which the then Minister for Trade responded:

It is the widely held view of the international community that Israeli settlements in the Palestinian Territories contravene international law. This is reflected in, for example, the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall on Occupied Palestinian Territories and resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council.

The final question from Ms Bishop to the then Minister for Trade read:

Did the Minister give the United States prior notification of the intention to include in the Communiqué, a call on its government to take a more active role in the Israeli/Palestinian peace process; if so, how much notice was provided.

To which the then Minister for Trade responded:

Yes. The Minister's Office advised the US Embassy on 18 January 2013.

Given the written answer to the second question on notice that Ms Bishop received from the then Minister for Trade, representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Pursuant to the order of the Senate agreed on 15 May 2014, the Senate will now move to valedictory statements.

PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

Valedictory

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (17:00): In my inimitable way, I have actually put off putting pen to paper until the eleventh hour for this speech, as in my mind the process was akin to drafting my own obituary. I have received so many offers from different quarters who wanted to take the opportunity to assist me to ensure that I canvassed certain matters of interest. I suspect that I have probably failed them in their quest, but I know with certainty that this is no obituary and no goodbye.
I am honoured to follow the trailblazing footsteps of Dame Ivy Wedgwood, the first Liberal woman to be elected in the Senate from Victoria in 1950 and the first woman to chair a Senate committee. Together with Dame Elizabeth Couchman, the then president of the Australian Women’s National League, she negotiated a tough deal with Sir Robert Menzies that enabled the formation of the Liberal Party of Australia in 1945 demanding that women were equally represented throughout all structures of the party. This structure continues today and provides a pathway for women to engage with politics. The Senate position held by Dame Ivy Wedgwood has been held by only a further three Liberal senators, all women, including two cabinet ministers: Dame Margaret Guilfoyle, Dr Kay Patterson and myself. I have to say that it saddens me that on 1 July this tradition will be broken and for the first time in 64 years Victoria will not be represented by a Liberal woman in the Senate.

What I did not know when starting out was the breadth of knowledge and expertise I would develop along the way. I owe my understanding of pelagic fisheries the Senator Colbeck. For those of you who have not been paying attention, I seek leave to table an exhibit for those who need to visualise what I am talking about—a small fish! I might give this to the attendants.

The PRESIDENT: There being no objection, leave is granted!

Senator KROGER: I actually will put it back in the water! As the daughter of a market gardener, I can now hold my own on the subjects of fenthion, genetic modification, spores, bumblebee pollination, fruit flies, salination, pineapples—thanks Bozzie—and irrigation channels, and the list goes on. Mr President, may I assure you and the clerk—who is looking very concerned at this point in time!—that I will not seek leave to table any further exhibits. The bumblebee has been quarantined at the Tasmanian border!

I have been very fortunate from day one to participate in committees of my choosing and one of those is the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee. I have had the benefit of first serving under the eminent former deputy chair, Dr Russell Trood, and presiding as chair of the references committee. Whilst the committee has been engaged in a number of inquiries, the inquiry into HMAS Success and improper behaviour to women was galvanising. Evidence presented during the inquiry reinforced the need for the Australian Defence Force to revisit its culture and its practices to ensure a level playing field for all men and women. It has been encouraging to see this addressed, but I have been mortified by the recent reports of abuse at HMAS Leeuwin.

The opportunity to participate in the parliamentary and ADF exchange programs enabled me to directly experience the extraordinary service, professionalism and distinction of our Defence men and women. Visiting Afghanistan and the waters to the north of Australia and taking part in the biennial RIMPAC exercise have only reinforced my respect. So it is with a heavy heart that I say we should expect and demand more. There should be zero tolerance for any substandard behaviour. The ADF needs to get its entire house in order. The appalling behaviour of only a few diminishes the reputation of the whole. Bad behaviour must be stamped out.

It is imperative that as a leading First World nation in the Asia-Pacific region we further our relationship with our nearest neighbours for mutual gain. The integration of DFAT with former agency AusAID is a very principled decision by Foreign Minister Bishop and one that I fully support. It is important that foreign policy, trade, aid and defence strategy be
determined in concert with each other and not as independent silos, with a common goal of creating a secure, prosperous and stable region.

The effectiveness of our aid program and the way that we ensure bang for our buck has been a keen interest of mine, as you all know, for the last six years. Taxpayers have every right to know how their money is spent and with what outcome. I commend Foreign Minister Bishop. She has already proved that talent and ambition for our nation opens up so many opportunities, and the next decade will be an exciting one for Australia.

It would be remiss of me to comment on matters of an international nature without recognising the leadership, initiative and determination that Prime Minister Abbott has demonstrated on the international stage. Foreign diplomacy is a subject that many study for years but don't get right. Like many, I have been so impressed by the way the Prime Minister has engaged with his counterparts from Davos to Abu Dhabi, Normandy to Tokyo, Washington to Port Moresby. It is history that will judge his international forays by outcomes, and he, together with my friend and Victorian colleague the Hon. Andrew Robb, has concluded two free trade agreements, with another seven advanced, all in the first nine months.

I think we would all agree that leadership is not a job for the faint-hearted. Having first met the Prime Minister over 25 years ago, I have known him outside the rigours of parliament. He is a man who carries the mantle of leadership with gravity and responsibility. He has shirked the easier road of populism, and I commend him for making tough decisions so early in this government in order to set the nation back on a fiscally responsible path.

In the very early days of this government, behind the scenes, and together with the Hon. Julie Bishop, he sought to liaise with his counterparts in the UAE, where a Victorian, Matt Joyce, had been arrested and detained for over four years. It would be fair to say that the arrest and detention of Matthew Joyce and Marcus Lee was a matter that I had been very passionate about. Matt was facing a 10-year prison sentence in a Dubai cell, with a $25 million fine. It is always difficult to provide support for Australians caught up in legal proceedings in foreign jurisdictions, whilst respecting the autonomy of the nation and its court system. I was convinced of their innocence. The matter was complex, and I sought assistance discreetly behind the scenes, but to no available. I used the parliament to advocate for two Australians who had no voice. I was threatened. I was bullied. But I have to say—and those who know me will not be surprised to hear—that it only strengthened my resolve.

I want to put on the record my gratitude to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs for their direct entreaties that saw Matt Joyce fly home shortly after the Abbott government assumed office. Their actions enabled an innocent Australian man to walk free and resume his life with his young family—and a man, I hasten to add, whom I have never met. There is no way in which I can adequately express my appreciation to them for facilitating his freedom.

I consider my position in the Senate as a privileged one that has allowed me to advocate on behalf of many. I am the 528th person to have been elected to the Senate since Federation. This is an honour that is bestowed upon so few, and one that I will always be grateful for. I thank the people of Victoria and the Liberal Party for the opportunity.
Serving as the chief whip in opposition and in government, I have worked closely with senators on all sides of the chamber, and I appreciate the professionalism and good humour we have shared. It is not to say that there has not been a little argy-bargy going on behind the scenes to keep us all on our toes. I would particularly like to thank Senator McEwen and her deputy whips, Senator Xenophon, Senator Madigan and Senator Siewert. We all know that I have taken a few swipes at the Greens in my time, yet Senator Siewert has never allowed partisan politics to interfere with the running of this chamber—and I thank you, Rachel.

In the lead-up to the 2010 Victorian state election, I was concerned that the Liberal Party would preference the Greens over Labor, just as they preferred Adam Bandt for the seat of Melbourne in the previous federal election. I respect the right of the Greens to advocate their ideological platform but I took umbrage at the thought that the Liberal Party would compromise its values and principles by trying to outflank the Left from the left. It would be fair to say that I took some heat in calling the Liberal Party hierarchy out on it publicly—and I think I still have the scorch marks to attest to that! It was a very tense six weeks. But, as history now records, this decision turned the tide of discontent, and the state coalition was rewarded with office, for standing up for the proud Menzies tradition. It was the right thing to do. It was also a decision that was strongly applauded by party members, who, after all, are the ones who provide those of us on this side of the chamber the opportunity to serve.

Being the patron senator for Bruce, Chisholm and Deakin has been a lot of hard work but most rewarding. Working the outer eastern corridor of Melbourne as if it were one giant seat has shown me that the members in the other chamber have it easy. I am so pleased that some of them are in the chamber today to hear this. The local volunteers worked with me to advance the cause and, in six years, we have won back the seat of Deakin. We now have a talented representative in Michael Sukkar—and I am so pleased to see you in the chamber tonight, Michael.

In Bruce and Chisholm, the organisation has been regenerated and revitalised. A highlight for me has been working with such committed and interesting people, who would be millionaires if they were able to bill their time. In the interest of time, I note the great work of the electorate executives under the chairmanships of Jeanette Milnes, Tom Daniel, Noel Pink, Ian Hansen and Clyde Aitken. They are wonderful people and they have earned my enormous respect. I have to say that you get to know each other well when on your hands and knees, rolling out banner wrap at midnight.

My political travails have been shared with my very good and loyal friend, former party state president and treasurer, Russell Hannan—who is in the gallery this afternoon. Former party state presidents never retire. It is in their DNA, and Russell is a great exemplar of this.

Another is Michael Kroger, the father of my children, the most talented politician outside of parliament who continues to contribute so much to the political debate in this country. Michael, you have never wavered in your support; you actually take hits on my behalf; we are great friends, but more importantly you are a wonderful father. Thank you. Robyn Nolan, the President of the Federal Women's Committee, and Carol Walters, the Chair of the Victorian Liberal Women's Council have both flown in from Perth and Melbourne respectively. Both are talented, professional women who make a real difference and I thank them. I also would like to acknowledge Tim Smith, candidate for Kew, who will be a terrific state MP and has a big future ahead of him.
I have shared the highs and lows for over 15 years now with Senator Ronaldson—and I am hoping I actually look a bit better than he does 15 years on. And I am going to use the fact that this is a valedictory to call him 'Ronno' because he is a true friend. He is a man of enormous integrity and talent. I am very blessed to call you a friend, and we all know that real friends in this place are a very rare commodity. I thank you.

My offices in Burwood and Canberra tick over like a steam train: smooth and quiet on the surface with furious activity below to keep it all going, with, seemingly, breakdowns only when I am around. My heartfelt thanks to Suzanne, Harriet, Amanda, Sybille—who is manning the phones in Melbourne—Bevan, Karen, as well as Kate and Emily, who were with me before the election. I have to say that I am looking forward to that lunch on Monday, but I could not have done it without you, and I thank you. To my former chief of staff, Brad Rowsell, I say: I think you are a star, but I am very mindful that if I say that you will not be able to get out the door when you leave. He is talented, decent and irreverent—a winning combination.

As whip, I work closely with so many professionals who ensure that the Senate practices and procedures are observed. My thanks to the inexhaustible Dr Rosemary Laing, Brien Hallett, Chris Reed, Bronwyn Notzon, Richard Pye, the table office, the committees' secretaries, the attendants—particularly John who continues to humour my repetitive jokes—Hansard reporters and security—the people who actually keep this place physically up and running. Ian and Peter, who look after us all so well in Senate transport, and the many Comcar drivers all make a difference. It will be a Comcar driver who delivers me home and who will be my last contact with the myriad support personnel who make this place tick.

In closing, I turn to the most important people in my life: my family. My contribution to public service has only been made possible with their love, support and understanding. My 90-year-old mother still holds sway over her son and two daughters, and I am so fortunate to have had her guidance and that of my father who died before my Senate foray. To be honest, I think he would have thought I was absolutely nuts. In my first speech I spoke of the importance of my family and what they mean to me. My crowning glory is neither my time here nor my contribution to the political landscape, but rather my sons, Jack and Simon. They are intelligent, decent and compassionate young men who make Michael and I very proud every day. They continue to inspire me. Put simply, I could not have served here in the Senate without their support. We laugh together and we cry together, but most importantly we treasure our lives together. My only advice to them is: never fear failure, because you will never know what could be if you do not at least try. Whilst success is sweet, regret is a lost opportunity. Thanks.

Senator FURNER (Queensland) (17:25): Mr President, many standards have been set in the last two weeks in senators giving their valedictory speeches. There was the standard of a short statement, going for about 40 or 45 minutes. Yesterday there was the standard set by my good friend Senator Ursula Stephens, which was the singing of a beautiful Irish song. To not be outdone, I brought into the chamber today the lyrics of Meatloaf, *Bat out of Hell*. But I am not going to sing!

*Honourable senators interjecting*

Senator FURNER: I know many are disappointed, but I am not going to go down that path. But, seriously, as third on the Labor Senate ticket, both in the 2007 and 2013 general
elections, I personally held no expectations beyond fair odds of any chance of being successful. It was not my good looks or larrikin personality that got me elected in 2007; it was the Kevin 07 campaign, the Your Rights at Work campaign and the support from Senator Hogg, Senator Moore and many other Queensland senators and other Queensland MPs. And let us not forget the Queensland members of the Queensland Labor Party.

Sadly, the Kevin 13 campaign did not have enough energy to bring me into the third position home last year. Notwithstanding that, it was an achievement to have won the third spot in 2007—an achievement not reached in 29 years—to win the unwinnable third Senate spot in Queensland.

Before coming to the Senate, some person with words of wisdom said to me: 'Your life is about to change.' Those words of wisdom came from you, Mr President. And certainly my life did change. But one thing did not change: they may have taken the boy out of Queensland but they never, ever took the Queensland out of the boy. I remain humbled and privileged, despite the amazing opportunity provided to me, to represent my state of Queensland as one of 12 senators. I do not think there can be any greater privilege provided to anyone in this country.

Like many other senators who have spoken in this chamber before have said, not only in valedictory speeches but on other occasions, the main work is committee work. I was extremely privileged to have served on a copious number of committees. Firstly, on the economics committee where I was provided with the opportunity to be involved in the inquiry into the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and also the Senate select committee's inquiry into climate policy, followed by the community affairs committee, and the legal and constitutional affairs committee. I chaired the Senate Standing Committee on Regulations and Ordinances and I was also a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. I chaired the Defence Subcommittee. I was Deputy Chair of the Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity and a member of the Joint Committee on Law Enforcement. At some stage I wondered when I would get the time to serve on some of these committees. At one stage, I was actually on nine committees in total.

Resulting from my involvement in these committees, two memorable trips remain etched in my memory. The first inquiry, while a member of the community affairs committee, was the petrol sniffing inquiry. Despite having travelled to Cherbourg, which is approximately 3.5 hours west of Brisbane, with local Aunty Honor Cleary, on several occasions and experiencing the community of Woorabinda—which is west of Rockhampton, in Queensland—in my time as an industrial officer with the Queensland Police Union, nothing ever prepared me for the understanding of the remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory throughout this particular inquiry.

Despite whatever persuasion of government, we must never rest until the gap is closed in this country. I believe that as Australians we are responsible for the living standards of our first Australians so it is only proper that we pursue our responsibilities to ensure their lives are lifted to the same level which we enjoy. I know that Senator Peris, my good friend, will not rest until this happens.

Secondly, as chair of the Defence Subcommittee, I was extremely privileged to lead a delegation to Afghanistan and experience firsthand the professionalism and dedication our men and women provide each and every day in dangerous and arduous conditions. Wherever
they serve in the world, this is a commitment they are sworn to office with and a commitment they carry out very proudly. These men and women are the salt of the earth for the selfless commitment they make in defending and representing our country.

I remember the trip quite well, in particular in Tarin Kowt, flying up to a forward operational base, a FOB, in a Black Hawk helicopter to a local community and meeting with locals and hearing about the particular issues they were faced with. I do not think there was any greater privilege than being in that circumstance and understanding and appreciating the trust and commitment that those community leaders had for our brave men and women in the FOB in that location.

The other memorable event was going to the capital of Afghanistan, Kabul, and standing there watching an Afghan soldier writing on the whiteboard. You might think there is nothing unusual about that, but this particular gentleman had not been able to write or read six weeks earlier. It was the professional training our Australian troops provided this particular gentleman with that enabled him to write in his own language, Pashtun, and teach his fellow Afghan soldiers.

Also I delved deep into parliamentary Defence programs in Amberley RAAF Border Protection Command up in Darwin with Talisman Sabre and RIMPAX. Like Senator Kroger, I thoroughly enjoyed those opportunities and I would encourage everyone regardless of your time, to take at least one opportunity to be involved in the parliamentary Defence programs.

Labor in office delivered so much in government—the apology, paid parental leave, the NDIS, repealing unjust industrial relations laws and introducing balanced legislation based on a fair go for all consistent with the egalitarian society Australia was built on. And like you, Mr President, during the global financial crisis and after it, I was privileged to go along to a number of BER, Building the Education Revolution, openings. I did not open anywhere near as many as you did. I think I got to around about 139, ranging from Charleville to Bundaberg in my five duty seats of Longman, Dickson, Brisbane, Forde and Wright. It was always a privilege to be involved in those openings and see the good work that we provided to those schools, schools that provided science rooms and halls and, on many occasions, libraries for the first time ever.

I just want to reflect on one matter in my first speech with regard to climate change. Towards the end, I said this:

With full respect, I bring the challenge to you, fellow senators, that we combine our skills to be part of the generation that took the opportunity to change the direction of climate change, and not the last generation that was responsible for the demise of our nation and the world.

Please do not judge me as a tree-hugging Green—I am not—but I think we need to appreciate our environment and we need to appreciate the fact that there is climate change. Certainly during the carbon pollution reduction scheme inquiry and also the climate change inquiry, I heard plenty of evidence that indicated that climate change is real. So the only real concern I had as a result of the CPRS bills was the fact that the Greens voted with the coalition to defeat the CPRS bills, and that was a disappointment to me.

I wish opposition leader Bill Shorten, and Senator Wong here in the Senate, all the best in returning Labor to government in 2016, and I thank also the whips and the staff. They have been an amazing help and assistance too. Regardless of whether we are in government or in opposition, they are always there to help us and it has been a privilege to be involved with
them. Additionally, I would like to wish all the best to Senators Parry and Marshall in your forthcoming roles. No doubt they will be discussed when the Senate resumes a fortnight from now. And also to all fellow senators, regardless of whatever party you are involved in, it has been a privilege to have been here with you in this chamber and during our many, many dealings in committee work and our exchanges across the chamber. There is no malice in that. It is something that we do here and I think that in some respects there is a bit of humour and at times we should remember that.

I would like to thank the Queensland Labor Party—the secretary, Anthony Chisholm; Evan Morehead; organiser, Ryan Casey, and past organiser, Chris Forrester, for their support in my being able to have this fantastic privilege to represent Queensland in this chamber. I would also like to thank the trade union movement. The trade union movement should be recognised for the good work they do. It is important that workers have a voice to protect them from unjust workplace laws and unsafe acts. I was privileged to be involved in my capacity to assist the Services Union in this chamber along with a number of other members and senators including Shayne Neumann from Queensland to make sure that they achieved the pay equity case. I wish Neil Henderson, the secretary of that union, and Jen Thomas, the very best for the future.

One of the other things that I took seriously was my involvement with the multicultural community, and I guess in some respects that comes from my background as a trade union official dealing with the most multicultural workplace, Golden Circle. I engage with as many organisations and ethnic communities as possible—the Lebanese, Taiwanese, Chinese, African and countless others. My good friends, Nabil and Awatef, were two of the first people I met at a Lebanese function on Anzac Day in 2006 and there are the Obeid family—no relation to that Obeid in New South Wales; I am told that the name is like 'Smith', another example of how we should not stereotype one's name—and also Sharon Orapeleng, the past president of the Queensland African Community Council, of which I am a proud member, to name just a few. It is great to be involved in their communities.

I would like to digress to a story about migrants. There was an opportunity where a Congolese gentleman, approximately the same age as my son, came into my office one day around 2009. We will call him Simon. He came to me and he said: 'Mark, I need your help. My two children are back home in the Republic of Congo. I can't get them to Australia.' He told me this story which still touches me. He spoke about his activities as a human rights activist, going out into his country trying to record and accumulate data around what happened in the atrocities in the Republic of Congo. He was out on this particular day and while he was returning home he was stopped by one of his relatives, who said: 'Don't go home. Your home has been burnt down. Your wife's been murdered but we've protected your children. We have your girls. They're after you. Escape the country now.' Well, he did. Simon escaped the country. He went through those detention centres in Africa and eventually he was accepted as a humanitarian refugee by our country.

We went through all the bases of getting his two girls out here, which we could not have done without the help of my amazing staff. Finally they were united about two years later, and I am now the proud godfather of those two girls. As a government, we can do more for migrants in this country. Rather than reducing the migration intake, we should be increasing that amount.
The Senate is such an amazing workplace, and I am sure you all agree. It never ceases to amaze me. From the moment you arrive in the morning, all of us are greeted by a friendly Comcar driver who drops you off, and some of us are greeted by a cleaner who has just completed cleaning your room and has thoroughly cleaned your suite during the early hours of the morning. Then, for me, it is off to the parliamentary gym where the staff spot you on your exhaust repetition weights you are lifting. I know Senator Mason is not here today, but he was kind enough to drop me a note. Probably only he would understand that. Then it is a chat with either Dom or Antonio from Aussie's after your workout.

Later on in the day you are greeted by our friendly Senate chamber attendants as you enter the chamber for morning prayers. Of course, there is the professionalism of the staff from the Clerk's Office to help you get through whether it is—a bill or a procedural matter—while you chair this amazing chamber, ensuring the business is progressed. Additionally, you may engage with the competent secretariat committee staff while being part of a committee meeting. In fact, everywhere you turn in this place you have the utmost support from all staff of parliament. While not singling anyone out intentionally, I do appreciate the support that Ian and Peter from Senate Transport have provided and their tireless work in ensuring you get to and from the Senate. Also, to the Clerk, Rosemary Laing, Deputy Clerk, Richard Pye, Maureen, Brien and Chris: thank you for your guidance and your knowledge in respect to my capacity of chairing this chamber at times. It has been invaluable. Thank you to everyone from Hansard who turns words into meanings.

However, I think one of my favourite pastimes that I will miss is the end of the week evening meal at Timmy's Kitchen—one of our favourites. Most Thursdays you will find Senator Hogg, Senator Bilyk, Senator Polley, Senator Peris, Senator Farrell, Senator Tillem and Senator Bishop there, just to name a few—sometimes the characters change. We end up there, having an excellent but simple meal and friendly conversation over a bottle of wine—or two.

I will continue my work for and my involvement in and commitment to Relay for Life, and I thank Senator Moore for her involvement in my team since 2006. I also thank my good friend Vicki James from Queensland Cancer Council and all the other team mates who have been through over the years to raise money to the tune of over $120,000 since 1996. I salute you for your efforts and your commitment to finding a cure for cancer which affects so many of us in our communities.

Now I turn to my staff, and I do not have to tell other senators that we would be helpless in this workplace without the staff that we have here. I am so grateful that most of them are here today for this moment. Christine, unfortunately, could not be here today. Christine is my rock and throughout she has been without fault in regards to anything. It has been such a great opportunity to have her on my staff. Unfortunately, she is at home with her first child, Eva, and is unable to be here today. Eva Doolan came into the world five weeks early on 26 May, and the family is doing well. I really do not know how I could have got through a week without Christine's conscientious commitment.

Terry, I appreciate your meticulous attention to detail in everything you do, whether it be constituent matters or other duties in the office. Thank you for your endless professionalism. Abdul, despite calling yourself Adam, you will always be Abdul to me. Just one word Abdul: concentrate—and you will get what you are looking for. Thank you for your loyalty and
friendship. Then there is Abby. You brought a new dimension to the office. You became the social butterfly of the office while maintaining my financial records. You made us all laugh while maintaining those boring accounts. Lastly, Trent, your mum, Lee, would have been so proud of you for all your commitment to my office.

Lastly, I turn to my family. I think, in this line of work you sometimes take your family for granted. I say that on the basis of having lost my mum while being here. I always said to myself, 'I'll see her soon.' Then that time passes. You never get that chance back again, and then they are gone. My mum passed away, never to see me in this workplace. But I always promise to commit more time to my dad, which I hope I am living up to, mate.

Notwithstanding mum passing away, I have now been blessed with two beautiful grandchildren, Xavia and Marley. Yes, I know what you are all thinking—'He's too young to have grandchildren.' But you cannot stop Mother Nature and, despite being so young, I am so happy they are here, albeit too far from Brisbane to enjoy on a regular basis. It is terrific to have Troy, Stacey and Sally, my adorable children, and Daniela, my daughter-in-law, here today. Despite only having Sally at home now, she makes every effort when I return from Canberra most weeks to spoil me with a beautiful meal.

To my amazing wife of 35 years: Lorraine, you have stuck with me along this journey and everything I do, and now I am about to commit to my next stage in life to continue a political career in Queensland. Thank you for your love and your support.

Well, where to from here? Recently, a couple of weeks ago, Sally and I went up to our good friends Terri and Bindi Irwin of Australia Zoo to discuss some work up there. That will at some stage come to fruition. I am not going to go into too much detail about what that will mean. Certainly one of my opportunities as a senator was to open the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital up there. When we were in government we donated some money towards it. That is where the relationship blossomed.

I have had an amazing opportunity to go up north in the cape. I know some of the senators in Queensland have been up there and been on the property on the Wenlock River and jumped a crocodile with them, a 10½-footer. They record the findings of that particular reptile and then let it go. That particular work is important and must continue. Those reptiles have been around a lot longer than us. I must invite all of you to at some stage drop in and see this amazing attraction. I promise I won't feed you to the crocodiles—at least, I promise some of you I won't. But I certainly promise you this: I will definitely not be throwing roo poo at you.

The other opportunity is that you may wish to become one of my clients as your own parliamentary personal trainer. Just recently I have been training a new client, the member for Wright in Queensland, Scotty Buchholz. It is great to see you in the chamber, mate. So I could give you some instruction in the gym. If you are looking for a body like mine, you know my number and you know where you can find me.

Most of my time will be taken up, however, over the coming months—most likely leading up to March next year—in putting 100 per cent effort into winning that state seat of Ferny Grove back to Labor. I thank the state branch for this privilege to be given another opportunity to represent the great Labor Party. In politics nothing should be taken for granted, so we will see what materialises.
Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (17:49): I am the lucky last of the retiring senators to speak—although, come to think of it, lucky is probably not a word that you would necessarily associate with my political career, especially since I was given a dead fish by Senator Kroger. That has certain connotations, I think, in certain areas. Those of you who were here last night will recall Senator Ursula Stephens singing in her valedictory speech. I have been strongly encouraged to do the same here tonight, but I will not. Later on perhaps I will give a rendition of Danny Boy with Senator Stephens. Senator Furner got all of the good lines, because he spoke before me.

I propose to start this evening by referring to something that you usually mention at the end of a speech. Of all the things that I have to say this evening, this is going to be the most important. On this my last week in public life I want to thank my wife of 30 years, Nimfa, and my daughters, Mary, Tess and Emily, for the unqualified love and support that they have given me—throughout my working life, certainly, but most importantly during my time here as a Labor senator for South Australia. It has been said before by others—and I shall say it again tonight—that we could not do our work in this place without the unflinching support of our partners and our families, and it is certainly the case for me. My time in this place would have been quite impossible, indeed quite intolerable at times, without the knowledge that my family—including my new son-in-law, James; he and my daughter Mary are watching this tonight over the internet in Moscow—have stood alongside me at all times but particularly when the wheel of political fortune rolled wildly downwards, as it has done over the last two years.

I have had the immense privilege of serving the people of South Australia as a senator, as a deputy whip and as a parliamentary secretary. I was a Labor minister in both the Gillard and Rudd governments with the portfolio of Sports, Tourism and Science. In recent months, I have served the Senate as the Opposition Spokesman on Veterans' Affairs. I am sure my colleagues will allow me—with much humility of course—to point out some of the achievements that I am quietly proud of.

As Minister for Sports, I facilitated one of the largest tranches ever of funding for grassroots sports infrastructure to encourage the participation of people of all ages and ability in healthy sporting activity—I intend to do a little bit of it myself over the months ahead. In tourism, we saw a record increase in the number of tourists visiting Australia from key markets like China. As science minister, I assisted South Australia's new health and biomedical precinct with a $100-million boost for the Uni SA's cancer biology centre to research blood cancers and for the University of Adelaide's integrated clinical school for medical and nursing students.

As Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water, I was able to improve the capacity of the Bureau of Meteorology by increasing the number of front-line forecasters and launched the next gen weather forecasting system. This has enabled the bureau, a much loved Australian institution, to provide better forecasting for ever-accelerating severe weather events' also drove the roll out of the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme. In what was a fractious parliament, I brought together the opposition and the Greens to support a world-class scheme that ensures that from July at least 90 per cent of all e-waste materials, most of which are unpleasantly toxic, will be recovered from landfill and made available for use in new products.
In my first speech in this place, I declared that in 1954—60 years ago now—I was born in Murray Bridge. As someone with Murray River water running through my veins, I was particularly devastated to watch the drought punish that mighty river, a river which in many ways is the artery of our nation. With Julia Gillard's unwavering commitment and some terrific work by top public servants, I was proud to assist Tony Burke, who is here tonight, in securing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. For the first time in our history, water became a national rather than a state issue. I need to be clear about this: it would not have been achieved without a second Labor of term in office, but I am certain that the plan will stand the test of time.

If you believe some of the media, you would think that politics is concerned with left and right. Instead, it is about right or wrong. In my six years in this place, I have worked hard with colleagues on my side of the chamber but also with colleagues opposite and on the crossbenchers to achieve progress in the portfolio areas which my leaders have assigned me. Unfortunately politics is seen as a blood sport in the media in Australia but what Australians do not see often enough is the genuine cooperation and the spirit of bipartisanship that often underlies a lot of we do to advance Australia. I take this opportunity to thank all Senate colleagues for the good work that we have done together in good heart.

Perhaps the portfolio area that has meant most to me and the one that has affected me most deeply is veteran's affairs. In this, my last hurrah, I intend to resist the temptation to lecture and hector but I would like you to forgive me this: the government's attempts to remove modest entitlements from the children of dead and wounded veterans was mindless and utterly disgraceful. I was proud to have led the parliamentary charge which defeated that attempt. I must use a few of my last words in this place to implore the coalition senators not to allow their government to downgrade the indexation of pensions of war veterans and war widows, a downgrading that will over time leave them much worse off. Please do not do it.

This is a place of rough-and-tumble, of vigorous debate and of hotly contested approaches as to how taxpayers' money should be spent. We all accept that there ought to be one area of policy that is of a higher order—that is, a matter of unassailable public bipartisanship—and that is veterans' affairs. Putting oneself into harm's way in the service of our country is the highest form of public office bar none. We owe these people and their families a monumental debt and the gravest obligation is to look after them and their families. When they are deployed in the name of our country, ADF members and their families do not stop to count the cost nor must we count the cost when they return to us, not now, not ever.

In the last election I gave up my No. 1 position on the ballot to Senator Wong. In my maiden speech and at the suggestion of my daughter Tess, I quoted Owen Wilson in Zoolander. 'The votes are in, Amigo. What's left to ponder?' said Owen. Owen was right and wrong. The votes are in, certainly, and I am out but there are certain things to ponder. With your indulgence, I would like to reflect upon my time here and in general in a personal sense.

I came to the Senate after a long career of as an officer at the SDA. I am pleased to see so many of my SDA colleagues here in the gallery this evening. There is a predisposition on the part of some commentators in this country to denigrate anybody who comes to this place from a union background. Let me say this: I have been, I am and I always will be a staunch member of the Australian trade union movement. I do not care what anybody says; I am proud of having served ordinary Australian working men and women as an officer of the SDA.
and I am proud of my commitment to social justice, fairness and dignity in working life. I am proud to have been part of a Labor government that undid the deeply un-Australian, unmandated WorkChoices.

My time as a senator has been marked by some very difficult challenges as well some terrific highs. But it would be hypocritical of me not to address those challenges here. It is well known that I was described as one of the 'faceless men' who argued for the replacement of Kevin Rudd with Julia Gillard in 2010. As well as being dubbed faceless, I have been called 'nameless' and, indeed, 'shapeless' by some members of the Fourth Estate.

This is vastly entertaining, as I consider that I have been in the public eye all of my working life. For good or ill, I am a recognisable figure and have been so for decades. To suddenly wake up one morning and find myself without a face was extremely Kafkaesque. I have also been called 'the Don' and 'the Godfather', and one genius in the press gallery even dubbed me 'the Pope'. In this he was clearly mistaken—as he is in so many other things. For the record, I am married with three daughters, and infallibility belongs to the women in our household.

Make no mistake: removing a Labor Prime Minister mid-term was a traumatic political event, but my view at the time was that it had to be done for the good of the country. My view has not changed in retrospect. During this very difficult time I rang an old friend for some counsel. It was being said that the removal of the Prime Minister was the worst political assassination since Julius Caesar fell on the Senate steps. My erudite and witty friend said, 'Comrade, tell them this: not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more.' I think that probably says it all. The Italian poet Dante once wrote, 'The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis.' I would hope that during my time in public life I have earned at least the right to carry a candle into hell.

I was deeply saddened at the way Julia Gillard was treated as Prime Minister of this country. Frankly, her critics diminished themselves rather than her. Tonight I wish to acknowledge the extraordinary skill and the courage with which the Prime Minister dealt with that hung parliament. Her legislative achievements will be seen more appreciatively through the prism of history. If there is any doubt that she was not worthy of the high honour of being Prime Minister of Australia, I invite people to revisit her graceful concession speech and her own brave and insightful valedictory speech. As far as the leadership of our nation is concerned, it will be easier for the next woman and the one after that. As a proud father of three daughters, I want them to know that they can be anything they want to be. Julia Gillard showed them the way, and I will be forever grateful to her for that.

I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, who is here tonight, for the opportunity that he gave me to serve on his front bench after the election. In a very short space of time, Bill and his very talented frontbench team have put the Labor Party well and truly back in the race. I wish Bill and Chloe all the best as they seek to rebuild the fairness and egalitarianism that should underpin our country and the conduct of our national affairs.

The Labor challenge has been made much harder by our disastrous Senate result at the last election. I do not think there is any other way to describe it. The loss of eight Labor senators committed to fairness and dignity for all Australians is devastating. Future Senate contests will require us to mount a proper campaign if we are to regain a second Senate seat in South Australia.
At election time particularly, those of us involved in campaigning often come across people whose knowledge of the way we conduct our national affairs is less than fulsome. There are some people out in the electorate even now who are not sure what senators do. When I was elected, a mate of mine with only a marginal knowledge of classical history told me that Rome had senators too and that is why it declined. I suspect in the next term of this parliament we are about to find out whether or not that is true. The challenge, I fear, in the new Senate will be to avoid turning this great institution into a reality TV show feeding the 24-hour news cycle, and competing at the same time as Al Gore and Clive Palmer is going to be very tough.

At this point I would like to stop and make a few thankyou's to some people who are very important to me. I wish to profusely thank my current staff: Sevi, Joan, Ben, Nina, and Remon, and all of my former staff, many of whom are here today, including Helen, Andrew, Manny, Amelia, Bridget and Tom. Many other friends in the gallery have joined me here today. In fact, I have been overwhelmed by the number of people who are going to be joining us this evening. I would also like to thank the clerks, Hansard and the Senate chamber staff, especially my fellow Crows supporter, Bryan, who I know is looking forward, like me, to whipping Port Adelaide at the magnificent newly-built Adelaide Oval this coming Sunday afternoon. Finally, I thank the perpetually tolerant and unfailingly helpful Comcar drivers. I also note that the Irish ambassador is here tonight and I thank him for coming along.

If the truth be known I had not actually planned to make my valedictory speech after just one term in parliament. The truth is that I had hoped to be here a little longer. But, as John Lennon said, 'Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans.' It turned out he was right—as was Ned Kelly, who said, 'Such is life.'

It has been a tremendous privilege to serve South Australia and the labour movement in the nation's parliament, a privilege given to so few. After my Senate defeat, my youngest daughter, Emily, said that I had lost a sparkle in my eye. I intend to get that back in the months ahead. I wish all Senate colleagues the very best, whether they are staying, coming or, like me, going. I welcome the new senators, some of whom are here tonight, and I urge all of them, regardless of party or other allegiances, to think deeply, argue courteously and remember the words of the philosopher John Stuart Mill: 'The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.'

Now, as I leave this place to prepare for post-political life and the birth of our first grandchild, I say good night and God bless.

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (18:10): Tonight, we farewell the last batch of our departing senators. All three of them have done themselves, their party, their states and this Senate proud.

I first turn to Senator Furner. His reference to Meatloaf's *Bat out of Hell* as being a relevant number made me wonder what the analogy was—whether getting out of Labor caucus or the Senate is like getting out of hell, or whether he was describing himself as a bat, because they know how to fly blind, and that is a very worthwhile quality to have, especially in the game of politics. In relation to his other discussion, about crocodile wrestling, I will leave that to him.
But, once again, the chances are that it is another very valuable attribute to have in the pursuit of political life. Senator Furner's speech highlighted his rich and extensive involvement in our Senate and its committees. He told us what he was seeking to do after this place, and I simply say that we wish him very well—but chances are that in that one respect, and I think he knows what I am referring to, not too well!

Nevertheless you have been a very collegiate colleague and you leave this place with the respect of senators from all sides. I wish you well on behalf of my colleagues.

I now turn to Senator Farrell. Your speech told us straight off how very important family is to you. In all of your policy settings and statements, family was always very important to you. From a personal perspective, I salute that.

Senator Farrell told us that fortune did not smile on him, and I must say it was one of the unluckiest hands to have been dealt in all the circumstances—having been chosen by your party to lead the ticket, then graciously accepting the No. 2 position, only to see yourself not being re-elected. I make the observation that this happened in the state of South Australia. It also happened in the next-door state, but it is interesting how the media talked about Western Australia as opposed to South Australia. I leave it up to the media to explain why all the focus was on one of the states as opposed to the other.

I simply say to you, Senator Farrell, that your contribution has been a very worthwhile one. You can look back on six years with a great degree of satisfaction with what you have achieved. I confess that when you became a minister I was one of those who believed that you were one of these people who was seen but never heard, but we always found out afterwards what you had been up to. I thought it would be a very smart tactic if we started serving you up with questions. It did not take us long to learn that when you were on your feet you knew how to answer questions, and we soon eased off on that tactic. I confess, we had to raise the white flag on that. Can I simply say that the Labor Party and the Senate will be poorer for your leaving us, and, from what I heard, for your departure or retirement from public life all of us on this side wish you well.

Turning now to my good friend and colleague, Senator Helen Kroger, the chief opposition whip and chief government whip. I think I have known Helen for nearly all of my adult life; we go back quite some way. It is somewhat ironic that the offspring of somebody who came to Australia courtesy of stealing not one but two loaves of bread became responsible for handing out the scones and the morning teas at all the whip's functions. There was a real turn of the wheel there. On behalf of all your colleagues, Senator Kroger, thank you very much for the important role that you have played, not only in the technical side of the whip's job, but also in the very vital role of keeping the team together, keeping the camaraderie together and making sure that everybody had the appropriate pastoral care in all the difficult circumstances and vicissitudes of political life. You did that exceptionally well, and all your colleagues are greatly indebted to you for that.

Senator Kroger's role, of course, was not only as whip; she was also a great contributor to foreign affairs policies to the foreign affairs committee in this place. Your involvement on matters in support of the state of Israel and the Jewish people, I am sure, will be remembered by many people. The simple fact is that the state of Israel is the only genuine democracy in the Middle East and it has human rights second to none in that area, and yet it is continually put under pressure. The state of Israel needs defenders like you, and you clearly were one of
its very keen and strong defenders. But you were not only there to defend countries, you were there also looking after individuals. You mentioned in your valedictory speech, and I had it in my prepared notes, your advocacy for Matthew Joyce and Marcus Lee during their incarceration. That, I think, shows the depth and breadth of your political involvement in this place. You could deal with the big ticket items—the macro policies of foreign affairs country to country—but you also had the capacity of dealing with the needs of the individual and taking a keen interest in an individual. I think that shows the breadth of your parliamentary involvement.

I must say I was also very heartened by your public commentary on the way that the Liberal Party allocates its preferences, especially in relation to the Greens. If you were not the vanguard, you were definitely part of the vanguard that assisted in getting that change, which clearly ensured the coalition victory in Victoria at the last state election. So I congratulate you for the huge impact you had in that regard. Your speech referring to your sons Simon and Jack told us that the real love of your life is your family and that you have been able to maintain that strong connection with your two children also shows us that you have a very good and balanced life. You did not become all-consumed by politics, but you also had the right balance, knowing how important family life and children are to you. That is one of the qualities that made you such a good whip in understanding those issues.

Mr Acting Deputy President, it is not easy being a whip, because too often you are accused of saying 'No' to your own colleagues and 'Yes' to your opponents in handing out pairs. You did it with distinction; you did it well; and, whilst your departure from this place is not of your choosing or the choosing of any on this side, you do leave with the very best wishes from all of your colleagues on this side. We wish you every success in whatever life may hold for you in the future, but, above all, we wish you good health and happiness in the future.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (18:19): I rise to speak on this last set of valedictories in this Senate to farewell Senators Kroger, Furner and Farrell, who all came to this place on 1 July 2008 following their election in 2007. I will make some brief remarks first in relation to Senator Kroger, who has had a long association with the Liberal Party; I have a note here that it commenced with the Springvale Young Liberals in 1974. She has held many positions in the party in Victoria, and she spoke of her continued advocacy of what she saw as the interests of the Victorian party, particularly in relation to the issue of preferences that she discussed. As a Senator, Senator Kroger’s interests included education, the rights of children, mental health and the participation of women in political and national life. She was also active with Parliamentarians Against Child Abuse and Neglect, and I note she made a contribution on this topic this week in the adjournment debate, which demonstrates her continued advocacy.

In her first speech, Senator Kroger said:

None of my friends here today would ever accuse me of being part of the sisterhood, but I draw inspiration from two of my predecessors, former senators Dame Margaret Guilfoyle and Dr Kay Patterson.

And I could not let the opportunity pass me by without saying how excited I am as a woman to begin my career in parliament at the very time that Sarah Palin is about to shatter the penultimate glass ceiling of politics in the United States.
I trust Senator Kroger does not mind that her powers of prediction were wrong. I would say this: even if Senator Kroger does not see herself as ‘part of the sisterhood’, I believe it is always a shame when a strong woman from any party leaves this chamber. We do need them. I did note one of the comments Senator Kroger made tonight that she had been bullied and threatened, but that only strengthened her resolve; and that is a response that I respect. As Senator Abetz said, Senator Kroger has served as the party's whip in this place, and that is not an easy job. And yet one has to deal with all sorts of issues that others in this place do not. I recognise her contribution to her party in that role, and I wish her and her family very well for the future.

Senator Furner has obviously served too short a time in this place. I do not think he spoke of it tonight, but he grew up in a housing commission house in Brisbane's northside suburb of Chermside. He worked as a trades assistant, a floor-covering layer, truck driver and 18 he became the youngest delegate of the Transport Workers' Union in Queensland. He went on to serve as an organiser with that union, and subsequently with the Queensland Police Union and the National Union of Workers, including as Queensland Branch Secretary.

In the Senate, Senator Furner has served on a number of committees, including the Joint Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade and Law Enforcement. He has made contributions to debate in many areas, particularly concerning the rights of workers and law enforcement agencies. He spoke tonight, movingly, I think, of the imperative to close the gap. I think one of the privileges we have in this place as a senator is that we have the opportunity to engage with regions and communities we would not otherwise have engaged with. Senator Furner did so but, more importantly, what he took from that was the imperative of that great national challenge and great national responsibility to close the gap.

It is, as I said, a great shame that Senator Furner's time in this place has come to a premature end. We will miss his no-nonsense approach to debate, which was on show again tonight—although I am not sure that your career as a physical trainer is necessarily one that will take off, Senator Furner; but I could be wrong! Whilst he is leaving the Senate, we do all hope that Senator Furner is going from this parliament to another parliament—in the state of Queensland. We on this side of the chamber know how important it is for us to rebuild Labor in Queensland. We wish you all the very best in that endeavour, Senator Furner; not just for Queensland Labor but also for the Labor Party, and for the very many people who expect and hope that we will stand up for them. So I hope that 'Furner for Ferny Grove' catches on! If you need help from any of us up here in campaigning, I am sure that all of us would be very happy to add our efforts to your campaign effort.

Finally, I turn now to my South Australian colleague, Don Farrell. It is with deep disappointment that we farewell Senator Farrell tonight after only one term. Don Farrell has been a leader within our labour movement. He has devoted his life to the service of the labour movement and to the Labor Party. Prior to his election, as he said, he served the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees’ Association for some 32 years, beginning as an industrial officer in the mid-70s. and concluding as State Secretary in 2008, a position he had held for fifteen years. He has been a leader in the South Australian Branch of the Australian Labor Party in many capacities, including as State President, but perhaps the greatest part of his role as leader has been the support and mentorship he has given to so many. Many of the next generation of Labor leaders and future Labor ministers—here and in South Australia—have
benefited from his support and his guidance. He is a guiding figure for so many. Tonight in the chamber, we saw people such as Kate Ellis, Amanda Rishworth and Nick Champion—people who will be ministers in a Labor government in the future—and all of them, I am sure, would refer to Don as one of the guiding figures in their political careers. In many ways, there is no greater mark of a leader than those you bring to the table, in the way that Senator Farrell has.

Since entering the Senate on 1 July 2008, Senator Farrell has served in many positions, from Deputy Government Whip to Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water—as he has said, a portfolio with particular significance to South Australia. In 2013, he entered the ministry as Minister for Science and Research and Minister Assisting for Tourism, and later as Minister for Sport. Since the 2013 election, he has served as shadow minister for Veterans’ Affairs and the Centenary of ANZAC, and tonight his championing of veterans was evident.

The departure of Senator Farrell is a loss to Labor, and to the Senate. Many would be aware of the reasons for Senator Farrell’s early departure; none more than me. I acknowledge and thank Don Farrell for his decision to volunteer for the second position on Labor’s Senate ticket in South Australia at the 2013 election. In that decision and in many others, Senator Farrell put the interests of the Labor Party first. In ordinary circumstances, we would have expected that we would both return to the Senate as colleagues. However, this was not to be the case. It is a profound regret that South Australia only returned one senator at this election and that, as a consequence, Don was not re-elected. The fact that Senator Farrell was not re-elected stands as a compelling example of the need for Labor to improve its vote in Senate elections, and the responsibility of all of us—to return senators of the calibre of Senator Farrell, Senator Pratt and so many others to this place but, most importantly, to ensure a strong presence for the Australian Labor Party in this chamber—to give voice to the rights of Australians who most need the advocacy of the Labor Party in this place.

Don’s love of his family is deep and abiding, and was evident tonight. I wish Don and his wife Nimfa, and his family, all the very best for the future. The only exception is that I do not wish his team well for the showdown next weekend!

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (18:28): I rise as well to provide farewells to those leaving the Senate this evening. First of all, I would like to make some remarks on the leaving of one of our truly favourite senators, Senator Helen Kroger. Senator Kroger, as a senator representing Victoria from 1 July 2008—it seems so long ago—and, more recently, as Chief Government Whip in the Senate, you have proved yourself an accomplished professional. Your negotiation and skills as a strategist I think are unsurpassed. Your knowledge of the Senate and its procedures—things which, even to those of us who have been around a while longer, and certainly to me, seem to remain completely obscure—is enviable.

But it is your gentle and unassuming manner that is most remarkable in an environment not always known for graciousness or that good old-fashioned notion of magnanimity. Even under intense pressure, Senator Kroger has always been a model of civility. Perhaps this is her secret weapon—that she is so disarmingly kind and refined, belying her steely resolve and determination when it comes to issues that she believes in dearly. It is no surprise, then, that
she came to win Victoria's Liberal Party presidency and, in doing so, brought a healing and a balm to what many thought was a wounded party.

Perhaps her steely resolve was forged in the modest and resilient family background in which she grew up. She stated in her maiden speech in this place in September 2008:

… while my father was a simple labourer, he knew that education was life’s great equaliser …

continuing that her parents had sacrificed their present to provide her and her siblings with a future. In this respect, Senator Kroger has never lost her ability to relate to the aspirations of many Australians who strive to achieve a better life for their children. And I know that the principles and values instilled in her by her parents continue to be a guiding light in her life. Senator Kroger was not born into privilege or wealth, but she was gifted with something far more important: strength of character; a determination to succeed and make a difference—the epitome of the 'liberal' essence.

The importance of education has been a consistent theme in Senator Kroger's life. In that maiden speech, some six years ago, Senator Kroger highlighted that, in the educational context, there is no more important form of choice than the power of parents to be able to choose where their children will be educated. She has been passionate about the education system rising above mediocrity, arguing for competition amongst public schools, and that, in particular, it was important to shatter public-sector monopolies. She very much believes that there is no valid reason why low- and middle-income families should not be able to enjoy the same power of parental choice that the wealthy take for granted.

She also understands the importance of giving back to society, having a great appreciation of volunteerism and the central role it plays in Australia and on the international stage. I understand that she was the fundraising director for Wesley College in Melbourne for six years prior to entering the political sphere. Selflessness has been an important feature of her career and personal life.

Small business has been another passion of Senator Kroger; she has called it the primary engine of Australia's economic prosperity. Like many on our side, she has been prepared to give small business its rightful place in the economy and recognise that it is at the centre of good economic management. In addition, she has had a distinguished career in human resource management—again, most apt for a woman of her capabilities in dealing with people and understanding what motivates them.

Since being elected as a senator in this place, Senator Kroger's name has become synonymous with hard work and dedication. She is the chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee and is Acting Deputy Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee. She is also a voting member of the Senate Standing Committees on Finance and Public Administration and the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, and the coalition representative on the Parliamentary Education Office advisory committee. In addition, she is a member of the coalition backbench policy committees on education, industry and foreign affairs, defence and trade, and serves as a Temporary Chair of Committees in the Senate.

She has also been a wonderful ambassador on parliamentary delegations overseas. I can recall that, in 2008, not long after you got here, Senator Kroger, you relaunched Parliamentarians Against Child Abuse and Neglect, which aims to increase the awareness of,
and take action to eliminate, the serious issue of child abuse and neglect. This is something that I know you have been passionate about and you have remained so since you started in the Senate.

Senator Kroger has avoided characterisation as a feminist or as belonging to the sisterhood. But what better role model is there for women who are thinking about entering politics to make a real difference? She has never once referred to being held back because she is a woman; she has just got on with the job and has taken on the best of us males—and, in many cases, I think she has won.

Senator Kroger, you will leave a lasting legacy—you will not be forgotten. I thank you on my own behalf, and on behalf of my staff and the National Party, for the impeccably courteous and helpful manner with which you have always dealt with us. It has meant a lot to us.

I have no doubt that the next chapter of your life will be just as rewarding because you will continue to seek out the opportunities that will allow you to make a contribution. Good luck in your further endeavours.

In the interests of those opposite who, I know, also wish to make a contribution, I seek leave to have my valedictory speeches on Senator Furner and Senator Farrell incorporated into Hansard.

Leave granted.

The speeches read as follows—

Senator Mark Furner

Senator Mark Furner was the first Labor candidate in 29 years to win the third Senate spot in Queensland. His was elected to the seat of Queensland in 2007 and his term began on 1 July 2008.

Since this time, Senator Furner has been a member of numerous committees and has had the privilege of chairing the Senate Standing Committee on Regulations and Ordinances.

In 2006 and 2007, Senator Furner was a team captain in the Queensland Cancer Council’s Relay for Life, where he was shown recognition for being the highest fund raiser at both events.

As an active member and leader of the community, Senator Furner has been a supporter of the Pine River Men’s Shed, an Ambassador for Keep Watch, a member of the UNICEF Parliamentary Association and an advocate for preventing domestic violence against women.

Senator Furner has had the opportunity to visit other countries for conferences, delegations and visits. On 1 October 2013, Senator Furner visited the country of Georgia with National’s New South Wales Senator, John Williams, as part of the international contingent of election observers.

On 21 June 2012, there was a rare agreement on the floor of the Australian Senate with the Government and Opposition passing a motion that called for the Government to improve Australia’s human rights dialogue with Vietnam. The motion was moved together by National’s Queensland Senator, Ron Boswell and Labor Senator, Mark Furner.

Before this was passed, Senator Furner, Senator Boswell and others took to the front lawn of Parliament House where they addressed a crowd of 200 supporters of the petition.

Apart from the different views Senator Furner and I share on Wild Rivers, I know that we share the same values on Indigenous Affairs. I have had the privilege of travelling with Senator Furner to Cherbourg which is an Indigenous community located in QLD for a committee visit.

Senator Furner, On behalf of the National Party, I would like to wish you all the best in your new life and congratulate you on all your achievements as Labor Senator for Queensland.
Senator the Hon. Don Farrell

Senator the Hon. Don Farrell was the first Senate ticket for Labor in the 2007 election, to represent South Australia. He commenced his term on 1 July 2008.

In his 6 years, Senator Farrell has been a member of many committees, the Deputy Government Whip in the Senate and has held portfolio responsibilities for Science and Research, Sports and assisting for Tourism.

He was also appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water from September 2010 — March 2013.

Senator Farrell is known to being committed to helping the environment and has made a commitment to the urban water reform and infrastructure investment. He has expressed on many occasions the impacts that a drought can have on the agriculture industry, rural communities and our major cities.

His commitment to the environment has seen him announce the establishment of a Product Stewardship Advisory Group; Launch the Cooperative Research Centre, launch of the South Australia’s National TV and Computer Recycling Scheme, and announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding allowing Australia’s participation in Scientific Collections International.

For all your achievements, Senator Farrell, I would like to congratulate you. You have made a huge contribution to not only South Australia, but to the whole country. On behalf of the National Party, good luck and I wish you all the best in your next journey.

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (18:35): I will make just a couple of brief comments about Senator Kroger. It will be nice not to turn around all the time when someone sings out, 'Helen, Helen'! But thank you very much for the contribution that you have made. As Penny Wong said, it is always a shame when we lose women from this chamber. I wish you every success.

I now turn my attention to Senator Furner. He was another chamber buddy of mine. But I have to say: since I was moved away from you, at least I have been quite calm when I have had a question to ask, because on several occasions during our journey together you would take away the question, and at times I said to you, 'Well, that's all right—I'll just make it up as I go!' But it has been a great privilege to work alongside Mark. He has made an outstanding contribution. He is a man who respects other people’s views. He is also a strong family man. He speaks up for what he believes in. He has outlined tonight, and we have heard on many occasions, that he has given distinguished service within the union movement.

Senator Wong made comments in relation to your role, Mark, in the Senate as an instructor. I am probably not the best example of someone who you helped with weights and for whom you were a trainer, so I am not sure you will be able to earn much money in your new life going into that field!

But I think it is always important that we note the contribution of those who are leaving the chamber. You leave with my friendship. I have an open door for you to come and visit. I know you are a strong Queenslander, but the best state in this country is Tasmania, and the door is always open for you to come and experience our hospitality.

There are those on this side of the chamber who—as I think Mark mentioned before—like to go out to dinner and to socialise, but it is always hard to get people in this place to try a new restaurant. I actually did convince people to go along to Timmy’s in Manuka after telling them it was the best Asian food in town, so I hope I have not upset too many people here.
tonight! But we certainly are going to miss you. Our Thursday nights will not be the same. I want to wish you all the very best and say to the Queenslanders listening in tonight that you will continue to make outstanding contributions—and I hope your next chapter will be in the state parliament.

Now I want to say just a couple of things in relation to Don Farrell because I know other people want to make a contribution. It is not always easy being in this place and having views that are not held by the majority of your own party, but you have been someone to share those with and someone to act as a guide and a support and that should not be left unsaid. Senator Farrell, I think it is a great shame that you were not re-elected to the Senate from South Australia. I think not only is it the Labor Party's and South Australia's loss but in general our country and our community will be poorer for you leaving.

I want to mention, as I did in relation to Senator Furner, your family values and your commitment to those who are less fortunate. You outlined again in your speech that which is very close to my heart, veterans affairs. You stood up for veterans against the government, and we appreciate what you have done for them. I know veterans and war widows have always respected your contribution.

Moving forward, our social activities here in this place will not be the same either because Senator Farrell was always the first to invite you around for a drink or to get together and have something to eat. I remember when he supported me to become deputy whip in this place. He said, 'Helen, it's a great office, but you have to have the blinds open so that you can see outside and see that this is really just a small part of what is happening in the greater community that we are here to represent.'

Senator Farrell, going forward I think it is a shame that you are going into retirement, as I have said. I appreciate your friendship and your guidance. I do know that you have been referred to as 'the don', so I want to say thank you very much. Thank you from your Labor colleagues. It has always been a privilege to work with you, and I personally thank you for your support and leadership.

Senator RUSTON (South Australia) (18:39): I have to say that since I have been in this place I have actually only sat next to two senators—and two fabulous senators they are, indeed—Senator Boyce and Senator Eggleston. I am not sure whether it is coincidence or just terribly bad luck on both their parts but they are both leaving. Hopefully people will continue to sit next to me! I wish both of you all the best. Both Senator Boyce and Senator Eggleston have been wonderful role models and guides. They have given me huge support as we have sat in this chamber over the last two years.

I also wish all the best to Senator Boswell. What an amazing person he is. Even though I have been in this place for only a very short time with such a great man, it has certainly been a huge privilege to have been able to serve some time with him.

Senator Farrell is a great South Australian. Senator Farrell and I have certainly not necessarily agreed on a huge number of topics, but I have to say that South Australia will be all the worse off for not having Senator Farrell here fighting for the interests of South Australians and unfortunately also not even in the South Australian parliament. To Senators Furner, Bishop, Pratt, Stephens and Thorp, I wish you all the best in whatever you choose to do in the future.
Now I come to my friend Senator Helen Kroger. The minute I was preselected I think she was the first person on the phone to me. I do not think the ink was dry on the ballot papers before Senator Kroger rang to congratulate me on being successful in my preselection and to immediately offer me assistance. Right the way through the time I have been here she has offered amazing support, guidance, friendship and care. There is nobody I can say has offered and given more of herself to me since I have been here than Senator Kroger. I think initially I thought, 'My gosh, I must be so extraordinarily special to be receiving this treatment,' but it did not take me terribly long after I got here to realise that that is the way she treats everybody. For that reason, I think it is a great tragedy that we are not going to continue our careers together in this place. But I am sure we will continue our friendship outside of this place forever.

I will finish quickly because I know others want to make contributions. On behalf of Senator Payne, who would have made a contribution tonight except I am afraid she is still in the anteroom crying, I want to say what a brilliant whip you have been, what an inspirational woman you are, what a tremendous friend you are and what an amazingly caring colleague you are. This place is going to be so much the worse for you going.

Senator BILYK (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (18:42): I too rise tonight to wish all the senators leaving good luck and good fortune in whatever lies ahead. But I did tonight particularly want to mention Senator Kroger, Senator Farrell and Senator Furner and speak to their leaving this place.

Senator Kroger, it has been a pleasure to work with you. We have worked together so well in PACAN as co-convenors. It is a great parliamentary friendship group to be involved in and over the years I think we have developed a really good working relationship in regards to it. You will be missed. Yes, I saw you to tip your hands there, motioning about having a little drink! We certainly will. I was trying to keep it a bit nice because you said there were some things I was not allowed to say tonight!

Also working with you in your whip position as a fairly new deputy whip has been great. You have been very easy to work with and very cooperative, so thank you for that. As I said, I will not say too much about what happened on the bus. What happens on the bus stays on the bus between those who were on the bus! A few around the chamber who were on the bus will know what that means. But I will look forward to seeing you in Melbourne, maybe with some red legs on at some stage. Thank you for being such a good person to work with.

I also wanted to mention Senator Farrell. He mentioned being a 'faceless man' in his speech. I was going to talk about that and say he is the most well-photographed faceless man I have ever seen! He is a great man. I have got to know Don really well since we have been here. He loves his family inordinately, and I know that one of his best prizes is that he is going to be a grandad soon. He is absolutely chafing at the bit for that to happen. I do hate to tell him it is not going to happen as quick as he wants, but it will happen around Christmas time. I am excited for him because of that.

I will not go into people's work histories—they have already been spoken about tonight—but I do know that Don has always been passionate about improving the lives of workers and he has always worked hard for the people of South Australia. I do not know much about the Adelaide Crows, being a Tasmanian, but he assures me that they are the best team in South Australia and, as no-one has ever really tried to convince me otherwise, I will take his word.
on that. Both Senator Farrell and Senator Wong alluded to what happened in the last election
that resulted in Senator Farrell having to leave this place. As someone who is fairly close to
Senator Farrell, that was the time to see the character of a person come through. He did not
grizzle and he did not complain. He copped it on the chin. He could have gone berserk in the
media as other people do when they do not get what they want, but he did not do that. My dad
always says it is not what happens to you but how you handle it that truly shows what your
character is like, and in this case, Don, you have shown your character to be great, mate. I
would like to thank him also for all the support and help he has given me over the six years I
have been here. Senator Kroger, Senator Farrell, Senator Furner and I all came in together,
and I would like to wish Don and Nimfa and their family all the best.

The last person I want to mention is Senator Furner. They say if you want a friend in
politics you should get a dog. I should have called Senator Mark Furner 'Fido'. He has been
my best mate in this place, hands down. We entered parliament together, we had offices next
to each other in the beginning—I think they moved us to separate us, to tell you the truth—we
were on committees together, we spent a lot of time together, we know each other's families.
We could see tonight from his own speech what a wonderful sense of humour he has and what
a warm person he is, and I will miss him enormously. There are some things we will
always remember about him. We will always remember Drago and we will always remember,
as Senator Polley alluded to, him grabbing questions if you sat anywhere near him. One day
he grabbed my question and crumpled it up, and he did not give it back to me until right
before I stood up so I had to quickly flatten it out so I could read it. He is a great community
person. I say to him, thank you for your support and your friendship, helping me to learn the
ropes. It certainly helped to have someone I could get on with so easily, too. He is a great
family man to Lorraine and the kids, and especially to Xavia and Marley, his two beautiful
grandchildren. I hope they get to see Grandad a bit more—I know he has always missed you
when he has been down here. I hope the family does well, and I hope the Senate's loss will be
a Queensland Labor government's gain. Good luck to everyone.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (18:48): I want to pay tribute to all my
colleagues who are leaving this place. Senator Helen Kroger—I called her by the Greek name,
Eleni—and I have had a good friendship. I still owe her a yiros at Yianni's Yiros on Hindley
Street, so I hope she can take me up on that when she is next in Adelaide. She has done a
great job as Chief Government Whip and she has made a significant contribution to this place.
I wish her all the very best.

Senator Mark Furner is the quintessential good bloke—a decent bloke. We worked together
on committees and I genuinely wish him well in terms of his potential future career as a state
member of parliament.

In relation to Senator Don Farrell, I am genuinely disappointed that he will not be back in
this place. That reflects, as it does in respect of Senator Kroger, the voting system we have.
There is a need for some genuine reform in our voting system—the will of the people was not
directly reflected at the last election. It was, in a sense, subverted by a bizarre preference
system that I think needs some reform—a reform that should not go against minor parties and
Independents having a fair go. Back in 2001 Senator Farrell was the man, along with Robert
Atkins, who saved 1,500 jobs in Harris Scarfe in South Australia. He made a significant
contribution then, and, having worked with him, I am sure the fact that he will not be
returning here will be a real loss to this place. It was a real loss to the people of South Australia that he did not get an opportunity to be the member for Napier, for a number of bizarre reasons. He is a Labor stalwart and he deserved to be the member for Napier, and he could have made a contribution to public life through the state parliament. I respect his contribution enormously.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (18:50): I wish to make a couple remarks about my good friend and colleague on this side of the chamber, Senator Helen Kroger. Senator Kroger has always been a person of class in the way she conducts herself and in the undertaking of her duties as a senator and indeed in her day-to-day life. We saw that in spades with her valedictory statement this evening—the class shone through, her achievements in this place were demonstrated and her commitment to principles and values were clearly on show.

Helen's leaving will be an enormous loss to this place and to the Liberal parliamentary team but by no means will she be lost to Australia. I am confident that Helen, great friend that she is, will continue to champion the causes and the issues that are dear to her heart, will continue to speak out when it is warranted and will continue to make a big and lasting difference. I have been proud and pleased to call Helen a friend, to support her in this place and to give her support in performing her role of chief whip both in opposition and in government, and I have been delighted to see the way in which she has conducted those tasks whilst not losing sight of the fact that she is here not just as a whip to help with the administration of the place but as a senator and an individual to make a contribution to issues, to champion the causes of her constituents and to be able to demonstrate that she can do all of the different duties that come with being a senator, a member of a party, a chief whip as well as, of course, a mother.

Helen was whip during the time that our two children were born and during the time when my youngest had a couple of operations. A whip has a special role when it comes to pastoral care in this place and being able to provide assistance, time out and opportunities to deal with the matters back home. I have nothing but praise for Helen for the way in which she helped me through those times and ensured that our family had the attention and support that was needed back home whilst allowing me to get on with the job here. As many have said, Helen will be dearly, dearly missed. I associate myself with the remarks of others in that regard, and I look forward to maintaining a continuing friendship with Helen that will last many, many years—a lifetime, I am sure—into the future.

I will also quickly reflect on my South Australian colleague, Senator Farrell. Don and I may not share a lot when it comes to politics, views and policies, but I do respect him. Don has been an incredibly effective political operator in South Australia for a very long period of time. He is one of the reasons the South Australian Labor Party has been electorally dominant at a state level in SA for such a period of time. He deserves credit and respect for what he has done in backroom roles in that regard. I also know that in this place Don has been somebody to champion the issues and values that are important to him and to those who put him here. A couple of months ago I had the pleasure of welcoming the historic clipper ship City of Adelaide back to Adelaide. It had been saved from being demolished and destroyed in a shipyard in Scotland, thanks to the work of Senator Farrell. When he was parliamentary secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Farrell ensured that the
ship could be returned and that that piece of Adelaide's history would come back to Adelaide. That is one of his accomplishments.

In this place I will miss hearing some of the war history and family history that Senator Farrell has shared with us many times during the adjournment debates. His stories have always been thoughtful and considered, and a demonstration as to why he was an appropriate fit to be the shadow minister for veterans' affairs, given the deep sense of commitment he has shown to those issues. I do wish Don as well as his wife, Nimfa, and family all the best for the future, and I am sure I will run into them in the Clare Valley at an appropriate time in the years ahead.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (18:55): I just want to take a moment to place on record my great admiration for our whip and current colleague, Senator Kroger, as she departs from this place. Again, on the record, I want to associate myself with all of the other things that others have said with far more time at their disposal. Helen has been a great contributor to this place and to Australia so far, but I know she has a lot more to contribute to public life in Australia, and I would certainly and fervently hope and expect to see her talents being used again for the benefit of her state and her country. Competent, compassionate, courageous and intelligent are just some of the words I would use to describe Helen. The vagaries of politics and the preselection process are such in our party that you can never really anticipate what is going to happen or why things happen, but it is such a shame that she is leaving us after too short a time here. I wish her all the very best for the future and, like my colleagues, I am certain that we will see a lot of her in the future in many different roles. I will conclude by wishing all the Labor senators who are leaving us next week all the very best for the future. I repeat my good wishes to Senator Furner. I said I wished him well for the future, but not in his political future, as he takes on a sitting LNP member in the state parliament in the time ahead. But apart from that, he and his colleagues go with my best wishes.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Middle East

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (18:58): I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech on the matter of public importance incorporated into Hansard.

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—

Given the written answer to the second question on notice that Ms Bishop received from the then Minister for Trade, representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs, it is clear that the Abbott government, in questioning the terminology and in questioning the illegality of settlements, was acting in a manner contrary to the accepted or expected standard or practice.

It is clear that the Abbott government has been acting in a perverse manner on the Middle East peace process, and yet what has now happened is that Senator Brandis has been gagged. In his capacity of representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Senate, Senator Brandis, when asked about the response of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's Council of Foreign Ministers to his comments, took the question on notice. Here I would reiterate that the Council had blasted 'the orientation of the Australian government not to describe the city as occupied.'
On the same day as the foreign minister met with the delegation of ambassadors, Senator Brandis appeared on the ABC's 7:30 Report. In the interview, Senator Brandis was asked if he was being censored by the foreign minister. Senator Brandis's response was:

Well, that's not correct. I represent the foreign minister in the Senate.

Senator Brandis was then asked to clarify whether the eastern part of Jerusalem is occupied and, after a heated exchange where he was overly defensive, he stated:

I'm not going to indulge your desire for me to play word games.

As the interviewer reminded Senator Brandis, while he might call these word games, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation met in Saudi Arabia later that evening, and the Senate is well aware of the Council's comments with regard to Australia's word games. Enough is enough—a clear statement is needed. Australia must hold a clear position on the Middle East peace process that highlights the wrongs of both sides, and does not seek to brush any inconveniences under the table for short-term appeasement of interest groups. For the sake of the peace process and for Palestinians and Israelis, I ask the government to abandon the hastily-announced decision of last week, and to issue an apology to the Palestinian people and their supporters.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Whish-Wilson) (18:58): Order! I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

Canberra

Senator LUNDY (Australian Capital Territory) (18:58): About three months ago, on 12 March, our nation's capital turned 101 years old. While members of the parliament can be forgiven for overlooking this lesser milestone, as a proud senator for the ACT I am motivated to report on the significance of what happened the day before—a birthday ceremony at City Hill, just down the road from Parliament House, to unveil an imposing eight-metre-high Canberra Centenary Column, and to bury a time capsule until the date of 2114.

Speeches given on the day by ACT Chief Minister Katy Gallagher, cultural historian Dr David Headon and Canberra CBD Ltd's Manny Notaras kept returning to a comment made by the centenary of Canberra's creative director, Robyn Archer, a comment that was her operating mantra throughout her years in the job—namely, that Canberra's centenary would only be fully franked, would only be historically and culturally endorsed, by the range and depth of the legacy projects that followed over the ensuing months, years and decades. This is now our challenge. This city of Canberra has a wonderful story, a unique story and, as our national capital, a grand foundation narrative. It is a story we are proud of and one that deserves to be shared. In the centenary aftermath, and whenever the opportunity presents itself, I intend to keep doing that—starting tonight.

The City Hill event taught us more about the foundation stones and naming ceremonies that took place on Capital Hill a hundred years ago. People will be familiar with the large circle of stones just down at the forecourt here. Back then, the then Minister for Home Affairs, King O'Malley, while organising the foundation stones to be laid with golden trowels, did not get his piece de resistance—a column to sit atop those stones.

The generosity of the Canberra CBD Ltd group has ensured that, a century on, in a symbolically linked location—one point of that equilateral triangle joined by Commonwealth Avenue across Lake Burley Griffin—King O'Malley has finally got his wish. Dr Headon
referred to this as 'unfinished business' and it is this theme I would like to explore tonight. Surely we want to be a country that knows much more about its Federation past, its roots as a nation, than just the name of its first Prime Minister. Surely we want to be a country not only familiar with the big story of our national capital but also committed to plugging the gaps in our knowledge, discovering exciting new chapters, telling it how it really is and was, and attending to that unfinished business.

In recent decades, we have all relished the increase in the critical mass of national institutions, along with the steep rise in the number of quality exhibitions. I am talking about the addition of institutions like the National Museum, built on the foreshore of Lake Burley Griffin, and the National Portrait Gallery—as well as the extraordinary steps taken to improve the National Gallery of Australia. There have been quality exhibitions in places like the National Archives, as well as some marvellous blockbuster exhibitions held through the course of our centenary year. These included the wonderful *Mapping our World* exhibition at the National Library of Australia; the Griffins exhibition at the National Archives, which showcased the beautiful Marion Mahony Griffin watercolours that were the entry into the competition for the design of the city of Canberra; the *Glorious Days: Australia 1913* exhibition at the National Museum; and the *Renaissance* exhibition of works by the great European masters, which followed the great tradition of blockbusters at the National Gallery of Australia. Many Australians, from right across the continent, have now adopted the immensely satisfying habit of regularly visiting their national capital city, engaging up close and personal with some of the world's—and of course Australia's—most extraordinary works of art and items of cultural heritage.

Permit me to depart from my intended focus, but I cannot help but mention my concern about some of the budget cuts to our national cultural institutions in the context of reflecting back on the wonderful contribution they make to civil life in Australia. I am concerned about that. We explored it quite thoroughly at Senate estimates. I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary work of everybody employed and playing a volunteer role in each and every one of our national cultural institutions, both here in Canberra and around the nation.

While the National Botanic Gardens might not enjoy quite the same high-profile status as some of the institutions I have mentioned, it is firmly entrenched as one of my favourite Canberra places. When visiting the gardens, you are embraced by one of the city's most tranquil environments, featuring a unique and encyclopedic selection of native flora. It is in fact the largest living collection of Australian native flora in the world. It is here in our own backyard in the national capital and accessible to all who want to see it. It has its own fan club, the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Gardens. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge them. They are a group of volunteers, as you would expect, who spend their time making sure that visitors to the gardens have a fulfilling tour and that the interests of the gardens are brought to the attention of those who need to know. They work very closely and constructively with the management of the Australian National Botanic Gardens.

The gardens, however, have something more—a robust connection to a Federation past that other institutions cannot boast. This connection to some of Canberra's earliest and most revered individuals and anecdotes makes the gardens perhaps the most important exemplar of
Canberra's primary, city-defining narrative—its globally significant, 'garden city, bush capital' story. To uncover these roots, however, you have to dig back into our past a little bit.

In May 1901, as we know, the first Commonwealth parliamentarians met in Melbourne. Australia's switched-on design professionals of the day, however—well aware that section 125 of the new Constitution confirmed that the capital city must actually be built—were not willing to simply let the politicians make all the running on the shape and, above all, the character of the national capital to come. So, in the same month of May 1901 that the elected representatives met for the first time, a remarkable gathering took place. It was called 'The Congress of Engineers, Architects, Surveyors, and Others Interested in the Building of the Federal Capital of Australia'. There were some great speeches delivered, genuinely visionary. Arguably, though, none were better than one by Charles Bogue Luffman, Director of the Royal Horticultural Gardens in Burnley, Melbourne. For the future federal city, Luffman advocated:

… a true botanic garden … representing Australian flora … with a library, and a museum for preserved specimens.

Many decades ahead of his time, Luffman also issued a warning—that in the national capital we should 'beware of introducing an exotic plan or arrangement of scenes'. He did not want the new citizens of the new capital to look out, again in his memorable phrasing, 'on bits of Italy, or Norway, or Japan'. Luffman imagined a diverse and detailed representation of Australian flora:

…our Gippsland stream and valley, our Blue Mountain escarpment, timbered crag, wind-swept cataract and highland plateau, for waratah, rock lily, kurrajong, banksia, wattle, and flannel flower.

What an enlightened and noble vision. Bogue Luffman was the liberated forerunner of a small but utterly crucial stream of individuals whose appetite for hard work, singular determination, dense knowledge of local flora, and professional commitment established Canberra's impeccable landscape credentials.

There was link from Luffman that could have been lost if it were not for Charles Weston, an English-born horticulturalist and arboriculturalist turned Canberra zealot. Weston, as we learnt recently on an ABC 7.30 Report segment, honed his craft at Drumlanrig Castle in Scotland and then, in 1896, migrated to Australia and became head gardener at Admiralty House in Sydney. On 5 May 1913, he took up residence here in Canberra, at Acton, near what is now the site of the National Museum.

When, in February this year, the National Capital Authority launched its National Capital Open Space System (NCOSS) Review Report, it flagged a continuing, rock-solid commitment to Canberra as a global garden city showcase into the long-term future. With its acknowledgement of the fine work of federation-era characters such as Charles Weston, the Griffins, John Sulman and others, this report is a welcome if not perhaps overdue document. It comes at a key time in the evolution of the national capital.

The report is the culmination of an extensive research project undertaken in conjunction with the University of Canberra, and it represents 'the first comprehensive examination of the National Capital Open Space System since the early 1990s'. It contains ten carefully considered recommendations, and these recommendations, compiled by an expert reference group, provide us with a mature, authoritative way forward. I commend the report to the Senate. It makes very interesting reading. (Time expired)
Role Models and Leaders Australia

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (19:08): Tonight I rise to commend the work being done by Role Models and Leaders Australia through their educational programs in Australia, and also to inform the chamber of my recent visits to their sites, including the Clontarf Girls Academy, in my own home state of Western Australia, and the Centralian Girls Academy, in Alice Springs.

For those who have not previously heard of Role Models and Leaders Australia, it is a private-sector-led, not-for-profit organisation that aims to develop and empower young Aboriginal girls, through leadership, sport, development and, of course, the all-important education. The RMLA girls academies are funded by the Prime Minister and Cabinet Sporting Chance Programme, together with support from a range of state government authorities and many corporate partners.

The girls academy program, based in high schools, focuses on Aboriginal girls in years 7 through to 12 who experience poverty, sickness, misfortune or disconnectedness from their community. They believe that Aboriginal women play a pivotal role in Australian Aboriginal families and communities, yet their needs are often overlooked.

There were programs available for Aboriginal boys, yet the girls' needs were being overlooked. That is where Ricky Grace, a former basketball player, and his Role Models and Leaders Australia have created such a wonderful program, because they have created an environment within schools where the girls receive the support and programs needed to help them realise their full potential.

Since opening its first academy in 2005, RMLA has expanded throughout Western Australia, the Northern Territory and New South Wales and currently has 12 girls academies established. One of the key objectives of the RMLA girls academy programs is to focus on increasing retention rates and levels of attainment for young at-risk Indigenous female students in year 7 through to year 12.

The academy program supports the partner schools across Australia to build healthy attitudes to learning by using sport as a motivator and tool for engagement; to provide Indigenous role models to act as guides and mentors to the girls; to provide leadership, teamwork and vision-development opportunities to improve the girls' skills, sense of belonging and commitment, and their capacity to explore the future in a positive way; to build strong partnerships with the parent and Indigenous community to build bridges between the school and wider community; to improve Indigenous literacy and numeracy levels; and to provide business networks and links to secure the best fit for work placements and traineeships that suit the individual needs and interests of the students.

I am also pleased to say that I have witnessed first-hand the wonderful work the academy does to promote the importance of young Indigenous girls in the community. My first visit, in May, was to the Clontarf Girls Academy in Perth. I met with many of the girls who are in the program and spoke to them about their aspirations and interests.

Terry Boland told me about the students who have come through the Academy, and their stories. I learnt about a student who graduated in 2012 and had been in the program since 2009. She made her own way to school every day, leading her class in all areas of study, was
a major part of the sporting program, and was one of the most mature and friendly students enrolled at the academy. In December 2010, when she was only 15 years old, she began a traineeship at a local bank branch and completed one year of this traineeship as a bank teller. She showed great commitment to this position, despite admitting that she really did not enjoy the job. In late 2011, when one of the Academy's sponsors, Nestle, met with Clontarf Girls Academy staff about the opportunity to place two of the girls into a merchandiser traineeship, she took up the opportunity. She never once missed a day of work and even willingly gave up her term 3 holidays to work full-time with Nestle in order to complete her traineeship requirements. This student aspired to complete a bachelor's degree and was employed by Nestle in 2013 as an entry level merchandiser.

Whilst at Clontarf Girls Academy I was also told about the 6th Annual Role Models and Leaders Australia Academy Showcase, which was hosted by the Perth Girls Academy, from Sunday 15 June to Wednesday 18 June. This event saw 130 Indigenous secondary school girls from across Western Australia, the Northern Territory and New South Wales join together in a celebration of sport, identity and friendship. The girls came from nine of the 12 RMLA girls academies operating across Western Australia, the Northern Territory and New South Wales, and marked the first visit by students from the Kununurra, Roebourne, and Coonamble girls academies. Other academies participating included Palmerston, in the Northern Territory; Alice Springs; Fitzroy, in Western Australia; Derby, in Western Australia; Bunbury in Western Australia; and Perth.

The girls truly earned this trip to Perth, showing so much potential with their positive attitudes, with their great school attendance records and in being fearless leaders from within their communities. The showcase was an opportunity for them to develop their teamwork and leadership abilities. But the academy showcase is much more than a basketball tournament; it is an opportunity for all Role Models and Leaders Australia's girls' academies to come together and celebrate each other. Over the three days the girls showed their sporting skills on the basketball court, met girls and staff from other academies, and learned more about Noongar culture. As young Indigenous women, they will be the role models for future generations.

I also had the opportunity in late May to visit the Centralian Girls Academy, including the Centralian Senior College and Centralian Middle School in Alice Springs. The Centralian Senior College is the only senior secondary college within a 500-kilometre radius of Alice Springs. Yet, despite the tyranny of distance, the senior college has over 410 students in Years 10, 11 and 12 and an attendance rate of 77 per cent. I had the opportunity to meet with the program director, Beverley Angeles, and many of the girls over a lunch where we spoke about politics in Australia, my career journey and the girls' own aspirations. From wanting to be a beautician to a lawyer to an Indigenous liaison officer, these young women are passionate, hungry to learn and hungry to lead.

I also learned about another previous student's experience with the academy. This student came from a small community outside of Alice Springs. She was painfully shy and found it confronting to participate and to engage in the girls' academy classes. The program managers did lots of one-on-one mentoring with her over the course of the first term. In term 2 she blossomed, and in May she won the award for the student of the month. She took on a leadership role in the academy classes and participated in a radio interview on CAAMA
Radio to promote the academy's fundraiser event as well as the girls' academy. This girl's confidence and self-esteem grew and she became the unofficial ambassador for the girls' academy. These are just a few of the so many wonderful success stories from the girls' academies across Australia. The Australian government is committed to an Australian society where women have equal opportunities to fully participate in all areas of society, including paid employment, and are supported to take up leadership and decision-making roles. The girls' academies truly do make a real difference in the long term to achieving this level of participation and leadership that the Australian government also prioritises.

I would like to thank all the program managers and development officers who have built strong and nurturing relationships with the girls. They are the other mums and big sisters who provide day-to-day support and mentoring. They all must be so proud of their students and they deserve thanks and gratitude for being these young girls' champions in their schooling life. I would also like to congratulate each and every young woman enrolled at the academies and to tell them that they truly do have the world at their feet and their schooling career is only the beginning of inspiring futures for them all. I look forward to visiting more of the Role Models and Leaders Australia's girls' academies and meeting with these inspirational young leaders over the coming months.

**Coal Seam Gas**

*Senator WATERS* (Queensland) (19:18): I rise to place on the public record some alarming new information regarding the assessment and approvals of two large coal seam gas projects in my home state of Queensland and the events which followed and to draw attention to the cosy relationships between the CSG industry and key decision makers. I have recently become aware of a series of events following complaints made to the Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission—the CMC—about the environmental assessment process for Queensland Gas Company and Santos projects in Queensland's west and the associated export terminals near the Port of Gladstone.

I understand that the CMC received complaints from two individuals, Mr Drew Hutton and Ms Simone Marsh, on 18 and 19 February 2013. Those complaints alleged that undue pressure had been placed on departmental staff by senior public servants and by the CSG companies. They also pointed out that the companies had failed to provide critical data which was a prerequisite for environmental approval under the Queensland's Environmental Protection Act, including baseline studies of the areas to be affected, maps of proposed works and cumulative impact assessments.

Simone Marsh, who appeared as a whistleblower about these matters on ABC's *Four Corners* program in April 2013, worked within the state government on the approval. She raised concerns at the time that the proponents had failed to provide this very basic data. Ms Marsh was called into a meeting one day and was told point-blank that the projects would be approved, regardless of whether adequate assessments had been done. She was told that there would be no groundwater chapter in the report, despite the fact that it was a key impact of the projects. Her superiors gave no explanation. She was given half a day to write the climate change chapter of the report, despite having no time to review the source materials. An internal email from a senior public servant dated before the approvals were given says that the assessment process:
Wednesday, 25 June 2014

... has been difficult and uncertain without the full suite of information normally available. We are mindful of the CG's Report being able to provide a 'bankable' outcome.

That was a bankable outcome—not a rigorous assessment, but a bankable outcome. In the days after the CMC complaints were lodged, two meetings occurred which I believe raise very serious issues.

The Premier of Queensland's diary for that period records that on the very next day after the CMC received the commission complaints, 20 February, Premier Newman and others met with the chair and deputy chair of the CMC. We only know that the meeting occurred, not what was discussed. Then on the following day, 21 February, the premier met with Rob Millhouse, the vice president of QGC, which is one of the CSG companies the complaints were about. Again, we do not know what was discussed. The CMC dropped their investigation later that year, in September 2013, offering an inadequate explanation.

I do not stand here to unfairly implicate individuals in wrongdoing. However, when it comes to CSG, our rural communities, our natural environment, our water and our climate hang in the balance. We have a right to ask whether our decision-making processes have been compromised.

Particular questions arise for me when I hear about the connections and career trajectories of some of the individuals present at those meetings. For example, the Premier's diary indicates that among those present at the meeting with the CMC were the Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Mr Jon Grayson, and the Premier's Chief of Staff, Mr Ben Myers.

At that time, Mr Grayson owned a 25 per cent stake in a CSG services company; the other 75 per cent was owned by the Queensland arm of the now disgraced Australian Water Holdings. Mr Grayson had served as a director of the company until 2012. The two other directors were Tony Bellas, and the now disgraced New South Wales Liberal fundraiser Nick Di Girolamo. While holding that ownership stake, Mr Grayson had provided advice on CSG and water issues to the Premier.

Mr Grayson has recently sold his stake in the CSG sector, after mounting media attention. But there are also family connections to CSG that are worth noting. Jon Grayson's nephew Mitch Grayson had been a staffer for Premier Newman in 2012 and, by early 2013, had joined CSG company, Santos. Mitch Grayson is now back working for the Premier. When asked how he resolved these conflicts of interest, a spokesperson for Mr Jon Grayson said:

Mr Grayson does not accept he has a conflict of interest, potential or otherwise. That is an astounding statement, and it leaves me with little confidence in his ability to even recognise, let alone resolve, conflicts of interest.

Another participant at the meeting with the CMC was the Premier's Chief of Staff, Ben Myers. He used to work for QGC. A subsequent meeting with QGC on 21 February took place in his office. So the Premier met with the CMC, alongside individuals who appear to be closely connected to the industry, and then the next day he runs off to meet with a CSG company executive. These meetings raise questions which the Premier must answer. Is it merely a coincidence that just days after the CMC received a potentially explosive complaint about corporate and political misconduct, the Premier met in quick succession with the CMC and then with the very company against whom the complaint was directed? Is the Premier...
usually privy to CMC investigations? What was discussed in the Premier's meeting with QGC? Did he tip them off about the CMC complaints? Did the Premier or QGC exert any influence or other 'encouragement' for the CMC to abandon their investigation? The Queensland farmers and coastal communities who will be impacted by coal seam gas fields and ports have a right to know how the Premier and his staff managed the conflicts of interest present in that room. I call on the Premier and the CMC to disclose all meetings and correspondence between the Premier's office, the CMC and QGC regarding these two complaints.

In the months following those meetings, there was a mass exodus at the CMC. In May 2013, a Dr Ken Levy took over as acting chair. Dr Levy is widely viewed as too close to the Newman government since writing a newspaper column supporting the controversial anti-association laws. He initially denied being pressured by the Premier's office to write the column but then admitted that the Premier's chief media adviser had called him, apparently to coach him on what to say to the media. The Queensland parliamentary CMC oversight committee began an investigation, and Dr Levy told them in November 2013 that he had refrained from criticism of the Newman government for fear that they would abolish the CMC entirely. The Premier then sacked that parliamentary CMC oversight committee and Dr Levy is now under police investigation.

In the intervening months before the February complaints were made and the September dropping of the complaints, another set of meetings took place. First, the Premier, along with the Attorney-General, met with Dr Levy on 8 August. Second, the Attorney-General met with top resources industry lobbyist Michael Roche from the Queensland Resources Council on 5 September. Third, on the very same day, the Attorney-General met with Dr Levy again. We do not know what was discussed—only that the meetings occurred.

Under Dr Levy's oversight, in September 2013 the CMC announced that the investigation into Ms Marsh and Mr Hutton's complaints would be dropped. It stated that the investigation had found 'no evidence' of any unlawful activity. This is a staggering finding. After being presented with a mountain of documents, including what looks to me like clear evidence that CSG approvals were given unlawfully, it is very difficult to believe that there was 'no evidence'. The CMC has never responded to repeated written requests for a copy of their assessment report setting out the reasons for dropping the investigation. It is my understanding that assessment reports are usually provided as a matter of course—not in this case. I call on the CMC to publish the assessment report in relation to these complaints. Queenslanders must be assured that the investigation was conducted in an independent and unbiased manner. This long series of events would lead any reasonable person to the conclusion that the Premier pressured the CMC to drop the investigation.

In relation to this matter I would like to seek leave to table four documents. I note that these documents are already in the public domain and that the whips have cleared such tabling. The documents include the Premier's diary for the relevant period; an email from 2010 from Mr Ian Fletcher, addressed to the Queensland Treasurer; subsequent internal emails; and an email from 2010 from Ms Marsh, addressed to the Deputy Coordinator-General and the Assistant Coordinator-General.

There are questions which the Premier must answer. Did he inappropriately pressure Dr Ken Levy to drop the CSG complaint? Did he ever threaten to abolish the CMC? Has he
suppressed the assessment report in relation to the complaints? I call on the Premier to show some moral leadership and, if he cannot, I call on my fellow Queenslanders to show him the door. I seek leave to table the documents.

Leave not granted.

Queensland: Sugar Industry

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Queensland) (19:28): I rise tonight to continue to speak on a matter that is, on the one hand, of great interest and, on the other, of great concern in my state of Queensland. To reference the subject of my speech, it is about the marketing arrangements that exist in the sugar industry in my home state. For over 100 years, the sugar industry in Queensland has had a single marketing desk. For a long period of time the industry was regulated but for a considerable period of time now it has been unregulated, with Queensland Sugar Ltd marketing the economic interests of sugar growers right throughout the state internationally.

QSL is a not-for-profit company that is owned by the growers and millers in that state, where any profits generated by their trading performances are returned to the growers, producers and millers in the form of enhanced and attractive payments in the pools that are offered in the year following. QSL was not formed accidentally; it was the result of a royal commission in my home state in 1912, where, with the development of QSL, an attempt was made to deal with an imbalance in market power that was held by the millers over the interests of the growers. It was created so that the rights of, and the risks and rewards to, growers and millers were equalised and balanced, producing what is now known as the economic interest of growers in two-thirds of the sugar that they deliver to mills for processing. This two-third/one-third agreement has been enshrined contractually for generations within the sugar industry through the raw sugar supply agreement between the millers and QSL and the supply agreement between growers and their mills. It is regarded as a longstanding convention and it is regarded to be in the economic interests of Queensland growers.

On 20 May this year Wilmar International, a multinational company based in Singapore, who has a substantial interest in the sugar industry in Queensland—in fact, control over two-thirds of the sugar that is processed in my home state—notified QSL that it would be withdrawing from the collective single desk marketing arrangements, effective 2017. This has resulted in a significant reaction from the growers in my state. In fact, we have established that over 1,600—getting up towards 50 per cent—of the grower-producers in Queensland have written to Wilmar. These include, I understand, most Wilmar grower-producers and suppliers, as well as growers who are not attached to the Wilmar mills, who have indicated to Wilmar that they do not want the QSL arrangement weakened by alternative marketing options.

Before anybody challenges us in relation to free market arrangements, there is no challenge to the ability on the part of Wilmar to be able to market their share of the sugar. This is about Wilmar properly recognising 100 years of convention, where growers have a two-third interest in that product when it is delivered to their mills. Sugar is somewhat different to other agricultural commodities in that there is quite a short harvest period, where the harvest is delivered to the mills in the region predominantly by a light rail system. Unlike grains, sugar cannot be stored. Therefore, the owners of the sugar—the grower-producers—do not have the
same ability as a grain producer to bide their time with respect to where and when they might market the commodity. Unlike grain, once harvested, sugar has to be processed within a matter of hours, otherwise it starts to lose moisture, and then the capacity to process the sugar content diminishes to a point where the sugar is effectively spoiled after a short period of time.

The challenge here is to be able to accommodate Wilmar's lawful rights to be able to market sugar but not at the expense of taking away the rights of grower-producers. Grower-producers in my home state have made very substantial investment decisions over the last 100 years, and in some cases over recent decades, based on the prospect that they will produce a commodity in which they will have a continued interest after harvest and after processing into the marketing arrangements. This affords our grower-producers in Queensland the opportunity to decide whether they engage in selling their sugar interest through a low-risk pool, a medium-risk pool or indeed a high-risk pool. They know that, no matter what the outcome, because they are shareholders along with their miller partners, they will share in any of the benefits that are developed as a result of those sales.

Additionally, in 2010, Wilmar and other millers had no difficulty at all in recognising this economic interest to the growers, when QSL, due to inclement weather that prevented the harvest from being completed, were unable to meet about $110 million worth of international contracts. This was the cost of the penalties incurred by that company. Those penalties were properly, in recognition of growers' interests, sheeted back home to the growers and the millers. The growers in my state collectively stumped up about $66 million.

All I want for my state, and all the grower-producers in my state want, is a free market environment. For that to occur, there has to be choice, there has to be transparency and there has to be competitive tension—that is, of course, unless it is a single desk that is owned, where the interests of that single desk are owned by the grower-producers. The call has gone out to Wilmar to consider—and it has been coined as a phrase—the growers' choice. The growers' choice is not a request but a demand on Wilmar that they recognise the economic interest of these growers that has existed for over 100 years and that recognises the ability of grower-producers to harvest the benefits and expose themselves to the risks that markets produce for the produce that they and their families grow—and in some instances have grown for four or five decades. I have said before—and others have said it also—that, collectively, those of us who have any capacity to influence the decisions that will result from this departure of Wilmar from QSL will not relent until such time as those growers' interests are recognised.

I understand that our agricultural minister in the state of Queensland has urged Wilmar to consider this. I understand that our federal agricultural minister has made like statements and intends to elevate his rhetoric in relation to this matter in the near future. I call on Wilmar simply to respect the 100 year convention of the 4,000 families who have nourished them to date in my home state.

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Gallacher):** Earlier Senator Waters sought leave to table some documents. Now that the documents have been circulated, is leave granted?
Leave granted.
Senate adjourned at 19:38

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The following documents were tabled:


Migration Act 1958—Section 486O—Assessment of detention arrangements—Personal identifiers
1001441, 1001416, 1001330, 1001456, 1001444, 1001286, 1001272, 1001238, 1001446, 1001376, 1001203, 1001240, 1001447, 1001207, 1001350, 1001337, 1001414, 1001220, 1001071, 1001172, 1001258, 1001403, 1001404, 1001081, 1001232, 1001119, 1001068, 1001422, 1001360, 1001382, 1001452, 1001010, 1001124, 1001216, 1001383, 1001389, 1001209, 1001224, 1000747, 1001213, 1001212, 1001066, 1001214, 1001211, 1001179, 1001236—


Government response to Ombudsman's reports, dated 17 June 2014.