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<th>SITTING DAYS—2009</th>
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FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SIXTH PERIOD

Governor-General
Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Companion of the Order of Australia

Senate Officeholders

President—Senator Hon. John Joseph Hogg
Deputy President and Chair of Committees—Senator Hon. Alan Baird Ferguson
Temporary Chairs of Committees—Senators Guy Barnett, Cory Bernardi,
Thomas Mark Bishop, Carol Louise Brown, Patricia Margaret Crossin,
Michael George Forshaw, Gary John Joseph Humphries, Annette Kay Hurley,
Stephen Patrick Hutchins, Gavin Mark Marshall, Julian John James McGauran,
Claire Mary Moore, Stephen Shane Parry, Hon. Judith Mary Troeth and Russell Brunell Trood

Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. Christopher Vaughan Evans
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. Stephen Michael Conroy
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator Hon. Eric Abetz
Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator Hon. Joseph William Ludwig
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator Stephen Shane Parry

Senate Party Leaders and Whips

Leader of the Australian Labor Party—Senator Hon. Christopher Vaughan Evans
Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party—Senator Hon. Stephen Michael Conroy
Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia—Senator Hon. Nicholas Hugh Minchin
Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia—Senator Hon. Eric Abetz
Leader of the Nationals—Senator Barnaby Thomas Gerard Joyce
Deputy Leader of the Nationals—Senator Fiona Nash
Leader of the Australian Greens—Senator Robert James Brown
Deputy Leader of the Australian Greens—Senator Christine Anne Milne
Leader of the Family First Party—Senator Steve Fielding
Chief Government Whip—Senator Kerry Williams Kelso O’Brien
Deputy Government Whips—Senators Donald Edward Farrell and Anne McEwen
Chief Opposition Whip—Senator Stephen Shane Parry
Deputy Opposition Whips—Senators Judith Anne Adams and David Christopher Bushby
The Nationals Whip—Senator John Reginald Williams
Australian Greens Whip—Senator Rachel Mary Siewert
Family First Party Whip—Senator Steve Fielding

Printed by authority of the Senate
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(1) Chosen by the Parliament of South Australia to fill a casual vacancy vice Amanda Eloise Vanstone, resigned.
(2) Chosen by the Parliament of Western Australia to fill a casual vacancy vice Ian Campbell, resigned.
(3) Chosen by the Parliament of Western Australia to fill a casual vacancy vice Christopher Martin Ellison, resigned.
(4) Term expires at close of day next preceding the polling day for the general election of members of the House of Representatives.

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; CLP—Country Liberal Party; FF—Family First Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals

Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—H Evans
Clerk of the House of Representatives—I C Harris
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—A Thompson
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<th>Ministry</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Hon. Kevin Rudd, MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Minister for Employment</td>
<td>Hon. Julia Gillard, MP</td>
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<td>and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon. Wayne Swan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration and Citizenship and Leader of the Government</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Chris Evans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence and Vice President of the Executive Council</td>
<td>Senator Hon. John Faulkner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade</td>
<td>Hon. Simon Crean MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Leader of the House</td>
<td>Hon. Stephen Smith MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>Hon. Nicola Roxon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Jenny Macklin MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Finance and Deregulation</td>
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<td>Government and Leader of the House</td>
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<td>Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research</td>
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<td>Senator Hon. Penny Wong</td>
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<td>Hon. Peter Garrett AM, MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>Hon. Robert McClelland MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary, Special Minister of State and Manager of Government</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Joe Ludwig</td>
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<td>Business in the Senate</td>
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<td>Hon. Martin Ferguson AM, MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Financial Services, Superannuation and Corporate Law and</td>
<td>Hon. Chris Bowen, MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
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[The above ministers constitute the cabinet]
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Alan Griffin MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Housing and Minister for the Status of Women</td>
<td>Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Home Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
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<td>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<td>Hon. Dr Craig Emerson MP</td>
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<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Nick Sherry</td>
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<td>Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>Hon. Justine Elliot MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth and Minister for Sport</td>
<td>Hon. Kate Ellis MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Personnel, Materiel and Science and Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change</td>
<td>Hon. Greg Combet AM, MP</td>
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<td>Minister for Employment Participation and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Government Service Delivery</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Mark Arbib</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon. Maxine McKew MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support and Parliamentary Secretary for Water</td>
<td>Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM, MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Western and Northern Australia Services and Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction</td>
<td>Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children’s</td>
<td>Hon. Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Duncan Kerr SC, MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Parliamentary Secretary for Trade</td>
<td>Hon. Anthony Byrne MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector and Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Ursula Stephens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Industry and Innovation</td>
<td>Hon. Richard Marles MP</td>
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SHADOW MINISTRY

Leader of the Opposition
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Leader of the Opposition
Shadow Minister for Trade, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government and Leader of The Nationals
Shadow Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Leader of the Opposition in the Senate
Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate
Shadow Treasurer
Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training and Manager of Opposition Business in the House
Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and COAG and Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader on Emissions Trading Design
Shadow Minister for Finance, Competition Policy and Deregulation
Shadow Minister for Human Services and Deputy Leader of The Nationals
Shadow Minister for Energy and Resources
Shadow Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Shadow Special Minister of State and Shadow Cabinet Secretary
Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water
Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing
Shadow Minister for Defence
Shadow Attorney-General
Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
Shadow Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors, Tourism and the Arts

The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP
The Hon. Julie Bishop MP
The Hon. Warren Truss MP
Senator the Hon. Nick Minchin
Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz
The Hon. Joe Hockey MP
The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
The Hon. Andrew Robb AO, MP
Senator the Hon. Helen Coonan
Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion
The Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP
The Hon. Tony Abbott MP
Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson
The Hon. Greg Hunt MP
The Hon. Peter Dutton MP
Senator the Hon. David Johnston
Senator the Hon. George Brandis SC
The Hon. John Cobb MP
Mr Michael Keenan MP
The Hon. Dr Sharman Stone
Mr Steven Ciobo

[The above constitute the shadow cabinet]
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The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. John Hogg) took the chair at 12.30 pm and read prayers.

QUESTION TIME

The PRESIDENT (12.31 pm)—Order! In respect of points of order that were taken at question time on 17 August, I make the following statement. Yesterday after question time points of order were taken and a request was made that they be referred to me.

It was suggested that, whenever a point of order is raised during question time, I should explicitly rule on whether the point of order is upheld. As was pointed out in the discussion yesterday, the relevant standing order requires that I determine points of order but does not require that I explicitly make a ruling as such. I attempt to keep my responses to points of order as brief as possible so as to cause the minimum interruption to question time.

It was also suggested that I need not hear additional arguments on points of order before determining them. That is quite correct; it is in the discretion of the President as to how much argument is allowed before a point of order is determined. My general approach is that, if a senator wishes to respond to a point of order, it is courteous for me to hear what that senator has to say, provided that it is brief and to the point. I would encourage senators not to discuss points of order at length unless they raise really significant issues, particularly at question time.

Most of the points of order at question time relate to the relevance of ministers’ answers. I think I should reiterate a point made by President Beahan in a statement he made in 1995. There is a tendency to confuse relevance with responsiveness. A minister, in giving an answer, may be relevant to the question, and may be directly relevant to the question, without necessarily providing the response that the questioner believes should be given. Relevance means relevance to the subject matter of the question.

As presidents have ruled over many years, the chair has no power to direct a minister how to answer a question. If, however, I consider that ministers are not being directly relevant to the question, I draw their attention to the question, and sometimes ask them to return to the question, while reminding them of the time they have available to answer it. I will continue to do so in appropriate cases.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (12.33 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the Senate take note of the statement.

Mr President, thank you for responding promptly to the matters raised yesterday. In relation to the second paragraph of your statement, can I inquire: if you determine a point of order but then do not tell the Senate that you have determined it or in which way you have determined it, how is the Senate supposed to know whether the point is valid or otherwise?

Also, in relation to the penultimate paragraph of your statement, whilst I understand the difference between responsiveness and relevance, it does, with respect, Mr President, seem to many of us that, if a minister is not being directly relevant, certainly you cannot direct them how to answer, but you can direct them to sit down having failed to answer the question, which is what question time is all about. Question time is not a game; question time is not for political rhetoric; it is about seeking information from ministers. It is not about giving ministers an opportunity to speak for four minutes or two minutes on a subject of their own choosing; it is meant to try and give senators information—facts—that a senator might require.
Yesterday, when a senator asked whether legal advice had been sought or given, the Senate wanted to know not what the legal advice was but whether the minister had sought it. The minister then got up and said, ‘I refuse to answer the question,’ and then spent two minutes waffling about nothing. Having said that she was not going to answer the question she should have then, with respect, Mr President, been sat down and told, ‘You don’t have to answer it, but you’ve indicated you are not going to answer it; therefore sit down and let the Senate get on with the rest of its work.’

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland) (12.36 pm)—Mr President, might I at the start indicate that I completely agree with what Senator Macdonald said, in particular the last observation he made. That is incontrovertibly so. If a minister says, ‘I am not going to answer this question,’ then, whatever else they may say, it is not an answer to the question. Can I direct you, Mr President, to the penultimate paragraph of your statement. Might I respectfully suggest that, although the distinction between relevance and responsiveness is a real distinction, the manner in which it is expressed by you in this statement is so broadly cast that it seems almost to define the possibility of irrelevance out of existence.

So, Mr President, what I request of you, having regard to the argument developed in the penultimate paragraph of your statement, is for you to come back to the Senate with another statement in which you define ‘irrelevance’. If ‘relevance’ means what you say it means in the penultimate paragraph of this statement it is almost inconceivable that you would treat any answer as irrelevant. And yet we have a standing order requiring that answers be ‘directly relevant’. So would you, Mr President, by way of example, give the Senate some guidance on what would be considered to be irrelevance.

Senator FERGUSON (South Australia) (12.38 pm)—In the broad, I support all of the statements that you have made in this statement to the chamber but I would also refer to the second to last paragraph and I ask you to consider two things. One is that the statement that was made by President Beahan in 1995 was actually made prior to standing orders being changed. At that time a minister was only required to be relevant, whereas standing orders have been changed now to require ministers to be directly relevant. So I am not sure that President Beahan’s statement carries weight today in the same way that it did prior to the standing orders being changed.

Mr President, the only other issue that I raise—and this relates to the current state of the chamber—is that I noticed in the last paragraph that you said you draw senators’ attention to the question and you sometimes ask them to return to the question while reminding them of the time they have available to answer it. Can I respectfully suggest that prior to the addition of the digital clocks in this chamber a minister had no idea how much time they had left to answer a question. Because all they had was a light on in the last minute, nobody knew how much time they had left. Since the addition of digital clocks in the chamber, which ministers can look up at and see exactly how many minutes or seconds they have left, it might not be necessary to remind senators of the time that they have available. By simply glancing up at a clock in the chamber they know how much time they have left. I respectfully ask you to consider that as well.

Question agreed to.

The President—In respect of the matters that have been raised I will take those into further consideration and if needs be I will come back to the chamber.
In Committee

Consideration resumed from 17 August.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (12.41 pm)—I move Greens amendment (4) that was circulated in the chamber yesterday:

(4) Schedule 1, item 5, page 5 (after line 28), at the end of section 19-38, add:

Report on consultations

(9) Each higher education provider must, as soon as practicable after 31 December each year, prepare and publish a report detailing the consultation which occurred during that year between the provider, its students and its student organisations in relation to the level of the fee, collection of the fee and expenditure of amounts paid.

(10) Each higher education provider must provide to the department a copy of each report prepared under subsection (9).

(11) The department must publish on its website a copy of each report received under subsection (10) in a form which allows ready comparison between the reports of different higher education providers.

This amendment seeks, as the previous one did, to ensure that we have accountability in how the money is being spent and that the $250 that will be collected from each student, if this legislation were to pass, is accounted for and spent in consultation with student organisations, student representatives and students. This will ensure that there is some element of transparency and accountability by requiring universities to show how they have involved students in deciding how the universities will spend their money.

We know that already the government’s legislation does not give the money that students are handing over directly to their student organisations. We know that the universities will have the discretion to spend the money on the services that they see fit but we believe that there needs to be a built-in mechanism which allows universities to discuss and decide collectively with their student populous how this money is spent. This amendment goes to the issue of compliance—and ensuring that universities comply and show that they comply. We need to make sure we have transparency and accountability.

I spoke last night about how I was surprised that the coalition did not support my previous amendment, which called for building a solid accountability measure within this legislation. This is the next step: to ensure that universities are required to speak with their students about how they are going to spend their students’ money. $250 is a lot of money if you are a university student. It is a lot of money if you are not. We need to ensure that students have an element of say in how this money is going to be spent and this amendment ensures that universities have to report on how they have included students in decisions about how their money is spent.

It is not good enough just to leave it to good will and assume that it will happen. We need to ensure we have accountability and transparency just as there is in the approach that the government is taking on a variety of other different educational transformations and policy directions of late—whether we are talking about schools or other elements of the Higher Education Support Act. This amendment is building in an accountability and transparency mechanism to ensure that universities show how they have involved students and consulted with students before they go and spend their money and throughout the process.
Senator MASON (Queensland) (12.44 pm)—Can I again thank Senator Hanson-Young for her amendment. I think it is sensible and she should be congratulated for putting forward accountability mechanisms in any legislation. Senator, perhaps in future we might better coordinate our efforts. While I do not see any serious objections to this amendment, it does not overcome the serious deficiencies that opposition senators have outlined so the opposition will be opposing this amendment.

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (12.44 pm)—The government is providing the Greens senators with a letter similar to that that has been provided to Senator Xenophon outlining the measures that will be covered in the guidelines in terms of the accountability mechanisms. I understand that is on its way and I trust it will satisfy the requests that have been made of the government in regard to assurances on the accountability mechanisms. As a consequence, in the view of the government this amendment is not necessary, and we will not be supporting it.

Question negatived.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN—The question now is that the bill, as amended, be agreed to.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (12.45 pm)—I have several questions for the minister. Can I first of all thank you, Minister, and in particular Ms Ellis, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth and Minister for Sport, for her letter to Senator Xenophon. That does address many of the issues I was going to raise, so I want to thank the government for that. I appreciate getting a copy of that letter, but I have some other questions.

With respect to the student services and amenities fee guidelines, part (m) talks about student media. I wanted to know whether it is prohibited by the guidelines for a student newspaper to endorse a political candidate or a political party within the student media.

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (12.46 pm)—Senator, it is not the government’s intention to censor newspapers.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (12.47 pm)—So in fact student money that has been compulsorily acquired from other students can be used for political purposes?

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (12.47 pm)—Senator, given the extraordinarily narrow view of politics that has been expressed by coalition senators, I would have thought that you would regard just about any matter as non-political; therefore, it could be said that there is no question that student newspapers would cover political questions in that manner. The fact remains that students are entitled to publish newspapers and they are entitled to express views; it is, in fact, an important part of the education process to debate matters. I really think whether you regard them as politically acceptable or not is a question for your party to resolve amongst yourselves. As far as the government is concerned, we are not in the business of censoring student newspapers when it comes to the expression of student opinions which are expressed lawfully and which obviously meet the normal requirements that one would expect in terms of publishing.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (12.48 pm)—Minister, thank you for that, but perhaps I did not make myself clear. I was not talking about political causes. Both the legislation and the guidelines themselves explicitly prohibit student money being used for a political candidate or a political party. Let us forget political causes for a second. The explicit prohibitions in the act and the guide-
lines are for political candidates or political parties. Is it prohibited under the guidelines for student newspapers, funded by compulsory levies on students, to explicitly endorse a political candidate or a political party?

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (12.48 pm)—Clause 19-38 of the act, sorry, of the bill—I trust it will be an act, but we may be about to discover that that is a forlorn hope—says:

(1) A higher education provider must not spend an amount paid to the provider as a student services and amenities fee to support:

(a) a political party; or

(b) the election of a person as a member of:

(i) the legislature of the Commonwealth, a State or a Territory; or

(ii) a local government body.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (12.49 pm)—I take it from that that in fact student newspapers cannot be used to specifically endorse a political candidate or a political party. I am not talking about political causes here; I am talking about political parties or political candidates explicitly. That is the position, then, Minister?

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (12.49 pm)—Senator, I must say to you I find it hard to believe that you would expect the parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia to pass legislation prohibiting the expression of opinions in student newspapers. I find it an amazing proposition. That is what you have just asked me, and I am saying to you, Senator: that is not the purpose of this parliament. Surely it is not the purpose of this parliament to ban people expressing their opinions.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (12.50 pm)—I take it from that, Minister, if that is your answer, that money compulsorily acquired from students and used by student newspapers can in fact be used to endorse a political party or a political candidate—yes or no, Minister, please.

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (12.50 pm)—The world is a bit more complicated a place than Senator Mason obviously appears to acknowledge. All I can do is draw his attention to 19-38. I have read out clause (1); let me go to clause (2):

(2) If a higher education provider pays a person or organisation an amount paid to the provider as a student services and amenities fee, the provider must make the payment on the condition that none of the payment is to be spent by the person or organisation to support:

(a) a political party; or

(b) the election of a person as a member of:

(i) the legislature of the Commonwealth, a State or a Territory; or

(ii) a local government body.

And so it goes on. Now that is a different question to whether or not people write letters to the editor for Farrago.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (12.51 pm)—I know I am not a very good lawyer, Minister, but I still cannot follow your answer. But perhaps for the sake of my and the Senate’s sanity I might ask a different question. Let us say that money is given to a student guild from a university to run a coffee shop. If the coffee shop makes money can the student union use those profits in any way they want? In other words are the profits of that coffee shop subject to the bill and the guidelines?

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (12.52 pm)—Senator Mason, it is my expectation that the private income of entities that function on university campuses, be they businesses or individuals for that matter, would not be the subject of this legislation. It
is not our intention to ban people who are members of the Labor Party, the Liberal Party or any other party from buying a cup of coffee at a university, nor in any way seek to undermine a legitimate process for a business or an individual to function at a university. The proposition that you are putting to me, as I understand it, is that, if there are receipts from a legitimate business, we are to regulate those receipts and the purpose for which those receipts are to be spent. I think that is far beyond any possible interpretation of this bill.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (12.53 pm)—Thank you for that, and I take that to mean that, if a coffee shop that has been provided with funds compulsorily acquired from students makes a profit of $20,000 in a year, that $20,000 can be used for any purposes, whether they are political purposes, political candidates or whatever. That is what I understand your answer to mean, and is that correct?

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (12.53 pm)—Senator, I cannot add anything to what I have already put to you. It is a nonsensical proposition that you are now seeking for the Commonwealth parliament to control the legitimate incomes of businesses or individuals at universities. Senator, I would not have thought that the taxation act distinguished between students and other citizens in this country in terms of income in that way. Why should this particular legislation do the same, or do as I think you are suggesting?

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (12.54 pm)—I would like to speak on a separate matter. I have a letter from the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth, Kate Ellis, in relation to the arrangements and agreements that we have been able to come to, and I seek leave to table that document.

Leave granted.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG—I indicate that, based on these arrangements and some amendments to the guidelines, the Greens would be happy to support the legislation. The minister and the government have taken on board the issues in relation to the need for compliance, accountability and transparency. While we would have liked to have seen something specific, the minister has outlined that there will be the need for higher education providers to sign-off on a compliance certificate at the end of each financial year, outlining exactly where student money has been spent and providing a balance sheet. This will ensure that students can see where their money is being spent and then advocate whether they have any concerns about that to their institution.

We were obviously very concerned that higher education providers would simply decide where and when they believed advocacy and representation was important, and that they could pick and choose certain groups. We were very concerned that there was no explicit mention of the three broad groups of students who all have various different needs, that there was a need to ensure that any welfare and support services covered them and that this money gets spent in ways that support them. They are, of course, undergraduate, postgraduate and international students. The minister has taken those issues on board and has amended the guidelines to reflect that, including ensuring that we have the election of student representatives from those three separate groups, which is very, very important to ensure that international students and postgraduate students have elected representative voices, as do undergraduate students. It was very important for us to ensure that none of these groups,
who are all going to be paying the money, were left out. They have different needs and we need to ensure that they have the opportunity to voice their concerns and advocate for their different needs and issues. I thank the minister and the government, and I hope that that letter has now been circulated.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (12.57 pm)—I thank Senator Hanson-Young for her contribution because accountability in this context is important and I would like to thank the government for providing the note from Ms Ellis, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth. In the second paragraph it says that section 22-15 of the act empowers the minister to revoke a body’s approval as a higher education provider. If the minister is satisfied that the body has breached a quality and accountability requirement then it is appropriate to revoke the approval. I thank the government for providing that. That accountability goes from the minister to the university and that is the relationship that is being discussed there. Minister, my concern is: has the government any proposals about overseeing the relationship between the university and the student? By that I mean: is the government going to set any guidelines or templates for an appeals process for students who are concerned about higher education providers not doing the right thing with their compulsorily acquired money?

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (12.59 pm)—Senator Mason, the arrangements as outlined by the government are essentially a relationship between the Commonwealth and the university as an institution. The university is required to certify that it has met its obligations under legislation enacted which authorises the payment of moneys. Those principles apply whether it is in a research area, a teaching area or any other areas in which the grants are made by the Commonwealth to the university as an institution.

The regulation of individual student behaviour is a matter for the university—they have to sign off that there has been compliance. It is not the Commonwealth’s role to establish the behaviour of individual students. Nearly a million people are enrolled in universities in any given year across the country, and that has been increasing for some time. The Commonwealth does not seek and has never sought, in my long involvement in this industry, to identify a personal relationship with each of those students other than through the HECS arrangements that are made and any other contractual arrangements between the Commonwealth and those students, through the taxation system. It would be inappropriate for that pattern to be changed in this legislation. The relationship is between the Commonwealth and the institution.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (1.01 pm)—Thanks, Minister. If the Commonwealth, then, is not mandating any process for student engagement with universities, how can we be certain that students will be looked after and that there will be some appeals process, such that they can be assured their concerns about the expenditure of their money will be looked after?

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (1.01 pm)—Senator, I am sure you are aware that the constitutional relationship between the Commonwealth and universities is a quite complex matter. They are technically state institutions, they are regulated by state parliaments, but the expenditure of Commonwealth money is covered by measures that are regulated by Commonwealth legislation. The Commonwealth does not seek to establish a relationship between the university and individual students other than for
those purposes for which the Commonwealth has appropriated money. That is effectively the basis upon which that discussion is held. The Commonwealth is now moving, through the reform measures, to broaden the level of engagement with the university system, consistent with the fact that these are state institutions enacted by state legislature. We have no intention to change that particular matter.

The fact remains that, with regard to all of those verification processes, the arrangement is between the Commonwealth and the institution—the vice-chancellor or whoever it happens to be. The authorised officer signs off, verifies, that Commonwealth moneys that have been expended in that university are in accordance with the arrangements made with the Commonwealth. If there are students who have complaints about the expenditure—for instance, regarding my area, people have written to me about the award of an Australian postgraduate award, as to whether they have been properly treated—that is effectively a matter for the university. The relationship is with the university in terms of the actual administrative arrangements for those awards. If there are broader complaints, and we are looking at these issues, in terms of accreditation arrangements—this is part of the Bradley reforms that have been proposed; in my case there are questions that we are exploring with the universities about research misconduct—a series of measures are changing that relationship, but those relationships are governed by the legislative framework passed by the parliament to this point.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (1.03 pm)—Minister, again I thank you for your answer. In a sense you have outlined the problem. If the relationship is between the Commonwealth government and the universities, and if a university is doing the wrong thing—spending money inappropriately, giving it to political causes—what does the student do? What process does he or she undertake if no processes have been designed by their particular university? What do they do? Write to the minister?

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (1.04 pm)—Invariably they will. Even some members of the Liberal Party might do that. May I even be so bold as to suggest they might engage in a political process to complain about what is happening with the expenditure of public money. I know that is a shocking revelation to you.

Senator Mason—Not with someone else’s money.

Senator CARR—I have heard that members of the Liberal Party do engage in a political process at universities. I have heard that has been going on for some time. So maybe you should go back to the Liberal Party branches that are obviously giving you such difficulty on this issue and draw their attention to the way things actually work at universities. We are seeking to provide a framework to support student services, amenities, representation and advocacy for students at universities. That is essentially what this bill seeks to do. I know you have a view that we as a parliament should regulate the behaviour of students at universities. While in government, you sought to establish a series of protocols about the behaviours of university administrators and university academics—

Senator Mason—You supported it for a time.

Senator CARR—No, no. Previous ministers sought to engage in direct interventions with regard to which research projects were undertaken, the behaviour undertaken by students and what universities spent their money on. You did this under the guise of Work Choices; you did this under the guise of a number of other moral crusades that you
sought to perpetuate and for your narrow, base political motives. We are not going to be a party to it. We are about ensuring that institutions are able to be run properly and that we understand the importance of universities. As Minister Gillard pointed out, we take the foot off the throats of universities. What you are seeking to do is to reimpose that Commonwealth boot onto the throats of universities.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (1.06 pm)—Minister, what I am trying to do is ensure that a student who is aggrieved, who has had their money compulsorily acquired, has some process by which they can ensure universities do the right thing. Your response here this afternoon is that no student can be certain that that is going to happen, and that is a great disappointment and a failing of the bill.

Moving on to another question, let us assume, Minister, that student money is given to the Wilderness Society. It could happen in one of three ways: either directly from the university, from the student guild or it could come via a student club funded by the guild or university. Would this be prohibited by the guidelines?

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (1.08 pm)—The Student services and amenities fee guidelines have been tabled in this chamber. They outline the purposes for which Commonwealth monies can be spent and they list a series of matters that go to such things as food and beverages; sports and recreation; clubs and societies; child care; legal services; health care; housing; employment; financial services; visual arts, performing arts and audiovisual media; debating—I can see why that would upset you!; libraries and reading rooms; student media—this is revolutionary stuff!; student study skills and advocacy; personal accident insurance; orientation information; and support services for overseas students. Nowhere there does it say anything about the Wilderness Society.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (1.09 pm)—I concede, Minister, that I am not a very good lawyer, but above that list a) through to q), Minister, you will notice if you read it that it says:

Allowable uses of the fee in relation to services and amenities may include the categories listed below. In all cases the purpose would include but not be limited to,—

in other words, that list is not exhaustive—

the direct provision of the service or amenity, the provision of infrastructure (including new construction) and subsidies that would reduce the price that students may have to pay.

That list is not exhaustive. Even a poor lawyer like me will understand that in fact it is simply reflective rather than exhaustive.

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (1.10 pm)—Senator Mason, you are obviously very concerned about people dressing up as koala bears! I just say to you that any additional matters to be added to this list—

Senator Mason—You make a better koala bear—

Senator CARR—I am getting better at it. Any other matters to be added to this list, of course, would be a disallowable instrument. I have got no doubt that we would hear a great deal more from you on the issue of people wishing to participate in environmental groups.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.
Bill reported with an amendment; report adopted.

Third Reading

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (1.11 pm)—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.

Senator MASON (Queensland) (1.12 pm)—I will not detain the Senate too long. Going back over last couple of days, listening to the debates from the government in particular, they just remind me of the debates of yesteryear. I know today is 40 years after the close of the Woodstock rock festival in the United States. In fact, I understand 40 years ago today was the last day of the rock festival, with Jimi Hendrix playing the Star Spangled Banner. I know that Senator Carr wishes he was there. Perhaps he still is, if not in presence at least in mind—the mosh pit of the mind. That is the problem with the Australian Labor Party in this debate: their perspective on compulsory levies for students is grounded in this antiquated mentality. The courts and the quadrangles of our universities are nothing like they were in their sixties, the seventies, the eighties and the nineties—nothing like it. They have changed enormously since I was at university in the 1980s. Yet the language of the debate from the government is the same. It has not moved on from 1969.

The opposition argument is very, very simple: we do not believe that students should be forced to pay for services they will not or cannot use. Why? Because we know that today universities are mainstream and they are not elite. Most students are older; many more now study part-time and in the evenings, with work and other commitments. It has changed totally from 30 years ago when I was at university. In those days students were younger, they studied full-time, they did not have part-time jobs and they often lived on campus. The demographic—the people that make up undergraduate students in this country—has changed enormously. It is simply not fair to ask people who will not or cannot use those services to pay for them. It is simply not fair. It is a matter of freedom of association. For us it is a very important issue.

What has changed so much—and the government does not seem to understand this—is that not only are students older, not only are they studying part time, but today when members of generation Y go to universities they are there for credentials. That might not be a good thing—I am not arguing with the minister on whether this is a good or a bad thing. All I am saying is that it has changed for good or for bad. It was different 30 years ago when I was at university. Today’s culture is far more about credentials than it was 30 years ago.

People talk about university life. Sure, I had a marvellous time at university. Everyone knows I spent too many years there. But that has become rarer and rarer today. It is simply not acceptable for the government to impose a fee of $250 on every student, particularly when the government—and I think this is an oversight—wants to decrease the amount of disadvantage of Indigenous students at universities. I think that is a noble aim. I may disagree with how the government is doing it, but I think it is a noble aim. The government encourages disadvantaged and Indigenous kids to go to university and then it slugs them with this fee. Most of them will not use these services. It will be subsidising students who live on campus and that is just not fair.

Today most students are simply not interested in student unions. Labor Party politicians might be—that is where they earn their stripes—but the vast majority of students are simply not interested. Five per cent or fewer actually vote in student elections. Services and activities provided by the unions are increasingly superfluous. They tend already to exist and are being provided by the universities themselves, by the government or by the non-government voluntary sector, whether
they be cafeterias, childcare services, welfare advice, medical services, legal services, counselling or sporting activities. That is the case and these services do not need to be subsidised by money compulsorily acquired from students, particularly disadvantaged students, for these purposes. It is unfair and certainly goes against the principles of liberalism.

As I think we have uncovered today in the committee process, quite simply there are still flaws in this bill relating to enforcement and trying to ensure that students actually have a say in how their money is spent. The government admits that the relationship is between the government and the university. When students have a problem there is no certainty at all that their grievances will be adhered to. I must wind up now—that is the agreement—but can I finish by saying that the language of this debate is mired in debates of 20, 30 and 40 years ago. The world has changed, the world has moved on, the profile of tertiary students has changed enormously and it is time that the government started to understand that.

Senator FIELDING (Victoria—Leader of the Family First Party) (1.17 pm)—The compulsory student services fee is a tax on the poor—nothing more, nothing less. It is a tax on university students. It is a tax on those who can least afford it. Students are doing it very, very tough. If the Rudd government realised how tough they are doing it, they would not be slapping a tax on students, a compulsory fee on university students. We have to be clear that it is nothing more than a tax on them.

I will make a statement that I have made a couple of times before. The National Party’s position is absolutely ridiculous. It is a halfway house. They are half pregnant, saying, ‘Look, gee, we don’t like a $250 compulsory fee, but we’ll have a little less for sports.’ I play sport, I love sport and most Australians love sport, but how can you argue the principle that it is okay to slug the students with a compulsory fee for sports only? What about those people who are not interested in sports? It undermines the whole argument. It is a ridiculous position. It is half pregnant—a halfway house. It is crazy.

No wonder the chamber is going to reject this compulsory student fee, because it is nothing but a tax on the poor. It would be used for services that people may not even use—some will never use them. Students are struggling to make ends meet and we should not be putting an extra financial burden on them at all. It is strange that we are again talking about a tax on students. Frankly, that is what it is. I know the two major parties will argue back and forth on history and political grounds. Putting that aside is not the issue. Should students be compulsorily required to pay a fee that is nothing more than a tax? I say no and I think Australia generally would say no. It should not be supported and I think today we will find it will not be supported.

Senator JOYCE (Queensland—Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (1.21 pm)—As I stated last night, I believe that this bill is going to be defeated on a tied vote. The issue therefore becomes one of whether it is returned or not. In consideration of the situation down the track, the amendments put forward by Senator Nash, Senator Williams and me may be more worthy of consideration. Our issue was never the reintroduction of compulsory student unionism—not in the slightest. Our issue was about giving universities, as businesses, the capacity to cover those things that make up the greatest proportion of their costs.

We heard Senator Fielding’s comments about our position being half pregnant. I thought this was interesting. What more can
we say about that? We thank Senator Fielding for coming dressed last night in theme for the function. He looked as though he had just arrived from a tragic version of Tosca!

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT
(Senator Marshall)—Senator Joyce, there is a question before the chair.

Senator JOYCE—Certainly. I have come to the conclusion that it was actually Steve Fielding’s secret agent who was here last night! If we do not find some mechanism to achieve support for sporting facilities, especially for regional universities, those facilities will fall into disrepair. That will be the catalyst for the public to question whether a university is an institution they want to send their son or daughter to. If that is the case, then that university will be put at threat. I think that is terribly unfair and it will begin to bring a sense of discrimination back to regional areas in one of the most fundamental things we want to keep at parity—that is, educational opportunities. I do not think we are asking for a major change but we did seek to remove the major cost. Other people have questions about other costs. They are all conjecture and calibrations of the issue. It is undeniable that the major cost for universities is their sporting infrastructure. I do not think anybody suspects, even in the slightest way, that sport is a political activity. I think that universities, as businesses, should be allowed to cover the costs of their businesses, of which sporting infrastructure is a part. We will look to having this discussion again, I imagine, in about three months.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (1.24 pm)—I want to reiterate the Greens’ support for the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities, and Other Measures) Bill 2009, despite the fact that we do not think it is perfect. We would have preferred to see the money collected from students going to student organisations. We have said that all along. We have been able to negotiate matters which have dealt with some of our concerns, particularly in relation to ensuring that postgraduate international students and undergraduate students will receive the same level of service delivery, welfare support and elected representation under the guidelines in this bill.

First and foremost, I want to address one of the issues Senator Mason raised. He said that the profile of universities has changed somewhat from what it was 20 or 30 years ago. I completely agree—it has. Twenty or 30 years ago, people got their education for free. Nowadays, students are paying more than ever for their university degrees. Students are paying more than ever for their education, but with limited services. They are working long hours because the youth allowance, if they are able to get it—and that is another issue, which is in debate—is not sufficient to cover their costs. Living costs for university students have risen dramatically in the last decade. Students are paying more than ever, not just for the piece of paper that they get at the end but for their entire university career, but with absolutely limited support, advice and services. That is what this bill is trying to address. When students are paying more than ever for their education, we need to ensure that they have the support to maximise opportunities, to ensure that their university career is the best it can possibly be. That is what this legislation is attempting to deal with—to ensure that the services are there when they need them, that the advice is there when they need it. If they need support and advocacy to challenge an unfair decision made by a university board, they have somewhere to go and someone to act as an advocate for them. That is what this bill is aiming to achieve.

There has been a long debate, not just today and yesterday but in the other place as
well, about the politics of this issue. When it comes down to it, you are paying $30,000 or $40,000—which is what my HECS bill was; I paid $40,000 for my education. I needed support, advice and advocacy to ensure that my university career was the best it could possibly be and I was lucky enough to have that. Nowadays we are asking students to pay more than ever, with limited support and limited advice. This bill is trying to ensure that university students get a holistic experience so that when they graduate they do not just get a piece of paper which says, ‘You have this degree,’ but they have the networks, the support and the hands-on experience to give them the edge out in the workforce. As I said, I think this bill is far from perfect, but it is better than the situation we have now.

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (1.27 pm)—The government has considered the comments from the sector on the proposed contents of the guidelines that underpin the Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities, and Other Measures) Bill 2009. On 6 May 2009 the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth released publicly the revised contents of those guidelines. The government has considered the position of minor parties allowing student organisations to exercise control of the amounts raised through the fee. I thank the Greens for their support and their engagement on these matters. I thank Senator Xenophon for his support and engagement on these matters.

I would like to take this opportunity, however, to state the government’s position clearly. If this bill is passed, this fee will be paid directly to universities and not to student organisations. This is a fee to assist the rebuilding and the restoration of student services and amenities and is not for student organisations. What the Rudd government is putting to this chamber is a balanced, practical and sustainable approach to securing the future of student amenities and services, while maintaining our commitment not to return to compulsory student unionism. The provision of services and amenities on our university campuses is a key part of Australia having a world-class university system. By voting against this legislation, senators are turning their backs on $170 million of support for our universities.

We have seen as a consequence of the attitudes of the previous government on these questions not only much-needed services being substantially reduced or ceasing to exist on many campuses but students being hit with extraordinary increases in prices for basic services such as child care, parking, books, computer labs, sport and food. I cited some of these figures last night. I thought I would remind the Senate that parking fees at Monash University have risen from $80 to $280 per year. I would ask Senator Fielding, when he is considering the plight of the poor in Victoria, to think about what these costs mean for students actually participating at these institutions. Child care at La Trobe has increased by $68 per week and at the University of Technology, Sydney, by $800 a year. The price of food has increased by 15 per cent at that university in Sydney. Membership fees for Sydney university’s sport and fitness centres have risen by 500 per cent. What do you reckon that would do to people at universities who do not come from private schools and who cannot rely on the sorts of private incomes about which we have heard so many laudatory comments made by Senator Joyce and others? What would 500 per cent increases do for poor kids at university?

That is why every university organisation in the country has called on this chamber to
support this legislation. Universities Australia have indicated in their release:

Student service amenities underpin the university experience.

They call on the Senate to ensure the availability of quality student services and amenities for Australian universities through the passage of this bill. They say:

As there are important support services stressed by some senators, there are many essential university services such as health care, counselling, career advice, childcare facilities and independent advocacy and legal support that provide a safety net for all students—

that is, not just those with the money to get private facilities. They say:

Without this legislation, universities will have to continue to cross-subsidise their core teaching and research budgets at a time when their budgets are under pressure.

Innovative Research Universities is an organisation headed up by a vice-chancellor at a regional university. IRU Chair Professor Sandra Harding says:

A modest levy, such as that proposed by the government, would be a boon for student life on campus … It is critical for students to have access to support services which augment the student experience and significantly contribute to both students’ success and the development of well-rounded graduates.

There is an appeal being made to us right across the university system, because of the importance of this legislation, to underpin Australia’s reputation for excellence in education. By voting against this legislation, you are voting against the provision of those services that students desperately need.

Let me finally deal with the question of the Liberals’ attitude on this. There seems to be a fundamental misconception here, from what Senator Mason put. There is the notion that somehow or other the conservative parties in this country under the present arrangements in this chamber and in the House have anything whatsoever to do with liberalism. Their illiberal views are no better expressed than in their hostility to universities and their contempt for the fundamental principles that underpin universities. We saw that in government. We saw their contempt for academic freedom when Brendan Nelson, as minister for education, intervened on 10 separate occasions to block Australian research grants to scholars in this country. We had the provision of 7.5 per cent of funding being conditional on compliance with the so-called National Governance Protocols. We saw intervention in the size and the composition of boards at universities. We had their constant demands for the application at universities of their hideous Work Choices principles. There was a fundamental contempt for the principles that underpin the essential nature of what is a liberal institution in our society—that is, the university system.

What you are seeking to do and what we are being asked to do here is to intervene in such a way as to censor student newspapers and to intervene and determine the morality of students themselves, as if we should somehow or other regulate the behaviour of university students. Senator Mason talked about the ‘grand obsessions’. What we have seen are the grand obsessions of the Liberal Party, from when in the 1970s and 1980s they suffered humiliations—and perhaps psychological difficulties—as a result of their encounters with students at universities. Perhaps they should take up those problems with counsellors. They should not visit those psychological scars on this chamber. They should try to direct the attention of this parliament to more productive means.

Question put:

That this bill be now read a third time.
The Senate divided. [1.40 pm]
(The President—Senator the Hon. J.J. Hogg)
Ayes…………. 34
Noes…………. 34
Majority………. 0

AYES
Arbib, M.V. Bilyk, C.L.
Bishop, T.M. Cameron, D.N.
Brown, C.L. Collins, J.
Carr, K.J. Crossin, P.M.
Conroy, S.M. Feeney, D.
Furner, M.L. Hanson-Young, S.C.
Hogg, J.J. Hutchins, S.P.
Ludlam, S. Ludwig, J.W.
Lundy, K.A. Marshall, G.
McEwen, A. * McLucas, J.E.
Milne, C. Moore, C.
O’Brien, K.W.K. Polley, H.
Pratt, L.C. Sherry, N.J.
Siewert, R. Stephens, U.
Sterle, G. Wong, P.
Wortley, D. Xenophon, N.

NOES
Abetz, E. Back, C.J.
Barnett, G. Bernardi, C.
Birmingham, S. Boswell, R.L.D.
Brandis, G.H. Bushby, D.C.
Cash, M.C. Colbeck, R.
Coonan, H.L. Cormann, M.H.P.
Eggleston, A. Ferguson, A.B.
Fielding, S. Fierravanti-Wells, C.
Fifield, M.P. Fisher, M.J.
Heffernan, W. Humphries, G.
Johnston, D. Kroger, H.
Macdonald, I. Mason, B.J.
McGauran, J.J. Minchin, N.H.
Parry, S. Payne, M.A.
Ronaldson, M. Ryan, S.M.
Scullion, N.G. Troeth, J.M.
Trood, R.B. Williams, J.R. *

PAIRS
Evans, C.V. Adams, J.
Farrell, D.E. Nash, F.

Question negatived.

BUSINESS
Rearrangement

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales—Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector and Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social Inclusion) (1.42 pm)—I move:

That the order of government business for the remainder of the day shall be as follows:

• Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives Bill 2009 and related bills
• Health Insurance Amendment (Extended Medicare Safety Net) Bill 2009
• Migration Amendment (Abolishing Detention Debt) Bill 2009 [No. 2]

Senator MILNE (Tasmania) (1.43 pm)—Yesterday, when I moved a motion in the Senate that the renewable energy target legislation be given precedence over other legislation when it came from the House of Representatives, it was defeated by both major parties. However, the government gave me to understand that they voted against it not because it would not be given precedence but because they would not have the Senate determine what the Senate’s order of business would be; they were determined to have that carriage themselves and they intended to bring on the renewable energy target.

Now I find that, with this rearrangement of business, we will not be dealing with the renewable energy target legislation, even though it has been through the House of Representatives. I would like to know from the government why they continue to play politics with renewable energy when they know there is a whole industry out there waiting for this legislation. Where is it and why hasn’t it got precedence? I would like to
know why there has been this change in the order of business.

Senator STEPHENS (New South Wales—Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector and Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social Inclusion) (1.44 pm)—The messages from the House of Representatives in relation to the renewable energy bills will be coming through this afternoon, so this rearrangement is to allow debate on other bills to continue before those messages come.

Senator BOB BROWN (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (1.45 pm)—Mr Acting Deputy President, I seek leave to make a short statement.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Mark Bishop)—Leave is granted for two minutes.

Senator BOB BROWN—I just want to follow up on the point that Senator Milne so cogently made. If the rearrangement of business is because the messages are coming through from the House later, that is a matter, I submit, for the government. I have been in here long enough to know that messages from the House can come through very quickly or they can come through very slowly. I know that some very important amendments to the renewable energy legislation are going to be proposed which are going to require studious debate by the Senate, and the government is now putting the debate off till later to force the debate to be truncated.

Senator Ian Macdonald—Don’t you believe that!

Senator BOB BROWN—As the out of order member from the coalition benches interjects, they will not get a truncated debate from the Greens. This matter is too important to be manipulated by the government in the fashion in which it is aiming to do so.

FAIRER PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE INCENTIVES BILL 2009
FAIRER PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE INCENTIVES (MEDICARE LEVY SURCHARGE) BILL 2009
FAIRER PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE INCENTIVES (MEDICARE LEVY SURCHARGE—FRINGE BENEFITS) BILL 2009

Second Reading
Debate resumed from 15 June, on motion by Senator Faulkner:

That these bills be now read a second time.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia) (1.47 pm)—Today we are debating the second significant attack by the Rudd government on our health system through the Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives Bill 2009 and related bills. It is an attack on our health system that will hurt millions of Australians who are privately insured, but it will also hurt those Australians who will have to compete with more people seeking access to
our already overburdened public hospital system. It is another broken promise of the Rudd government. Despite the most emphatic pre-election commitments, despite the most solemn pledge by the Prime Minister and by the Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, before the last election, here we are debating a proposal to reduce or scrap altogether private health insurance rebates.

It is the government’s second strike in two budgets against the important private health component of our mixed public and private health system. We are quite concerned, as I am sure the 11 million privately insured Australians are concerned, about what we will be debating this time next year—if the Rudd Labor government is courageous enough to take us to a third Rudd government budget, that is.

Before the last election we were promised the world on health. Labor were going to fix public hospitals and, if there had not been enough progress made by the middle of 2009, a proposal would go to the Australian people that the Commonwealth take over the running of public hospitals. We were promised the world. The buck was going to stop with the Prime Minister. All we have had is a bad, old-fashioned Labor crusade against privately insured Australians—against Australians who do the right thing by our health system by putting additional, private resources into it. All we have had is a bad, old-fashioned Labor crusade against private health. All we have had on public hospitals is a review, a 20-month review into public hospitals—and now there is going to be a review of the review—and we have had a tax. That is all we have had on health from this government.

This government has been a failure on health; I have said it before. This minister has been a failure as health minister. There has been no progress made in terms of the running of our public hospitals since this government was elected. In fact, the situation is now worse. Measures like those contained in these bills, rather than putting less pressure on public hospitals, will put more pressure on public hospitals. I think that everybody understands that.

The overarching health policy objective ought to be that as policymakers we ensure that all Australians have affordable and timely access to quality hospital care. The best way to achieve that is through a well-balanced health system—one with a strong and well-funded public system and a strong and well-supported private system. Those on the other side know well that, after 13 years of Labor the last time they were in government, our health system was seriously out of balance. Private health insurance membership was plummeting. There were significant public hospital waiting times. There were significant pressures on public hospitals, but private hospitals were underutilised. There were serious issues in our health system when we came into government in 1996. Health insurance membership continued to plummet for a further two years after we got into government because of the flow-on consequences of bad health policy throughout 13 years of Labor.

It took two years before we were able to turn things around through very sensible health policy measures like the 30 per cent private health insurance rebate, the Medicare levy surcharge and Lifetime Health Cover. Since private health insurance bottomed out at 5.7 million in December 1998, it has increased by a staggering four million Australians, who are putting additional resources into our health system, taking it up to 9.7 million Australians.

We have had some discussion today about what is happening with private health insurance membership now. We have a govern-
government that is very good at spin but not so good at substance. We have a Minister for Health and Ageing who is very good at being a propaganda minister for Treasury but not quite as good at assessing the flow-on consequences of her actions and those of her government. So let us just have a look beyond the headlines and assess what is actually happening in terms of private health insurance membership across Australia today.

The first point to make is that, irrespective of the figures that are being quoted today and that the minister is waving around, the growth in private health insurance membership has already slowed down. If you look at membership trends in the last few years of the Howard government, we had increases of 400,000 additional privately insured Australians in the lead-up to June 2008, for example. This year it has gone down to 200,000. But, furthermore, the population has actually increased over that same period. If you look at the real target, the meaningful target, the proportion of the population who are privately insured, it has started to stagnate under this government at 44.6 per cent. It has already started to stagnate and of course we know that the Rudd government expects private health insurance membership to go down over the first term of its government. If you look at the budget papers, there is a figure there now indicating that 9.7 million Australians are expected to be privately insured throughout the term of this government, but of course in the context of population increases that means that the Rudd government themselves expect the proportion of the population with private health insurance to go down. It is something that they have hidden in the fine print of the budget papers by removing the reference that has been there for many, many years to the percentage rather than the absolute numbers of Australians with private health insurance.

This is a bad public policy because it will put more pressure on public hospitals. It will result in an immediate increase in the cost of private health insurance for those in those income brackets that are being targeted by the government and it will result in fewer people with private health insurance. There is no argument between the opposition and the government that that will be the outcome. The government agrees that this will lead to more pressure on public hospitals. The government agrees that this will result in an immediate increase in the cost of private health insurance and the government agrees that it will result in fewer people with private health insurance. The argument between the government and the opposition, and indeed between the government and stakeholders, is about how much more pressure, how much additional cost, and how many people will end up leaving private health insurance.

Just talking again, very quickly, about the number of people expected to leave the private health system, this is of course the second strike against private health under this government. Last year we had the Medicare levy surcharge change, which the government said would result in 492,000 fewer Australians in private health insurance as a result of that measure. I put it to you that Treasury got it right: 492,000 fewer Australians will have private health insurance as a result of that measure. That does not mean a drop of 492,000 compared to the number of privately insured at that time; it means that 492,000 fewer Australians have private health insurance than would otherwise have been the case. When we were investigating and inquiring into this measure during Senate estimates and the inquiry, both the health department and the Treasury confirmed that they stand by those figures. The government’s budget savings are based on nearly half a million fewer Australians being in private health insurance than would otherwise
be the case. And that is of course very relevant when we assess the flow-on implications. The reality is that the more people who take out private health insurance over the long term, the more affordable it is for everyone and the more private resources are of course channelled into our health system.

Labor has form on this, of course. We saw during the Hawke-Keating years that private health insurance membership plummeted from 63 per cent down to about 30 per cent before the Howard government was able to turn things around. But before the last election Labor said: ‘We have learned. We are not going to make that mistake again. We have learned our lesson. We now support private health insurance and we will not make any changes to the private health insurance framework.’ As Senator Cory Bernadi said, the Australian people have been deceived by this government. In fact the Prime Minister, as the then Leader of the Opposition, wrote to the Australian Health Insurance Association on 20 November, a couple of days before the election—and no doubt because he thought that it was politically important for him to do so—and said:

Both my Shadow Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon, and I have made clear on many occasions this year that Federal Labor is committed to retaining the existing private health insurance rebates, including the 30 per cent general rebate and the 35 and 40 per rebates for older Australians.

Et cetera, et cetera. Now, after the election—and this just shows how dishonest this government is with the Australian people—on 24 February this year the health minister was confronted with some media inquiries by the Age, asking: ‘What are you doing? Are there some plans afoot within government about changing the private health insurance rebate?’ And this is what the Minister for Health and Ageing said on 24 February:

The government is firmly committed to retaining the existing private health insurance rebates.

So everybody out there was reassured.

What do we find out in estimates a couple of months later? That on 12 January 2009 the Minister for Health and Ageing was getting advice from her department on how to reduce or scrap the rebates and she was out there a month and a half later telling the Australian people that all was fine, that the government remained committed, that there was not going to be any change. This is how this government treats the Australian people. They are pursuing bad policy. They are doing it behind closed doors. They were making commitments before the election and they were reaffirming them after the election, while all the while they were making disastrous policy changes to our health system behind closed doors. Mr President, I might continue after question time.

The PRESIDENT—It’s all right. Senator Cormann, you can keep going.

Senator CORMANN—I can see that people on the other side are really interested in my contribution to this debate so I will keep on going.

Senator Chris Evans—We want more!

Senator CORMANN—Senator Evans may like to hear that as a direct result of this broken promise, the cost of private health insurance will go up by up to 66.7 per cent immediately. Why is that good public policy on health—that is the question I would ask. The government says that about 40,000 people will leave private health insurance as a result of this measure. There is debate on this, but let us just take their word for it. Let us say that it is 40,000 people that will leave private health insurance as a result of this measure. What does this mean for our public hospitals? It means that there are more people who will present at public hospitals that are already under pressure.

And of course we still have the flow-on consequences of last year’s measure. I asked
some questions during the inquiry about how this figure was arrived at, which the minister has mentioned, of 8,000 additional public hospital episodes. I was told that 35 per cent of the 25,000 people will drop private hospital insurance—that is 8,750 additional admissions, presumably. The minister is not very good at her maths. She will not ever make it to be the Treasurer. She might be propaganda minister for Treasury but she will never make it to be the Treasurer.

Debate interrupted.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Emissions Trading Scheme

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS (2.00 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Wong. Has the minister finalised the details of the emissions trading scheme as it relates to the steel industry?

Senator WONG—The issues relevant to the steel industry are obviously the design of the emissions-intensive trade-exposed program. The senator would be aware that that has been the subject of quite detailed discussion between the government and industry. The details of that program were identified first in the green paper, determined in the white paper and then added to after negotiations with industry in the Prime Minister’s 4 May announcement in which we said the architecture is that the most emissions-intensive industries will receive 90 per cent of their permits for free. The next level of emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries will receive 60 per cent of their permits for free. On 4 May we added to that assistance, such that the most emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries will receive 94.5 per cent, and the next level will receive 66.

With the steel industry, as with all other emissions-intensive trade-exposed sectors, we are going through a process of detailed discussion about the technical definition of what constitutes the activity. My recollection, and I stand to be corrected, Senator, is that the government has released some 23 activity definitions. That is far more at this stage of the debate than those opposite ever put out in the context of the GST or the Work Choices legislation. Just to underscore, technical details that required detailed information from industry were put out before this bill went through the Senate. That was not the case when you were in government.

(Time expired)

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Was the CEO of BlueScope Steel, Mr Paul O’Malley, right yesterday when he said:

... the CPRS undermines Port Kembla Steelworks’ current world class competitiveness. It risks the viability of these long-term manufacturing assets. It’s a direct threat to this NSW regional economy and the 12,000 workers and their families who rely on the steelworks, and more than 1000 employees and contractors ... at Western Port in Victoria.

Senator WONG—I again make the point that the government’s modelling shows that, under the CPRS, iron and steel production will continue to grow. This is an issue about what is a fair contribution from industries towards the task of reducing emissions. Those opposite might have the view that industry has no role in this, but this government does believe that industry should pay its fair share. The figures that were in the announcement that the senator is referring to are a very high estimate of the costs. The government’s view, considering what has been put on the public record by BlueScope, is that the costs per tonne of steel are significantly less than the maximum costs which are postulated. We will continue to work with BlueScope, OneSteel and other industries that have not yet had their activity definition finalised. As I said, some 20-odd have—(Time expired)
Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Was Mr O’Malley also correct when he said:

The proposed CPRS scheme unfairly discriminates against the Australian steel industry relative to international competitors. Without comparable global action, the CPRS becomes a compounding tax ... needlessly putting Australian steel jobs and investment at risk for no environmental benefit.

Will the minister now commit to not reintroducing her flawed and rushed emissions trading scheme legislation until after the UN Copenhagen meeting in December this year?

Senator WONG—I will make two points. First, those opposite have claimed that they want this legislation deferred until the US finalises its position. The United States will finalise its position in 2013, under the current Waxman-Markey bill.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order!

Senator WONG—So what those opposite are postulating yet again is another set of excuses. I think Australians will be entitled to ask themselves this question: if we do delay again, if we do defer again after 12 years in government and after a series of excuses from those opposite—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator WONG—Does anyone in Australia really believe that Senator Bernardi, Senator Minchin or anyone else on that side of the chamber who opposes action on climate change will change their mind?

Economy

Senator HUTCHINS (2.06 pm)—My question is to the Assistant Treasurer, Senator Sherry. Can the Assistant Treasurer advise the Senate how the government’s stimulus packages have worked to help Australia in these difficult times? How have they been structured to provide immediate, medium- and long-term support for our economy? Can the Assistant Treasurer inform the Senate how we in Australia have compared with other major advanced economies?

Senator SHERRY—I thank Senator Hutchins for his very important question. There is no doubt that the government’s stimulus strategy has shielded and cushioned this economy from the worst of the global recession. The Rudd Labor government recognised the dangers that the world financial and economic disaster presented for Australia and we acted decisively to implement a three-stage stimulus program.

The first stage stimulus payments to consumers have had an immediate impact by increasing consumer spending. For example, retail sales in Australia are 5.2 per cent higher than the levels of last November, whilst in comparison in most other counties of the world they have fallen—they will fall by an average of 1.4 per cent. In comparable economies retail sales have collapsed. In Australia, that has not occurred, and I would point out that there are well over one million workers in the retail sector in Australia.

The immediate part of the stimulus totals some $27 billion. In the medium term we will spend some $35 billion on vital infrastructure—local community projects, the largest school modernisation in our history and social housing. The long-term stimulus will concentrate on major rail, road, port, education, clean energy and broadband. All up, these stages represent a $77 billion investment in Australia’s future and they will protect Australia from the present danger of the global recession, the worst in some 75 years. These important investments also underpin long-term productivity growth.

The stimulus sustained growth of 0.4 per cent in the Australian economy in March. The consequence is that there will be some
200,000 Australians kept in jobs who would otherwise have lost them. *(Time expired)*

**Senator HUTCHINS**—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the Assistant Treasurer advise the Senate what the chances are of a second shockwave hitting our economy as alluded to by the Secretary to the Treasury, Dr Ken Henry, in his address to the Australian Industry Group yesterday? In light of this risk, is now the time to wind back the stimulus?

**Senator SHERRY**—The Liberal opposition is arguing that the stimulus should be ceased and therefore the investments that I have outlined—important road, rail and broadband investments—should be discontinued.

*Honourable senators interjecting—*

**The PRESIDENT**—Order! Senator Sherry, resume your seat. On both sides there needs to be order so that I can hear Senator Sherry.

**Senator SHERRY**—The Liberal opposition argue that these sorts of important long-term productivity investments should cease. The Secretary to the Treasury, Dr Henry, pointed out yesterday that there are still dangers in the world economy and still challenges that Australia has to take account of in terms of maintaining the stimulus packages that we have outlined. Just last week another major bank fell over in the United States. In the state of Alabama, the $25 billion Colonial Bank, a US bank, has become the largest US bank to fail this year and the sixth largest bank in history. These are factors we have to take into account when considering the importance of the—*(Time expired)*

**Senator HUTCHINS**—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Is the Assistant Treasurer aware of any credible alternative policies to the government’s strategy of fiscal stimulus to keep the economy growing and safeguard the jobs of Australians?

*Opposition senators interjecting—*

**Senator SHERRY**—The only clear policy—and we had some noisy interjections from those opposite—for example, on tax, was from Mr Hockey, the shadow Treasurer, arguing that we should have broken our promise, and of course the former Liberal government’s policy, and reneged on the tax cuts. We delivered them in full and we are proud to do so. The only other strategy we have had from the opposition Liberal-National parties was the one outlined by the previous shadow Treasurer, who argued that in the face of the worst recession in 75 years the government should sit on its hands and do nothing. That was the strategy of those opposite—no stimulus package to cushion the Australian economy, no stimulus package to save 200,000 jobs and no stimulus package to keep the worst recession in 75 years away from Australia. *(Time expired)*

**Emissions Trading Scheme**

**Senator KROGER** (2.11 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Wong. Given that the Prime Minister has claimed we must introduce an emissions trading scheme by the end of the year in order to avoid so-called carbon tariffs, would the minister tell the Senate specifically which countries are planning to impose a carbon tariff on Australia?

**Senator WONG**—I am so glad you asked me that question, Senator, because as usual what we have seen is the Leader of the Opposition and some of the loyal followers—they are not a very large band—jumping on board—

**The PRESIDENT**—Please address the question, Senator Wong.

**Senator WONG**—I apologise, Mr President. They are jumping on board with a
question on an issue that is not factually cor-
rect. The Waxman-Markey bill before the
United States Congress currently has a spe-
cific provision for border adjustments. So the
bill that you want us to photocopy—that Mr
Turnbull says we should hold off and photo-
copy after it has been passed through the US
senate—contains a specific provision for
border adjustments. What an own goal.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! When there is
order we will proceed.

Senator WONG—What an own goal.
The very legislation that those opposite wish
to trumpet as their position contains itself a
demonstration of what the Prime Minister
said could happen and, that is, the capacity
for border adjustments that is contained in
the current US legislation that has been
passed by the house of representatives.

Senator Abetz—Obama said he would
veto it.

Senator WONG—Thank you, Senator
Abetz—he also said, ‘Not the senate.’ Let’s
talk about the US senate. Ten senators this
month wrote to President Obama advocating
a border adjustment mechanism. They said:
‘We write to express our strong support for
the inclusion of a package of initiatives, in-
cluding a border adjustment mechanism to
ensure the viability and effectiveness of any
climate change policy crafted by Congress.’
This is a live issue in the discussions interna-
tionally and if those opposite cared to actu-
ally keep up with the facts they would al-
ready know that. The Prime Minister was
quite right to raise this. I again emphasise
that this is not Australia’s position. We do
not support going down the protectionist
path. That is not how the bill before the Sen-
ate, which those opposite voted against, was
framed. But this is an issue—(Time expired)

Senator KROGER—Mr President, I ask
a supplementary question. Given that the
minister cannot say which countries are go-
ing to impose this so-called carbon tariff, can
the minister at least tell the Senate which
products are going to be hit and by how
much by this imaginary tariff?

Senator WONG—The senator might like
to be aware that the issue of climate change
related tariffs has also been under considera-
tion within the European Union, and in
March this year President Sarkozy in fact
floated a proposal for a carbon tax on im-
ports from countries that have a lower envi-
ronmental standard than France. This issue
was also the subject of public discussion fol-
lowing a European environment ministers
meeting in July. It really shows that those
opposite are prepared to say anything, make
any false claim, in order to try and dodge this
tough issue of climate change. The reality is
that this is a live issue in the negotiations and
the international debate. If you kept up with
the debate, you would know that. You are not
interested in keeping up with the debate be-
cause you are only interested in fighting with
each other on whether or not you are actually
going to have a coherent position on climate
change.

Senator KROGER—Mr President, I ask
a further supplementary question. Is it a fact
that Labor are misleading the Australian
people about the need for an emissions trad-
ing scheme because they have a political
strategy on emissions trading, not a jobs and
environment strategy?

Senator WONG—I might assist the op-
position as well on this issue. If they turned
to the last page of the Frontier Economics
report that they sort of support—sort of—
they would see that they themselves, in their
report that they have paid for, acknowledge
that border taxes are an option. You your-
selves acknowledge that. I quote:
Options for reducing this risk both involve offsetting the loss of competitiveness of local products versus foreign substitutes ... these include:

- Border taxes to increase the costs of foreign produced goods.

So you are suggesting that the Prime Minister, in telling us what is factually correct, is somehow running a scare campaign when you yourselves, in your own modelling report, have alluded to the fact that this is a live issue. This really shows the extent to which those opposite are prepared to engage in fear and smear rather than dealing with the issue of climate change, rather than being responsible on an issue that is so important to the future of this nation.

**Steel Industry**

**Senator LUNDY** (2.17 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator Carr. Can the minister advise the Senate on the progress of the government’s economic stimulus strategy and its implications for the Australian steel industry? What impact has the global downturn had on steel markets, the demand for steel, steel prices and steel production? How has this affected Australian steel makers such as BlueScope and OneSteel? How is the government’s stimulus strategy helping maintain jobs and activity in this vital industry, and how well placed is the industry to benefit from recovery? Finally, how will the government’s investment in nation-building infrastructure maximise those benefits?

**Senator CARR**—I thank Senator Lundy for her question. In reporting their results for 2008-09, BlueScope and OneSteel have confirmed what those of us on this side of the chamber have known all along. They confirm that the world has been going through a period of what BlueScope calls quite unprecedented financial and economic turmoil. OneSteel explains that demand in prices for steel collapsed last November as the world was gripped by recession. This is a recession those opposite do not believe in. They point to the strength of the Australian economy and say, ‘We don’t need a stimulus strategy.’ They forget the economy is strong precisely because we have had a stimulus strategy, a strategy that is working. Australia is better placed than just about any other developed country to take advantage of recovery. That is also the message that we are getting from the steel industry. Demand for steel has risen each month since May. BlueScope CEO Paul O’Malley says the company is ‘increasingly positive’ about the domestic market. BlueScope is about to relight its No. 5 blast furnace at Port Kembla. OneSteel says it is encouraged by the Commonwealth’s action ‘to invest in infrastructure and boost residential and non-residential building activity’. It expects domestic demand to grow in line with improved economic conditions, greater confidence and the impact of government stimulus initiatives.

If only we could inject a bit more steel into the Liberal Party. If only we could get the Liberal Party to appreciate just how important these stimulus measures are. If only we could get the Liberal Party to actually believe in manufacturing. *(Time expired)*

**Senator LUNDY**—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister inform the Senate how, in addition to the general boost to employment and economic activity provided by its stimulus strategy, the government is supporting the Australian steel industry? What is it doing to promote innovation and increase productivity in the sector? What is it doing to strengthen the capabilities of individual firms and the supply chain as a whole? What role can existing initiatives, such as Enterprise Connect and the Industry Capability Network, play in equipping the industry for the challenges and
opportunities of the future, including, specifically, the export opportunities?

Senator CARR—The Australian government is working with steel companies, large and small, to build on this industry’s strong tradition of innovation. First, we have invited steelmakers, steel unions, steel consumers and researchers to form a Steel Industry Innovation Council. BlueScope has welcomed the council’s capacity to ‘identify major infrastructure projects and opportunities where the Australian steel industry can demonstrate its capability and competitiveness’. Its members will include the CSIRO and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, who have been asked to focus on how we can continue the transformation of steel production. Second, the innovation council will advise the government on the appointment of steel supplier advocates to build connections between Australian suppliers and major project proponents in this country and world wide. (Time expired)

Senator LUNDY—Mr President, I do have a further supplementary question. Can the minister explain to the Senate the background to the government’s decision to appoint a supplier advocate for the steel industry? How does this initiative serve the government’s stated objective of giving Australian firms in steel and other industries full, fair and reasonable access to compete for work, both in Australia and overseas? Have any other supplier advocates been announced? What other measures is the government taking to build the capabilities of Australian companies and ensure they have the best possible chance of winning work in open competition?

Senator CARR—The government has announced a package of measures to increase Australian industry participation in major projects and procurements. We want to give everyone the chance to buy Australian, both at home and abroad. This package includes $8.2 million to establish a new supplier advocate program, an extra $8.5 million for the industry capability network to match companies and opportunities and $2.5 million to apply the Australian Industry Participation National Framework to major Commonwealth procurement and infrastructure projects. We have already announced that there will be supplier advocates for steel, for textiles, for clothing and for footwear. Others will follow. This is a major advance for Australian industry and Australian workers. It is about supporting them in their efforts to win work in this country and around the world. We ask the Liberal Party to do the same.

Water for the Future Program

Senator BIRMINGHAM (2.24 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Wong. Is it true that under the government’s much vaunted Water for the Future program not one cent has been spent on on-farm infrastructure and irrigation projects in the past 12 months?

Senator WONG—I thank the senator for the question. We certainly have a significant amount of money committed, including through the state priority projects in the $5.8 billion program, which is a range of programs investing in infrastructure, in irrigation efficiencies and so forth. I may have to take on notice the precise amount actually spent to date. I had previously provided—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator WONG—I was going to say that I had previously provided it to a Senate estimates hearing and I am happy to see if I can get advice on expenditure to date. For example, I do know that in the good senator’s home state of South Australia, as part of our $330 million investment in the Lower Lakes area, we have funded a pipeline for irrigators. I do not know why Senator Fisher is
shaking her head quite so vehemently—we have. We certainly have also funded on-farm planning projects. That is in order to enable farmers to plan better for irrigation efficiencies. I would have to take on notice the precise details of expenditure to date so that I can give the good senator an accurate indication of the progress of that program.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Firstly, will the minister confirm that nothing has changed since I received an answer to her question on notice yesterday indicating that not one cent has been spent under the Water for the Future program in the last 12 months? Further, does the minister believe that to maintain food production while also reducing water use there must be increased investment in irrigation efficiencies? Why is the government refusing to invest in on-farm water infrastructure?

Senator WONG—I invite the senator to consider the Hansard. I think his allegation was not what had been spent out of the Water for the Future package. That is self-evidently not true. I will come back to the senator on the project status, as at today’s date, in relation to the totality of the $5.8 billion program. It is a very large program. It contains both off- and on-farm; it contains state priority projects, where obviously the Commonwealth is working with the states to implement these. As I have indicated to the senator previously, I will come back to him with the detail.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Does the minister agree that the government’s approach of all buybacks and no infrastructure spending is placing at risk Australia’s food security, jeopardising the future of regional towns and the opportunity to save even more water for our rivers and waterways?

Senator WONG—The government has a strategy that is both about purchase and investment. I invite the senator to remember that his party, when in government, supported buybacks. Mr Turnbull did not actually manage to get around to purchasing any water, but certainly their policy was to support buybacks. In fact, my recollection is that Mr Briggs, from the other place, has said, ‘We need to get the buybacks happening more quickly, buybacks that actually deliver water.’ Yet again we have the Liberal Party divided on this issue, depending where they are and depending who they are talking to. They will say one thing to communities down in South Australia and will say another thing upstream. We are about reform. This will take time because we were bequeathed a mess by you. (Time expired)

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT—Order! I draw the attention of honourable senators to the presence in the gallery of Hon. Maria Eagle MP, Minister for Prisons, in the Brown government. On behalf of honourable senators, I welcome you to the Senate.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Fisheries

Senator SIEWERT (2.29 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Sherry. Is the government proposing to proceed with opening an additional 10,000 square kilometres of the Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery and the North West Slope Trawl Fishery, off the Western Australian coast, to bottom trawling? If so, why is this being opened?

Senator SHERRY—Thank you, Senator Siewert, for your question and the notice you gave. We did anticipate that there would be a question on this, given your comments on the matter over the last few weeks. I am advised by the minister, Mr Burke, that he has
been assured by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, known as AFMA, that it is working hard to resolve the issue with its Western Australian fishery colleagues. There is and has been a good working relationship on matters of seabed boundaries in respect of fisheries between the Commonwealth, through AFMA, and all states, and that includes Western Australia.

I am aware, Senator Siewert, of your recent comments regarding the Commonwealth’s so-called proposals to change fishing boundaries. Unfortunately, these comments do not reflect a full appreciation of the issues that are currently before AFMA and the Western Australian government. In 2007, as an interim measure, AFMA made a temporary closure to the North West Slope Trawl Fishery for two years while the boundary listed within the Offshore Constitutional Settlement, known as the OCS, was considered.

Senator Siewert—Maybe because they made a mistake.

Senator SHERRY—I will get to the so-called mistake in a moment. I am sure you will have a couple of supplementary questions. The intent of the OCS that I have just referred to, the offshore settlement, whilst the boundary issue is being considered, is for the Commonwealth to manage trawl fishing in waters deeper than 200 metres and for Western Australia to manage all other types of fishing in waters shallower than 200 metres. Since 2008, AFMA have pursued amendments to that—(Time expired)

Senator SIEWERT—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I ask the minister if the government is aware of opposition to this opening from the fishing industry? Is the government further aware that the North West Slope Trawl expansion would impact on coral reefs and sponge gardens, that it is in fact up to 1,500 metres, not 200 metres, that key species in the Western Deepwater Trawl have been identified as overfished and depleted and that the WA Department of Fisheries believes that the proposals carry significant risks to the sustainability of fish stocks and fisheries in WA? Has the government sought any environmental assessment of the proposal to expand these fisheries to allow bottom trawling?

Senator SHERRY—The central issue here is the definition of the boundary, as determined by the 200-metre isobath, and, in effect, the waters inside the 200-metre isobath and those outside the 200-metre isobath. Those waters inside the 200-metre isobath are in the state jurisdiction. Those outside the 200-metre isobath are in the federal jurisdiction, as managed by AFMA. That is the central issue here. Geoscience Australia are the appropriate organisation to determine the boundary and what is inside and outside the 200-metre isobath. The issue revolves around where exactly that 200-metre isobath falls. (Time expired)

Senator SIEWERT—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I would like to note that the minister did not answer, at all, the question I just asked about whether there was going to be any assessment of the environmental impact this proposal will have on the sustainability of the fisheries and the sustainability of the environmental qualities of those particular areas. So I will ask it again.

Senator SHERRY—with due respect to you, Senator, you are wrong again. The central issue here is that the definition of the boundary is determined by Geoscience Australia. What waters are inside and outside—

Senator Bob Brown—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. The senator is not wrong in asking a question. The question was whether an environmental assessment is being done. It is up to the minister to say yes.
or no, not to say that the question is wrong. It is right; he should answer it.

The PRESIDENT—The minister is answering the question.

Senator SHERRY—I am pointing out that the minister is wrong—
Honourable senators interjecting—

Senator SHERRY—I mean the senator. I would look forward to the senator settling this one. Perhaps she would undertake deep sea diving to determine where this 200-metre isobath is placed. But we rely on Geoscience Australia to give us the advice as to where the precise boundary should be drawn.

Senator Abetz—She’s usually out of her depth.

Senator SHERRY—I will acknowledge that interjection, Senator Abetz. It is one of your best in recent times.

The PRESIDENT—Order! Ignore interjections, Senator Sherry. Address the chair.

Senator SHERRY—that was a particularly good one. It should be on the record. The central issue here is the definition of the waters inside and outside the 200-metre isobath. That is the central issue, Senator Siewert, and when that issue—

Senator Abetz—It is one of your best in recent times.

The PRESIDENT—Order! Ignore interjections, Senator Sherry. Address the chair.

Senator SHERRY—that was a particularly good one. It should be on the record. The central issue here is the definition of the waters inside and outside the 200-metre isobath. That is the central issue, Senator Siewert, and when that issue—

Senator Bob Brown—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. The central issue of the question is: will there be a study on the sustainability of the fishery in the environment?

The PRESIDENT—Senator Bob Brown, that is arguing the question. The minister is addressing the issue. Minister, you have four seconds remaining to address the issue.

Senator SHERRY—There will be an isobath assessment.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT—Order! I draw the attention of honourable senators to the presence in the chamber of a parliamentary delegation from the National Assembly of Cambodia. 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

Indigenous Communities

Senator SCULLION (2.36 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Senator Evans. Is the minister aware of a community that is the subject of a number of media reports, named Corella Creek, in the prescribed intervention area in the Northern Territory, where a number of houses have been without water since January of this year?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I thank Senator Scullion for the question. I do not have any specific briefing on that particular community. As always, if opposition senators have a particular concern about a specific issue, I am happy to receive that prior to question time and attempt to help them. But I do not have any particular briefing that I am aware of on that particular community.

Senator SCULLION—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Obviously, I am disappointed. That is why I reflected that it had been in the media. I thought it would have been released but, if he has not got that, so be it. I am not sure whether another brief may extend to any knowledge the minister has with regard to a school in the area that has just been reopened for a year, boasts an attendance rate of between 85 and 90 per cent—which is very difficult to achieve in many of the circumstances—but, again, because of water supply problems, has been closed on a number of occasions.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I indicated to Senator Scullion that I did not have any particular briefing on the situation at that par-
ticular community. I understand the community, from information someone just gave me, is managed by Yirrkala Council, not the Northern Territory government. As to which press this has been in, since you have not made it clear—I do not know whether this is a Northern Territory paper—I certainly have not had the opportunity to see it. I would appreciate it if you could tell me which press, so I could go and look it up. But, as I indicated to you, I am happy to help. If you want to give me some prior notice I can get you more information. But I cannot help you, when I do not have a brief, about a particular community and the circumstances in that particular community in the Northern Territory, as representing minister.

Senator SCULLION—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I can assure the minister that those facts are correct and they have been reported—not widely, but in a number of places. I will get some details to the minister about those reports. The point is: will the minister now admit that, despite the government’s web of media spin and propaganda in an attempt to deceive Australians into the idea that this government is closing the gap—and they know that. They made some genuine attempts, and they failed. What this government has said is that we are absolutely committed to it. We are absolutely committed to putting the resources to it. And I would encourage you to join us because, until we get that political consensus in this effort to closing the gap, we will not succeed.

Nation Building and Jobs Plan

Senator STERLE (2.40 pm)—My question is to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Government Service Delivery in relation to the nation-building economic stimulus plan, Senator Arbib. Could the minister advise the Senate on how the economic stimulus plan is progressing around the country, in particular how stimulus infrastructure is rolling out? Isn’t it the case that the construction of schools, social housing, community infrastructure and road and rail upgrades is underway across the country? Can the minister advise the Senate on how the states, territories, local government and block grants authorities are working with the Commonwealth to deliver the stimulus?

Senator ARBIB—I thank Senator Sterle for his question. I know that as a senator from Western Australia he is very concerned and interested in infrastructure and a big supporter of the government’s Nation Building and Jobs Plan. Can I inform the Senate that our infrastructure plans are well underway and kicking in, supporting jobs and small businesses across the country. As senators know, 70 per cent of the stimulus package is in infrastructure. Over the next 12 months some 35,000 projects will get underway. Senators might be surprised to hear that after five months we are actually completing projects. In Queensland we have been
Senator Sterle asked about the effect on jobs. Let me tell you about the effect on small business. I have the contractors list from Evans Harch, the company that was building this project. Guess where the plant excavators came from: Mooloolaba Beach. Guess where the concreters came from: Yandina. Guess where the roofers came from: Nambour. Guess where the plumbers came from: Mooloolaba. The plasterers came from Maroochydore; the electricians from Nambour. The waterproofing? Noosa. The glazing? Maroochydore. All local jobs!

Senator ARBIB—Liberal senators do not want to hear about the job creation that is happening. There are 9,500 other projects just like that, creating jobs and supporting small business. Just today the Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek, handed over the keys for the first social housing home right here in the ACT—local jobs! (Time expired)

Senator STERLE—Mr President, I thank the minister for his answer and I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate on the positive impact stimulus construction projects are having on Australian construction jobs? Is the minister aware of what builders and tradespeople, the people on the ground, are saying about the stimulus package? Isn’t it the case that there are people across the country in jobs right now who would have been out of work without the government’s early and decisive action? Can the minister outline for the Senate what the impact on Australian jobs would have been had the Rudd government waited to act?

Senator ARBIB—I thank Senator Sterle for his question. I do not expect those on the other side to actually believe my words. I do not expect them to do that—they are the Liberal Party; they would never believe what I would say!

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! Senator Arbib, address your comments through the chair.

Senator ARBIB—I did a bit of research in the local newspapers, just to see what other people were saying about the stimulus. Let’s take Jack Little, a bricklayer on the Central Coast, one of 70 tradespeople and five apprentices. What does he say? He said: If Newbuild wasn’t building these, I wouldn’t be working. I reckon Rudd’s done a good thing.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! Senator Arbib, resume your seat. I cannot hear. The time for debating these issues is after question time. I need order on both sides.

Senator ARBIB—Thank you, Mr President. I will read this quote from a tradesperson again:

If Newbuild wasn’t building these, I wouldn’t be working. I reckon Rudd’s done a good thing. I’m not Einstein with this sort of thing, but I’m working.

I will tell you what: he is not Einstein, but I wish those guys over there would listen to him. They voted against it. And what about Tony Constantino, Chief Executive, Bovis Lend Lease, who said: It has been a Godsend for some of these people. For a lot of them it is the difference between their businesses staying afloat and not.

That is Lend Lease. (Time expired)
Senator STERLE—I thank the minister for those examples. Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question for the minister. Can the minister advise the Senate on the impact the stimulus is having on small business? Can the minister provide the Senate with any views of small businesses who are actually delivering the stimulus and employing people to do so? In particular, is the minister aware of any examples from the insulation industry, which I understand has seen significant benefits from the Rudd government’s Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan?

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! The time for debating the issue is post question time. If you wish to debate it, do it then.

Senator ARBIB—I am happy to let Senator Sterle know that 6,000 installers have actually registered—that is, small businesses registered with the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, and over 170,000 homes. I just say to those Liberal senators that I know they oppose the stimulus; I know they totally oppose it. I know they oppose the Jobs Fund, which is part of the stimulus. But as the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has shown in the other House—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! On both sides, I need silence.

Senator ARBIB—I am happy to let Senator Sterle know that 6,000 installers have actually registered—that is, small businesses registered with the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, and over 170,000 homes. I just say to those Liberal senators that I know they oppose the stimulus; I know they totally oppose it. I know they oppose the Jobs Fund, which is part of the stimulus. But as the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has shown in the other House—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! On both sides, I need silence.

Senator ARBIB—As Minister Albanese has shown, the hypocrisy knows no bounds, because while they have been putting their hands out for funding under the community infrastructure program, they have also been putting their hands out for funding under the Jobs Fund. The member for Canning, Don Randall, voted against the Jobs Fund, asking for a handout. David Hawker, the member for Wannon—exactly the same—asking for funding. Again, it was the member for Wannon. But we move on to Andrew Robb, the future Liberal leader, asking for a handout under the stimulus package. Yes, you may laugh.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! Senator Arbib, you should not be displaying those in the chamber. You are entitled to read from them.

Senator ARBIB—Jobs plan on this side; no plan on that side.

Honourable senators interjecting—

School Chaplains

Senator PARRY (2.48 pm)—My question is to Minister Carr, representing the Minister for Education. Has the government conducted an evaluation of the successful School Chaplaincy Program?

Senator CARR—The School Chaplaincy Program of course was a program of the previous government. I am not aware of any evaluation that has been undertaken by the department of education into that program.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! It is impossible for me to hear the answer of Senator Carr if there are interjections. Senator Carr is entitled to be heard in silence.

Senator CARR—The chaplaincy program was a program introduced by the previous government. It operates across both government and non-government schools. The evaluation that is the normal part of any government programs is not actually due until next year, so it would be somewhat premature for the government to undertake a review in this budgetary period. There is of course the chaplaincy issue; it is a matter that has been canvassed at some length at Senate estimates for some time. There are a range of reports on the effectiveness of the program. I know that at my own children’s school they are actually running the presentational ball.
So they do meet a number of requirements within schools, not just providing counseling services that have been of a religious type. I understand it is a program that has in fact been oversubscribed within the school system to date.

Senator PARRY—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. If the government has not completed any form of evaluation of this program, how can it now then not continue this program past the end of its current funding run?

Senator CARR—I am not aware that there has been any announcement of the type you are alleging. The National School Chaplaincy Program will be subject, as I understand—and I will take further advice on this matter—to the normal evaluation processes. Concerning the program itself, I am not aware that any announcements have been made.

Senator PARRY—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. The minister, I am aware, has had representations from a number of groups concerning the cancellation of this program. Will the minister inform the Senate how the government plans to fill the void created by axing this highly successful program?

Senator CARR—I am not aware of any developments of the type alleged here today. I will take further advice from the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion. Undoubtedly, she will have something to say to you on these matters.

National Science Week

Senator BILYK (2.52 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator Carr. Can the minister please inform the Senate of the progress of National Science Week and its contribution to science communication in Australia? What is the scale of the festival and what level of Commonwealth support does it enjoy? How is the Commonwealth funding used and why is the Australian government making science awareness a priority? How does the government’s support for National Science Week relate to its science initiatives and its broader strategy to modernise the Australian economy and achieve better social and environmental outcomes by investing in science?

Senator CARR—I thank the senator for her question. National Science Week is a celebration of the contribution that science makes to the community and the contribution the community makes to science. This year’s festival boasts some 800 events and is expected to attract over one million participants right across the country. The Australian government is proud to be investing $1.2 million in National Science Week this year. That money is being used to support strategic events around the country, the work of state and territory coordinating committees in developing programs and school based activities through the Australian Science Teachers Association. It is essential that we build an awareness and acceptance of science if we want to make Australia more productive and more prosperous. However, I would have thought that in recent days, given the debate I have heard in this chamber, there was a complete antipathy to the principles of scientific inquiry on the other side. We will need a scientifically literate citizenry who can make informed decisions about scientific questions and make effective use of technologies and scientific outputs, a citizenry who are ready to support scientific endeavour. It is a pity we could not get the Liberal Party to be more engaged on these questions.

The Australian government demonstrated its support for science in the May budget, which included $1.1 billion for a new Super Science initiative and an extra $703 million...
for university research, much of which will support work in scientific disciplines. The Super Science initiative will concentrate on Australia’s strength in space science and astronomy and in marine and climate science.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! I remind senators that exchanges across the chamber are disorderly. It makes it very difficult to hear the answer being given.

Senator BILYK—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister inform the Senate what other measures the government is taking to increase community awareness of science, including through the Super Science initiative? How does Questacon, Australia’s National Science and Technology Centre, fit into the government’s science communication strategy? What initiatives has the government taken to raise awareness of specific branches of science including space science and astronomy and marine and climate science? What further action is the government taking in the field of science education?

Senator CARR—Science has enormous power to improve our lives. It is unfortunate that those opposite are such deniers of the importance of science but it is, of course, a fact that the government recognises—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! Exchanges across the chamber are disorderly, as I have already pointed out. Senator Carr, address your comments to the chair.

Senator CARR—It is an unfortunate fact that we have heard in recent days a denial of scientific principles in the allegations made by those opposite about the issues of climate change. There is a fundamentalist objection to the principles of science. This government has sought an inquiry based approach to the teaching of science and renewable energy in years 9 and 10 in schools. We have heard nothing in terms of support from the other side. The Super Science initiatives that we have proposed include an extra $11.3 million for Questacon, new support for space education and marine and climate science components. (Time expired)

Senator BILYK—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister explain to the Senate the significance of space science and astronomy to National Science Week and what the government is doing to develop Australia’s capability in these fields, both within the Super Science initiative and more broadly? In particular, what steps has the government taken to secure Australian participation in the international collaborations that now drive the development of major infrastructure for optical and radioastronomy? What are the practical benefits of space science and astronomy and what is the government’s commitment to maximise—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! Senator Bilyk, cease! I will call you when there is quiet in the chamber. I cannot hear the question. I am entitled to hear the question, as is the minister. Senator Bilyk, continue the question.

Senator BILYK—What are the practical benefits of space science and astronomy and what is the government’s commitment to maximise these benefits for Australia?

Senator CARR—Space is central to this year’s National Science Week. The Super Science Initiative includes $160 million to consolidate Australia’s leadership in this field.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Senator Carr, resume your seat.

Opposition senators interjecting—
The PRESIDENT—Order! Senator Carr, resume.

Senator CARR—In addition to this funding, the government last month allocated $88 million to buy Australia a 10 per cent share in the international giant Magellan telescope. We also continue to prosecute Australia’s case to host the Square Kilometre Array telescope. Space science and astronomy have given us technologies that are used every day, whether to treat diseases or understand climate change.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Senator Carr, resume your seat. When there is silence, we will proceed. Senator Carr.

Senator CARR—National Science Week’s Hello from Earth! project demonstrates the interest people have in space and how they can use this to promote science across the board. Senator Abetz, these are genuine emails! These are genuine messages, Senator Abetz. To the 19,000 people—(Time expired)

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! There needs to be order.

Senator Chris Evans—Mr President, can I speak on behalf of all of us from outer space and ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Emissions Trading Scheme

Senator FIERRAVANTI-WELLS (New South Wales) (3.01 pm)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Climate Change and Water (Senator Wong) to a question without notice asked by Senator Fierravanti-Wells today relating to the proposed emissions trading scheme and the steel industry.

I particularly refer to the steel industry and Labor’s flawed CPRS. As I have spoken about in this chamber earlier this week, my concern is about the impact of the CPRS on jobs, the economy and in particular the regions. As an Illawarra based senator, I can say that the steel industry is crucial not only to the Illawarra but to the exports of our country as a whole. I am particularly concerned that the steel industry in the Illawarra and in other places supports thousands of jobs. Therefore, areas like the Illawarra will bear the brunt of Labor’s flawed CPRS. In my speech in this place on 12 August I highlighted the real concerns that Illawarra residents in particular have had, which have been articulated by BlueScope Steel. They identified that the Rudd government’s scheme threatened to erode tens of millions of dollars from their books within the first year and had the potential to threaten the viability of the 12,000 jobs that its operations support.

Might I remind senators, particularly those senators opposite, that this region has traditionally been their heartland. At a time when these jobs are very much at stake, many in the area are crying foul that the one-time party of the workers appears to have lost touch. But I will come back in a moment to some comments about that. Today’s headlines in the Illawarra Mercury compound the worst fears of those residents. Under the banner ‘BlueScope steeling for success’, Mr O’Malley is quoted. The article reads:

He also fired a salvo at the Rudd government, saying it needed to amend its contentious Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme or put at risk the 12,000 jobs in the Illawarra underpinned by BlueScope.

It is important to note that BlueScope is a very important company as far as our exports are concerned. I really have to acknowledge the efforts of the Illawarra Mercury in highlighting consistently the concerns of its resi-
... and in particular as far as the steel industry is concerned, about this scheme. A headline reads ‘O’Malley demands changes to carbon pollution scheme’. The article says:

BlueScope Steel yesterday called on the federal government to consider amendments to its proposed carbon scheme because of concerns over the future impact it would have on the Port Kembla steelworks. In the Illawarra 12,000 workers and their families rely on the steelworks.

I quoted portions of a press release in my questions to Senator Wong. BlueScope Steel has a proven track record as an environmentally responsible company. In a press release yesterday BlueScope cites investing $50 million on environmental improvements globally over the 15 years. Mr O’Malley says:

… the Directors have grave concerns about the current design of the Federal Government’s proposed CPRS and the negative impact it would have on the world competitive Australian steel industry.

The Company strongly believes that the cumulative net cost impact of the current design of the proposed CPRS would be highly significant and material, and that it would severely damage our competitiveness, putting domestic investment, Australian jobs and the Australian steel industry at risk.

Mr O’Malley goes on:

This is not a one-off tax.

It is very clear. As one person—and I would like to requote this—recently commented in response to an article in the Illawarra Mercury this year:

Champagne socialists, the lot of them. They’re not the working person’s party anymore.

One only has to look at the comments of Jennie George in the House of Representatives on 3 June to know that the government berates us but that there are people on their side who are very concerned about jobs and the regional economies. (Time expired)
come into this chamber and put questions to this government about the way that we are addressing these issues. The Rudd government was elected in November 2007. We went to the election with a commitment to the people of Australia—a commitment to address the issue of climate change. We were not going to be like those opposite and bury our heads in the eroding sand. Last week in this chamber, we put forward a piece of legislation that would go some way towards addressing this issue. But those opposite, after 12 years, are still divided and still undecided. So they voted the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme down.

The government’s primary objective in designing the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme has been to get the balance right—to set in place a scheme that reduces carbon pollution and supports economic growth. The government has listened to the views of all stakeholders very closely, including the views of the iron and steel industry, in developing and finalising the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Activities in iron and steel manufacturing have been identified as potentially eligible for emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries assistance under the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. They are currently undergoing a formal assessment to determine their eligibility.

The government understands that Australian businesses are currently dealing with the worst global recession since the Great Depression. In this environment, the government has acted further to support jobs and assist businesses by providing a global recession buffer as part of the assistance package for emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries for the first five years of the CPRS. This buffer will provide an additional five per cent of free permits for emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries activities eligible for 90 per cent assistance and an additional 10 per cent of free permits for the EITE activities eligible for 60 per cent assistance. Other measures, such as the delay in the start of the CPRS by one year and a one-year fixed price phase, will further help Australian companies manage the impact of the global recession.

Senator BOSWELL (Queensland) (3.12 pm)—Sometimes I think the Greens must have done a recruitment campaign and recruited a lot of the ALP. You would expect a speech like that from Senator Brown or any of the other Greens, but where is the Labor Party when it comes to defending the blue-collar worker? Where is it? We have never seen it. They have given up on it. It is not only the National and Liberal parties that are saying that. Jennie George, the member for Throsby—which is in a particularly relevant area—has said that this is not going to work. Chris Trevor, the member for Flynn, has written to say that the coal industry needs more support. The Treasurer of New South Wales has written to say that the CPRS will not work. The Premier of Queensland, Anna Bligh, has expressed her dissatisfaction with the CPRS. So not only is it the coalition but there is a break-out amongst the ALP hierarchy. Why wouldn’t they break out? They can see their blue-collar vote being eroded. They can see it going down the chute.

This is a wake-up call to every blue-collar worker: you have been deserted by your so-called political allies. They were your political allies but have now ceased to be your political allies. They have neglected you and walked away from you as they put your job on the line. Your job is under threat. Do not be under any illusion. Your job is under threat, and it is only the Liberal and National parties that are standing up for you. You have to realise that you have been sold out by the ALP.

We see it time and again. Here we have BlueScope fighting for survival with a $66
million loss. So what do we do? We put a tax on them—no, two taxes! The government put on an ETS tax and then they double it up with a tax under the renewable energy target. So BlueScope have two taxes put on them by the ALP. But it gets worse: because the ALP will not decouple the ETS from the RET, we find that the steel industry are left out when it comes to any benefits under an ETS that should have flowed across to the RET. They miss out on that too.

This is a disaster beyond all disasters. But it is not only a disaster for the steel industry; it is a disaster for all Australian manufacturing. We do not have a lot of Australian manufacturing left—a lot of it has gone offshore. But what we do have depends on low energy costs. That is why we have all our workers; otherwise, a lot more manufacturing would go overseas. But we are penalising our niche advantage, which is low energy costs. We are putting a charge on energy that is going to put the price up by 40 per cent, between the RET and an ETS. And then we expect people like BlueScope to be able to compete, when none of their competitors overseas have to meet these costs. They are not miracle men. They cannot create something out of nothing. In the papers today BlueScope are saying they have lost $66 million and they are going to lose more if an ETS comes in.

It is not only our manufacturing base that is affected; it is our mining industry, our aluminium industry, our primary industries—all of them are threatened under the CPRS. What are the Labor Party doing about it? Lecturing us on what our obligations are. Well, why don’t you let us start lecturing you on what your obligations are to your base? They are the blue-collar workers who put their hard-earned money towards supporting the Labor Party. They are paying $600 and $800 a year to support you, the ALP, and what are you doing? You are turning your backs on them and not giving them any support at all. You are going to destroy the steel industry, you are going to destroy the cement industry, you are going to destroy the coal industry—all these industries that have hundreds of thousands of jobs for blue-collar workers. But you do not care. You are going to support doctors’ wives. You are going to support those people but neglect your blue-collar base. *(Time expired)*

Senator McEWEN (South Australia) *(3.17 pm)*—I too would like to contribute to this debate today and take note of answers given by Senator Wong to questions from the opposition about the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. I cannot help but start by acknowledging Senator Boswell’s comments. I have to say, I think I have heard Senator Boswell’s speech before. Once again, I would like to point out that, despite his claim that the Labor Party has deserted blue-collar workers, it was his party that introduced the Work Choices legislation—and those workers of Australia handsomely repaid the now opposition for introducing Work Choices by in fact voting them out at the last federal election.

This is the second day this week that the opposition have asked Minister Wong questions about the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. That of course is the scheme that they voted down last Thursday when they voted against the legislation that would have set Australia on the path to reducing our carbon emissions. The legislation that we put before the parliament last week was for a CPRS that was responsible, including economically responsible, and measured, and that compensated emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries such as the steel industry, as indeed it contemplated compensating lower middle income households. Those two factors of the legislation they defeated never
seemed to figure in the discussions the opposition had here in the chamber.

The CPRS was to have been but one of a range of measures introduced by the government to address climate change. As has been pointed out by previous speakers, one of the first things that the government did on coming to office was ratify the Kyoto protocol. We have also introduced a number of other measures to deal with climate change, which most of the opposition apparently still do not believe in. The evidence of that—that they do not believe in climate change—is apparent every day that they ask the minister questions about the CPRS.

Instead of assisting the nation to move to being a low-carbon-emission nation, which most of the rest of the developed world is attempting to do, this opposition simply comes up with a range of furphies and a fear campaign to try and justify its complete lack of a position on how to deal with the very real problem of climate change and carbon emissions. The range of furphies that they have come up with this week includes, once again, including agriculture in the ETS when of course, as has been pointed out, agriculture was not included in the legislation that they defeated last week. Yesterday, I think, we had questions about CPI increases arising from the implementation of an ETS. The government has already acknowledged that such bold and courageous legislation does not come without a cost; however, the government has a number of initiatives in place, as I previously discussed, to deal with that.

And today we had the steel industry and then border taxes as the latest furphies that the opposition have put on the table to try and cover up their complete lack of policy and their complete lack of direction on the single most important issue facing the Australian nation. I suppose that tomorrow they will ask some more questions, because they will probably still not have a position on it. It will be curious to see how it pans out with the renewable energy target legislation that the government wants to introduce as the next important phase of assisting the nation to address the problems of climate change and global warming.

Despite professing to be the party that represents business, the coalition have again demonstrated today in their questions during question time that they are not committed to supporting business, because they will not commit to the certainty that is needed in this country to address climate change for the future. (Time expired)

Senator McGauran (Victoria) (3.22 pm)—Senator McEwen talks about furphies. She says that the coalition do not have a policy on emissions trading. We rejected the bill last week.

Senator McEwen—Where is your policy?

Senator McGauran—Is that policy enough for you? A no vote from the majority of the Senate, by the way—that is a policy if ever I saw one! And Senator Boswell, I should add: what a wonderful address he gave the chamber. He still has the passion. After 25 years in this chamber, he still has the passion, and this issue is one that raises the passion more than most. This is definitely an issue that goes to the top level. It ranks with native title and other very emotional issues.

But Senator McEwen and other previous speakers call our questions ‘furphies’. Yesterday she called our question on agriculture a ‘furphy’. That just shows that she has no concept and that the Labor Party has no concept at all of the knock-on effects of the emissions trading scheme on the rural sector. It is all there for them to see. The bells are ringing, the alarm bells are ringing: ‘Hello from earth, Senator Carr!’ The alarm bells
are ringing with regard to the rural sector if
the scheme goes through as it stands without
an international agreement—is that policy
enough for you? If the scheme goes through,
dairy farmers will pay up to an extra $10,000
at the farm gate and that will break an al-
ready ailing dairy sector.

It is the same with the beef sector. Is it not
enough today that BlueScope’s CEO rang the
alarm bells? Isn’t it enough for you today
that he said jobs will be lost? Where is your
defence of the blue-collar workers? Senator
Boswell was right: where is the defence of
the blue-collar workers? To the credit of
Jennie George, she has tried to alert those on
the other side, but those on the other side are
not interested in the blue-collar workers.
They are not interested in the knock-on ef-
fects that the ETS scheme will have. They
have got two interests in this. One is defi-
nitely the politics of it. They believe that
maybe they can win an election on this.
What they have missed, and you hear it from
Penny Wong’s language—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Order!
You will refer to people by their correct title.

Senator McGauran—Minister Wong,
the ‘high priestess of climate change’, I once
heard her called. You hear it in her language.
It is the language of old. It is the language of
some 12 months or so ago when extremism
was the politics of the day. If science, or if
anyone, dared question climate change, they
were in fact burnt at the stake.

But what they have missed is that in the
last 12 months the politics of this has
changed dramatically. The public has started
to wake up and they want a far more moder-
ate approach to this. They want to know how
this will affect their jobs and how this will
affect the economy. You talk about science—
hello, to earth, Senator Carr—and what is to
be believed in science. Did you know, Sena-
tor Carr, that the Antarctic in fact is not
shrinking at all, and that is a scientific fact
which no-one denies? But Peter Garrett still
gets out there and tells us—doom and
gloom—that the Antarctic is shrinking and
polar bears are falling off the edge. That sort
of extremism is not happening and Minister
Wong is still getting up in this chamber and
using the old language of extremism. She has
missed the political shift in all of this.

Government senators interjecting—

Senator McGauran—We have a pol-
icy, do not worry about that, and, as I said
before, our policy is that we voted it down.
How much more of a policy could you get
than that?

But I want to return to the issue of the day
that we have raised, which you have just
brushed aside—forget about the jobs in the
steel industry. BlueScope has just reported a
severe decline in its profit for the coming
year, a 30 per cent reduction in the price of
steel for future contracts. So they are facing
hard times. You can talk about recovery but
it will not be coming to BlueScope Steel for
some time. The CEO alerts you, and it has
been read out today, that one of the greatest
risks to their viability—not profitability, vi-
ability and competitiveness internationally—
is the ETS, and you just brush it aside be-
cause politics is No. 1 and the second one is
the tax grab.

I know that Senator Forshaw and Senator
Hutchins and a lot of those New South Wales
politicians do not believe in the scheme that
you are putting forward, but they do believe
in the tax grab that is coming, and I believe
that the Prime Minister has his eyes on it
more than anything else. If you want to take
this to an election, we are happy to fight on
it.

Question agreed to.
Fisheries

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia) (3.28 pm)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Assistant Treasurer (Senator Sherry) to a question without notice asked by Senator Siewert today relating to fisheries and sea bottom trawling.

This proposed expansion of the Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery and the North West Slope Trawl Fishery amounts to just over 10,000 square kilometres. It is apparent from the minister’s answer that the government has paid no attention to what impact this may have on the environmental values of those two particular areas, on the sustainability of key fish targeted by the fishing industry and on the sustainability of the fisheries in general. I would note here that the Western Australian Department of Fisheries, as I commented on earlier, believe that the proposals carry significant risks to the sustainability of fish stocks and fisheries in WA.

That is a very significant issue. The only point we had from the minister is that this is about the 200-metre isobath and whether that line is correctly drawn. It did not seem to matter that it will have an adverse impact on the fisheries, that the fisheries department in Western Australia considers this to be unsustainable or that already there are fish species in the Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery that have been identified as being overfished, depleted or in immediate danger or are likely to be reported as such in the very near future.

The fishing industry in Western Australia is deeply concerned about the proposal to expand these two fisheries to include bottom trawling. We need to remember what impact bottom trawling has on the environment and on fish species. Bottom trawling is basically the bulldozer of the sea: it goes in and is very damaging to the marine environment, to benthic communities and to demersal fish species. This is recognised by line fishers in Western Australia, who are part of these fisheries and who are expressing very strong concerns.

What do we hear from the government? ‘It’s about the line. It’s about where the line’s drawn.’ It does not matter that, potentially, it will have an environmental impact in the North West Slope Trawl Fishery, in particular, where, even though the line is supposedly drawn on the 200-metre isobath, there are areas outside the line that are as shallow as 15 metres. If this proposal goes ahead, there are important coral reefs and sponge gardens that could be subject to bottom trawling. It could also have a significant environmental impact on the Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery. As I said earlier, there a number of species that will potentially be impacted by this proposal—species that are already overfished, depleted or in immediate danger in the near future.

What does the government say? ‘No, we’re not going to have a look at whether that is going to be significant. We’re not going to look at the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and see if in fact we should be revising our ecological sustainability assessments of those fisheries.’ The minister told me at the time that I had it wrong. Perhaps he should be looking at the fact that the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act has been used in the past. In fact, one of the key areas of that act looks at whether our Commonwealth fisheries are ecologically sustainable. It is one area that the EPBC Act review pointed out we should be looking at extending to other areas besides fisheries.

Here we have the Commonwealth fixated on a line on a map, rather than asking: ‘Is the decision we’re making sustainable? Will it have an adverse ecological impact?’ Bear in mind that fish stocks around the world are
crashing. The government are not even thinking about whether the decision about where a line is on a map will have an impact. Clearly it will. Clearly the WA fisheries department is very concerned about it and has concerns about the sustainability of the fisheries. So why hasn’t the Commonwealth? Why is the Commonwealth not sitting down, looking at it and saying, ‘Perhaps we should be looking at broader issues than just where this line is.’ Why is the Commonwealth not asking, ‘Are we making a truly sustainable decision?’ The government is making this decision at a time when it is carrying out the regional marine planning process, which the Commonwealth and the state have invested in. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE:
ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

School Chaplains

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (3.33 pm)—I have further information to add to an answer I gave to a question Senator Parry asked me during question time today, concerning the School Chaplaincy Program. Minister Gillard’s office advises that there is no review either underway or planned for the School Chaplaincy Program. Under the National School Chaplaincy Program, up to $165 billion over three years was made available to Australian school communities to assist in the provision of chaplaincy services. School communities were eligible to apply for up to $20,000 per annum to establish school chaplaincy services or to expand existing chaplaincy services.

The Australian government has confirmed that it will honour all funding commitments previously made under this program. Around 2,700 schools were granted funding under the two funding rounds of the program conducted in 2007. The previous government made it clear that no further funding rounds were planned beyond the two conducted in 2007. The current government may consider funding in the context of future budget processes.

Senator PARRY (Tasmania) (3.34 pm)—by leave—In response to Senator Carr, he did write to me on 24 June this year indicating that ‘while no further funding rounds are planned at this stage, the government may consider future budget expenses’. The problem with this, Senator Carr, through you, Mr Deputy President, is that there is uncertainty within the chaplaincy movement. I understand that Minister Gillard has written to them, indicating that their contracts would not be renewed. We want to know and to give certainty to chaplains in schools around Australia. I understand that Queensland will be the first state in which there will be no continuation of funding for chaplaincy services.

NOTICES
Presentation

Senator Siewert to move on the next day of sitting:
That the Community Affairs References Committee be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 20 August 2009, from 3.30 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the impact of gene patents on the provision of healthcare in Australia.

Senator Birmingham to move on the next day of sitting:
That the time for the presentation of the report of the Environment, Communications and the Arts References Committee on forestry and mining operations on the Tiwi Islands be extended to 26 October 2009.

Senator Mason to move on the next day of sitting:
That the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services be authorised to meet during the sitting of the Senate on

CHAMBER
Wednesday, 19 August 2009, from 5.30 pm, for a private briefing.

**Senators Barnett** and **Cormann** to move on the next day of sitting:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, no later than 12 pm on Thursday, 20 August 2009, the report of the Government’s National Preventative Health Taskforce as received by the Government on 30 June 2009.

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

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) the Department of Health and Ageing has been collecting audited General Purpose Accounts from aged care providers since the 2004-05 financial year,

(ii) this information has to be submitted by aged care providers as a condition of receiving Conditional Adjustment Payments (CAP),

(iii) national de-identified comparative data from those accounts was expected to be made available every financial year to assist in performance benchmarking and in industry planning and investment decisions,

(iv) only the 2004-05 data was made available to the aged care industry (Bentleys MRI report), and

(v) subsequently, even though the information has been collected and analysed (in 2005-06 by Grant Thornton, in 2006-07 by Access Economics and KPMG) these reports, and any subsequent analysis, do not appear to have been made publicly available;

(b) considers publication of the national de-identified data from the audited General Purpose Accounts to be in the public interest; and

(c) orders that there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, by no later than 12 pm on 20 August 2009, the following documents:

National de-identified data from the audited General Purpose Accounts of aged care providers for:

- 2005-06, including report/analysis by Grant Thornton,
- 2006-07, including report/analysis by Access Economics and KPMG,
- 2007-08, including any report/analysis by the department and/or any third party consultant, and
- 2008-09, including any report/analysis by the department and/or any third party consultant.

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

That the following matter be referred to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 14 September 2009:

The Australian Government’s management of the removal of the 40 per cent fee rebate for the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) export certification functions, having regard to:

(a) the level of industry support for the removal of the 40 per cent rebate prior to the implementation of comprehensive reform of AQIS’s export inspection and certification services;

(b) the adequacy of consultation by the Government in the development of industry work plans;

(c) the capacity of the Government, including AQIS, to implement efficiency proposals;

(d) the adequacy of government funding to implement industry work plans;

(e) any progress on meeting targets in industry work plans;

(f) the financial or other impact on industry sectors of the failure to meet reform targets; and

(g) any other relevant matter.
Withdrawal

Senator LUDWIG (Queensland—Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (3.35 pm)—I withdraw government business notice of motion No. 1 relating to the Select Committee on Agricultural and Related Industries.

COMMITTEES

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

Extension of Time

Senator PARRY (Tasmania) (3.36 pm)—by leave—On behalf of Senator Nash, I move:

That the time for the presentation of the report of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee on natural resource management and conservation challenges be extended to 26 October 2009.

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

Postponement

The following item of business was postponed:

General business notice of motion no. 519 standing in the name of Senator Siewert for today, relating to Hearing Awareness Week, postponed till 19 August 2009.

COMMITTEES

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

Extension of Time

Senator TROOD (Queensland) (3.37 pm)—I move:

That the time for the presentation of the report of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee on the economic and security challenges facing Papua New Guinea and the island states of the southwest Pacific be extended to 29 October 2009.

Question agreed to.

MS NATALYA ESTEMIROVA

Senator BOB BROWN (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (3.38 pm)—I move:

That the Senate:

(a) condemns the murder of Russian human rights campaigner, Ms Natalya Estemirova; and

(b) supports transparent debate on human rights abuses in Chechnya that is free from intimidation or violence.

Question agreed to.

CHEMOTHERAPY

Order

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia) (3.38 pm)—I seek leave to amend general business notice of motion No. 517 standing in my name by amending paragraphs (d)(iv) and (v) to omit ‘13 May 2008 and 17 August 2009’ and substitute ‘13 May 2008 to 17 August 2009’.

Leave granted.

Senator CORMANN—I move the motion as amended:

That the Senate:

(a) notes that:

(i) the government announced during Senate question time on 12 August 2009 that it remains committed to its $100 million budget cut to chemotherapy treatment,

(ii) the government repeated its assertion that it only wants to fund the ‘actual quantity’ of chemotherapy medicines that are delivered to cancer patients,

(iii) chemotherapy drugs are delivered in standard vial sizes, while different cancer patients, with different body weights and different physiological requirements will need different dosages of a particular life saving chemotherapy drug,

(iv) at times a portion of an opened vial will be left unused,
(v) consistent with Therapeutic Goods Administration requirements any un-used portion of an opened vial containing those dangerous chemotherapy drugs has to be discarded and will not be able to be used for any other patient,

(vi) unless there is a change in vial sizes, no change in government funding arrangements will be able to remove that inefficiency and somebody will have to pay for the $100 million budget cut,

(vii) this chemotherapy budget cut was part of both the 2008/09 and 2009/10 budgets with an original implementation date of 1 July 2009, deferred to 1 September 2009, and

(viii) the government still has not been able to come up with a sensible way to implement this ill-considered budget cut;

(b) is concerned about the potential impact of this budget cut on cancer patients and considers that the ongoing uncertainty surrounding this measure has led to unnecessary concerns for cancer patients, their families and health care professionals involved in the preparation and use of chemotherapy drugs;

(c) calls on the government to end the ongoing uncertainty as soon as possible; and

(d) orders that there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing by no later than 12 pm on 19 August, copies of:

(i) all advice from the Department of Health and Ageing to the Minister for Health and Ageing in relation to the budget measures set out above from 13 May 2008 to 17 August 2009,

(ii) any modeling conducted within government in the lead up to the announcements of these budget measures and any subsequent modeling undertaken by the government since 13 May 2008,

(iii) all correspondence between the Minister and/or her Department with State and Territory governments in relation to these budget measures from 13 May 2008 to 17 August 2009,

(iv) all correspondence between the Minister and stakeholders regarding these budget measures from 13 May 2008 to 17 August 2009, and

(v) all correspondence between Department and stakeholders regarding these budget measures from 13 May 2008 to 17 August 2009.

Question agreed to.

Senator O'BRIEN (Tasmania) (3.39 pm)—Mr Deputy President, I seek leave to make a very short statement.

Leave granted.

Senator O'BRIEN—The government opposes the previous motion. We understand that it has the support at least of the coalition and the Greens, which means that it would have a majority in this chamber. On that basis we will not call a division.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Afghanistan and Pakistan

Homelessness

Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus

Senator LUDWIG (Queensland—Special Minister of State and Cabinet Secretary) (3.39 pm)—I present three ministerial statements relating to:

• Afghanistan and Pakistan;
• homelessness; and
• commencement of Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus negotiations.

Senator BOB BROWN (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (3.40 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the Senate take note of the statement on Afghanistan.

This is a statement from the government, and in particular the Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Stephen Smith, on Afghanistan and Pakistan. I want to take this opportunity to express the deep dismay that the Greens have with the recent promulgation of laws to do with women’s rights by Afghan President Hamid Karzai. We have our defence forces, good and true, in Afghanistan to bring a measure of democracy and human rights to the people of that country, who have been through decades—indeed, centuries—of turmoil. When one reads of President Karzai’s recent proclamation on the rights of women, one has to question the cause in which we put at risk the lives and wellbeing of our defence forces.

Having been internationally criticised for a move to invoke repressive laws on women in Afghanistan earlier this year, it turns out that just a couple of weeks ago President Karzai used a constitutional loophole, according to the Guardian newspaper from the United Kingdom, to enact a law that allows minority Shiite Muslim husbands to refuse food and money to their wives if they deny them sex. The law also prohibits a woman leaving a house without her husband’s permission and it also automatically gives guardianship, or control, of children to the husband and/or to the grandfather in any dispute between a husband and wife. Let me read from the Guardian:

The legislation, which governs many aspects of family life for Afghanistan’s Shiites, has been sparking controversy since Karzai signed an earlier version in March. Critics said the original legislation essentially legalized marital rape and Karzai quickly suspended enforcement after governments around the world condemned it as oppressive and a return to Taliban-era repression of women.

But the revised version, made public in July, riled activists all over again because many restrictive articles remained, including one that appears to give a husband the right to starve his wife if she refuses to have sex with him.

That is, she will be denied food and sustenance. Female parliamentarians said they thought they would get a chance to fight the revisions only to discover in recent days that Karzai had taken advantage of a legislative recess to approve the law by decree. Parliament has the right to examine and change the law when they reconvene, but the laws stay effective in the meantime.

What indeed is this parliament to make of this law? Are we to stay silent about this sort of barbaric legislation from the elected president of Afghanistan in what I can only take to be an affront to decency to a world that is putting a lot of people at risk of life and limb to come to the so-called assistance of Afghanistan?

The Greens position here is that Australian troops should be withdrawn from Afghanistan. That has been our position all along. At the outset, when Afghanistan was taken over by the US defence forces in the wake of the bombing of the buildings and the huge loss of life in America, we thought that after getting rid of the Taliban there would be the establishment there of a more enlightened society. However, President Bush, the chamber will remember, then withdrew the bulk of troops from Afghanistan to invade Iraq, and that allowed the Taliban to become re-established. Now with the Taliban growing in influence in Afghanistan we have President Karzai beating them to the punch with barbaric laws that have no place in civilised society.

I call upon the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister of this country, Kevin Rudd, to issue the greatest objection to President Karzai in Afghanistan and a demand for the withdrawal of this legislation. It will be said that we should not be intervening in the domestic law of another country. We have our troops in that country, and they are there fighting for liberty, democracy and
decency. This legislation is an affront to all three of those things. I ask our government to take up this issue. I do not accept that silence is necessarily consent, but I want to know what the government is doing to have this law rescinded in Afghanistan. The polls indicate that President Karzai may well be re-elected. Indeed, commentators are pointing out that his action in passing this law was to placate some extremist and hateful clerics who wanted these laws brought in—in other words, to get their support.

But is that the Afghanistan we are fighting for? Are we asking Australians to put at risk life and limb—and are we asking their families see their loved ones going off to a very dangerous situation in Afghanistan—to uphold laws like this? I think not. It is a matter that we have to confront and debate. If Afghanistan is going to—whatever government is there—resort to these religious based laws which include extreme repression of women then so be it. If that is what the people of Afghanistan want—and I know there are many who do not want that, but if that is what the majority are voting for—then let us collectively debate the propriety of us putting our defence forces into a theatre of war to defend those laws and that particular regime, elected or otherwise, in Afghanistan. I pose that question to the coalition as well as to the opposition and to other crossbenchers. We cannot ignore this issue. We cannot just go quietly and say, ‘Oh, well, that’s a cultural difference between us and them.’

We are putting our troops into mortal danger in Afghanistan and all the reports are that that danger is increasing. Our soldiers are in some of the most dangerous circumstances. They are circumstances that other European countries—NATO countries, for example—will not allow their soldiers to enter into in Afghanistan. We have lost double figures in numbers of our soldiers already. How far is this to go, and in defence of what? I am motivated to get up and speak about this today because I find President Karzai’s behaviour totally unacceptable.

I put this question through this chamber to Prime Minister Rudd: what have you to say about this circumstance in Afghanistan? We need to know about the government’s thinking on this issue, and we need to know about what messages have been conveyed to President Karzai, not just after an election but in the run-up to this election, because he is thumbing his nose at the democracies which are putting so much into defending his position—let us be direct about this—as the elected President in Afghanistan. It is not good enough for us to be silent about it.

Question agreed to.

DOCUMENTS

Department of the Senate: Travel

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (3.50 pm)—I table documents providing details of travelling allowance payments made by the Department of the Senate to senators and members for the period 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009, and travel expenditure for the Department of the Senate for the same period.

COMMITTEES

Migration Committee

Report

Senator McEWEN (South Australia) (3.51 pm)—On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, I present the report of the committee Immigration detention in Australia: facilities, services and transparency. I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the report.

Leave granted.

Senator McEWEN—I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

I will at the outset indicate that I think Senators Hanson-Young and Bilyk were also
wishing to speak on this report. It gives me great pleasure to stand here today on behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration to table the third and final report from the inquiry into immigration detention in Australia. Following the first report tabled in December last year, which was entitled Immigration detention in Australia: a new beginning—criteria for release from detention, and a second report tabled in early May this year entitled Immigration detention in Australia: community-based alternatives to detention, this final report focuses on the facilities, services and transparency of immigration detention in Australia. The report concludes the 15-month long inquiry into the criteria for immigration detention in our country and the alternative options available. During these 15 months the joint committee on migration has reviewed some 142 submissions, visited detention centres across the country and spoken with witnesses from all walks of life in order to gain a wide-ranging insight into Australia’s immigration detention policies. It was the aim of the committee to offer suggestions to the government to help shape the future of Australia’s immigration detention policy in a fairer, more efficient and humane way.

The first report of the committee made 18 recommendations which the committee believed would aid in improving accountability and ensuring a timely release from detention centres for detainees following health, security and identity checks. The second report had an additional 12 recommendations, which focused on upholding the safety and security of Australia’s borders while taking a humane approach to those people seeking protection in Australia. This final report comes with a further 11 recommendations. These address the preferred infrastructure options for contemporary immigration detention; the options for the provision of detention services and detention health services across the range of current detention facilities; and the options to expand the transparency and visibility of immigration detention centres.

One of the key recommendations from this report is recommendation 4, which recommends that detention in immigration residential housing should be used in lieu of detention centres should it be deemed feasible. After reviewing submissions and public hearings, the committee believes that, while secure detention will continue to play an important role in our immigration system, evidence suggests it is not necessary to keep those people who meet the criteria for release in secure detention while they await resolution of their immigration status. Placing detainees in immigration residential housing and immigration transit accommodation for the shortest time possible would complement the government’s intention to address the prompt resolution of an individual’s immigration status. This is in line with recommendations from the second report of the committee.

Additionally, the committee has serious concerns about the appearance of a number of detention centres. In fact, recommendations 1 to 3 and 5 of this report revolve around the infrastructure and aesthetics, or lack of aesthetics, of some of the detention centres. The committee had a number of concerns about some detention centres which look more like prisons: high security levels; a lack of access to fresh, clean air; limited access to outdoor exercise areas; little privacy; and, in some circumstances, very poor levels of cleanliness. The people who are seeking refuge in our country are not criminals and the majority have fled hardships and risked their lives in search of a better future. They should not be kept in prison-like environments.
Recommendation 1 of the report that the reconstruction of stage 1 at Villawood Detention Centre remains urgent and a priority of the committee would help in eradicating the prison-like appearance. The committee noted that the government has provided $186.7 million over the next five years to redevelop that detention centre. However, the committee noted that that timeframe may need to be revised due to the current concerns regarding the state of the infrastructure and facilities. Similarly, the committee suggests in recommendation 2 that the proposed upgrades of the Perth detention facility commence immediately. Although the facilities in Perth are under limited lease arrangements, they are in dire need of urgent attention. The committee has agreed that the government should examine the long-term options with the intent to establish a purpose-built, long-term facility.

The intentions of most senators on this committee were to restore justice, dignity and certainty to the treatment of those people held in immigration detention in Australia. As at 17 July this year, there were 744 men and women still detained in immigration detention centres across the country and on Christmas Island. In line with restoring justice and dignity to these people, recommendations 3 and 5 are about reducing the extreme security measures currently in place. The use of razor wire or barbed wire, electrified fencing, caged walkways and perspex barriers are seen as excessive by the committee and are a disproportionate security measure. I note that the Christmas Island detention facility was built by the previous government as a high security establishment at a cost of some $400 million. The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship has already taken measures to remove razor wire from all of Australia’s detention facilities except stage 1 at Villawood, which is a very welcome move.

The committee recommends in its report that it is in the best interests of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, as well as the general public, to increase the transparency of the immigration detention centres. Many media outlets are using old file footage of the immigration detention centres or using file footage of now closed detention centres for their images. Therefore, the committee has recommended that the provision of greater access to detention facilities is made available for the media. Furthermore, the committee has recommended that regularly updated information on the facilities, including statistics and detainees population, should appear on the department’s website.

Additionally, to aid in the greater transparency of our immigration detention centres, the committee has recommended that the Australian Human Rights Commission be granted a statutory right of access to all places of, and persons in, immigration detention in Australia. This will ensure that all facilities and the treatment of detainees is always as dignified and as humane as possible. That being said, the committee has suggested with recommendation 9 that the government maintain appropriate physical and mental health facilities at the Christmas Island detention centre, commensurate with the services provided at other immigration detention centres. Many of the submissions received by the committee raised concerns over the services available on Christmas Island, partially due to the geographical remoteness of the island. Some medical needs, as we know, cannot be met on the island whatsoever. Therefore, the committee has recommended the access to appropriate facilities to assist in the transparency of immigration detention in Australia.

Lastly, the remaining recommendations made by the committee are with regard to the department’s provision of services to detention centres. The committee makes several
recommendations to encourage a full review of the current immigration detention service providers, to introduce mandatory and on-going training programs for staff of the detention service providers and to make public the service standards of the immigration detention centres on the department’s website. It is hoped that with those measures the Department of Immigration and Citizenship will be able to increase the quality and effectiveness of the services that it provides to all immigrant detainees and achieve a high service standard across the board.

I conclude by thanking all of the witnesses to this inquiry, particularly the detainees themselves, their advocates and the departmental officials. I thank the committee secretariat and all of the senators and members of the joint committee who contributed to this inquiry in a very positive and meaningful way.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (4.00 pm)—I rise to speak today on the motion to take note of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration’s third report into immigration detention, Immigration detention in Australia: facilities, services and transparency. Can I say that the Greens are extremely disappointed that the majority report of the committee does not appropriately address, in our view, the major concerns outlined throughout the inquiry process; nor does it put forward adequate recommendations for change. I have in fact put in a dissenting report because of my major concerns with the committee’s majority report.

First and foremost, the issues of transparency and the provision of suitable and sufficient services cannot effectively be dealt with without questioning the appropriateness of the privatisation of detention services. A lot of the issues and concerns that were raised throughout the inquiry process come back to the ultimate issue of our detention facilities being run by private companies. Given that the majority of individuals and organisations that provided evidence to the committee highlighted concerns about the privatisation of detention services, the fact that the committee’s report fails to reflect on this with an actual recommendation is disappointing and clearly contravenes moves towards a more transparent and accountable immigration detention system.

The Rudd government’s recent announcement that it has signed new five-year contracts for immigration detention services with GSL and Serco is disappointing and strikingly at odds with its pre-election promises. The fact that there will be two different operators for detention centres, residential housing and transit accommodation also raises concern over how the private operators will communicate with one another and the department to ensure that transparency and quality of care are maintained. It is going to be very difficult, I believe, to have a successful transition between the immigration detention centres, the residential housing facilities and the transit accommodation. It is hard to believe that this, as well as the need to coordinate with the department, will result in good-quality care, when we know already that just dealing with one private operator and the department causes problems from time to time.

In the course of the inquiry we heard numerous concerns about using external, for-profit contractors to provide immigration detention services, particularly given that there have been many instances, according to A Just Australia, one of the witnesses, where arguments regarding responsibility for service delivery between the department and service delivery contractors have resulted in unacceptable living conditions for detained people. If the arguments already happen between one private operator and the department, I hate to think what will happen when
negotiations are held between two separate private operators and the department. The fact is that both GSL and Serco have backgrounds in providing prison services. The Greens do not believe that this is an appropriate way to provide a service to those vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers who are currently found in detention centres. Outsourcing is not an appropriate way of handling their claims and providing care for those vulnerable people who seek our assistance and protection, particularly when some of the detention facilities are so far removed and remote from mainland Australia.

It is for this reason that the Greens have put forward two main recommendations on how we believe the immigration detention system can be made more transparent and accountable. Firstly, we have argued in our dissenting report that the government should return all immigration detention services to public control. Let me remind you, Mr Acting Deputy President, that that was a promise of the Labor Party before the election. Obviously, with the signing of the two new five-year contracts, that election promise has been broken. We believe that detention services need to be returned to public control, opening up a direct line of responsibility between the department, the minister and the immigration processes and services that occur in these detention facilities. Secondly, acknowledging that that election promise has been broken and that the government has just negotiated new five-year contracts, that election promise has been broken. We believe that detention services need to be returned to public control, opening up a direct line of responsibility between the department, the minister and the immigration processes and services that occur in these detention facilities. Secondly, acknowledging that that election promise has been broken and that the government has just negotiated new five-year contracts, we believe that, at a minimum, the contracts must emphasise the need to put welfare outcomes ahead of security and compliance. We must ensure that the welfare concerns of vulnerable people, those people seeking asylum and our protection, are put ahead of security and compliance. We must ensure that no private operator with only a prison services background is awarded the contract in the future.

The Greens are also concerned that the report fails to include appropriate and detailed recommendations regarding infrastructure, the security features of immigration residential housing and immigration transit accommodation, and healthcare services. Concerns were continually raised throughout the 12-month inquiry relating specifically to the inappropriateness of housing children in residential housing facilities and the overuse of immigration transit accommodation. Various other concerns were raised, which Senator McEwen alluded to in her response to the report, about healthcare services. These have not, in the view of the Greens, been dealt with in the majority report.

With regard to Christmas Island, most notably, the committee heard evidence from many witnesses criticising the current excision policy, particularly due to the remoteness of the location, which undoubtedly limits access to sufficient healthcare facilities and resources for both island residents and detainees, and access to torture and trauma counselling. These are basic services that should be available at any facility that is housing asylum seekers and refugees, and yet there is no access to them at the remote location of Christmas Island. The committee heard overwhelming evidence from refugee advocates, lawyers and individuals calling for the need for drastic upgrading of the facilities on Christmas Island to at least bring them up to a standard comparable with that required of detention centres on the mainland. I acknowledge the recommendations relating to those issues in the majority report.

Concerns were also raised around the lack of community oversight that is available when dealing with excised territories. The directors of A Just Australia argued that with no community oversight or media scrutiny ‘there is the opportunity for extremely inhumane treatment of people’ when there is a
lack of transparency in the operation of these services.

Despite our recognition for infrastructure change on Christmas Island the Greens believe that, due to the extraordinary level of security at the North West Point detention centre and the inappropriateness of detaining people there, the facility should be closed immediately. That is a long-held view of the Greens and one that we continue to hold. The white elephant, as it has been described by the chair of the committee, is not an appropriate place to hold vulnerable people seeking asylum protection and refuge.

As with our previous two reports to this inquiry we continue to remain concerned about holding children in secure forms of detention. Even under the definition of ‘immigration detention’ within the Migration Act it is clear that children theoretically should not be detained in any form of secure detention. We are committed to the principle that no minor be detained in any detention centre, or facility with similar conditions to detention centres, under any circumstances. This concern was raised time and time again in relation to the residential housing facilities where, just because it was not technically named a detention centre, the idea of monitored movement, guards, security, not being able to leave the front door and being surrounded by fences means it is not an appropriate place to be housing children. Concerns were also raised about housing children in those spaces with adults who are perhaps suffering from mental health conditions because of their long-term detention. There are many reasons why we should not be housing children in any form of detention, and that includes transit detention centres as well as residential housing facilities. To ensure that the welfare of children is paramount in any immigration detention policy we have recommended that a Commonwealth Commissioner for Children be established to, among other things, specifically oversee the treatment of children in immigration detention. In establishing such a commissioner the rights of the child would be appropriately protected and the treatment of children adequately scrutinised.

While I acknowledge, as I did in the previous two reports, the work the immigration minister, Senator Evans, is doing to work towards a more humane and compassionate system of immigration, the Greens believe we still have a long way to go. We must not be detaining people in remote locations such as Christmas Island where they do not have access to facilities and where it is out of sight, out of mind. It is not a place to be holding vulnerable people. (Time expired)

Senator BILYK (Tasmania) (4.10 pm)—I rise today also to speak on the third report of the inquiry into immigration detention in Australia by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, of which I am a member. This is the last of three reports against the inquiry’s terms of reference. We have seen the two previous reports: Immigration detention in Australia: a new beginning, released in December 2008; and Immigration detention in Australia: community-based alternatives to detention, released in May 2009.

The first report made 18 recommendations aimed at improving accountability and ensuring a timely release from detention centres—and of course I, and the members of the committee, are pleased that this government has already acted on some of the recommendations from the first report.

In the second report, tabled in May 2009, the committee looked into options available for community based alternatives to detention centres and focused on the support, both physical and emotional, required for a successful release of detainees into the community. The key recommendation here was that the government reform the bridging visa
framework to fully support people released into the community, with the appropriate reporting or surety requirements.

I will not go over old ground on those two reports in the short time I have today. It should be noted, however, that the third report, *Immigration detention in Australia: Facilities, services and transparency*, brings this particular inquiry to completion. The third part of the report addresses the issues of options to expand the transparency and visibility of immigration detention centres, the preferred infrastructure options for contemporary immigration detention and options for the provision of detention services and detention health services across the range of current facilities. This includes immigration detention centres, immigration transit accommodation and community detention. I am pleased that the government has taken positive steps to introduce more humane and appropriate accommodation facilities through immigration transit accommodation and residential housing, but the standard of many facilities remains of concern to the committee, particularly at Perth and stage 1 of Villawood.

There are 11 recommendations overall in the third-stage report of the inquiry, which received over 144 written submissions. These submissions supported the many public hearings and visits by the committee to various forms of detention. The committee members reiterate that reconstruction of stage 1 at Villawood remains a priority of the committee. And here I would just like to point out the Rudd government has announced that it will provide $186.7 million over the next five years to help Villawood redevelopment. We also recommend that the upgrade of the Perth centre goes ahead but that the government look at developing a purpose built facility over the long term, as the lease agreement on this site will be renewable in a few years.

The committee notes that some facilities are more like the traditional concept of a prison, with razor wire, and/or barbed wire, and the committee recommends replacing this with more appropriate fencing. Immigration detention is not meant to be punitive, so it would be more appropriate if the facilities did not look, as I said, like the traditional concept of what people imagine a prison to look like. North West Point, one of the facilities on Christmas Island, has caged walkways and electrified fencing. Once again, it is recommended that this be replaced with more appropriate security infrastructure.

The geographical remoteness of Christmas Island provides a challenge to the detention service provider, organisations that provide support and other services to detainees and the local community. Some medical needs cannot be met on the island. It is difficult for the local community to provide adequate health support to a significant number of immigration detainees. Recommendation 9 is that the Australian government provide and maintain appropriate physical and mental health facilities on Christmas Island.

It is imperative also that staff dealing with detainees are aware of and trained in cultural sensitivities and appropriateness, that they have basic counselling skills, can manage conflict through negotiations and provide the appropriate security measures. To ensure that all detainees, whether onshore or offshore, receive the same level of appropriate service the committee’s recommendation 7 is that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship include mandatory staff training programs at the various facilities and that all staff dealing with detainees are assessed as competent in the areas I have just mentioned.

Recommendation 8 relates to the need for DIAC to publish the detention service standards or the current equivalent on its website, with all current and future detainees to
receive a copy which has been translated into appropriate languages. It is also recommended that the Australian National Audit Office undertake an independent review of the current detention service providers and facilities within the next three years.

The committee also recommends that the Australian Human Rights Commission be granted a statutory right of access to all places of and persons in immigration detention in Australia. If Australia ratifies the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment, which it recently signed, an agency with functional independence will need to be developed to conduct visits based inspection of all places of detention in all parts of Australia as well as relevant offshore locations such as immigration detention facilities. It was considered by the committee that access by Australian Human Right Commission be the minimum access.

In the past few years the government has moved towards using a more humane process of immigration residential housing and immigration transit accommodation where possible, as I have already mentioned. But it is unfortunate that some parts of the media still use old file footage of facilities that are now closed, such as the Baxter and Woomera. Providing access to the media, with due process undertaken to protect the privacy of detainees, would increase the level of transparency and allow greater visibility of day-to-day life in the facilities. Therefore, the committee recommends that DIAC develop a set of public media protocols to be applied consistently across all immigration detention facilities and also provide the media greater access to all immigration detention facilities, but, as I said, with due care to maintaining the privacy of people in these facilities.

A fair and effective immigration detention policy and strong border security measures at the same time need not be mutually exclusive. We must ensure that we are committed to the fair and equal treatment of all people, and this commitment extends to people who enter Australia illegally and are placed in detention. To this end I would like to acknowledge the work already undertaken in this area by my colleague Senator Evans, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. I would also like to thank all those people who gave evidence to this committee, either in writing or verbally, the chair Mr Michael Danby, and fellow committee members, from both this place and the other. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the secretariat who worked with the committee on this report. Their professionalism and integrity at all times are to be applauded, and I thank them for their hard work.

Question agreed to.

**Joint Standing Committee on Treaties**

**Report**

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia) (4.18 pm)—On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, I present report No. 103, Treaties tabled on 12 March and 13 May 2009, and I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the report.

Leave granted.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

In addition to remarks that I would like to make shortly, I seek leave to have a tabling statement on behalf of Senator McGauran incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

*The statement read as follows—*

Mr President, I present Report 103 of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties. The report reviews three treaty actions:

* the Agreement between Australia and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam concerning the Transfer of Sentenced Persons;
the Convention on Cluster Munitions; and
the Agreement on Employment of Spouses and Dependents of Diplomatic and Consular Personnel between Australia and the Portuguese Republic.

In each case the Committee has supported the proposed treaties and recommended that binding treaty action be taken.

Mr President, I will direct most of my remarks to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Cluster munitions are bombs, artillery shells and rockets that fragment into small bomblets known as submunitions. One cluster munition can spread up to hundreds of submunitions.

Cluster munitions are the subject of a convention because their broad area of effect and the fact that submunitions often fail to detonate mean they have a significant impact on civilian populations. Their use results in large areas of land contaminated with highly dangerous unexploded submunitions.

In the short term, unexploded submunitions expose civilians returning to areas of conflict to the danger of being killed or injured. There have been over 13,000 recorded civilian casualties from discarded submunitions.

In the longer-term, the suspected presence of unexploded cluster munitions prevents the use and rehabilitation of vital infrastructure, including roads, schools, markets and farms, until expensive and arduous clearance activities have taken place.

The Convention was signed in December 2008 and will come into force six months after it has been ratified by 30 States. As of July 2009, 98 states had signed the Convention and 14 states had ratified.

The Convention will require Australia to:

- never develop, produce, acquire, stock or transfer cluster munitions;
- never assist anyone in any activity prohibited under the Convention;
- only retain limited stocks used for training purposes;
- provide assistance to cluster munitions victims in areas under Australia’s jurisdiction or control;
- provide to other States Parties technical, material and financial assistance to clear unexploded submunitions, and for the economic and social recovery needed as a result of the use of cluster munitions in these jurisdictions;
- criminalise any activity prohibited under the Convention; and
- encourage other States not party to the Convention to sign and ratify, with the goal of attracting universal adherence.

Mr President, as with any important measure of this sort, the chief thing is how to ensure the implementation follows both the letter and the spirit of the Convention.

The Committee is concerned that some of the terms contained in the Convention are not clearly defined and may provide an avenue by which Australians could inadvertently contravene the humanitarian aims of the Convention.

To prevent this, the Australian Government and the Australian Defence Force should ensure that, when drafting the domestic legislation implementing the Convention, and when developing policies by which the personnel of the ADF operate, the humanitarian aims of the Convention cannot be legally contravened.

To achieve this, the Committee recommends that the Australian Government and the ADF have regard to certain issues when drafting the legislation required to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and when developing policies under which the personnel of the ADF operate. These issues are

- the definition of the terms ‘use’, ‘retain’, ‘assist’, ‘encourage’ and ‘induce’ as they apply in Articles 1, 2 and 21 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions;
- preventing inadvertent participation in the use, or assistance in the use, of cluster munitions by Australia; and
- preventing investment by Australian entities in the development or production of cluster munitions, either directly, or through the
provision of funds to companies that may develop or produce cluster munitions. The Committee is of the view that ratification of the Convention will reaffirm Australia’s commitment to limiting the impact of armed conflict on civilian populations, and will significantly improve the lives of people affected by cluster munitions. The Convention will also permit Australia to continue to cooperate militarily with its allies.

Mr President, the Agreement between Australia and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam concerning Transfer of Sentenced Persons permits Australians imprisoned in Vietnam, and Vietnamese nationals imprisoned in Australia, to apply to serve the remainder of their sentences in their home country.

The purpose of the scheme is to reintegrate prisoners into society by allowing them to apply to serve their sentences in their home country, without the language and cultural barriers which can reduce their prospects of rehabilitation. This agreement applies to the 28 Australians serving sentences in Vietnam and 684 Vietnamese-born prisoners in Australian prisons. The Committee is of the view that it will provide humanitarian support to these prisoners.

Finally, Mr President, the Agreement on Employment of the Spouses and Dependants of Diplomatic and Consular Personnel between the Government of Australia and the Portuguese Republic is a treaty that will permit members of the families of Australia’s diplomatic and consular personnel in Portugal to engage in work.

The Committee is of the view that ratification of the Agreement would be in the interests of the families of Australia’s diplomatic community. I thank the numerous agencies, individuals and organisations who assisted in the Committee’s inquiries.

I commend the report to the Senate.

Senator BIRMINGHAM— I welcome the decision of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties to recommend and support a binding treaty action in regard to this matter. This is an important treaty on a very important issue. It is work that has been ongoing since the days of the previous government.

Indeed, cluster munitions are terrible devices that unfortunately have caused great harm to thousands over the years. We hope that the progression of this treaty will provide some assistance to reducing their impact throughout the world.

Cluster munitions are gravity bombs, artillery shells and rockets that fragment into small bomblets, known as submunitions. They can spread across large areas, cause widespread damage, and have been proven to be incredibly difficult to clear after conflicts. They can leave a horrible legacy for the civil populations of war zones and, just as Australia led the way in tackling issues around landmines, it is welcome that Australia is again playing such a key role in regard to cluster munitions. This convention was signed in December 2008 and will come into force six months after it has been ratified by 30 states. As of July this year, 98 countries had signed the convention, 14 had ratified it and we hope that, with this recommendation, Australia will shortly join that group.

The extent of damage caused by cluster munitions was highlighted in the report of the joint standing committee from evidence provided by Australian Red Cross which cited a study by Handicap International found that in 2007 there had been 13,306 recorded casualties from cluster munitions, with men and children being the most frequent victims. The longer term damages can have huge impact on the rehabilitation of vital infrastructure, especially that around roads in remote and regional areas, schools, markets, farms, and this provides an expensive and arduous clean-up task for those who assist countries in rebuilding after conflict.

Whilst recommending this treaty be adopted, the committee went to some pains to ensure that the definitions within the treaty are clarified as much as possible, in particular in relation to how the Australian Defence
Forces interpret the definitions within them to make sure that there is certainty for our ADF personnel when operating under Australia’s obligations that we accept as part of this treaty. The recommendations include reference to preventing inadvertent participation in the use or assistance in the use of cluster munitions by Australia. I highlight the word ‘inadvertent’ in that recommendation as it is important to recognise that the committee was acknowledging the reality of the situation—that is, that some of Australia’s military partners will, in at least the foreseeable future, potentially continue to use cluster munitions in their operations.

We hope, by signing this treaty, that one day all countries will join up, but we recognise the reality that Australian personnel may find themselves part of the use of such munitions in cooperative operations, as we tend to have around the world. The clarity which I think needs to be given was provided very eloquently by Air Vice Marshal Geoffrey Brown in evidence he provided the committee on 22 June 2009 when he stated:

... the simplest way to understand the interoperability provisions in the Convention is that ADF personnel should not be the first or the last in the chain of command when cluster munitions are used. That is, ADF personnel must not be engaged in actually deploying the cluster munitions—an example is that of a pilot actually dropping cluster munitions—or should they be at the top of the chain of command with ultimate responsibility for exclusive control over the choice of using cluster munitions.

He went on to recognise that there are a variety of other roles in which ADF personnel may find themselves supporting joint operations and recognising the reality that in conflict zones, where other countries are not party to the treaty, they may find themselves providing assistance. It should not be inadvertent assistance, which the committee has highlighted, and we should know what Australian personnel are getting themselves into. We should protect them at all times by having clarity in the operational instructions given to them but we need to deal in the reality of the situation. Nonetheless, the committee and I strongly welcome the recommendation to take binding treaty action. We hope that this is another step in this treaty coming into force, that it will quickly have the required number of countries on board and indeed that, over time, all of the military powers of the world will, as they have progressively—thankfully—been doing with land mines, accept the importance of banning cluster munitions and deliver a safer world for those who unfortunately find themselves in the conflict zones where these types of weapons are used.

Question agreed to.

Public Works Committee Report


Leave granted.

Senator McLUCAS—I move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

This report addresses the proposed Australian embassy complex to be constructed in Jakarta, Indonesia. The embassy complex will cost $415 million and provide office accommodation for the 14 Australian government agencies represented in Indonesia, as well as living accommodation for the head of mission and 32 essential staff and their families. The design of the planned complex also recognises the security needs of the Australian mission in Indonesia as well as using
the spirit of Australian character in features throughout the complex.

While the committee was considering this proposal, seven people, including three Australians, lost their lives in the 17 July 2009 bombing at two well-known hotels in Jakarta. This acutely reminded the committee of the need to provide a secure embassy for Australians working in Jakarta. The committee received assurances from the department that this embassy proposal meets the appropriate security standards.

The committee has commended the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for the significant commitment to environmentally sustainable design that this building makes. It is not only sympathetic to the tropical Indonesian environment but it recognises the need for government agencies to be utilising low-resource technologies. The committee would like to see more projects of this quality brought before it. The committee has recommended that the House of Representatives agree to the project proceeding. I would like to thank the senators and members of the committee for their work in relation to this inquiry. I commend the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for a quality submission.

I commend the report to the Senate.

Question agreed to.

DELEGATION REPORTS


Senator McEWEN (South Australia) (4.27 pm)—by leave—On behalf of Senator O’Brien, I present the report of parliamentary advisers to Australia’s permanent mission to the United Nations in 2008.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (4.28 pm)—by leave—I move:

That consideration of government business continue from 6.50 pm to 7.20 pm today.

Question agreed to.

RENEWABLE ENERGY (ELECTRICITY) AMENDMENT BILL 2009

RENEWABLE ENERGY (ELECTRICITY) (CHARGE) AMENDMENT BILL 2009

First Reading

Bills received from the House of Representatives.

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (4.30 pm)—I move:

That these bills may proceed without formalities, may be taken together and be now read a first time.

Question agreed to.

Bills read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator CARR (Victoria—Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research) (4.30 pm)—I table a revised explanatory memorandum relating to the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 and move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The speeches read as follows—
Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009

Australia is increasingly faced with compelling evidence of the effects of climate change and the risks of not acting to reduce carbon pollution. We know that new data and scientific understanding compiled since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007 report are painting an even more worrying picture of climate change for the whole world.

The Australian people have clearly indicated that they expect our Government to take decisive action on climate change and the Government is committed to introducing the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. So it is important to set foundations that will stand Australia in good stead to position us to take advantage of opportunities in a carbon-constrained world. We must provide our future generations with an economic and environmental legacy that matches the one we enjoy.

The world’s attention is focused on securing a post-2012 agreement at Copenhagen. And it is in Australia’s national interest to secure an ambitious deal that stabilises greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere at 450 ppm carbon dioxide equivalent or lower. What matters most as we try to secure a global deal is what we do at home. Our domestic agenda is our platform for Copenhagen in helping to shape a global solution.

In order to discharge our obligations to address climate change, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme was recently introduced into the House of Representatives in May. In introducing this bill today, the Government is laying the second foundation of its highly significant institutional change in environmental and economic policy in Australia.

Renewable Energy Target scheme - part of a comprehensive approach

The Government’s commitment to a Renewable Energy Target of 20 per cent of our electricity supply to come from renewable sources by 2020 is a key measure within the Government’s comprehensive approach to tackling climate change.

The expanded Renewable Energy Target will complement the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme now before the Parliament and will accelerate the development and deployment of renewable energy technologies.

The Council of Australian Governments agreed to the design of the Renewable Energy Target scheme on 30 April 2009, following extensive community consultation. As the Prime Minister observed at the time, that agreement represents a major step towards Australia’s low pollution future.

Today, in introducing legislation to give effect to the Renewable Energy Target, we move closer towards that low pollution future.

The Renewable Energy Target scheme will bring the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target and existing and proposed state and territory schemes into one national scheme, avoiding the inefficiencies, and administration and compliance costs, of multiple schemes operating around the nation. The legislative framework will ensure a smooth transition into the national scheme for the only existing state-based scheme, the Victorian Renewable Energy Target.

Electricity generation accounts for more than one-third of Australia’s current greenhouse gas emissions, so Australia’s transition to a low pollution future will require a significant transformation in this sector. The Renewable Energy Target scheme will accelerate deployment of a range of renewable energy technologies like wind, solar, biomass and geothermal power over the next two decades. Over the longer-term the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme will be the main driver of renewable energy deployment.

As a transitional measure, the Renewable Energy Target scheme will help transform the electricity sector and drive the low-pollution electricity generation that we need to tackle climate change. It will deliver on the Government’s commitment that 20 per cent of Australia’s electricity supply will come from renewable sources by 2020.

The Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 amends the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act 2000 to increase the existing Mandatory Renewable Energy Target from 9,500 gigawatt-hours to reach 45,000 gigawatt-hours in 2020. This change will increase the existing target by more than four times. Building on the existing Mandatory Re-
newable Energy Target framework, the new Renewable Energy Target scheme will create a guaranteed market for additional renewable energy deployment, using the mechanism of tradeable renewable energy certificates that are created by renewable energy generators. And this in turn will attract additional investment and create additional jobs in renewable energy in Australia.

The Renewable Energy Target scheme is part of the Government’s economically responsible approach to tackling climate change. It focuses on providing support for the most cost-effective renewable energy technologies.

The expanded Renewable Energy Target will accelerate green jobs and together with the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme will drive around $19 billion in investment in the renewable energy sector in the period to 2020.

Key design features of the Renewable Energy Target scheme

Higher annual targets under the expanded Renewable Energy Target scheme will apply from 1 January 2010 and will reach 45,000 gigawatt-hours in 2020. To provide renewable energy investors with even greater legislative certainty, the 45,000 gigawatt-hour target will be maintained until 2030.

The Renewable Energy Target scheme includes many of the features of the current Mandatory Renewable Energy Target, including eligible sources and banking of renewable energy certificates to promote smoother investment over time. It is a broad-based incentive which provides a significant platform for accelerating the deployment of a range of renewable energy technologies.

The Government recognises that households are keen to do their bit in the fight against climate change. The Renewable Energy Target will assist with the upfront costs of installing small-scale renewable energy systems, including household solar photovoltaic systems, by introducing a ‘Solar Credits’ mechanism. Solar Credits work by allowing owners of small scale renewable energy systems to earn multiple renewable energy certificates for renewable energy produced by these systems.

Solar Credits, which take effect for systems installed from 9 June 2009, will provide the solar industry with certainty and a solid platform for future growth.

A related bill, the Renewable Energy (Electricity) (Charge) Amendment Bill 2009, increases the level of the shortfall charge under the Renewable Energy Target scheme from $40 per megawatt-hour to $65 per megawatt-hour. The shortfall charge encourages compliance with the Renewable Energy Target scheme, as liable parties who do not meet their obligations to purchase renewable energy certificates will need to pay this charge. Increasing the shortfall charge to this level will allow the price of renewable energy certificates to be sufficient to drive investment in renewable energy in order to meet the Government’s significantly increased renewable energy targets. The level of the shortfall penalty will be monitored to ensure it remains effective as an incentive for investment in renewable energy.

The Government recognises the impact of the Renewable Energy Target on emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries in the context of the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and the additional pressures these firms are experiencing as a result of the global recession. As part of the consultation process, stakeholders suggested that assistance under the Renewable Energy Target should take account of the cumulative impact of the Renewable Energy Target and the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

The Government listened to industry and has therefore decided to provide assistance under the Renewable Energy Target, reflecting the cumulative impact of the Renewable Energy Target and the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

The Bill provides for regulations to be made to provide partial exemptions from liability under the expanded Renewable Energy Target. As agreed by COAG on 30 April 2009, partial exemptions will apply to those activities that are emissions-intensive trade-exposed activities under the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Exemptions will apply to 90 per cent or 60 per cent of an entity’s liability under the Renewable Energy Target, according to the respective category of assistance provided under the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme framework. All businesses
will contribute to supporting renewable energy as the exemptions will only apply for liability above the existing 9,500 gigawatt-hour target.

The Bill also provides for a review of the operation of the Renewable Energy Target scheme to be undertaken in 2014 to coincide with the strategic review of the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. The review will allow the Government to ensure that the expanded national Renewable Energy Target scheme remains effective as a measure to increase the deployment of renewable energy generation in Australia.

Government funding for renewable energy

The Renewable Energy Target measure is complemented by significant direct support that the Government is providing to the renewable energy industry through a range of initiatives. As part of the 2009-10 Budget, the Government announced the $4.5 billion Clean Energy Initiative, which will kickstart a range of critical low-emission energy technologies in the marketplace.

As part of the Clean Energy Initiative, the Government will invest $1.6 billion in solar technologies, including $1.5 billion for the Solar Flagships program and $100 million for the Australian Solar Institute, which supports research into solar thermal, solar photovoltaic, and other solar energy technology. The Solar Flagships program will aim to create an additional 1,000 megawatts of solar generation capacity. This ambitious target is three times the size of the largest solar energy project currently operating anywhere in the world and may demonstrate both solar thermal and solar photovoltaic technologies.

The Clean Energy Initiative also includes $465 million to establish Renewables Australia, to support leading-edge technology research and bring it to market.

In addition, the $480 million National Solar Schools Program is giving Australian schools a head start in tackling climate change and conserving our precious water supplies – over 4000 schools have registered to participate and more than $10 million in grants have already been approved.

The Government recognises that we need to take action to tackle climate change with a comprehensive set of measures. Expansion of renewable energy generation represents a significant opportunity to reduce Australia’s energy sector emissions while driving $19 billion of investment and creating the green jobs of the future as part of an estimated thirty-fold increase in the renewable electricity sector by 2050.

The implementation of the expanded national Renewable Energy Target scheme as outlined in this bill represents a major step towards transforming the electricity sector and the Australian economy to contribute to a low pollution future. But even with complementary measures like the expanded Renewable Energy Target in place, Australia’s emissions will still be around 20 per cent higher in 2020 than they were in 2000, as opposed to as much as 25 per cent less with the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

Without the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, we can’t halt climate change.

Without the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, we will keep making climate change worse.

And the simple fact is that without the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, we have no means to deliver our emissions reductions targets, which are ambitious, but necessary.

Renewable Energy (Electricity) (Charge) Amendment Bill 2009

The Renewable Energy (Electricity) (Charge) Amendment Bill 2009 amends the Renewable Energy (Electricity) (Charge) Act 2000 and, together with the related Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009, implements the expanded national Renewable Energy Target Scheme to deliver on the Government’s commitment to ensure that 20 per cent of Australia’s electricity is supplied from renewable sources by 2020.

This bill increases the level of the shortfall charge under the expanded Renewable Energy Target scheme from $40 per megawatt-hour to $65 per megawatt-hour. The shortfall charge encourages compliance with the Renewable Energy Target scheme, as liable parties who do not meet their obligations to purchase Renewable Energy Certificates will need to pay this charge. Increasing
the shortfall charge to this level will therefore act as an incentive for investment in renewable energy in order to meet the Government’s significantly increased renewable energy targets.

The level of the shortfall penalty will be monitored to ensure it remains effective as an incentive for investment in renewable energy.

According to data published by the Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator, there has been a consistently high level of compliance with the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target since the scheme began in 2001, which means that very few liable parties have paid the shortfall charge. The new shortfall charge seeks to encourage affordable deployment of renewable energy through continued high levels of compliance, while taking into account the significant increase in annual targets under the expanded scheme.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia) (4.31 pm)—I welcome the opportunity to comment on the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 and the Renewable Energy (Electricity) (Charge) Amendment Bill 2009. I am pleased that the government has finally brought these bills to the Senate for consideration. The primary bill aims to set in place a renewable energy target of 20 per cent by 2020. It will also enable the government to introduce a new solar rebate scheme based on renewable energy certificates that come with small energy units such as solar PV systems. The legislation progressively increases the 9,500 gigawatt hour annual mandatory renewable energy target to a 45,000 gigawatt hour mandatory renewable energy target, to be reached by the year 2020. The coalition parties support this objective, but I emphasise to the government as we enter this debate that this is not a blank cheque. We come to this debate with conditions and with the hope to be able to negotiate a satisfactory outcome to ensure and guarantee the passage of these bills.

The bills also replace the solar rebate of $8,000, which the coalition introduced in government, with the solar credit scheme. It will issue RETs to installers of PV systems of 1½ kilowatts or less and will ensure a trading scheme that provides some form of rebate—though not as generous as the previous scheme, I note—for solar panel installations. Under the bills, wholesale purchasers of electricity or liable parties are required to meet a share of the renewable energy target in proportion to their share of the national wholesale electricity market. Those who do not meet the target will face financial penalties.

As I said, the coalition welcomes the opportunity to debate these bills and hopes—with the government’s cooperation—to see their smooth passage through the Senate. We do so because our vision from this side of the chamber is for a clean energy economy. We believe that Australia has great capacity to transform its energy base and in doing so to provide for a clean energy future for all Australians, by using the great mix of technologies that are available to Australia and that are continually being advanced and developed.

In my own state—and, indeed, Mr Acting Deputy President Bernardi, in your own state too—of South Australia there remains great potential for the growth of clean energy, great potential in geothermal, great potential in solar, great potential that is already being recognised in wind, great potential around all parts of Australia for wave and tidal energy and great potential for the development of clean coal opportunities and carbon sequestration opportunities—not just through carbon capture and storage but through new developments in fields like algae, like the opportunity to capture carbon and to store and use it not just in a carbon capture manner but for agricultural benefit in the long term as well. We recognise all of these opportunities, but in particular we wish to see the step towards a clean energy economy taken but
taken in a manner that actually preserves Australia’s interests—that is, Australia’s economic interests and the interests of Australian industry, households, farmers and the entire Australian community.

It was the coalition which first introduced Australia’s mandatory renewable energy target. It was one of the pioneering steps that the Howard government took in relation to climate change policy that, thanks to the politics pursued by those on the other side of the chamber, have been largely ignored or rewritten in history. Nonetheless, at the time the Howard government brought in the 9,500 gigawatt hour target which, taking account of already existing renewable energies in Australia, provided for an almost 10 per cent renewable energy target. We moved in the last phase of our government to support a 15 per cent clean energy target. As was the case during the last campaign, when Mr Rudd—as he did on the ETS, by trying in a failed gesture to bring its commencement date forward—sought to make a gesture of one-upmanship, as he liked to do time and again, and raise it to a 20 per cent target we indicated support for the principle of that 20 per cent target. Having done that at the last election, we are frankly gobsmacked that it took the government so long to get its house in order and to bring this legislation to the parliament and that it decided to scramble it up with its far more controversial ETS package and, along the way, stuffed around the renewable energy sector so comprehensively.

I have spoken many times in this place about the damage that is being done to the solar industry thanks to the approach of the Rudd government. We saw last year on budget night the solar industry surprised with a means testing on the $8,000 solar rebate. There was no consultation. There was no consideration by the government of the impact of this rebate on the solar industry, particularly of the impact it would have on the effectiveness of the rebate to achieve the maximum possible generation of electricity.

By excluding households with a gross income above $100,000, the government ensured that only small solar systems were installed. We were told—it was witnessed and evidenced—through the various inquiries undertaken in the Senate about numerous instances of this and we saw the long-term average size of solar systems shrinking because of the government’s means testing. Not only did they persevere with their ridiculous means testing; but on 9 June this year they scrapped the solar panel rebate prematurely. Having given countless assurances to the industry that there would be a smooth transition from the rebate to their solar credits arrangement, they then up and scrapped the rebate without having introduced into this parliament the legislation for this renewable energy target and for the solar credits arrangement at all. They left the solar industry hanging out there on a limb with one program abolished and the other without even the legislation in this place. One wonders what the government were thinking when they decided to both drag their heels in regard to this legislation and scrap the previous legislation in the manner in which they did.

Then, just a few days later, on 22 June at 8:30 am, the government, again without any warning to industry, scrapped a second renewable energy incentive scheme. This time, it was the Renewable Remote Power Generation program. This was a program that helped families, businesses and not-for-profit organisations who were not connected to the power grid to install solar, wind or other renewable energy units. This was a clever program because the only alternative that those people in remote and rural settings had was to use diesel power generation.

So the government had a longstanding, well-supported and well-taken-up program
which the Howard government had put in place. Through it, people who did not have access to the power grid, instead of installing diesel units, installed solar units or other clean energy units with a subsidy from the government and support from the government. But no, again, this was scrapped preemptively on 22 June and, as a consequence, we see the solar industry sitting in limbo without a rebate for those off-grid systems, without a rebate for those on-grid systems and with nothing coming out of the solar credit system yet because the government has dragged its heels.

We do welcome very warmly the decision of the government to bring this forward, and not just to bring it forward but also to decouple it from the ETS. Not only did the Rudd government delay the introduction of their renewable energy target, which they knew from day one in government was their policy and their plan, but they also tied the legislation, this renewable energy target, to their emissions trading scheme for political motives. In a sense, they took their own legislation hostage. They said, ‘You can’t have this without that; you cannot have the RET without the ETS.’ It was a maddening decision by the government, and you have to wonder why on earth they decided to inflict such pain on the renewable energy sector—such uncertainty on the many businesses operating in that sector and such uncertainty on the many households that have tried to achieve and to take up renewable energy options. The linking of these schemes was unnecessary; nobody supported it, and you have to question why they did it. Indeed, the Clean Energy Council, at the height of the scrapping of the rebate programs by the government back on 16 June, said:

Any political tricky manoeuvre to hold the legislation up now will simply end up being a remarkable own goal.

Well, an own goal it has been proven to be, of course. With the defeat last week of the ETS legislation, the government has agreed, at long last, to decouple these bills—

Senator Williams—Some of them.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—and to do exactly what the coalition asked for from day 1. Senator Williams makes a valuable interjection: ‘Some of it.’ I will come to some of our foreshadowed amendments very soon that are important, as I said, to the passage of these bills. I re-emphasise that our support for the target and for these bills is not a blank cheque. Indeed, the coalition will seek a number of amendments to these bills. We are not satisfied with what has passed through the House of Representatives. I acknowledge the good work of Mr Hunt, Mr Macfarlane, Mr Robb and others on the coalition side in the other place in negotiating with the government to achieve concessions thus far to ensure that we have a system in place that both sides can and will support. But we are not satisfied with what passed the House of Representatives and we expect further changes during this debate in the Senate.

We will firstly, as Senator Williams alluded to, seek a full decoupling of the renewable energy target from the flawed emissions trading scheme that was voted down by the Senate just last week. We have been successful in securing the principle of decoupling. Certainly, if you listened to the language of the minister or, in particular, the Prime Minister on this matter, you would be led to believe that total decoupling had occurred, but it has not entirely happened. In particular, it has not happened for key affected industries. We believe that the framework of compensation and qualification under the ETS should be replicated but decoupled so that the start date for that compensation framework will be 1 January, irrespec-
tive of whether the ETS has been passed. That must occur for all affected industries.

We seek coverage of the aluminium sector for both its existing MRET and its expanded renewable energy target liabilities to the 90 per cent already offered by the government for the latter. At this stage we are not willing to accept the idea that the government limit its compensation in this sector in narrowly defined ways. We want to preserve and protect, as we have said all along, Australian jobs. That has been a priority of the coalition, along with ensuring the growth of renewable energy in Australia. We do so recognising the trade exposed nature of industries like this sector and the reality that, without this type of protection, we will simply see such industries close down in Australia, with jobs and the industries moving offshore to countries with less clean regulations than Australia. We will see the leakage of carbon emissions to those countries for no environmental benefit, with possibly even worse outcomes—yet to the economic detriment of Australia. So we are pushing hard and we expect the government to continue to negotiate in good faith on these issues, as we acknowledge they have done to date in earlier discussions and we hope that will continue behind closed doors and in the committee stage here.

We will also be seeking amendments regarding food processing to ensure that that sector is categorised for assistance under the renewable energy target as well. Protecting Australia’s food security is something that all members of the coalition have stood up for for a long time. We did so in the water debate and we will do so in this debate as well, because in the end Australia has a valuable role to play in food security not just for our country but also for the rest of the world.

The coalition will also seek to remove a loophole in relation to the multiplication of RECs for industrial heat pumps. We will also move that a portion of the RET be banded and reserved for emerging renewable technologies such as baseload solar, geothermal, wave, tidal and biomass. We will seek that 8,875 gigawatt hours or 25 per cent of the additional 35,500 gigawatt hours of renewable energy be reserved for these sectors. We do so in response to lobbying from the clean energy sector and from many of the parties involved in this, and because we recognise the importance of ensuring that this target is not just about clean energy but also about growing Australia’s capacity in the clean energy sector.

Growing our capacity does not just mean putting in place a mechanism that encourages further proliferation of the already well-developed and cheap wind opportunities that may exist—cheap by comparison with some of the others at this point. It also means ensuring that Australia, if it is to have a renewable energy framework, actually develops key baseload capacity. We want to make sure that the renewable energy target delivers on baseload potential for Australia’s future—not just the technologies that provide, potentially, additional energy at peak level but cannot be relied upon for that all-important baseload potential.

We have already been successful in securing amendments that recognise renewable gas or waste coalmine gas as a zero-emission source of energy, as it is in the United States and Germany. We are happy that the government has accepted that. We believe this will save some 400 jobs in the sector, but we believe the government should consider extending this support to 2030, not just to 2020.

I note, again as a South Australian senator, the enormous potential role that the gas industry can play in also reducing our emissions over time. Natural gas can meet future baseload power generation requirements for
Australia. It can be a key partner to this renewable energy technology. Where we have technologies, like wind, that may not be reliable, gas has the potential to be able to be wound up or wound down in accordance with the power generated by some of those other technologies, so it can complement these sectors. I know that companies like Santos, one of South Australia’s major companies, have been working very hard to explain this potential to the government.

In conclusion, I emphasise the coalition’s commitment to a clean energy future for Australia and to continuing to work with the government through the Senate process, in good faith, to achieve the changes that I have outlined—changes that we believe will secure Australia’s future and our economic position and protect Australia jobs while at the same time giving Australia a world-leading position in developing renewable energy technologies.

As I emphasised, our support is not a blank cheque. Whilst we will support the second reading of the bill at the conclusion of this stage of the debate, we do reserve our position on the third reading depending on the progress of the amendments that I have outlined today and amendments in the committee stage. But we welcome the fact that this bill is before us and we look forward to working in a cooperative manner with the government to, hopefully, ensure that Australia has a bright, clean energy future ahead of it.

**Senator MILNE** (Tasmania) (4.50 pm)—I rise to support the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 and the Renewable Energy (Electricity) (Charge) Amendment Bill 2009 before the house. The Greens have been campaigning for a very long time to increase the renewable energy target in Australia. We noted that, at the last election, the government promised a 20 per cent renewable energy target. The Greens went to the election with a 25 per cent target, and we believe now, in view of the advances in renewable energy, it could go to a 30 per cent target. So we welcome this legislation, and there are many amendments which I will be proposing which would improve it. I will be putting those to the house in the committee stage and will discuss them in a moment.

First I want to talk about the cost of the delay of this legislation. It was a Rudd government promise in 2007. It has taken until June 2009 to get it into this parliament. The renewable energy industry has been waiting all of that time for this expansion, for this long-term signal for investment, and in the meantime we have been losing jobs and some of our brightest and best overseas. Every time people talk about job losses in the fossil fuel sector, they should instead talk about opportunity cost to the renewable energy sector and the new manufacturers and the move to the zero-carbon economy as our brightest and our best leave the country. On top of David Mills having left for California, Spark Solar have said quite clearly that all of their engineers around the world are Australians who trained here but went overseas because the opportunities were not here. We saw Vestas pull out of north-west Tasmania. We have seen BP Solar leave the country. We have seen so many leave the country—and on and on it goes—while waiting for this investment in renewable energy.

The Greens argue that we could not only have a renewable energy target but we also need a gross feed-in tariff on top of that target to bring on those technologies which will not be advantaged under the renewable energy target. We would put in a specific tariff for solar thermal, geothermal and wave power on top of the renewable energy target so that you maximise the technologies available now and bring on the technologies of the future.
This is a huge opportunity for Australia and it was held up because the government chose to try to wedge the coalition and link it to the CPRS in the context of giving exemptions to the big energy users around Australia, in particular under pressure from the aluminium industry. So when it came to a choice between going ahead with a renewable energy target and not getting the exemption for those big energy users, both the government and the coalition chose the big energy users above the renewable energy sector. According to the Clean Energy Council, that decision to delay in June has cost $2 million a week. So for all the rent-seekers pleading for the extra special treatment that they have been given under this legislation, it has cost the renewable energy industry a huge amount not only in dollar terms but also in terms of certainty and jobs and long-term planning. That is why I am pleased that this legislation is here. I will be working to get it through and I will not see anything that jeopardises its getting through as quickly as possible, because I want to see this industry sector expand.

I have to say that I was devastated to see the government under pressure again from the coalition to brown down this legislation by including coal gas in a renewable energy target. Coal gas is not a renewable energy source; it is a fossil fuel. It is a nonsense to watch in the lower house the government amending its own legislation to take out the word ‘renewable’ from several sectors of the renewable energy target legislation. What sort of a nonsense is that? I was reminded in fact of Alice in Wonderland, because I wondered at what point are people going to acknowledge the stupidity of what goes on in this parliament. I note that in the lower house Mr Hunt went on and talked about a ‘renewable gas’. So we now have coal methane as a renewable gas, according to the member Mr Hunt. I have to remind him of what Humpty Dumpty said to Alice in Wonderland. He said:

If I had a world of my own everything would be nonsense. Nothing would be what it is, because everything would be what it isn’t. And contrary wise, what is, it wouldn’t be. And what it wouldn’t be, it would. You see?

And so now we have a fossil fuel no longer being a fossil fuel; suddenly it is a renewable gas. What utter and complete nonsense that is!

No-one is saying that we ought not to be dealing with coal seam methane, with coalmine gas. Of course we should be dealing with that and, again, it is the incompetence of the government that they have failed to get a smooth transition from the New South Wales scheme GGAS. That should have been looked into. But the way to deal with this is to put pressure on the coalmines to ensure that they must deal with that gas. Those people who are currently generating energy from that gas are independent of the coal companies but the coal industry refuses to invest in it because it has not got a big enough return for them. They want 20 or 30 per cent return on their investments and they will not do it. So it is time that governments forced the coalmining industry to deal with its waste, and it should not be done under a renewable energy target because this is a financial mechanism to see the rollout of renewable energy.

Now you are going to see people around Australia who were quite prepared to pay an additional cost for renewable energy, because they thought it meant that solar was going out there, that wind was going out there, that they were seeing a big expansion out there. They were prepared to pay for that because they want to see the jobs, the manufactures, our brightest and our best in Australia doing this work that our universities are training them to do. Instead of that they are suddenly going to find that they are paying more for
renewable electricity because coal seam methane is in there and we have exempted the big energy users. How is that reasonable? It ought to have been dealt with elsewhere and there is absolutely no justification, as I indicated, for these exemptions for the big industries, and I would like the government to respond to this.

The argument is that these industries are trade exposed. They are not trade exposed when it comes to a renewable energy target, because almost all of their competitors work under a renewable energy target. Have a look around the world and what have you got? In the United States many state governments have adopted renewable energy targets, including California’s target of 33 per cent of its electricity from renewables by 2020. Waxman-Markey also has a renewable energy component and the EU-wide renewable energy target for 20 per cent of final energy consumption is to come from renewables by 2020. The UK has got a target of 15 per cent, and on and on it goes. Japan has got a target. Canada has got a target. China has set a target of 15 per cent of primary energy supply to come from renewables by 2020. So all of them have got a renewable energy target. If anything, Australian aluminium has been sheltered because of the renewable energy targets imposed elsewhere. So tell me, in the absence of a CPRS, why should we exempt these companies from a renewable energy target when all their competitors are already paying that target?

Secondly, three of the four reports that were done on this showed that by bringing in renewable energy you are shaving off the peaks. In other words, on a hot summer’s afternoon you bring on your solar energy and so what otherwise would have been a higher pool price is actually brought down because you are bringing in that energy there. Three out of the four reports say that there is downward pressure on the wholesale pool price because you are bringing in the renewables. So if they are not paying for the renewable energy target and are exempt from it, how am I to be assured they are not going to get a windfall gain from this? They do not pay for the renewables, but they get the benefit from the dropped pool price.

At the moment, most of them do not care because they are on bulk power contracts, but they are going to have to renew those in this period when we are dealing with a renewable energy target. They are just looking after themselves to see that they get a windfall gain. I hope I can get the support of the coalition or the government to acknowledge that we do not want these sectors to get a windfall gain on the back of the Australian taxpayer, the average consumer out there, who is having to pay more so that the aluminium industry can do that.

What is even worse is that the long-term future of the aluminium industry depends on it producing green aluminium from renewable energy and not from coal fired power or anything else. It needs renewable energy to be competitive in a zero carbon economy. Unless we can get enough renewable energy in Australia to power these industries, they will then go offshore. The threat is not that they will go offshore now; there has been no one suggesting that they would. Where would they go when everybody else around the world has got a renewable energy target? No, the threat to them is the failure to move off coal fired power, resulting in them ending up uncompetitive when their competitors have moved to green energy. Already there is green aluminium being produced from geothermal energy in other parts of the world. So let them take note of this: if we want a steel industry and an aluminium industry in Australia in the future then we need to transition to renewables as fast as possible.
Let me go through some of the other issues. Of course we want to see an expansion in the target to 30 per cent by 2020. We do not support the inclusion of coal seam methane, a fossil fuel, in a renewable energy target. We do understand the need to deal with coal seam methane, but it should have been done somewhere else—not in the renewable energy target and not requiring people to pay for it in that context.

We think a gross feed-in tariff should be brought in in addition to the renewable energy target for the reasons that I have said: to bring on geothermal, solar thermal and wave power. We believe the target should be expressed in percentage terms rather than in gigawatt hours. The reason for that is that if energy demand increases out to 2020 and you have set a specific gigawatt hour target then it will form less and less as a percentage of total energy. The ABARE report suggested it might only be 17 per cent if energy demand increases. So the Greens are saying: ‘Why not set it as a percentage target, and then the gigawatt hour target can reflect that percentage, rather than set a gigawatt hour target which may not necessarily, in the end, give us 20 per cent renewable energy?’

We are also saying that we should remove the 1.5 kilowatt hour cap for PV systems and in fact increase the cap to 10 kilowatt hours for other technology types such as small wind and hydro. This is particularly important for remote renewable systems, and it is a disaster. To get rid of one system supporting remote renewable systems and have nothing to replace it is another government disaster. There is nothing in this. Under the renewable energy target there is about a fifth of the level of support of the previous scheme for off-grid.

Let me talk about who these people are: these are Indigenous communities; these are farming communities; these are people who are not near the grid and who need this support to get off a reliance on diesel. It has been hugely successful and those senators in this chamber who represent areas in which there are communities living off-grid understand just how important this remote support was, and it is now gone. That is unacceptable. I want the government to come in here and accept this proposed Greens amendment to remove that 1.5 kilowatt hour cap so that we do not disadvantage those communities that are off-grid. If the government are not going to accept the proposed Greens amendment, what are they going to do for remote communities? You are prepared to bend over backwards for coal seam methane. You are prepared to bend over backwards for the aluminium industry with megaprofits. But where is the bending over backwards for remote communities? That is something we have to fix.

Another thing we need to fix is to add the number of phantom credits that are being created to the total target. Again, we want 20 per cent of energy to be renewable. If you give out five certificates for one unit of energy, you end up having given out, yes, the target number of renewable energy certificates, but that will not represent, in terms of energy, the same amount. We have to deal with that issue and we need to add those phantom credits onto the target.

We also need to limit the banking of renewable energy certificates to four years because we do not want to see a situation where there is so much generated in the first few years that the banking occurs but where you then have the old boom and bust cycle in investment in renewables. We want to even that out and we would like to limit banking to four years.

We also would like to see the operation of the scheme and the adequacy of the target reviewed after two years, not left until 2014.
We think this needs to be carefully monitored and reviewed and, if necessary, the target needs to be adjusted upwards over this period of time. If you leave it until 2014, that will be too late in the scheme of things. We also want a review of the target to be triggered if the certificate price drops below a threshold of $40 for a period of six months. That is essentially a floor under the system, but we think that is necessary to maintain certainty in the longer term and to give some stability to the whole system.

I now want to come back to removing native vegetation. It is absolutely outrageous, and this is where doublespeak comes in. We had Minister Garrett at a global conference on biodiversity and ecosystems today saying that we have 1,750 species on the threatened species list in Australia and that we have to move to an ecosystem protection approach in order to look after our native ecosystems. And what have we got? We have a government subsidising native forest logging, the bottom dropping out of the woodchip market and the inclusion in this renewable energy target of, essentially, the burning of native forests.

I have had constituents writing in telling me that the woodchip mill in Eden—along with, of course, those in Tasmania—is just desperate for this to go ahead. I want the Minister for Climate Change and Water to tell me whether she is going to allow one certificate to be issued to a company like Gunns, Southern Forest or Eden, or to companies in southwest Western Australia for the destruction of native forest.

I would also like to know from Minister Garrett how that sits with the government’s new commitment to ecosystem support. This is from George Orwell’s novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which was published in 1949. He had a definition for ‘doublespeak’, and that is what we have from the government when it comes to biodiversity protection and species protection and their support at the same time for the logging of native forests. You cannot have it both ways. As Orwell said at the time:

The power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one’s mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them....To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies—all this is indispensably necessary. Even in using the word doublethink it is necessary to exercise doublethink. For by using the word one admits that one is tampering with reality; by a fresh act of doublethink one erases this knowledge; and so on indefinitely, with the lie always one leap ahead of the truth.

That is what happens when you have a government saying, ‘We are worried about ecosystems,’ to a global biodiversity conference and then bringing in legislation here that permits the generation of energy from the logging of native forests. That is a complete nonsense—logging the largest carbon stores in the Southern Hemisphere for so-called renewable energy. It puts a bitter pill into the mouths of the people who actually want to have renewable energy to know that they are going to be paying not only for coal gas but for the logging of native forests in terms of that energy. The people rubbing their hands together are the logging industry. You only have to look at their contribution in evidence to the Senate committee to see that they are salivating at the prospect of putting a floor under logging of native forests. So that has got to come out of the legislation and I urge the coalition to support that.

Equally, on the issue of solar hot water and heat pumps, the Greens want to see solar hot water on every roof in the country. We want to see a massive expansion of energy
efficiency. We should have an energy efficiency target and an energy efficiency scheme that supports solar hot water. But by putting it in the renewable energy target I fear that you are going to have crowding of the target with heat pumps and solar hot water and not benefit the renewable industry. We need to be doing both: we need to be reducing demand and increasing the supply of renewables. Energy efficiency for one target and renewable energy for another target—maximum benefit. What I am seeing here is yet again the government undermining the renewable energy sector by squeezing the space for the new technologies. It is in fact the Alice in Wonderland or the George Orwell scenario.

**Senator HURLEY** (South Australia) (5.10 pm)—Throughout the various inquiries that have occurred over the past year into Australia’s response to climate change one thing has been perfectly clear: if we as a nation are to move to reduce our carbon emissions at least cost to the economy and whilst maintaining energy security, we must fast-track investment and research and development into renewable energy alternatives. The renewable energy target will not, by itself, turn around Australia’s increasing emissions but it will play its part in a suite of measures to decrease Australia’s dependence on fossil fuels into the future, and it is certainly a fact that Australia has by world standards a very high dependence on fossil fuels.

Given the rejection of the CPRS in the chamber last week, the government has agreed to decouple both the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 and the Renewable Energy (Electricity) (Charge) Amendment Bill 2009 from the legislation in order to provide business certainty to the hundreds of renewable energy businesses and thousands of Australian consumers seeking access to renewable technologies. This is despite evidence from a legislation efficiency and environmental perspective that the bills made more sense operating together with joint transitional assistance.

Just last night, on *Lateline Business*, Mr Andrew Petersen of PricewaterhouseCoopers, when questioned whether the decoupling of the bills made sense, said:

I don’t think it does. I think they do talk to each other, there’s a language here in relation to elements of all policy around your greenhouse gas emission reduction, whether it’s energy efficiency, a carbon pollution reduction scheme, or whether it’s the mandatory renewable energy target.

Indeed, the Senate Economies Committee heard evidence that over 20,000 jobs will be created in the renewable energy sector due to renewable energy technology changes. Modelling by McLennan Magasanik Associates undertaken for the Department of Climate Change, modelling by Access Economics for the Clean Energy Council and research undertaken by the Climate Institute all support these estimates. The committee also heard that modelling undertaken at a sub-state level incorporated inherent biases. Modelling tools do not allow for disaggregation below a sub-state level to take account of any abatement opportunities generated and therefore do not take into account any of the new jobs created in the renewable energy sector. I think that is a very important point for people who do not understand that modelling is a useful but often inaccurate tool. The sub-state regional modelling figures quoted by some in the opposition do not actually make sense. It meant that the more negative modelling presented on this issue was fundamentally flawed in its projections regarding employment in regional Australia; we have heard a lot from the National Party on that issue. Modelling by both Treasury and the Minerals Council projects that real wages will continue to grow with both the RET and the CPRS.
Many submissions were received from the renewable sector, in particular the solar energy area, highlighting the potential damage to the industry and its job potential should the RET legislation be further delayed. The government was not going to allow the creation of more than 20,000 jobs in this area to be sacrificed because of the inability of those opposite to come to a united position on climate change. The RET bills implement an agreement on a renewable energy target reached by COAG on 30 April 2009. This agreement aims to have at least 20 per cent of Australia’s electricity supply coming from renewable sources by 2020.

This renewable energy technology bill expands the mandatory renewable energy technology scheme and replaces various state and territory schemes with one national scheme. That is also important for business certainty and for those businesses that have a national base. It continues many of the features of the mandatory renewable energy scheme, such as eligible sources and the banking of renewable energy certificates to encourage smoother investment.

At the 2007 election, the Liberal and National parties made a commitment to 15 per cent renewable energy targets by 2020. The Greens, as Senator Milne said, committed to 25 per cent and the government to 20 per cent. We have heard commitments from all sides that appear to support getting this legislation passed and operating, with a predictable divergence of views that the RET does not go far enough or goes too far. We have already had over the desk a number of amendments to these bills. But I think we must keep in mind the central fact here: we need this bill passed. I believe that the 20 per cent target by 2020 is achievable, but it will indeed present some serious challenges. The government, in designing this scheme, have worked very diligently to get the balance right. There are several factors in this. Let us have a look at some cold, hard facts about the transition we have to undertake.

Coal-fired power currently accounts for 80 per cent of Australia’s electricity generation. Australia is reliant on fossil fuels to generate electricity, and these account for over a third of Australia’s emissions of greenhouse gases. These are the facts that the government is grappling with in any realistic discussion about transitioning to a low-carbon economy. These are the facts that the government has taken into account when designing both the CPRS and the RET scheme, with the understanding that both will be necessary if we are to reduce our contribution to global emissions. At the moment, the production of baseload power from renewables is neither physically nor commercially viable. This is not to say that it cannot be viable and achievable in a relatively short time frame but that today it is simply not viable. So we do have to make compromises.

The CSIRO, in providing evidence to a recent inquiry, pointed out that geothermal, a form of renewable energy that has enormous potential in my home state of South Australia and indeed in other states, and which I think has universal support in this parliament, is looked on as a baseload technology. It does not have the intermittency and variability challenges faced by wind, wave and solar technologies. However, the technology is not yet up and running, and it is some years from being commercially proven on a large-scale basis. I have followed this technology for probably about 10 years. I know they always feel they are very close to getting it up and running, but I believe it is still some years away from being operational on a large scale. I watch with great interest the development of Geodynamics’s proof of concept operations with Origin Energy in the South Australian outback town of Innamincka, which is to progress to a commercial demonstration. Though only a very small town—if you
blinded, you would miss Innamincka, I think—it will be a trial project to generate the town’s electricity entirely from geothermal energy supply.

Having noted the concerns regarding baseload generation and our current dependence on fossil fuels, there is also much to be optimistic about concerning our ability to fast-track renewable investment and development in Australia. Evidence provided by the Clean Energy Council highlighted the important contribution renewable sources could make to generating electricity. I think through Australia we have all seen the start of that, and it has been well canvassed. The committee heard that Australia is one of perhaps three or four countries with the potential to power itself entirely from renewables in the future. However, this will require diverse investment and commercialisation across a broad range of renewable technologies in really what is a fairly short time in our country.

The RET is only one measure the government have put in place to ensure Australia is well placed to take advantage of these opportunities. Other measures the government have introduced will ensure we give Australia’s renewable energy sector every opportunity to compete viably over the long term. They include $0.1 billion for the Australian Solar Institute to support research; $1.5 billion for the Solar Flagships Program; $0.5 billion for the Australian Centre for Renewable Energy to promote development, commercialisation and deployment of renewable technologies; $0.5 billion for Renewables Australia to support technological research and bring it to market; and $0.5 billion for our National Solar Schools Program. All of these measures will assist in conjunction with the RET to assist the fast-tracking of renewable technologies and assist with the commercialisation of these sectors to eventually become competitive with traditional electricity generation. I would like to emphasise that commercialisation aspect, because in my many years of contact with new and emerging technologies it is not so much the research and development but the commercialisation at which companies get stuck. I think we need to concentrate very heavily on ensuring that transition from a prototype to a commercial operation.

The committee received evidence on a number of other factors affecting our renewable energy measures, and some concerned some of the problems that have arisen. Senator Milne was critical of some of the transitional measures to assist companies, and I am not so critical. I think that we do need to ensure that—and we are talking about the RET today, but this concerns, hopefully, the introduction of the CPRS—the transition goes as smoothly as possible and that the adjustment occurs after the introduction of those two measures.

One industry that has got quite a lot of attention is the aluminium industry. The committee received evidence that, even on a pessimistic assumption, all but the aluminium industry will face an increase in costs of under 0.5 per cent, with the majority under 0.1 per cent. This represents less than the impact of a typical day’s movement in the exchange rates. In regard to the aluminium industry, the committee found that the RET would not change most of the factors the industry gives for operating in Australia. These were the cited by the industry itself as Australia having the natural resources, the integrated supply chain and a skilled workforce. The final reason cited by the industry for operating in Australia was competitive energy supplies. Other major producers of aluminium are Canada, China and the US. They have already introduced renewable energy technologies in most of the areas where the aluminium industry is operating, and Senator Milne went through that. We do, however,
need to take into account what the aluminium industry is saying, and the government has covered that in the bills we have before us.

Finally, in regard to claims about the increases in electricity prices due to the increased RET, the committee heard modelling from Treasury, McLennan Magasanik Associates and the Clean Energy Council. They concurred that electricity prices would rise by approximately three per cent in the period 2010-20. Interestingly, modelling undertaken by the Business Council of Australia and ROAM Consulting found RET would make wholesale electricity prices lower than they would be otherwise, although I very much doubt that companies such as those operating in the aluminium industry would make windfall gains out of that.

No government, having brought in renewable energy technologies or the CPRS, would then abandon any industry. This government has always acted responsibly in terms of the economy, and it would keep a keen eye on the operation of industries like the aluminium industry and other industries that receive interim assistance cited by the government, such as aluminium smelting, silicon production and newsprint manufacturing. I am sure that this responsible government would not allow those industries to go under, despite some hysterical claims to the contrary.

Senator Birmingham also mentioned the natural gas industry. Being from South Australia, like Senator Birmingham, I recognise the importance of the natural gas industry. I have also heard them lobbying about the importance of natural gas and it being a cleaner energy source than coal or some other sources currently being used. Natural gas has the ability to step into the breach in a transitional period and reduce our carbon emissions. Clearly it is not a renewable technology and does not fit into these bills, but I echo some of what Senator Birmingham talked about and urge that it be considered in that transitional phase. I say to Senator Birmingham: it is the CPRS-type structure that allows the funding and flexibility to enable not only the natural gas industry but also other industries to be funded and supported in transition. That is why, I believe, the government wants them considered together: because there is the ability to support these industries under the CPRS. In that context, to consider the RET separately does not make sense.

To conclude, I reaffirm that tackling the issue of reducing Australia’s carbon pollution is decidedly challenging. It is not an easy process, but it has to be started now. The government has consulted widely, building on over a decade of analysis, modelling and policy formulation to give a scheme that will deliver real environmental outcomes at the lowest cost to the economy and with the smoothest transition possible. It is frankly absurd to suggest that any government would not seek to deliver these principles when seeking to introduce such a massive economic reform. However, the RET legislation is profoundly important to ensure the sustainability and growth of hundreds of businesses, which will see the creation of more than 20,000 jobs and the investment of an estimated $28 billion over the next decade. Not only is this important as part of our tackling carbon pollution; it is also economically and technologically important for Australia to be ahead of the game—or at least in the leading edge of the game—in developing these technologies. Australians have great faith in the ability of our scientists, engineers and technologists to develop these technologies. The current government, through Minister Kim Carr, has put additional resources and funding towards ensuring that we are developing that research capability in our universities and technical institutions.
throughout Australia and that it is supported and encouraged through This is something that we can utilise in the development of renewable energy. It is vitally important that we pass this legislation. I commend the bills to the Senate.

Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (5.28 pm)—In rising to make a contribution to this debate, I will flag that it should be relatively brief, for the benefit of the next speaker, Senator Xenophon. I begin by expressing my disappointment that it has taken two years for the government to introduce a bill that is clearly flawed. Is it irredeemable? That is a question that we are trying to negotiate with the government because we think that it can be improved. There are a number of areas where we have flagged amendments, which not only Senator Birmingham alluded to before but were also discussed in the other place. It has taken the government nearly two years to bring a flawed bill to this chamber. Originally they tried to do it by linking it to an even more flawed series of bills which they named the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. It was an attempt at political extortion, for want of a better term. It was an attempt at extortion that clearly failed. It has been rejected not only by the coalition but by the minor parties. I am pleased that the government have seen at least a modicum of sense by bringing in the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 and the Renewable Energy (Electricity) (Charge) Amendment Bill 2009 as a stand-alone issue.

Renewable energy is an issue that is high on the priority list of many Australians. Many Australians think ‘what’s not to love?’ about renewable energy. It is clean, it is green and it is sustainable—all the things we like to think that we will support as a nation. But there are of course prices attached to this love of green energy. The question that will confront the Senate and that should confront every Australian is: is the price worth the results? Quite frankly, as these bills stand now, the answer is no, it is not. The consequences attached to these bills—pursuing a mandatory renewable energy target that is linked in some way to a flawed and ridiculous CPRS that grants exemptions for some industries but not for other vital industries and that will force every Australian consumer and every Australian business to pay more for their electricity—are pretty hefty price tags.

Clearly, not many people are willing to pay the personal cost of going into green energy themselves. I say that because I understand only around 10 per cent of people—it may be a few per cent more—actually opt in to green energy in their power bill. I have a confession to make: I am one of those 10 per cent. That surprises a lot of people, but I assure you it was a mistake; I ticked the wrong box on the electricity form. You are paying more for electricity to be generated that, I was assured, is saving the planet. But recently the ACCC have come out and said that you are not actually saving the planet. There are no additional emissions being reduced because you are opting in to green energy right now. They have forced the electricity companies to change their marketing methods. That is a concern because good-natured and well-minded people who are seeking to do the right thing by the planet have been wholly unable to rely on the marketing claims attached to green energy power producers. I think that is cause for some concern. Is what we are told now actually going to be an accurate reflection of the consequences and impact attached to these bills?

The coalition are serious about trying to get these bills through parliament because we think that there is ultimately a net benefit if we can get the amendments through that we really need to have. We also want to satisfy ourselves that there will be real benefits for the environment. There are, as I said, a
number of questionable marketing campaigns that have been run. We also have no idea what the price of the electricity increases is actually going to be, not only for businesses but for individual households. Senator Hurley, in her contribution, said that there would be around a three per cent electricity price increase between 2010 and 2020. From where I stand, that beggars belief. I have not seen a three per cent annual price rise in electricity for as long as I can remember. The most recent price rise that I recall seeing on my bill was in the region of 15 or 16 per cent, and yet Senator Hurley gives us an assurance, thanks to some modelling. She made a bit of fun of modelling and how it can produce anything you want—and then relied on it. It seems quite absurd, really. But she said there is going to be a three per cent increase in electricity costs. That beggars belief. I do not think anyone in this place or in Australia should take that at face value.

It is disappointing that, in concocting these bills and the mandatory renewable energy target, the government has decided to ignore or leave out the consequences for a number of key industries, such as the food production industry. It has chosen to disregard the important contribution to sustainable energy that other forms of energy outside wind and solar can make, including, as Senator Hurley said, the geothermal projects in South Australia. South Australia is really quite a leader in renewable energy. I believe we have over 50 per cent of the wind power that is generated in Australia. I say that with a degree of pride because I think it is a good thing for us, but having such a high reliance on wind power in our state actually poses a threat to our state and our peak power supplies. We know that wind and solar cannot provide baseload power. Wind can be good for the peaks and troughs in the system. It can provide general smoothing of electricity generation, but when it comes to baseload power it is not going to be there. Quite frankly, I cannot see it being there for decades and decades and decades to come, if at all. In fact, I have some question marks about renewable energy outside of geothermal, which is really just a new way of producing a steam turbine, or going to a nuclear energy process to provide for Australia’s future energy needs, if we are insistent on moving away from coal.

Going back to the substance of this bill, the other part of it that causes me some philosophical internal debate is, I have to say, the fact that we are mandating that people have to pursue a particular course of action, whether or not it is actually going to be good for them personally, for their businesses or for our country. I remain unconvinced about whether this is the right approach or whether a market led approach, where people would recognise the benefits for themselves and be able to opt into it, is the right approach. Are we, at some particular level, disadvantaging our nation, our states, our households or our families by having to support this bill? That question will remain with me until the final outcome of this bill is determined, quite frankly—and we will have to determine whether we are doing the exactly the right thing.

How this is going to end up is now in the government’s hands. The coalition will be moving amendments. I understand that other parties and independent senators will also be moving amendments. We will be doing so with the intention of improving the bill. We will be doing so with the intention of making it workable. And we will be allowing the second reading to proceed, in the hope that the bill can be salvaged in the committee stage. Accordingly, I join with other coalition senators in reserving my right to make a final decision about whether to support this bill based on whether it can be fixed—because right now it is horribly flawed. It is another
ill-considered piece of legislation from a government that is more concerned with spin than substance.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (5.39 pm)—I can indicate my support for the second reading of the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 and the Renewable Energy (Electricity) (Charge) Amendment Bill 2009. For the last week the Senate has debated a package of climate change and renewable energy related bills. It cannot be overstated that these are some of the most important pieces of legislation that the Rudd government will be dealing with, and some of the most important pieces of legislation that we will be dealing with as a parliament, for many years—particularly in the context of their potential economic and environmental impact.

These bills go beyond politics; they go beyond the terms of governments. It is vital to get our climate change and renewable energy policies right for the future of our nation, for the future of our children. Our environment needs urgent action. The community demands that the government acts responsibly so that we can have a package of measures that work to reduce greenhouse gases, that work to deliver the maximum environmental benefit, but do so in the context of being economically responsible. Our economy, especially our growing renewable energy sector, needs investor certainty; and each is vital to our future sustainability. That is why it was pleasing to see that both the government and the opposition have come together in recent days, after the decoupling of the CPRS legislation from the renewable energy target legislation, to have constructive talks in relation to getting this legislation through. But let us make it clear that that should not be about the lowest common denominator; it is also important that we have the best possible policies in relation to renewable energy targets.

The Senate has an important role to play in improving this legislation. I believe the legislation needs to be improved. There are loopholes—indeed, rorts—with respect to renewable energy that need to be addressed, and they need to be addressed in the context of these bills. So I strongly support the intent of these bills. But, as a member of the Senate Economics Legislation Committee, which held an inquiry into these bills, I became aware of a number of anomalies. I will set out those concerns primarily in the committee stage, but I will touch on them briefly in my second reading contribution.

What I propose to do now is provide a background by outlining the outcomes of the consultations that my office had between the submission of my minority report and the circulation of these amendments. Those discussions centred around these broad themes: firstly, ensuring the short- to medium-term viability of the solar industry; secondly, supporting the long-term development of emerging renewable energy technologies; and, thirdly, ending the rorting of RECs, renewable energy certificates, within the water heat pump sector.

In relation to the solar industry, my office was contacted by a number of leading solar water heating and installation services from around Australia, including Think Water in Colac and Summerland in Tweed Heads. These businesses reported a drop of around $10 in REC prices between June and July with the delay of these bills. They also expressed concern about the future viability of their businesses and the possibility of job losses. These concerns were shared by installers of photovoltaic electricity panels, who have also called for the swift passage of this legislation to ensure the short-term viability and long-term certainty of their industry. Through discussions my office has had with Adrian Ferraretto and Liam Hunt from Solar Shop, which has operations nationwide...
and is based in Adelaide, the impact of the delay of the RET becomes patently clear. In May this year the Solar Shop had $25 million of panels ordered; however, after the announcement of the delay of the RET orders, this dropped to $20,000. They both outlined the history of the solar panel rebate, which has been the subject of constant change, delay and at times cancellation since its introduction in January 2000. This has done little to provide for certainty for that investment confidence in the industry. They pointed to modelling in the German renewable energy sector that indicates that the number of jobs created per megawatt of solar energy installed is between three and seven times more than by other renewable energy technologies.

In my conversations today with representatives from the Clean Energy Council and associated organisations, the need for PV solar to provide renewable energy generation in the short to medium term was stressed yet again. I must say that, while I think the Clean Energy Council has taken an active interest in this debate, as is entirely appropriate, they will do themselves a favour if they come out and speak out against the rorts that we have seen in relation to the heat pump sector. I think they should do that sooner rather than later if they want to enhance their credibility. It is already a credible organisation but I think it is important that the Clean Energy Council speak out in relation to what is clearly rorting in the heat pump sector. That is something that must be attended to.

This industry is vital in the transition to reliable renewable energy in the longer term, and it is trying to prepare itself for future energy grid parity in terms of PV solar. It must be provided with greater certainty and confidence. While the industry may be able to sustain these sorts of adjustments in the short term, should they continue and become long-term losses businesses will close and jobs will be lost. That is why we need this legislation.

In relation to emerging renewable energy, one of the big issues has been how to better support emerging renewable energy technologies such as geothermal, wave energy, solar and solar thermal. If we want to reduce our reliance on coal, the best way to do it is to have reliable alternatives to baseload electricity generation. Geothermal is clearly the best of the best in relation to that. It is still an emerging technology, as is wave energy, as is solar thermal—which may not provide power 24/7 but could provide power for those peak times. These are exciting technologies that need support, and that is why I think it is important that there be a particular emphasis in relation to them. I am concerned, in relation to this current legislation, that there simply are not the clear signals to give that support to this particular sector.

I am concerned that we are putting too many of our eggs in the wind energy basket and that we have a massive increase in wind energy and wind farms, which do not provide that baseload power certainty that you need if you want to wean an economy off coal. I think that more needs to be done. To give an example, in South Australia during a heatwave in February this year, the reliability of the wind farms dropped to three per cent. The wind was not blowing and the farms were not providing regular power. I am not against wind energy at all. I think that it has an important role to play in renewable energy technology, but it is important to combine it with, for instance, gas as an interim measure. It is not a renewable but it is certainly much, much cleaner than coal and it gives you that baseload certainty.

More importantly, I think we should encourage geothermal and other emerging technologies. As Senator Bernardi pointed out, geothermal energy is something that...
South Australia has an abundant supply of. It is a matter of tapping it and tapping it as soon as possible so that we can wean ourselves off coal. Yesterday I met with Susan Jeanes, from the Australian Geothermal Energy Association, John Grimes, from the Australian and New Zealand Solar Energy Society, and Kellie Caught, from WWF; to discuss ways forward to support emerging technologies. Their input was most helpful, as have been the conversations with bodies such as Vast Solar and Oceaninx, as well as organisations such as the Clean Energy Council and the Australian Industry Greenhouse Network. I believe that strategic support should be provided for emerging technologies, and I foreshadow that I will be moving an amendment to this purpose in the committee stage.

As a South Australian senator, I would like to make special mention of the significance of geothermal hot-rock energy generation. I was recently up in Innamincka, not in relation to geothermal, and there is a real excitement in that community in the far north of South Australia about the potential of geothermal in terms of powering local communities and being a mainstream source of power. I have raised these issues with the minister’s office and I am looking forward to some positive outcomes. I think that is the way forward, and we need to deal with that as a matter of urgency.

In relation to what I call the ‘heat pump rort’, this is a real concern, and there are two areas that have emerged through my discussions and my office’s discussions in relation to this. The first is that a multiplier effect is operating on commercial heat pump installation that results in a flooding of RECs, which devalues their value. The second is that air-source heat pump technology does not actually generate any energy and hence should not qualify for RECs. Let me address each of these issues in turn. The issue of multiplier effect was first brought to my attention during the Senate Economics Legislation Committee inquiry into these bills on 5 August 2009. I quote from the Hansard of that day, when Mr Warring Nielsen, of the Gas Industry Alliance, reported:

The abuse has come through the fact that in the MRET calculations of calculating RECs there is a loophole that exists in the quantity area in excess of 700 litres when you can put three heat pumps together in parallel and you get a multiplying effect. That means you can put anything up to 30, 40 or 50 heat pumps into an installation for no cost whatsoever. In just one audit we have taken on our own customer base, we have had 30 customers where we have had gas installations in place and they have put in heat pumps to the tune of around $2.6 million and they have generated RECs of around $6.2 million. They have been overcapitalised completely and they have just been rorting it to develop RECs. And even tonight I have had a phone call from a plumber in Victoria telling me that the rortting is going on in Victoria where people are pulling out continuous gas flow units and sticking in heat pumps and saying they are replacing electric.

That sort of rort should not be allowed to go on. It is an abuse of the scheme, it is an abuse of the system, and I will be moving an amendment so that we put an end to that. At the very least, where that abuse has occurred and where it has been manifestly occurring around the country, we should immediately put an end to the 700 litres or more capacity and we should also phase out those heat pumps. They are quite different from those that require solar panels.

It beggars belief that this should be part of this scheme, and it is a rort that must be addressed. I think that many senators on both sides would privately acknowledge that this is a real problem. I will discuss further how that rort operates, but once a unit exceeds 700 litres it is deemed a commercial installation and a consumption standard no longer applies as it does for the domestic usage, and
the total RECs are then calculated by the total tank volumes multiplied by the maximum level of energy saving of the unit, not the actual consumption. In practice, this means that while two units will receive 60 RECs a third unit can receive over 570 RECs. This provides the opportunity for a company to oversupply the needs of its business and then use the resulting maximum RECs to subsidise the installation to a level that is attractively cheap to the purchaser. Clearly, using this loophole to secure more RECs and to line the pockets of a company, while currently legal, is a rort. While this avenue is open to all heat pump installers, the vast majority of the industry in Australia is not choosing to participate in it, because it believes that it is unethical. However, one operator has been brought to my attention who is exploiting this loophole. The amendment that I am proposing will close that loophole.

My second amendment in relation to heat pumps will, as I indicated, phase out air sourced heat pumps over the next six months. In the conversations that my office has had with Nick Smith from Elgas and Warring Nielsen from the Gas Industry Alliance, it became clear that the industry could accept the removal of air source heat pumps as long as solar source heat pumps remained eligible for RECs. To put it another way: if a heater or a heat pump has a solar panel, then it should qualify as being energy efficient, but if it relies on a refrigeration unit and electricity it should not be eligible for RECs.

My other concerns are in relation to the waste coal gas sector but I understand that that has been the subject of negotiations with the opposition. It is something that I will refer to during the committee stage.

There are two other points that I should also mention before concluding. Firstly, I have consistently advocated the decoupling of the CPRS and the RET bills, and I commend the government for agreeing to decouple these bills. In terms of the politics of it, the government really could not do anything else. It was quite right for the government to maintain its position until the CPRS bill was defeated but the government understands that the only way forward now is to decouple the bills. I commend them for going down that path.

Secondly, there ought to be a more rigorous review of the RET. I foreshadow an amendment that will introduce clearer guidelines and a biennial review. I note that Senator Milne has put up an amendment to that effect and, subject to discussions with Senator Milne, it may be that I will support that amendment rather than introduce the amendment that I have drafted. But I think it is important to look at the environmental and economic impact of this scheme.

It is important to note that we need to get this right. We need to get rid of these loopholes in particular and make sure that those who are involved in renewable energy are given the investment certainty they need and that we do not have a crowding-out of this market of renewable energy certificates by wind power so that the emerging technologies miss out. We need to make sure that other technologies in terms of waste dumps, that have been very effective in abating emissions, are not crowded out of the market.

To that degree, I pay tribute to the work that LMS, a South Australian operator, has done nationally in relation to this. My fear is that while a company such as LMS may not put its investments on hold, it may not expand as much as it could have because the market has been crowded out. But that will be less of a problem if we get rid of some of these rorts, particularly in relation to air heat pumps. I look forward to both the opposi-
tion’s and the government’s arguments in relation to those, because I do not believe they can be justified at all under a scheme such as this, which is about renewable energy. I look forward to the committee stages of this bill.

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (5.55 pm)—I rise this afternoon to speak in support of the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 and the Renewable Energy (Electricity) (Charge) Amendment Bill 2009 and in support of the strong steps being taken by the Rudd government in relation to climate change. There are very few people left today who do not comprehend the seriousness of climate change and the very real effect it is having and will continue to have on our ecosystems.

The effects of climate change will spare no nation, will be long and entrenched, and will affect our lives and societies in ways that we perhaps do not yet fully anticipate. Australia will be amongst the most vulnerable and most threatened by climate change. We are the driest continent on Earth at a time when the Earth is getting drier. Our tropical areas will get wetter and our parched, drought-stricken areas will get drier. We boast a unique and valuable catalogue of fauna and flora that is found nowhere else in the world—due to the many millions of years of evolution since Gondwana broke away. These flora and fauna are already showing signs of stress and decline due to changes in air temperature, ocean temperature and habitat.

There is a tendency to sit back and despair at how much we as a nation have to lose through the effects of climate change. However, the Rudd government chooses not to linger on such despair but instead has put forward a comprehensive package for reducing our emissions and thereby inspiring the international community with what can be achieved. The fundamental aim of the renewable energy amendments bills is to ensure that 20 per cent of our electricity supply comes from renewable sources by the year 2020.

The easiest and most sustainable way to reduce our impact on the environment and to minimise the effects of climate change is to invest seriously and sensibly in renewable energies. We as a race have found ever-increasing ways to use electricity to power almost every aspect of our lives, and this carries many great advantages. However, we must become serious about limiting the use of conventional electricity generation and instead use such renewable options as wind, sunlight, waves and geothermal energy. These power sources are limitless in their application because they are infinite; they can replenish themselves in a short space of time and it often costs nothing to generate and harness their energy. The benefit is therefore twofold—less finite fossil fuels are used and they are, instead, replaced with infinite energy resources which expend no energy to create energy, and therefore the CO2 emissions created are less.

The catalyst for achieving the target of 20 per cent by 2020 through this legislation will be the introduction of renewable energy certificates. Power generators can create these certificates by creating renewable energy and then trade or sell these in the electricity marketplace to any organisation that may carry a liability. Market forces will then work their magic with liable organisations choosing between either surrendering their certificates to demonstrate their compliance with the scheme or paying a fee for a shortfall in meeting their own targets.

This is a simple yet highly effective means of giving incentives to energy generators to change old habits and to invest in a renewable energy sector that offers significant
long-term benefits, both financially and environmentally. The introduction of a renewable energy target will open up an expected $19 billion investment in the sector, leading up to 2020. Such unprecedented levels of investment will significantly boost job creation, innovation and the economy and will do so in a sustainable manner.

The renewable energy target will not work in isolation, however. The Rudd government has planned carefully to create an interwoven set of policies and legislation that will work together to realise the maximum benefit and to arrest climate change, working across the community in a number of significant ways. The initiatives include: $500 million for the Renewable Energy Fund, to aid the development and distribution of renewable energy in Australia; $150 million for solar energy and clean energy research; 80,000 solar systems installed on Australian rooftops under the previous Solar Homes and Communities Plan; continued incentives for the installation of household solar power systems through the new Solar Credits scheme; investment in information on the best means of reducing energy consumption through the Solar Cities program; $4 billion to install ceiling insulation in 2.9 million homes as part of the Energy Efficient Homes Package, along with 420,000 solar hot water systems; the National Solar Schools Program, with up to $50,000 per school in grants to install solar power, rainwater tanks, solar hot water systems and other renewable energy items; the Green Loans Program, to provide low-interest loans of up to $10,000 to make homes more energy and water efficient; and the National Rainwater and Greywater Initiative, to provide up to $500 in rebates for the installation of household rainwater tanks and greywater systems. The list is as long as it is comprehensive and provides multiple opportunities for making a difference to the way we use energy and water, the amount we use and where we source it.

We cannot work in isolation when we attempt to combat such a broad and complicated issue as climate change. Legislation needs to be changed. We need to change not just policies and processes but mindsets and societal expectations and standards. The Rudd government is working constructively at a multipronged approach to this issue and will draw the initiatives together to have the greatest and most tangible possible effect.

However, the greatest threat posed to the establishment of a renewable energy target in this country is not the complex nature of the problem of climate change and lowering emissions; it is the entrenched, oppose-at-any-cost mindset of those opposite. It is the belief that if we sit by and talk idealistically about which way is better or worse and who is more or less likely to be affected then the problem somehow will resolve itself. The opposition have clearly demonstrated that the issue of climate change is too much for them to tackle and that they would rather stymie any attempt to move forward to actually achieve something positive. Hopefully, finally they will do what is right and support these bills. But I have to say, Mr Acting Deputy President Bernardi, that I think your contribution clearly demonstrated that there are still many sceptics on that side of the chamber. This scheme, along with a suite of other complementary initiatives and programs, is not a half-baked rush forward with no thought for consequences. It is a carefully measured, well-balanced step in the direction that we must go.

I speak with conviction on this issue largely out of my hopes for my home state of Tasmania. Tasmania is a uniquely positioned state that will be able to maximise the benefits that can be drawn from the renewable energy target scheme. Tasmania is currently
the leader in renewable energy generation in this country, with 87 per cent of mainland Tasmania’s installed electricity generation capacity coming from renewable hydro or wind power. We are the only state to generate a significant portion of its energy from hydroelectric power, with the Hydro being the predominant source of electricity in Tasmania for nearly a century—Tasmania leading the way again. Tasmania also boasts one of the best performing wind farms in the world, in the far north-west. Our position right in the path of the roaring forties westerly winds makes us a prime candidate for extended application of wind power generation. A project currently in the middle of the procurement phase will see a 60-turbine wind farm established in the north-east with 129 megawatts of power generation capacity.

In addition to wind, a number of companies are currently exploring Tasmania’s geothermal resources. Tasmania’s geology is considered amongst the best for geothermal power generation in the country. We also have the added advantage of a small land size with a highly decentralised population, meaning that high-voltage transmission lines will not be far away from any geothermal power plant. Continuing on, Tasmania also has excellent wave power and tidal opportunities, another means of generating electricity. All of this constitutes enormous potential for Tasmania to take its place as the premier producer of renewable energy in this country and a significant source of contribution to the renewable energy targets. We have a proud history of using renewable energy first and foremost and have thrived on the financial, tourism and social benefits stemming from that.

Supporting the renewable energy target scheme is the only way to support more such programs and initiatives and grow jobs in this sector and jobs in general. The entire Tasmanian economy could benefit enormously from a strong step in this direction. A speech by the member for Franklin, Ms Julie Collins—an excellent member for Franklin, I must say—recently highlighted that 500 permanent jobs and 1,300 construction jobs at the height of activity could be created by the renewable energy target scheme. Such an investment in a sustainable future and in job creation cannot be ignored by Tasmania and, likewise, should not be ignored by this nation or by this chamber, particularly those opposite.

Now is a time for optimism and bold steps, not for naysaying and political opportunism. As a legislator, as a parent and, most importantly, as a grandmother, I will do whatever I am able to do to ensure that the planet is left in a better state for my children, my grandchildren and future generations than it otherwise might have been. Setting a renewable energy target of 20 per cent by 2020 is a step I and they could be proud of. I commend the bill to the Senate.
aluminium, and assistance for trade-exposed food processing businesses. The complexity of RET and its relationship with the CPRS acts to divert attention from the enormous impact this bill will have. However, there is a clear way through. There is an aspect of RET which cuts through all the political palaver. I would like to quote from the submission put forward by Catholic Health Australia to the economics committee inquiry into this bill, which cuts straight to the chase. Catholic Health state:

… the Bill will see an increase in energy costs for health and aged care services. We estimate this adverse impact on Catholic Hospitals in 2010 to be $650,000, leading to $1,685,000 in 2020. The adverse impact for Catholic aged care services will be $365,841 in 2010, growing to $1,035,261 in 2020. Accordingly, the total cost of the Bill for Catholic health and aged care providers is likely to total $1,022,436 in 2010, raising to $2,720,591 in 2020.

But that is not all. They go on to say:

The adverse impacts as a result of the Bill come in addition to that of cost impacts of the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Catholic Hospitals are likely to meet an increase in energy costs of $10.8 million in year one of a fully operational carbon trading scheme, for which the Government is yet to propose any adjustment packages to meet the needs of not-for-profit health and aged care providers.

We have heard about the price of groceries going up. We have heard how fuel and energy will go up. Every day there is another cost that goes up. Now we hear the nitty-gritty from Catholic Health about how the RET and the CPRS will cost them millions of dollars that they cannot recoup from their clients. They have asked for help from the government but there is nothing forthcoming. The RET will impact not only on Catholic hospitals but on all hospitals across Australia. Where in state and federal budgets is there allowance for RET and CPRS expenditure? What programs will have to be cut in order to pay for RET and the CPRS? This government was elected on the promise to bring down grocery and fuel prices. All we have seen is those prices go up. And now the sorry mess that passes for health in this country, due to the negligent state governments, is going to suffer even more. I urge the Senate and the public to cut through the green rhetoric that passes for political debate and become aware of the reality of what the RET and the CPRS mean.

This bill mandates that 20 per cent of Australia’s electricity supply in 2020 comes from renewable resources. The 20 per cent target is achieved by combining the 45,000 gigawatt-hour target included in this bill with the 15,000 gigawatt hours of renewable energy generation that existed prior to 1997. By mandating renewable energy we are requiring energy users to pay significantly higher prices for electricity. We have a $40 product, which is the cost of generating a megawatt hour of electricity from coal, but we are forcing people—no, we are forcing people—to pay $100 or more for that product. It costs $100 to produce a megawatt hour of electricity from wind power and it costs $200 to produce a megawatt hour of electricity from solar photovoltaics. Technologies such as geothermal, solar thermal, wave and tidal energy and other such things have not even been developed enough to the point where we can say what they will cost. Maybe the cost will be somewhere between wind and solar—it may be higher or it may be lower; we do not know.

The 45,000 gigawatt hours of renewable energy needs to be subsidised because it is expensive, and it would not be produced without a subsidy. Electricity users will pay this subsidy through higher electricity prices passed on by electricity retailers such as Origin Energy and AGL. Electricity retailers or some large industrial users are required to purchase renewable energy certificates on an
open market and surrender these at the end of the year to the government. These certificates, which could cost anywhere between $30 and $93, represent the subsidy to renewable energy generators. Renewable energy certificates are created by renewable energy generators for each megawatt hour of electricity generated. As the target ramps up electricity, retailers are required to purchase and surrender an increasing number of certificates in proportion to the amount of electricity they purchase from the wholesale market.

For example, in 2010, an electricity retailer will be required to surrender an amount of certificates equal to about five per cent of its electricity purchases. So, if a retailer purchases 10 million megawatt hours of electricity from the wholesale market, it would have to purchase and surrender 500,000 certificates to the government. In 2020 the percentage increases to over 16 per cent and therefore requires the same retailer to purchase and surrender more than 1.6 million certificates costing anywhere between $30 and $93. Electricity retailers will not absorb the costs of subsidising renewable energy. These costs will be passed onto industry, businesses, schools, hospitals and households. They will force electricity prices up.

The government’s modelling suggests an increase in retail electricity prices of between three and four per cent, but we heard in the recent economics committee inquiry from one of Australia’s largest electricity retailers that it will increase retail prices by up to 7.5 per cent. It must be noted that this increase is not an increase on today’s electricity prices; it is an increase on electricity prices that would have already increased as a result of Labor’s flawed, friendless and now defeated ETS. It is a 7.5 per cent increase on prices that would have already increased by about 35 per cent because of the ETS.

Yes, increasing renewable energy is a good thing, but do we have all the policy levers right? There are utterly credible doubts about our capacity to invest the billions of dollars required to achieve the 20 per cent target in the time frame. There are utterly credible concerns that there will be insufficient investment in transmissions infrastructure for all the windmills to come online. Australia is not Denmark, where everyone lives within cooee of each other. This is a massive continent where graziers used to call STD to ring their own shearers’ quarters.

Today we read that necessary maintenance investment in Victoria’s power supply industry is not going ahead and that everyone will have to prepare for less reliable power. Is that why people voted Labor at the last election? Take the case of the Murray Goulburn Dairy Cooperative. They are high energy users and are trade exposed. The RET squeezes their profit margins to the extent that they will have terrible trouble competing in export markets. They cannot sustain the cost increases and will be forced to pass the cost back to dairy farmers.

The Australian Dairy Industry Council submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics inquiry states that the RET will further add to the cost burden on farming families that would already be imposed by the CPRS by increasing electricity costs to processors and farmers. The cumulative increase has the potential to seriously impact on the industry. They add:

Although dairy processing is highly trade exposed in most products—the main activities do not meet the cut-offs for EITE classification. We believe this is a flaw in the CPRS system that will see less competitive food processing and farming in Australia and lead to carbon leakage. Our major competitors in the world dairy market—that is, New Zealand—
will provide support for dairy processors and/or exclude farm emissions or will not have an ETS at all.

The Murray Goulburn Dairy Cooperative told the economics committee that its liabilities under the CPRS would result in income losses to its 2,500 farming members of between $5,000 and $10,000 and that the RET would impose an additional $1 million in 2010, rising to $2 million by 2020.

I have been told by an abattoir in Queensland that its RET costs alone will be $315,000 in 2010 and would rise to $850,000 by 2020. Like dairy, these additional costs cannot be absorbed and will be passed back to the sheep and beef graziers. By all means, let’s have more renewable energy and less carbon, but do not pull the wool over everyone’s eyes and insulate them from the costly truth. The only cheques in the mail from the RET and the CPRS will be the ones paid by working families to the government to pay for the extravagant cost of green schemes.

The totalitarian approach of the Rudd government would give the Spanish Inquisition a run for its money. The pointy hats opposite gleefully torture anyone who raises their hands with so much as a question, yet that is exactly what parliaments are for: to explore the issue and make sure everyone’s voice is heard.

Here I stand—I am speaking up for the thousands of patients in Catholic hospitals and demand that the climate minister explain to me and them how they will pay for the RET and CPRS costs? To whom will they have to refuse a bed? Minister, tell us: what services should they shut down; which sick people should they turn away? It would be a truly mongrel act to allow that to happen.

Evidence to the economics committee inquiry was very helpful in focusing the mind on the real outcomes of the unamended RET. We were reminded that the Productivity Commission, in its submission to the Garnaut review, said:

... with any effective emissions trading scheme in place, the MRET would not achieve any additional abatement but impose additional costs, most likely lead to higher electricity prices, provide a signal to lobby for government support for certain technologies and industries over and above others. Reserving a proportion of electricity generation for renewable energy sources changes the generation mix in a way that increases abatement costs for no additional emission reduction benefit. These problems would be further compounded if state-based renewable energy target schemes were retained or introduced.

The Garnaut review itself states:

There is an interesting and seemingly perverse consequence of expanding MRET at the same time as the emissions trading scheme ... Having both schemes operating side by side could ... increase in coal-fired power generation (by more than 2000MW) as gas-fired plants are crowded out by MRET. This would not occur if the emissions trading scheme were operating without MRET.

The Treasury, in its report, Australia’s low pollution future: the economics of climate change mitigation, in October 2008, says:

The impact on GNP of the expanded RET, taking into account both increased GDP costs and the reductions in international income transfers, is $5 to $5.5 billion. The average cost of mitigation per tonne of CO2 from expanding the renewable energy target is around three times the average price of permit prices in the CPRS.

Mr Michael Hitchens, the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Industry Greenhouse Network, told the committee:

... what the RET effectively does, for no additional reduction in CO2 emissions, is add about $350 million in 2010 to electricity consumers’ costs, and that rises to about $1 billion by 2020. That is for no added environmental benefit.
I then asked him why the government was proceeding down this path. Mr Hitchens replied:

I am at a loss. I have quoted four independent reports that have either been done for the government or by government agencies and none of them find a good economic or environmental case for the policy.

That is where I find myself today in this debate: I am at a loss. I concede that investments have been made pursuant to an expanded RET and acknowledge that increasing renewable energy is a worthy aim, but I do not want to see healthy Australian industry and jobs go down the drain; nor do I want to see longer waiting lists in hospitals across the country.

As legislators we have a responsibility to face up to these truths, not to ignore them and hope they will go away. We are called to act with discernment. The coalition amendments are sound and seek to alleviate the problems of RET. Any reasonable government would accept them. The government said this week that it would decouple the RET and the CPRS legislation. They have failed to do so. All they have done is offer interim trade assistance for a select three industries. Other trade exposed industries have been left out in the cold, with RET assistance remaining contingent upon passage and commencement of Labor’s flawed ETS.

Australia’s most energy-intensive industries—aluminium, silicon and newsprint—have been offered stand-alone trade assistance, but the aluminium industry says it is not enough to ensure ongoing viability. Other industries like iron and steel, sugar refining, plastics and chemicals, pulp and paper, glass, and cement and lime will receive no trade assistance under RET until an ETS is passed and commences—and agricultural processing will receive absolutely nothing even if an ETS is passed.

If the coalition were to pass Labor’s renewable energy legislation as currently proposed, Australia’s most significant trade advantage, cheap and secure supplies of energy, would take an enormous hit and this would be felt by every trade exposed business in the country—and every hospital and ultimately affect blue-collar jobs across manufacturing, mining, mineral processing and food processing.

On the one hand the Rudd government is wedded to grandiose stimulus plans and on the other it seeks to destroy jobs and industry. There will be precious little left to stimulate by the time they have finished adding carbon and renewable energy costs onto every hospital bed, conveyor belt, coffee machine, personal computer, dragline, plasma TV, nail gun, electric light, pool pump, fridge, assembly line, boiler and jackhammer. You name it, it is going to cost a lot more under CPRS and ETS—and RET.

Senator BARNETT (Tasmania) (6.24 pm)—I stand tonight to speak on the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 and the related bill and place on the record my strong support for the renewable energy target, in particular the 20 per cent target by 2020, and, as a proud Tasmanian senator, note the important contribution that this will make to our home state of Tasmania. If this legislation passes with the appropriate amendments—and I will come to the amendments and the importance of them shortly—this could be the catalyst for significant development in hydro and, specifically, wind power.

I would like to address right up front the importance of wind power. We have seen at Woolnorth wind power developments already in Tasmania. We know that Tasmania is a renewable energy state. In fact, well over 95 per cent of our power is renewable energy. We also know that Hydro Tasmania is
in fact the largest generator of renewable energy in Australia. It is a proud fact. Most Tasmanians are not proud of that fact. Hydro actually own and operate in Tasmania some 29 hydro power stations worth $4.8 billion based on the last estimates that I have been briefed on. They have a number of renewable energy projects, primarily in wind, through their joint-venture partner, China Light and Power. They own what is called Roaring 40s, a very forward-thinking and progressive company. They are doing a lot of good work, including looking at a development at Waterloo wind farm in South Australia and specifically the Musselroe Bay wind farm in north-east Tasmania. I want to place on the record my thanks for the recent briefings I have had from Matthew Groom from Roaring 40s and also Alex Beckett from Hydro Tasmania. I thank both of them for their professional assistance and briefings.

There is no doubt about the fact that Tasmania is a state that is proud of its renewable energy history and its culture. Indeed, when my father finished university back in the 1950s he looked at a job in the hydro sector but instead pursued other options and ended up being a farmer and a small-business operator in Northern Tasmania. It is very important for Tasmania.

The prospects for the Musselroe Bay wind farm development have advanced markedly as a result of the passing of the renewable energy target legislation, certainly by the House of Representatives. If we can pass it through the Senate with the appropriate amendments, conditional upon those appropriate amendments, then it will be a tremendous boost and it will send a signal certainly to Roaring 40s and to the industry generally of the prospects for that Musselroe Bay wind farm and renewable energy developments more generally.

The Clean Energy Council in its statement of 16 August indicated that if this legislation were passed it would unleash $28 billion worth of new investment and 28,000 new, clean jobs over the next decade. They also say:

There is a fair chance of that, depending upon what happens in the committee stage here in the Senate with respect to the amendments and if the government does the right thing and ensures that they are considered and passed.

The Musselroe Bay wind farm is a $350 million investment in Tasmania and in north-eastern Tasmania more specifically. It will create 150 jobs during the construction phase and it will meet the electricity needs of up to 55,000 homes. It will have a 140 megawatt capacity. Already the development application has been approved. They are really ready to go. Obviously finance will need to be arranged and locked in, but if this legislation is passed it will send a signal to the developers and to financiers that this is a very live prospect. It will be the given the green light if this RET legislation is passed with the appropriate amendments.

Last week, as I have indicated, I was briefed by Hydro and Roaring 40s and they were both eager for the federal government to fulfil its promise of renewable energy targets. A number of significant projects in the pipeline have been left on hold, because you have to remember that the government has been sitting on this legislation for over 12 months. That is a great disappointment for those in the renewable energy sector, including in Tasmania. Of course, the Howard government introduced Australia’s first renewable energy legislation, and the legislation before the parliament this week only builds
on that. The Liberals strongly support a renewable energy target of 20 per cent by 2020. If this is legislated, it will be a huge boost for wind farm developments generally, not just at Musselroe Bay in north-east Tasmania.

Last week, the Rudd Labor government refused to separate the renewable energy legislation from their failed emissions trading scheme legislation. Now they have done the right thing. They have seen the light and taken on board the requests and the urging of the coalition, specifically Malcolm Turnbull, Greg Hunt and Ian Macfarlane. I commend those spokesmen for the coalition and thank them for their lobbying to make this happen. It is looking positive. I am very pleased that the Labor government has backed down and agreed to the coalition request to decouple the renewable energy legislation from the overall ETS package. It is, however, critical that the government agrees to our amendments—and appropriate amendments put by whomever in this place—to protect the aluminium, cement and food-processing industries in particular.

About one hour west of the Musselroe Bay wind farm is the Rio Tinto-Comalco smelter at Bell Bay. Together with members of the Tasmanian Liberal Senate team I had a tour there some months ago. It is a fine establishment and a significant contributor to the Tasmanian economy, particularly the Northern Tasmania region. It employs around 600 people plus an additional 60 full-time equivalent contractors. The business directly contributes to the local economy through payment of $50 million in salaries per year as well as an annual spend of around $175 million on goods and services from more than 300 Tasmanian suppliers. They are very community oriented too, which is well known in and around George Town and the Bell Bay area. They certainly provide significant investment in social programs and partnerships. It is Australia’s only aluminium smelter using predominantly renewable energy. It is the only smelter of its kind and produces around 180,000 tonnes per annum of aluminium.

We know for sure that, under the government’s failed and flawed ETS scheme put to parliament last week, which has now been rejected, the smelter at Bell Bay would have copped it in the neck and big time. We know that and we also know that under this legislation it is very important that we get the amendments right to protect their interests because there will be higher power charges. They need proper protection and a level playing field. Why would we wish to export jobs in emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries? Yes, it is important that they be properly protected and that we do not export jobs unnecessarily to China, India or elsewhere.

About another hour west of Bell Bay is Railton, which is the home base for Cement Australia. Cement Australia make a tremendous contribution to their local industry and, again, an amendment needs to pass through this Senate chamber to protect their interests. Cement Australia provide about 130 direct jobs, but, of course, those jobs support about another 500 jobs in their local community. It was some time ago that I toured Cement Australia, and I know other members of the Tasmanian Liberal Senate team have toured that facility. We have a high regard for the management and the workers at Railton. We also know that they are doing it tough at the moment. In the transition period of any future ETS and any future arrangements, they need to be taken very seriously. They do not want to take on undue costs, whether from power prices or elsewhere.

I put on record my thanks to Todd and Robyn Loydell for their recent briefings and information that they have provided. They
have been very professional and forthright in their views. Likewise, I put on record my thanks to Jenny Jarvis and her team and to John Lemberg, the general manager of operations, at Rio Tinto at Bell Bay. I also want to mention the need for an appropriate amendment to protect the interests of the food-manufacturing sector. Tasmania has a lot to gain from this legislation. I believe it could be the catalyst for a major multimillion dollar development in north-east Tasmania. We can really make a difference in Tasmania if this legislation is passed with the appropriate and correct amendments.

Some years ago I visited Denmark as part of a parliamentary delegation. I visited the Vestas factory there and noted that a very high proportion of their energy comes from wind. That was an excellent visit. I learnt a great deal about the importance of wind energy to the Danish community. Of course, it is also the home of Tasmania’s own Crown Princess Mary. Being a proud Tasmanian, it was great for me to be in Denmark at that time. We can learn a lot from interstate and overseas, but the options and opportunities now are very significant indeed.

Finally, on a different approach to renewable energy, I commend the work of KUTh Energy and the hot rocks approach to renewable energy. They are doing quite a bit of work in Tasmania, which should be commended and supported. We hope that their progress continues. It will be energised if this legislation passes with those appropriate amendments. Having made those points, I conclude my comments and express hope for the future as it relates to this legislation.

Senator CAMERON (New South Wales) (6.37 pm)—I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate on the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 and the Renewable Energy (Electricity) (Charge) Amendment Bill. This debate marks progress on an important element of the government’s strategy to deal with the reality of global warming and climate change. After more than a decade of lost opportunities under the Howard government, it is this Labor government that has ratified the Kyoto protocol, designed and introduced legislation on the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, decided on a renewable energy target, invested $4.5 billion in clean energy initiatives, developed the Solar Flagships program, implemented the Solar Homes and Communities Plan, invested $4 billion in the Energy Efficient Homes package and committed $12.9 billion towards a national water strategy. These are the initiatives of a government that cares about the future. These are the initiatives of a government that has a plan, a strategy and a vision for the future—a government that has a vision for a comprehensive national and international approach to reducing CO2 emissions.

Contrast this record with the record of the opposition. While in government, they presided over a decade of lost opportunities, a decade epitomised by inertia, pandering to the sceptics and deniers within their own ranks. We now see a continuation of the divisions and the weakness of the Leader of the Opposition, Malcolm Turnbull. Malcolm Turnbull is an opposition leader incapable of producing policy in the interests of the nation, incapable of exerting discipline on his party room rabble and incapable of recognising what is in the national interest.

I have been fortunate enough to participate on a number of Senate inquiries into climate change. Following those inquiries, I am even more convinced about the urgency of dealing with the scientific reality that our planet is warming, the icecaps are melting, sea levels are rising and drought, storms and severe weather patterns are becoming more common. I am pleased to be a member of a government that recognises the great politi-
cal, economic, social and environmental challenges arising from global warming. I am pleased to be a member of a government that has been honest and upfront with Australians on the need to deal with climate change and the reality that this cannot be done without cost to the economy and to the community. The cost is manageable and the cost will be accepted by our community, who want a future for their children and grandchildren.

Despite the fear campaigns from the deniers and the sceptics of the opposition, the Australian public have overwhelmingly accepted the scientific reality and the political necessity to deal with climate change. No amount of clever, and many times not so clever, one-liners from Senator Joyce can change the fact that the public want action on climate change. No amount of misinformation and scare tactics from Senator Boswell will change the fact that it is in the national interest to deal with this issue. No amount of ideological claptrap—and I apologise—from you, Acting Deputy Speaker Bernardi, will change the fact that Australians want an environmentally sustainable future for our kids. No amount of dogma from Senator Abetz and Senator Minchin will change the fact that the scientific community have overwhelmingly warned of the dangers of inaction.

This bill is the start of dealing effectively with climate change. It is incumbent upon the Leader of the Opposition, Malcolm Turnbull, to show some leadership, some courage and some wisdom and unite the rabble that makes up the opposition party room. The member for Wentworth must ensure that the coalition works effectively with the government in the national interest. If, as many believe, he is incapable of doing this, then he should get out of the way and let someone of courage and conviction lead the coalition.

It takes courage and conviction when powerful industry lobbies mobilise their huge financial and political resources against a government determined to do the right thing for future generations. It takes the courage and conviction of a Labor government to stand up against the short-termism and opportunism that underpins much of the criticism from big business. We are determined to not only have this bill pass the Senate and become law but also ensure that the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme is passed in the interests of our nation.

Having sat through the Senate inquiries, I am disappointed, but not surprised, that vested interests want a continuation of business as usual. I hear much bleating from big business at the cost that some industries will bear as the government moves to stabilise and reduce CO2 emissions. I never hear much from the same big business groups on their contribution to increased greenhouse gases and global warming. It seems to me that many an Australian business has an all care, no responsibility approach to the pollution of our atmosphere by industrial emissions. It is quite confronting when you see the difference between the rhetoric of our business leaders and the more mature rhetoric of business leaders in Europe, in the UK and, increasingly, in the United States. Many of our business leaders have failed to come to grips with the need to use the challenge of climate change as an opportunity to create new jobs and new technology, develop the skills of the Australian workforce and ensure that our nation benefits from the employment creation arising from a carbon constrained economy.

I have heard so much from the coalition that is no more than a carping negative criticism. I have even been lectured by Senator Boswell on the need to stand up for blue-collar workers. This is the same Senator Boswell who consistently stuck his hand in
the air to take basic rights away from the working people of this country. Senator Boswell should not lecture me about standing up for blue-collar workers. It is a bit rich to be lectured about looking after blue-collar workers by one of John Howard’s Work Choices warriors. It is the Labor Party who is looking after workers in this country. It is the Labor Party who is standing up against the carbon polluters of this country. It is the government that understands the long-term needs of our economy, our community and our environment.

I have been forced to listen to Senator Boswell’s claptrap on climate change for months, his predictions of job losses and the demise of the agricultural industry. He even asserted that sugar industry workers would never support a Labor government as a result of the CPRS. Let us have a look at the sugar industry. The government’s decision to move decisively on climate change has opened up a range of opportunities for the sugar industry. One area of particular benefit to regional New South Wales and Queensland is the sugar industry cogeneration projects, which will increase employment and provide renewable energy capacity from Grafton in New South Wales to Tully in North Queensland.

The sugar industry accepts that the jobs are green jobs and they are the result of the government’s policy. On 6 August evidence was given by the Australian Sugar Milling Council and Mackay Sugar in relation to the benefits of the renewable energy target. Very powerful evidence was given by Mr Gary Longden, Mr Mark Moriarty, Mr Dominic Nolan and Mr John Power on behalf of the Australian Sugar Milling Council and by Mr Eddie Westcott, the chairman of the board of Mackay Sugar. The evidence is that they represent farmers who are 94 per cent of their shareholders. These are the farmers who are allegedly represented by the National Party.

And what do these representatives of the farming community say? I quote from the Sugar Council:

It is pretty straightforward. We support the national renewable energy legislation framework as it is proposed. We support the proposed penalty price and we want to see the overall scheme design and structure remain as it is. We do not want to see it revisited.

These are the representatives of farmers. These are the representatives of regional and rural Australia—the real representatives, not the fake representatives of the National Party who stand up here and call doom and gloom every time they stand up. The sugar industry submission is that they will, as a result of our legislation, build an additional 500 megawatts of capacity which will serve about 290,000 households in regional Queensland and New South Wales. Their submission is that, by 2016, 70 per cent of households in Far North Queensland will be supplied by renewable energy from sugar mills. In the Burdekin, Herbert and Townsville areas the sugar mills will supply greater capacity than required for household consumption and 80 per cent of households around the Whitsunday hinterland will also be supplied. In the Wide Bay-Burnett area almost 50 per cent of households will be supplied by sugar industry renewable power generation and 40,000 households in northern New South Wales will also be supplied.

These fantastic initiatives will not only result in the use of sugar cane biomass to generate electricity but also be extended to wood waste, woody weeds and, in particular, camphor laurel—which is a pest species in northern New South Wales. The sugar industry, as a result of the government initiatives, will be in a position to generate in excess of 2,000 construction jobs, along with 150 permanent jobs. Using a very conservative multiplier of effect for jobs of four for every permanent job, these initiatives could result in
750 permanent jobs in regional New South Wales and Queensland. Is it any wonder that Senator Boswell was what I described at the hearing as gobsmacked? Senator Boswell, the arch enemy of renewable energy and climate change, admitted, ‘I am in an absolute fix on this one.’ He went on to say, ‘I am caught in a real bind with this one.’ Of course Senator Boswell is in a bind, because the realities of the opportunities of acting quickly and effectively on climate change is there for everyone to see in the sugar industry in regional and rural New South Wales and Queensland.

The coalition have also been running hard on a scare campaign in the mining industry and have used what was clearly a misrepresentation of economic modelling done by the Minerals Council. This modelling was designed to spread fear amongst mining workers for their job security. Let me tell the coalition that the fear campaign is not working. The ABC radio program AM last week broadcast from Muswellbrook in the Hunter Valley. I know Muswellbrook well. I lived in Muswellbrook with miners, power workers and farmers for 12 years. I was a member of the Muswellbrook community. Presenter Tony Eastley spoke with a number of coal miners, who offered some very revealing opinions about the emissions trading scheme, and in the space of five minutes they blew away Senator Joyce, Senator Boswell and all the other coalition and coal company fearmongers. They blew them right out of the water. The first of those workers was Dave. Dave is not his real name, but he feels that if he were to reveal his identity he would face retaliation from his employer. Dave is a fifth generation coal miner from Muswellbrook. He has been in the industry for 20 years. He likes his job and he is on good money. He is a dump truck driver who works 12½-hour shifts. Dave is one of the blue-collar workers that Senator Boswell has been claiming to represent so vociferously in recent months. Dave is comfortable with being described as a ‘green miner’. Tony Eastley went on to ask:

TONY EASTLEY: Now we’re using not your real name because you are concerned about ramifications ... 

DAVE: Coal has been around here for over a hundred years but I think we’re going to have to look for other sources for our energy generation and if we’ve got to have an ETS introduced and some pits are forced to close, then, well, that’s just what’s got to happen because there’s no life on a dead planet.

So the coal miners get it, the workers get it, but the coalition want to create fear and loathing. Eastley also spoke to three other miners, CFMEU members who seemed perfectly happy to be identified by their real names—Warren Cook, Geoff Drayton and Adam Dever. This is how the interview with these three men went:

TONY EASTLEY: Well regardless of an ETS, whether it is now or sometime in the future, the coal industry is booming, governments have poured in more than half a billion dollars to help expand Hunter Valley coal rail lines. And some of the world’s biggest mining companies are tipping in billions of dollars to expand their operations around the town of Muswellbrook, from where we’re broadcasting this morning.

That is not the scene that the coalition is trying to develop in relation to the coal industry in this country. The coal industry is booming. Jobs will still be created in the coal industry. Jobs will be there for the future. Tony Eastley then went on to say that he caught up with three miners and the interview continued:

WARREN COOK: Third generation underground coal miner, now working in an open cut mine, 58 years of age and probably a couple of years off retirement.

TONY EASTLEY: What about you Jeff?

JEFF DRAYTON: No, no, about seven years for me as long as I’ve been in the mines. I have a
father who spent about 25 years, a local, I’ve spent all of my 40 years here and now have family and three young children.

TONY EASTLEY: Adam I don’t want to insult the other blokes, but you look a bit younger than them.

ADAM DEVER: Just a couple of years, I’m a 30-year-old, my father’s also in coal mining. Local lad, married with a few kids and spent my whole career in coal mining, about 12 years.

TONY EASTLEY: Warren if I can come to you first: what’s the industry like? You’ve been in it longer than anyone here at the table ...

WARREN COOK: Twenty-eight years in total, and probably no, certainly never better both as far as employment and also in money terms.

TONY EASTLEY: So you couldn’t be happier with the industry as it is?

WARREN COOK: As a long term employee I would say no, never been happier.

Jeff Drayton goes on to say that he has been in the industry only seven years and that there has to be concern predominantly with developing clean coal technologies. The interview goes on:

TONY EASTLEY: Adam you’ve got three young girls and we mentioned your feelings about the future of Muswellbrook and the Hunter Valley, this coal mining area? Do you want to see a carbon tax introduced by the Government?

ADAM DEVER: Yeah definitely, definitely. It goes hand in hand. My main responsibility is my family, so I want to make sure my family is secure and my lifestyle and things like that, but I also don’t want to be the responsible generation for you know, damaging the environment and you know, for future generations to look back and say that’s the generation that could have done something and they didn’t.

This is the coalminers of this country saying what they think and what is important to them. They see the industry as important to them but they also see the future for their kids as being important. We have farmers in New South Wales and Queensland saying that they see opportunities in dealing with a carbon constrained economy. Yet what do we have? We have a coalition that is driven by a group of sceptics and deniers, a group who want to say, ‘Everything should continue on as normal, we should continue to pollute the atmosphere because we don’t really believe in it.’ That is what we have from the coalition, yet miners and farmers are saying, ‘You’ve got it wrong, you’ve got it so wrong.’ Miners and farmers are saying to you, ‘Give us leadership, give the government support for its vision, give the government support for its strategy,’ because that is where jobs will be built in the future. Those jobs will be environmentally sustainable, those jobs will deliver for this economy and this society in the future. We must be about building the jobs of the future, maintaining the jobs we have in the coal, steel and aluminium industries, ensuring that those jobs operate in an environmentally sustainable way because our responsibility is not to your doomed leader; our responsibility is to future generations in Australia. It is about time the Leader of the Opposition understood these issues. (Time expired)

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (6.57 pm)—What an interesting set of views from Senator Cameron. I assure you, Senator Cameron, that Malcolm Turnbull’s leadership is not under challenge. He is a man of great skill and ability. He has a great knowledge of finance and economics and that is something the Labor Party ought to fear as we go into record debt levels and record unemployment—having someone leading the opposition who understands economics and the power of the system of government that has produced the Liberal Party’s great record over the years should make you quake with fear, Senator Cameron. You were quite right, there is debate in the coalition about climate change, just as there is in the whole community.

CHAMBER
Senator Bushby—And in the Labor Party!

Senator EGGLESTON—And in the Labor Party, indeed. Of course, Labor Party people are not allowed to express their views. They have to toe the party line or face the discipline of the party machine. There is debate in the coalition because there is debate in the community. There are differences of opinion about the causes of climate change: whether it is due to greenhouse gases or simply a manifestation of evolving change which has occurred over the millions of years that the earth has been here and has gone through cyclical climate change. The fact that there is a debate is healthy, a very healthy thing indeed.

Senator Cameron—It’s lunacy!

Senator EGGLESTON—Senator Cameron, ‘lunacy’ is a very powerful word. I suppose one could say that people who do not open their minds are more open to being described as such than those who do open up their minds and consider all alternatives. Whatever the cause of climate change, the coalition is keen to see renewable energy sources developed for their own sake, to reduce pollution and to make Australia energy self-sufficient. There is no doubt, it has to be said, that under both the ETS and the renewable energy scheme the cost of energy will go up. Whether or not you like it, Senator Cameron, there will be an impact on the Australian economy in higher prices for energy and consumer goods. That will have to work its way through.

The coalition have a very great record on renewable energy. In government the coalition passed legislation in 2000 establishing the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target Scheme, giving effect to commitments made by then Prime Minister John Howard in November 1997. The MRET was the first scheme of its kind in the world and has been a key factor in the growth of both renewable and waste energy electricity generation in Australia. As a coalition, as I said, our vision is of a clean energy economy. We strongly support the concept of a 20 per cent renewable energy target. We believe in the potential of solar energy, geothermal, wind, tidal and other forms of renewable energy to contribute to our green energy future. Clean energy is about broadening the base of our energy security.

One might ask: how committed are the Labor Party to renewable energy? The answer, from their record, one would have to say, is that they are perhaps not very committed at all—if their record on solar is anything to go by. In just over 18 months Labor have created widespread upheaval and anxiety within the renewables sector. Among other floundering election commitments, support for renewables has fallen casualty to Labor’s mismanagement of the nation’s finances. Solar energy is Australia’s most abundant potential source of renewable energy. However, as is well known, the solar energy industry in particular has suffered at the hands of the Rudd government. The first assault was delivered in the 2008-09 budget, when the $8,000 rebate for solar PV installations was removed for thousands of Australian families. On 9 June 2009 solar PV rebates were scrapped altogether with less than one day’s notice, leaving the solar energy industry again in disarray. Businesses were forced to scramble, to warn customers that they only had a few hours to get applications in before the $8,000 would close off.

When the Rudd government—again suddenly and without warning—scraped the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program, families and solar companies were again sent into chaos. Solar companies continue to say that the Rudd government’s decision will cost them enormous sums and has resulted in staff being laid off. This time, no-
one was given any chance to get their applications in. People started learning about the guillotine decision at 8.33 am and the decision was, however, effective from 8.30 am on 22 June. One of Australia’s leading solar companies, the Solar Shop, described the decision like this. The Managing Director, Adrian Ferraretto, said:

This is the third setback for the industry in as many weeks. We were promised a smooth transition from the $8,000 rebate to the new solar credit scheme and instead the old rebate was pulled early, with only hours of notice. The government then fiddled with the renewable energy target policy, making what was a policy with bipartisan support into an unwinnable piece of legislation. Now they have retrospectively pulled the RRPGP, which was a very popular and important program.

So there we are. Labor promised the solar PV industry a smooth transition from what was left of the coalition’s $8,000 rebate for solar credits. Faced with the fact that it was going to be difficult for them to get their flawed CPRS through the parliament, they decided they would link—or couple—the crucial renewable energy trade assistance measures under the RET to passage of the CPRS, which inevitably caused difficulties. As everyone knows, the coalition voted down the CPRS last week. Labor’s approach was in fact to make its own legislation on renewables hostage to the CPRS and to put the renewables sector in the objectionable position of being political ransom to the passage of the flawed Rudd-Wong CPRS. Now the CPRS has been defeated, we are left with the renewables legislation. It is very important to understand this debate about renewable energy and the renewable energy target legislation. It is not merely a media headline but a matter of vital concern to all Australians because the future wellbeing of important sectors of the Australian economy was at stake before the RET legislation was decoupled from the flawed CPRS bill. Now it will have an opportunity of passing.

It is important that the RET legislation is passed, because some very important Australian industries which would otherwise be in danger of suffering severe economic impacts will be assisted by it. One is the aluminium industry, which is particularly vulnerable to the effects of Labor’s CPRS or emissions trading scheme. This bill, the RET bill, provides eligibility for aluminium smelting to receive a 90 per cent exemption from liabilities that relate to the expansion of the schedule of targets under the RET. Exemptions from liability do not apply to the 9,500-gigawatt-hour target embedded in the existing MRET legislation, to the extension of this target for an additional 10 years or to potentially higher renewable energy certificate prices as provided under the RET bill. No exemptions from liability are provided in the period before the CPRS commences, so unless this bill is now passed, the aluminium industry will not receive any exemptions from liability.

I am the deputy chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Economics. Senator Hurley, who spoke earlier, is the chair and Senator Cameron, from whom we heard such a colourful and critical speech earlier this evening, is a member of that committee. The Australian Aluminium Council, in its submission to the committee, made the following comments:

The expanded Renewable Energy Target will impose costs on the aluminium industry in the same manner as much of the CPRS—through increased electricity costs. It addresses similar environmental objectives, operates over similarly long timeframes, and, like the CPRS, is a cost that will only be imposed on Australian producers, not competitors.

Aluminium has become known as ‘solid electricity’ because so much electricity is used in refining it. In terms of cost exposure to RET, aluminium smelting stands quite apart from other industrial processes. On this
point, Mr Cransberg from Alcoa made the following comment to the committee:

Australia is home to six aluminium smelters. We are the key electricity using industry in this debate. We are by far the biggest user of electricity within Australia, and the department’s own analysis shows that aluminium smelting is an order of magnitude more electricity intensive than any other activity.

On consideration of the evidence presented before the committee, coalition senators view the risks of shifting Australia’s world-class aluminium production facilities to another country as too great for this country’s economy to bear. We believe it is very important that there is some sort of consideration given in this legislation to the interests of the aluminium industry. Coalition senators support the provision of a full 90 per cent exemption for aluminium smelting from the RET and MRET liabilities. Coalition senators, when it comes to other emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries, also support the provision of stand-alone exemptions from liabilities associated with the expanded schedule of targets under RET for emissions-intensive trade-exposed activities.

Many of Australia’s trade advantages have been built on the basis of secure and cheap supplies of fossil energy. Moving away from our traditional supply of energy is acknowledged to be much more costly for Australia than for other countries. Submissions to the inquiry were also received from a large number of organisations involved in waste gas from coal power sources. Coalition senators certainly support the expansion of eligibility of renewable energy sources to include electricity sourced from waste coalmine gas—WCMG—and waste industrial gases. The coalition believes that waste coalmine gas should be categorised as renewable energy.

Another matter which was brought before us was the issue of electric heat pump and water heaters. The Gas Industry Alliance brought to the attention of the committee some significant concerns regarding the eligibility of electric pump water heaters to generate renewable energy certificates. Coalition senators believe these issues raised by the Gas Industry Alliance should be supported.

Coalition senators have indicated that their support for the expansion of renewable and clean energy technologies and for this legislation will depend on the interests of those industries that I mentioned having their particular problems recognised and being supported under the legislation. The coalition accordingly supports the government’s target but insists that the legislation must accommodate existing exemptions for the emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries in stand-alone renewable energy target legislation. We believe that there should be a full 90 per cent exemption for aluminium smelting from the renewable energy target and mandatory renewable energy targets. We believe certainty and continued support should be provided to waste coalmine gases by including the waste coalmine gas industry as an eligible renewable energy source under the renewable energy target.

Most importantly, the government must move to address the costs imposed under this proposal on agricultural processing facilities, which are significant and which will ultimately be borne by farming families in industries that the government considers will be classified as emissions-intensive trade-exposed. The government must move to address issues associated with electric pump hot water systems by reviewing the technology and performance and tightening regulatory controls. The government must also make allowance for the future inclusion of new sources of renewable energy in the Renewable Energy Target Scheme.
So, while the coalition is supportive of the expansion of the renewable energy options provided under this legislation, the government must understand that it is a precondition for coalition support that the unreasonable and politically motivated linkage of the renewable energy legislation to the CPRS legislation must be broken and the two considered separately. If that is done, this bill will be assured of passage this week.

Senator PRATT (Western Australia) (7.15 pm)—I have but a few moments to make my remarks about the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2009 and I want to highlight the fact that it is the second pillar of the government’s comprehensive strategy to tackle climate change and prepare Australia for transition to a low-carbon future. It provides for an expanded renewable energy target, which we hope is going to accelerate the development and deployment of renewable energy technologies in Australia. To drive this expansion, we know liable entities are going to be required to purchase renewable energy certificates or face the shortfall charge, thus providing the incentive to drive investment in renewable energy. We are looking for a much-needed boost to the renewable energy sector when it is most needed.

The first pillar in the Rudd government’s comprehensive strategy to tackle climate change is of course the CPRS, which is designed to ensure that the Australian economy shifts towards a low-carbon future over the near to medium to long term by putting a price on carbon and a cap on emissions that tightens over time. Indeed, the RET and the CPRS are designed to work together. Our attempts to fast-track the renewable energy industry now, using the RET, will prove fruitless if we do not ensure a sustainable market into the future for renewables—by establishing a price mechanism for carbon through the CPRS—that is going to work over the long term. We need both if we are to prepare for the low-carbon future that we hope and believe is coming. We hope and believe this low-carbon future is coming, because the only alternative is unthinkable: a future devastated by disastrous climate change.

The Department of Climate Change recently released a report entitled Climate change 2009: faster change, more serious risks, which synthesises the latest science on climate change and its implications. As the title of the report implies, the latest science indicates that the world’s climate is changing faster than previously thought. It shows that, while uncertainties remain about some aspects of climate science, most of these uncertainties operate in one direction—in short, the bulk of the risks is on the down side: the risks that rising sea levels pose to Australian cities, concentrated so heavily on our coastline; the risks to Australian agriculture from reduced rainfall, especially in the Murray-Darling Basin; the risks to the welfare of Australian people from extreme weather related events, such as flash floods, bushfires and heatwaves; and the risks to our iconic national heritage, most particularly the Great Barrier Reef.

The latest science also reinforces the fact that climate change is not linear. We are confronting potential tipping points, and thus there is a critical need to avoid the risks of crossing dangerous thresholds—by taking action now to reduce our greenhouse pollution. The latest science confirms Lord Nicholas Stern’s conclusion: There is a large probability of a devastating outcome …

Now, that, senators, is too great a risk for this nation to face, it is too great a risk for the globe to face, and this Senate must get on with the job of not only supporting the bill before us for a renewable energy target but
also committing to cap Australia’s emissions and a trading scheme that provides us with a vehicle to do that. I commend the bill to the Senate.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Trood)—Order! It being 7.20 pm, I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day

Senator McEWEN (South Australia) (7.20 pm)—Today is Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day and therefore it is an appropriate day to reflect on how we as a nation remember and honour our veterans of all conflicts and to also reflect on how fortunate we are to have a serving Defence Force of extraordinarily skilled, loyal and courageous personnel. As members of parliament we are in a unique position to observe what is happening in veterans affairs and in our defence forces. More importantly, we are in a position to influence government policy and legislation in these areas of public administration, and it is a responsibility that I know all of us take seriously.

I have not always been as mindful as I should have been about the welfare of our veterans and of our defence forces. I was a teenager during the Vietnam War and I supported the campaigns to end that war and bring our troops home. I was, I admit, at that time fairly insensitive to the plight of Vietnam veterans and serving defence personnel, despite the fact that my own father was a veteran of World War II.

Today, as was acknowledged by the Prime Minister during his address at the Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day service, we should all take time to remember the 60,000 Australians who served in Vietnam, especially the 521 defence personnel who died and the 2,400 who were wounded in that conflict.

As a nation we failed on many accounts to adequately support the veterans of that war, and their families. I am sure most MPs and senators would have constituents who are Vietnam veterans and who still need our assistance to access the support and services they need. I acknowledge the work of the numerous ex-service organisations who do an excellent job supporting their members and I would also like to commend the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Mr Alan Griffin, whose genuine care and concern for our veterans has led to many important policy initiatives, including the Vietnam veterans family study currently underway.

Many Australians are paying more attention to Australia’s military history and are actively choosing to honour our veterans and ADF personnel. I am sure all senators would have acknowledged the ever-increasing number of people, including large numbers of young people, who now attend Anzac Day dawn services in our electorates. Visiting Gallipoli as part of the grand tour and walking the Kokoda Track are other ways that Australians are choosing to honour their veterans.

The nine Australians who died last Tuesday in the tragic plane crash near Kokoda were doing just that, and I would like to express my sincerest sympathy to the family and friends of all those who died in that terrible crash. Like quite a number of MPs and senators, including Senator Barnett, I have been to Kokoda and I have flown that flight path through the Owen Stanley Ranges on the way to Kokoda, and I feel deeply for those who were undoubtedly feeling very excited and also apprehensive about the adventure to come but who were robbed of that opportunity. It is a privilege to walk the Kokoda Track and last week’s incident
brought home just how much of a privilege it is. The pilgrimage that many Australians make to the Kokoda Track—and I sincerely hope that Australians continue to do that—is a fitting way to remember the service of our veterans and our current serving defence personnel.

I was very pleased to note that the Minister for Veterans' Affairs has also recently announced some very welcome initiatives to assist us to remember the sacrifice many have made, and continue to make, to keep Australia safe and to recognise those who have supported our defence personnel. On 23 July 2009, which is Papua New Guinea's Remembrance Day, at the beautiful Bomana War Cemetery near Port Moresby, the minister issued the first commemorative medallion honouring the so-called 'fuzzy wuzzy angels' who cared for Australian soldiers on the Kokoda Track during that terrible campaign that saw nearly 600 Australians killed and another 1,000 injured. In June this year, the government announced a grant of $12,000 to upgrade and refurbish the southern entrance to the Kokoda Track at Owers Corner. This has become a special place for Australians and Papua New Guinean locals alike and the upgrade will make sure this important place is improved and maintained.

Just yesterday, in recognition of the infamous Sandakan prisoner of war camp in Sabah, Borneo, and subsequent death marches in August 1945 from Sandakan to Ranau that saw 2,400 British and Australian soldiers die in terrible circumstances, Minister Griffin announced the opening of an Australian government funded memorial hall at the privately operated memorial gardens in Kundasang in Borneo. Those people who have been to that memorial garden would know what a special memorial that is and it is so worthy of the $155,000 that the Australian government has provided. It is good to know that the government is determined to honour our service personnel with support for these memorials and acknowledgements of service.

As I said at the beginning, senators and members are in a very fortunate position to know about and to influence veterans and defence policy. One of the ways that interested senators and members can become better educated about our defence matters is by participating in the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program. This program has been in place since 2001 and I have, since I came here in 2005, listened with much interest to the speeches of other senators who have been able to participate in one or more of the activities provided under the program. The aim of the program is to provide members and senators with practical experience of the ADF so that we can take a more informed and constructive part in the debate about defence. The objectives of the program are: to provide an understanding of a unit's role and missions; to provide an opportunity to experience the life of a service person; and to provide an awareness and understanding of defence capabilities, personnel and management issues.

In July this year—in fact in the week immediately following my return from walking the Kokoda Track—I was very fortunate to join the ADF Parliamentary Program and was placed with the SAS, the Special Air Services Regiment, for five days during part of the regiment’s selection course. It is without doubt one of the best things I have ever done. The regiment, with its famous motto ‘Who dares wins’ was formed on 4 September 1964, although its predecessor, the 1st Special Air Service Company, which was part of the Royal Australian Infantry, had been in existence since 1957.

The SAS Regiment has a long history of operations in Borneo, Vietnam, Rwanda, Somalia, Cambodia, East Timor, Iraq and
Afghanistan and probably other places. The members of the regiment are extraordinary men who undertake extraordinary operations and do so with little regard for the accolades and recognition they deserve and occasionally get, but certainly never seek. It was hard finding much material for this speech about the regiment because, as is entirely appropriate, not a lot of official material is written about their operations or about their citations and achievements. Suffice to say, it is not easy to become a member of the regiment and those who make the grade certainly deserve to be there.

I have to say that the willingness of the officers and soldiers of the SAS to take on board two members of parliament to participate in and observe part of the challenging selection course was very much appreciated. It was an honour to be there. Being there did give me the opportunity to learn a lot more about life in the forces, about the issues ‘from the ground’ in Defence, as opposed to from the across the table during Senate estimates, and about the importance of supporting our defence personnel and our defence capability. I was very pleased to note the announcement today by the Minister for Defence Personnel, Materiel and Science, Mr Greg Combet, that the ADF is currently experiencing its lowest separation rate for the last decade, which is extremely welcome news indeed.

While there are many differences between the wars and warfare that I have mentioned in this speech—World War II, Vietnam and Afghanistan, and of course also World War I—regardless of what capacity our veterans and defence personnel have served in, or are serving in, we should always honour their service, as the Prime Minister did today, and we should also use our privileged positions as members of the parliament to do what we can to support our former and current servicemen and women.

**Afghanistan**

**Senator HUMPHRIES** (Australian Capital Territory) (7.29 pm)—Members of the Senate will be aware, I am sure, that this week there is an election in Afghanistan. That election is for the presidency and for regional councils in that country. As it is the second free election in modern times, I am sure that we would welcome the advances that that society has been able to make—partly as a result of the involvement of Australian troops in that country to assist it to restore democratic freedoms to its citizens.

I rise tonight, however, to highlight a complexion on the Afghan political situation that I believe needs to be addressed if we are to fully understand the challenges that that country faces in becoming a fully democratic society. I want to talk tonight about the plight of the Hazaras, the third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, comprising some 25 per cent of the population. This minority has occupied the humblest niche in the country’s complex ethnic mosaic. The political power structure has been dominated by the large southern Pashtun tribes, followed by the slightly less numerous northern Tajiks.

The Hazaras are, unfortunately, a much persecuted minority. During periods in history, the Shiite Hazaras have been forced from their lands and slaughtered in bouts of ethnic or religious cleansing. In more recent times they have been relegated to lowly jobs as cart pullers or domestic servants, a result of their social standing in the community, made famous by the novel *The Kite Runner*. Today almost all Hazaras adhere to Shiism, whereas Afghanistan’s other ethnic groups tend mostly to be Sunni.

The Hazara now stand poised, however, to play a more decisive role in the future of their country through these elections that are taking place this week. An independent candidate called Ramazan Bashardost is a
Hazara and is travelling the country and apparently attracting a degree of support, notwithstanding that he is a Hazara. His message is one of government reform and social justice.

Hazaras have faced a long history of injustice and oppression. They have faced displacement in a number of wars, going back at least as far as the mid-18th century. Their oppression continued from a variety of sources, leading to uprisings in the 19th century and massive displacements which led to them having to leave Afghanistan altogether in many cases. Apparently some 35,000 families have, since the 19th century, fled to northern Afghanistan, to Meshed in Iran, to Quetta in Pakistan and to other places in Central Asia. It is estimated that more than 60 per cent of the Hazara population were massacred or displaced during the late 19th century. Farmers were often forced to give up their properties to Pashtuns and, as a result, many Hazara families had to leave seasonally to major cities in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan in order to find jobs and a source of income. Pakistan, in fact, is now home to one of the largest settlements of Hazaras, particularly in and around the city of Quetta.

During the Soviet war in Afghanistan, the Hazarajat region, which is in the centre of Afghanistan, the home of most Hazaras, not only felt the effects of the conflict but also dealt with the bloody internal conflicts of rival Hazara political factions. When the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996, the Hazaras sided with the Northern Alliance against the Taliban but were again on the wrong side of the conflict. Hazarajat fell to the Taliban in 1998 and was then totally isolated from the rest of the world, with the Taliban going so far as to prevent the United Nations from delivering food to the provinces that make up the Hazarajat region. Even very recently, as recently as 1998, there was a major massacre of Hazaras in the city of Mazar-e Sharif.

Eight thousand civilians were massacred and the Taliban openly declared that the Hazaras would be targeted. The leader of the militia that attacked them said:

Hazaras are not Muslim. They are Shia. They are kafir.

‘Kafir’ means ‘infidels’. The quote continues:

The Hazaras killed our force here, and now we will have to kill Hazaras.

I am pleased to say that there have been some improvements in the position of this minority since 1998, but it would be quite wrong to imagine that the Hazaras face a bright future. They still face animosity, sporadic oppression and attacks from a number of sources, including Pashtun tribesmen and Taliban inspired fighters. They are considered a lower social class within Afghan society today, with the result that they have a level of support from the Afghan government that leaves a great deal to be desired.

I want to make two points tonight about their position. Firstly, I would like to express my appreciation for the resilience and patience of the Hazara people, who have survived and continue to be very much identified by their ethnicity and their faith despite centuries of oppression and conflict. I hope that the rest of the world will be in a position to acknowledge that the Hazara seek only to be able to live peacefully in a pluralistic Afghan society, if that is possible. Secondly, I want to remind the Senate that the rights that we enjoy in this country, which are free of racial or social distinctions, are not enjoyed by many other countries of the world, particularly, in this case, Afghanistan. It is important that we acknowledge that our role as a participant in the military force in Afghanistan today is a means to an end. That end has to be the establishment not just of a democratic society but also of one that has all the
features of a truly democratic society, including respect for minorities.

I would ask the Australian government to use the opportunities afforded to it by virtue of it being a participant in the multinational force in Afghanistan to remind the Afghan government that it cannot create a truly peaceful and democratic society if it does not address the legitimate requirements and needs of minorities like the Hazara within the framework of the society which is Afghanistan. They need to understand those needs, to address them and to restore to them a degree of civil equality, which is clearly lacking in the practice of government and the attitudes of many in Afghan society.

I wish these people well. I wish the Afghan people as a whole well in the important elections that are taking place this week. I hope that it will be a small step towards the kind of peaceful and democratic society that we would hope Australia’s involvement in that country’s conflict is going to produce.

Homelessness

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (7.38 pm)—I rise tonight to make a couple of brief comments on the statement that was made earlier today by the Minister for Housing and Minister for the Status of Women, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, who updated us in the other place this afternoon on homelessness and where the government is at with the homelessness white paper and progress in rolling out some of these programs. I would like to say at the outset that I certainly welcome the statement. I think it is greatly appreciated that the minister took the time to update us because we are of course used to prominent announcements and huge amounts of money notionally to be spent and then sometimes the details can fade from view and it can be very difficult to track what is going on. So we certainly welcome the statement and the amount of detail that has been provided today.

The Greens join and wholeheartedly support this commitment to wanting to end homelessness in Australia. The aim of halving homelessness in all its forms by 2020 is something that we need to do for everyone, particularly for young people, for women escaping domestic violence and for other groups in Australia at risk of homelessness. So the commitment is certainly welcome and the Greens are very supportive and very willing to work with all parties on advancing this agenda.

I also appreciate the stated desire of the government that the implementation plans will evolve over time as we learn more about the most successful ways of preventing and responding to homelessness. As a first step in this process it is particularly important that we see these implementation plans in full. Some details on the state plans have been released and obviously this is greatly appreciated, but the full plans would give a sense of what research is informing each state’s thinking because each state and territory is obviously at a very different place in how they are grappling with homelessness, what links states may have made with other government initiatives and how states will ensure that no-one is exited from the care of the state into homelessness, which is obviously a very big issue. Different jurisdictions will have prioritised different measures in their plans already and I think it would be extremely helpful to the parliament if the full plans were released to the public so that we are able to assess why these decisions are being made and how the funding is tracking.

Generally, the announcement was very positive, particularly the fact that initiatives that are rolling out today are part of long-term planning that is a mix of housing people permanently but also looking after crisis ac-
commodation. The $11.5 million homelessness research program is also extremely welcome.

Not by way of critique but certainly as a point of caution is the fact that the details on Western Australia are pretty sketchy. In the minister’s statement there appeared to be only inner-city rough sleeping focus. I am presuming the agenda is much broader than that but the details were fairly sketchy. There did not really seem to be any focus on long-term housing and on housing targets, and of course we know that Western Australia has the worst turn away rates in the country, which is a statistic of which none of us is proud.

It has yet to be seen exactly how the funding proposals are going to hit the ground in a meaningful way. I want to talk a little bit about the funding because obviously there is matching funding between the states and territories and the Commonwealth that will total just over $1 billion over five years. But these figures are then stacked up next to the $6 billion social housing proposal that went through in the stimulus package passed through this place earlier this year, which we discovered is roughly the same amount that the federal government hands out to people every year who already own more than one property. It was one of the key instruments for inflating the housing bubble that we are now grappling with and it has created this degree of housing unaffordability in the first place through negative gearing.

I went back to the Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia, which did quite a good job of canvassing the issues and proposing alternatives, and found that the combined total of capital gains tax arrangements, land tax exemptions and negative gearing arrangements is estimated to be in the order of $50 billion per year. This is set against one $6 billion funding commitment for social housing and the relatively much smaller amounts that have been set aside annually for homelessness. That reflects against the $1.5 billion in the Commonwealth-state housing agreement at the time that the report was released; it is now a couple of years old. So the tax concessions that we are making to allow people to get into their second and third properties are actually costing the Australian economy, as of 24 months ago, in the order of at least $50 billion per year, which is set beside the $1 billion over five years that we are providing for homelessness. So amidst the welcome news that the government is making some serious inroads into homelessness—and we hope to see the practical implications of that over the next few years—we are still spending vastly more money assisting people who already own one property to purchase more. That is something that it is about time we had a proper look at.

All in all, however, I welcome this announcement and future progress in homelessness in Australia. I think it is absolutely long past time that we made a proper attempt with substantial funding commitments to address homelessness in Australia.

Maternal Health

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (7.44 pm)—Last week in Bali a consultation was hosted jointly by the United Nations Population Fund and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development. This consultation was looking specifically at the issues of maternal health and rights in our regions. The United Nations Population Fund, the UNFPA, is a United Nations institution, an international development agency that promotes the rights of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using strong population data for policies and programs to reduce poverty and, most
importantly, to ensure that every pregnancy
is wanted, every birth is safe and every
young person is free of HIV-AIDS. Most
particularly for my concern, a huge feature
of the UNFPA agenda is to ensure that every
girl and woman is treated with dignity and
respect. The Asian Forum of Parliamentari-
ans on Population and Development is the
coordinating body of national committees of
parliamentarians on population development
across the world. The Australian Parliamen-
tary Group for Population and Development
is part of this network. The network across
the world works to generate support and per-
petuate cooperation among Asian parliamen-
tarians and Asia-Pacific parliamentarians in
the area of population development and the
related fields.

Our work and that of the UNFPA is
guided by the program of action which was
adopted by 179 governments in 1994 at the
Cairo International Conference on Popula-
tion and Development. The 15th anniversary
of that very important meeting is coming up
in October this year. At that historic meeting
delegates from all regions and cultures
agreed that reproductive health is a basic
human right and that individuals should be
able to freely choose the number, timing and
spacing of their children. They also affirmed
at that meeting that the needs for education
and health, including reproductive health
care, is an absolute prerequisite for sustain-
able development over the longer term.

The ICPD objectives were very important
in helping shape the Millennium Develop-
ment Goals. Those goals, about which we
have spoken many times in this group, are
focused at reducing poverty and working as a
world community to ensure that people will
not be living in poverty by 2015. We have
taken a bit of a look at how we are going on
those goals, and every year the United Na-
tions publishes a state of the world report.
Whilst there has been wonderful progress in
many ways, it has been identified that one of
the areas where we are doing most poorly is
maternal health, and that is a shame to all of
us. In fact, on 17 June 2009, the United Na-
tions Human Rights Council passed a resolu-
tion which desperately—in UN speak, it ‘ex-
presses grave concern’—naturally and im-
portantly:

Recognizes that most instances of maternal
mortality and morbidity are preventable, inter-
alia, through family planning, skilled birth atten-
dance and emergency obstetric care, and that pre-
ventable maternal mortality and morbidity is a
multidimensional issue

—I hate the word, but it actually gets across
that it is not a simple issue—
that also reflects a failure to promote and protect
effectively the ... human rights of women and
girls ... to be equal in dignity, to education, to be
free to seek, receive and impart information, to
enjoy the benefits of scientific progress ...

All those are things that we as a world com-
munity must commit to and move forward.

Millennium development goal No. 5 has
now been divided into two parts because of
the way that we have to move forward. Tar-
get 5.A is to reduce by three-quarters the
maternal mortality ratio across our world and
also, in part of that, to have a greater propor-
tion of births attended by skilled health per-
sonnel. That is something we tend to take
almost for granted in our community, but
across the Asia-Pacific region and many
other parts of the world there are so many
births that do not have the benefit of a skilled
health attendant, and it can make a huge dif-
ference to the survival of the mother and the
child. We now have target 5.B, which is to
achieve, also by 2015, universal access to
reproductive health. That looks most clearly
at effective contraception programs across
our region. In this area we have failed dis-
mally. It is something that we as a world
community must acknowledge. We then
must plan to achieve some forward action so
that we can be sure that by 2015 we can meet the goals that we have agreed to.

This is not something that has been imposed; it is not something that is outside. This is something that we as a world community have agreed to on a number of occasions now, from the time that we joined together at the wonderful event at the United Nations, where the world community committed to the Millennium Development Goals, to reviews that have happened since then. Consistently governments have re-committed that they would take on their own plans of action that would engage with their communities so that we can be sure that all of the world will be able to be free of poverty—and in this case so that we can be sure that we can have safe and healthy births.

Unfortunately, the state of the world report has shown that over 536,000 women and girls die as a result of complications during pregnancy, childbirth or in the period immediately following delivery. That figure alone can actually make you stop breathing for a moment, because it is so confronting. However, the 536,000 may not actually be a full result of what is occurring, because we do know that the data that is being produced must be better researched and more sound. In fact, one of the issues that the UNDP takes up is the importance of having appropriate data. But we know that many thousands of women are lost through complications through birth every year. We also know that in our own area, the Asia-Pacific, we contribute to 44 per cent of the world’s maternal deaths. Several reports on the progress to achieving the MDGs in Asia and the Pacific have highlighted the fact that it is really unlikely, given the current state of what is happening, that we will reach the MDG No. 5 targets by 2015. Many women in these parts of the world go through a pregnancy uncertain of whether they will survive childbirth, which should be a time of joy. In fact, there is almost a fatalistic acceptance that a number of women will not be able to survive birth. Their child then may not survive as well.

We have seen through the UN information the horrific impact that the loss of a mother has on a family. We have data that shows what happens if a mother is lost through a childbirth death. The impact on and the potential terror for the rest of the family is great, because they do not have that central focus of their family to actually help them through life, to put to them opportunities, to help them access education, and to give them a future.

The whole Millennium Development Goals process is focused on having that equity of opportunity across the world. We have a clear opportunity to assist and work with our neighbours so that these maternal health issues can be addressed. The group that met in Bali last week is focusing particularly in our part of the globe, Asia and the Pacific. We have an opportunity to work in concert with those groups to provide strength and support. I know that AusAID has a very strong reputation in the area and its work to support communities in the Asia-Pacific region has been wonderful. Many of the countries and representatives from the UNFPA and regions spoke with great appreciation for the work AusAID has done.

Earlier this year, the Minister for Foreign Affairs announced a further amount of money for the maternal and child health areas. We will be working in future budgets to ensure that that commitment is maintained. We have a role to play to ensure that we will be able to speak at the next forum looking at these issues at the UN and say what we have been able to achieve in Australia and in our area to ensure all the Millennium Development Goals have future success. I hope that in particular we will be able to improve in
the area of maternal mortality and cut the horrific number of women lost during childbirth. As was stated several times at the UN consultation, no woman should die in the process of giving life.

Papua New Guinea: Aircraft Accident

Senator BARNETT (Tasmania) (7.54 pm)—I rise tonight as a mark of respect for the victims of the Airlines of PNG Twin Otter crash one week ago today, on 11 August, along and near the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea. For the nine Australians among the 13 people on that flight, it was understandably an experience of a lifetime that turned to tragedy. The nine Australians were: Max Cranwell, 66, a dairy farmer from Hazelwood North, Victoria; Leanne Harris, 35, the daughter of Max Cranwell and a mother of two from Traralgon; Matthew Leonard, 28, a Victorian fireman and part-time tour guide; Kelly Weire, from Melbourne; Peter Holliday, 28, from Bendigo, a Bendigo Bank manager; Euan Comrie, chairman of Mo-Artz theatre and cousin of Peter Holliday; Hannah Kinross, from Belgrave South; Dr June Canavan, from Maroochydore, a sports medicine doctor; and Keith Gracie, from the Sunshine Coast, a close friend of Dr Canavan, a construction company owner and father of two. I pay tribute to them. I place on record that my thoughts and prayers, along with those of many Australians, are with the families and friends of the victims during this time of great sadness and loss. The Senate unanimously passed a condolence motion last week. The senators here were proud of that moment as we acted for, and on behalf of, our constituents and our communities throughout every part of Australia.

I also place on record my sympathy, thoughts and prayers for the families and friends of the PNG nationals who died in the crash, including the pilots, and the local Kokoda residents. On Wednesday, 12 August, the day after the tragic accident, I was invited to an event at the High Commission of Papua New Guinea. I shared my personal condolences with the high commissioner, Charles Lepani, his wife and others. At the function, attended also by the Hon. Peter Garrett, we had a moment's silence in honour of the victims of this plane crash and tragedy. I also met a relative of one of the PNG victims and the sadness struck home. It was a sombre occasion. I want to commend the government for the rescue and repatriation efforts to date.

In April last year, together with a group of 17 other trekkers, I walked the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea. The trek was organised to honour the diggers who stopped the Japanese advance on Port Moresby in 1942 and to raise funds for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund. We raised over $165,000. I place on record my specific thanks to Sam McCardel of Melbourne for his tremendous fundraising and marketing efforts to gain those funds for the JDRF. Thank you, Sam.

After eight days of heavy trekking, our plane out of Kokoda to Port Moresby was three hours late. It was a small Airlines of PNG Twin Otter, identical to that which tragically crashed in the highland jungles of PNG just last week. The plane took off from a grass airstrip amidst mountainous terrain, with 20 trekkers and crew on board. Our party included Tasmanian veterans Ivan Dean, MLC, and Bruce Scott, the Scottsdale RSL President. After take-off, the plane had to spiral upwards to gain enough height to get over the Owen Stanley Range, the mountains, and back to Port Moresby. The variable weather conditions and geography of the mountains mean that flights in and out of Kokoda are nearly always an unnerving experience. But there is no other way. Every trekker who walks the Kokoda Track must take the flight either into or out of Kokoda.
The Kokoda Track Authority says that in 2001 only 76 people registered to walk the track. By last year, there were 5,621, mostly Australians, who completed the onerous 96 kilometre journey with a permit. A further 1,000 walkers are estimated to have taken the trip without a permit. The Flight Safety Foundation’s statistics for aircraft accidents in Papua New Guinea states that there have been 98 accidents, with 31 fatalities, since 1 January 2000. This includes the tragic 11 August crash last week. By comparison, during this same period, Australia has had 16 accidents, resulting in 17 fatalities.

It has been reported that the International Civil Aviation Organisation is currently conducting an audit of matters pertaining to air safety in PNG. The same report states that 19 of the accidents since 2000 have not been investigated. Previous ICAO audits have pointed out the lack of proper crash investigation in PNG as well as serious failings in the licensing regime. A proper Air Accident Commission was only established in PNG in 2008, but there have been criticisms about slow progress in investigating the backlog of air accidents. Further criticisms have been made of the quality and condition of the runway at Kokoda. The simple grass airstrip only allows smaller aircraft to land. Smaller aircraft have to approach at a lower altitude and therefore more frequently fly closer to the mountains than would be the case for larger aircraft at higher altitudes. Therefore, it is a greater safety risk. In my view, the airstrips should be upgraded, and the Australian government can play a part in making this happen.

It is not just the aviation standards in PNG that are a cause for concern for trekkers. Last year three Australians died undertaking the trek. While all deaths were the result of natural causes, questions remain regarding the safety of the track and the trek. Last year alone, dozens of trekkers were airlifted out after sustaining injuries or failing to meet the level of fitness required to complete the trek. During my eight-day trek there were five medi-evacuations. The 96-kilometre track is now one of PNG’s biggest tourist attractions, but concerns are being raised about the huge but unregulated trekking industry that has grown out of Kokoda. There are over 60 different tour operators that reportedly make an estimated $50 million per year by charging an average of $4,000 per trekker. There are no mandatory minimum industry standards to regulate first aid or medical expertise, insurance cover or the experience of guides and porters. There are no set guidelines for the number of people in each tour group or the necessary communications equipment.

Australian tour operators have recognised that there is indeed a need to create some form of guidelines to ensure the safety of trekkers, to preserve the heritage of the area and to protect and support the local communities. I commend the Australian tour operators who have taken the initiative by drafting a code of conduct. Under the vision that the Kokoda Track will be a premier tourism destination catering for the requirements of a niche market to experience the adventure, historical, environmental, cultural and social features of PNG in a sustainable manner, Australian tour operators have prepared a comprehensive draft for a Kokoda Track Code of Conduct 2009. Tour operators who agree to comply with the code of conduct agree to adhere to the Kokoda Track Authority rules, guidelines and procedures to ensure sustainable trekking operations, limiting the number of trekkers, if required, and paying the appropriate fees.

I will not go through all the aspects of the code, but I have the draft code with me. It relates to promoting sustainable tourism along the Kokoda Track; promoting the unique heritage of the area, especially its military history and culture; promoting re-
sponsible tourist behaviour; minimising impacts on the natural environment through best practice; supporting local communities; promoting excellence; and exercising a duty of care to clients and staff and so on. I commend it. It is an excellent document. Under the proposal, the code of conduct is to be monitored by the Kokoda Track Authority and to be annually reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant, effective and up to date.

I believe the code of conduct needs to be finalised and implemented as a matter of urgency. The federal government should intervene and, with the Kokoda Track Authority, ensure that this code of conduct is implemented. Trekkers also need to be assured of full disclosure of the dangers that they face, in order to make an informed decision before embarking on the trek. This code of conduct will go a long way to ensuring that proper standards and safety are a high priority. At the same time, more needs to be done to ensure that the risks are reduced, including the upgrading of the Kokoda airstrip, which remains substandard. That would be an excellent initiative.

I say that there is more still to be done. Senator McEwen earlier made reference to the fuzzy wuzzy angels. As the sponsor, together with Senator McGauran, of a Senate motion on 24 June last year to recognise the fuzzy wuzzy angels, which was supported by senators across the board, I am pleased to note that PNG nationals have been officially recognised. It has come 67 years late, but it is never too late. But what has not happened is the ex-gratia payment that the government agreed to in that Senate motion. I have written to the relevant minister, Minister Kelly, to ask for a response from the government, to ensure consideration and recognition of the appropriate initiatives, including making a small ex-gratia payment to each fuzzy wuzzy angel in recognition of their contribution over and above the call of duty. I think that is important. I thank the Senate.

Renewable Energy

Senator WORTLEY (South Australia) (8.04 pm)—I rise tonight to speak on renewable energy, such a crucial part of Australia’s energy future. This sector is a vital cog in the Rudd government’s comprehensive plan to reduce Australia’s emissions, stopping their growth and actually reducing them for the first time. It is high time to act. The issue of our environment’s health and welfare is urgent. Australians know full well that climate change is the biggest single threat to our prosperity and way of life in this great country. We are one of the most vulnerable nations when it comes to the ravages of climate change. Renewable energy sources, including solar, wind and geothermal, must play key roles in the climate change solution. Australia has huge potential across these areas.

The arguments for significant investment in renewable energy industries are compelling. Expanding Australia’s role in renewable energy generation is a great opportunity to reduce Australia’s energy industry emissions. Also, it would power billions of dollars in investment and ensure that we create and access the green jobs of the future. Modelling by Treasury predicts that by 2050 the renewable electricity sector will be 30 times larger than it is today, creating jobs relating to renewables such as solar, wind and geothermal technologies. This would mean that more than 48 per cent of the electricity generated in Australia would be from a renewable source by 2050. Enshrining investment in renewable energies into law is a critically overdue step in the fight against dangerous climate change.

This is a sector that should have been given much higher status, much greater support, by government years ago. And, failing
that, as terribly wishful thinking, those opposite could have guaranteed the future of these industries here, just last week, with a vote in the Senate. A renewable energy target will not by itself halt our contribution to climate change but, as part of a gamut of measures, will have an effect by helping to break our fatal addiction to fast-fading fossil fuels.

While some of those opposite do not want us to succeed, this government is committed to making a difference for our environment—locally, regionally and globally. That is why we ratified the Kyoto protocol, when our predecessors would not. That is why we are implementing our Water for the Future plan, when those opposite neglected to improve our ailing rivers. That is why we are working towards creating a nation of energy efficient homes, schools and industries. We are committed to slashing Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent on 2000 levels by 2050, and committed to a 25 per cent reduction on 2000 levels by 2020, as part of global actions sufficient to stabilise atmospheric greenhouse gas levels at 450 parts per million or lower—or, if global action falls short of 450 parts per million, reducing Australia’s emissions by five to 15 per cent on 2000 levels by 2020.

We are also committed to playing our part in global efforts after 2020. Unfortunately for our nation, our environment, our economy, our global community and our planet, the dinosaurs among their numbers ensured that those opposite failed to act on climate change when they had the chance to do so. It was not just last week but over 11½ long years that they neglected to address the issue. Of course, it is difficult to address a problem if you do not even accept that there is a problem. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Turnbull, and the Liberal and National parties are hopelessly divided on this crucial front. They are, in fact, as we have heard in this place before, still debating whether climate change even exists—or, if it does, whether there is any human impact on its extent.

It shames Australia that under the former coalition government the progress of renewable energies development not only stalled but actually went backwards. In stark contrast, the Rudd government has an election commitment to have 20 per cent of Australia’s electricity derived from renewable energy sources by 2020. The opposition has no such commitment to a renewable energy target. After collaboration with the states and territories, this government has come up with a plan to amend the foundation on which the current Mandatory Renewable Energy Target scheme stands. Our plan will back a boost in various technologies such as geothermal, solar, wind and biomass. Many of these facilities will be built in regional areas, thereby benefiting the communities in those areas.

Already we have committed significant direct support to the renewable energy sector through a variety of initiatives. As part of the 2009-10 budget the government committed $15 billion to climate change related initiatives. This includes the $4.5 billion Clean Energy Initiative, which will fire up a range of low-emissions energy technologies in the marketplace through the commitment of $1.5 billion for the Solar Flagship Program, which will aim to create an extra 1,000 megawatts of solar generation capacity—this would be three times the size of the largest solar energy project currently operating anywhere in the world; $100 million for the Australian Solar Institute, which supports research into solar energy technologies, including thermals and photovoltaics; and $465 million to establish Renewables Australia, to support cutting-edge technology research and bring it to the market. On top of those measures, the government’s $480 million National Solar Schools Program is giving our schools a boost in their efforts to tackle climate change.
and conserve water. More than 4,000 schools have signed up and more than $10 million in grants have already been approved.

Renewable energy investment is not only the right thing to do from the point of view of easing the pressure on—and the pain of—our environment; it is the prudent thing to do for our economy and our employment prospects. And renewable energy targets are the way to give the transitional help needed by industries. The Senate Economics Legislation Committee, having looked into renewable energy legislation, reports that it would like to see a range of renewable energy technologies develop. It states:

Renewable Energy Targets have been adopted internationally to provide transitional assistance to renewable energy technologies, where a purely market based approach would not result in sufficient investment and take up in the short term.

And the committee:

... welcomes the support for diverse renewable technologies contained in the programmes under the Clean Energy Initiative.

As the Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Wong, said in this place just last week:

It has been more than a hundred years since the first realisation that the earth’s climate might be sensitive to atmospheric concentrations of gasses, creating a greenhouse effect. The IPCC’s fourth assessment report, the largest assessment of climate science ever undertaken, concluded that warming of the climate system is unequivocal and it is 90 per cent likely that this warming is caused by human activity.

So, as we have been part of a problem that has become increasingly evident over more than a century, it is about time we became part of the solution through renewable energies and other measures. The Rudd Labor government is determined to address the challenges of climate change for this and future generations.

Senator PRATT (Western Australia) (8.13 pm)—This evening I also rise because this chamber and this nation must face up to the reality of the challenges that confront us with climate change. We owe it to future generations of Australians—to our children and our grandchildren. If we do not act, and if the world does not act, we will have to explain to our grandchildren why we did not even try to prevent the disastrous environmental consequences of our inaction. We will have to explain why we sat idly by, enjoying the fruits of our carbon-intensive economy today, when we knew that our inaction made it all the more certain that future generations would face a hostile environment tomorrow.

We will have to explain why we did not do all that we could to secure an effective global agreement on climate change at the critical moment—and that critical moment is Copenhagen this December. If we do not act, and the world does not act, we will have to explain to our children and grandchildren why we did nothing to prepare the Australian economy for a low-carbon future, with disastrous effects on their living standards.

It is not just about the risk of climate change to our environment that we are talking about here. It is also about needing to get on board with the economic transformation that is going to take place across the globe. Make no mistake: if the world acts and we do not act the Australian economy is going to suffer and so will the living standards of future Australians. Personally, I believe the global community will act to reduce carbon emissions produced by the human race. Self-preservation is a powerful instinct, and the preservation of our quality of life and countless human lives is what is at stake. I believe that the human race will act to preserve this planet’s beautiful, hospitable climate so as to secure our own futures, and that means putting a price on carbon. The coalition is right
About one thing. To quote their minority report to the Senate into this bill:

Many of Australia’s trade advantages have been built on the basis of secure and cheap supplies of fossil energy.

Cheap coal has been the cornerstone of our prosperity, and the coalition is right about that, but when it concludes from this that Australia would be imprudent to take decisive action to transform our economy in advance of a new global agreement and strong multilateral action on climate change it is very, very wrong—because our trade advantages for cheap fossil fuel will disappear when the world puts a price on carbon. We must take action before then to make our economy less dependent on fossil fuel, just as many other nations are taking action right now, because they know it is in their economic interests and in humanity’s environmental interests. We must be prepared for the day when fossil fuel energy is no longer cheap because carbon has been given its real price. We need to be prepared for the day when carbon pollution bears its own real true cost, no matter how secure the fuel supply.

1990 was the year of the first Gulf War, the year the last recession began, and the year Carmen Lawrence and Joan Kirner—our first two female premiers—took office. It does not seem that long ago, does it? 1990 was 20 years ago and 2030 is just 20 years away. 2030 is as close to us as 1990 was. It will be 2030 before we know it and then fossil energy will no longer be the cheap option. Coal will no longer be king. What happens to our competitive advantage from cheap fossil energy then? Once coal is no longer cheap we will not simply be able to switch to another form of energy overnight. We need to be ready well before then. We need to be prepared for the day when our fossil fuel supplies—all that black gold—turns to fool’s gold in our hands.

Before then, we must find other trade advantages. By then we will need to have other tricks up our collective sleeve. We can and we must diversify our energy supply, and we must start now. We can begin this by building a low carbon future out of our carbon intensive present. Contrary to what the opposition would have us believe, this is not about plant closures or job losses. It is not about wage cuts or a lower standard of living. Those who say that it is are simply engaging in the worst kind of politically motivated, short-sighted, self-interested scaremongering imaginable. What this is about is getting on with the hard work required today to ensure a lower emissions future is possible along with rising living standards. It is about doing the groundwork today for the green jobs of the future before the way we do business today becomes unsustainable and our prosperity is undermined.

The Rudd Labor government has a mandate from the Australian people to take action on climate change and to prepare our economy for a low carbon future. We have a mandate to use market mechanisms, including renewable energy credits and a CPRS, to transform our economy in preparation for a low carbon future. The Australian people know that this transformation is absolutely essential to the environmental security and economic prosperity of future generations. The coalition claims that the Australian public has been duped by Labor’s policies. That is what it has claimed. Its minority report to the Senate committee inquiry into the renewable energy target said:

Industry has been waving the warning flags for months but the public continues to be duped.

So the coalition thinks the Australian public are dupes. What arrogance, I say. The Australian public are not stupid. Unlike the coalition, they have been listening to industry, and they have noted that, while unsurprisingly industry does not speak with one voice
about every aspect of the schemes that have come before this place, the one common call from industry and business is for certainty in our climate policy settings. The Australian public know that, without decisive action by government and without certainty, investors and employers cannot get on with the job of transforming the way we do business here in Australia. Indeed, because the instruments that we have put before this place—the CPRS and the RET—work together, they together provide short and medium to long term signals for entrepreneurs, employers and investors. Without both schemes in place, there will be no certainty for our economic future.

I commented in debates on the CPRS legislation that without certainty there is going to be no new investment, no start-up companies or innovative ways of running existing operations, no clean coal and no building the high wage, sustainable jobs of tomorrow. No, it is not the Australian public who have been duped into supporting decisive action to tackle climate change. Who has been duped? It is indeed the Leader of the Opposition and the more moderate elements in his party who have been duped by the troglodytes in the coalition into believing that division, delay and denial on climate change will somehow win them votes. Well, we in the Labor Party are not fooled by this pathetic performance and neither are the Australian public. We will show leadership, whether or not the Leader of the Opposition does so. The Australian public want decisive action on climate change, they deserve decisive action and we on this side of the chamber will work for as long as it takes to give them decisive action on climate change.

Whistleblowers

Senator FEENEY (Victoria) (8.23 pm)—Tonight I want to examine the extraordinary double standards applied by the Liberal opposition on the matter of ethical behaviour by public servants. Recently, we saw the spectacle of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Turnbull, and his sidekick in this place, Senator Abetz, admitting that their false and outrageous accusations of corruption and dishonesty against both the Prime Minister and the Treasurer were based on a forged email provided to them by a public servant—of course, I speak of Mr Godwin Grech. Mr Turnbull has been asked several times by journalists about the nature of his long-term relationship with Mr Grech. He has steadfastly refused to answer these questions. When Kerry O’Brien persisted with this line of questioning on ABC television recently, Mr Turnbull simply clammed up and refused to say anything, but the questions will not go away. Why did Mr Turnbull and Senator Abetz so readily accept the allegations made by Mr Grech against the Prime Minister and the Treasurer? Why did they do nothing to verify the faked email which Mr Grech waved in front of them but never actually gave them?

Senator Brandis—Mr Acting Deputy President, I rise on a point of order. I have listened carefully to the speech thus far and it is very clear that this refers directly to a matter currently before the Privileges Committee. For that reason, might I respectfully submit to you, Sir, that the speech, to the extent to which it does reflect on a matter currently before the Privileges Committee, is out of order.

Senator FEENEY—I can very happily comply with the request from Senator Brandis. My speech does not go to the matters being put before the Privileges Committee.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Barnett)—Senator Brandis?

Senator Brandis—Senator Feeney knows what he proposes to say next. None of us can know that, but I invite you to rule, Mr Acting
Deputy President, that no matter that is the subject of the current reference to the Privileges Committee can be properly addressed by the senator.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Thank you, Senator Brandis. I am happy to rule on the point of order and to make it clear to Senator Feeney that he cannot address any of his remarks to the matter that is referred to the Privileges Committee. Senator Feeney, you can speak generally to matters but not directly to matters that have been referred to that committee.

Senator FEENEY—Thank you very much, Mr Acting Deputy President. Tonight I want to address the issue of whistleblowers and in particular the inconsistency of the Liberal Party—the opposition—and their treatment of whistleblowers. I want to contrast their attitudes of the present with their performance when they were in office. Senior members of the opposition have suggested that it is somehow okay for public servants to leak information for political purposes and, of course, I mean any opposition—and have drawn a spurious comparison between such political leaking and genuine whistleblowing, which of course is the act by a public servant of reporting illegal or improper conduct to the appropriate authorities. I wish to speak about whistleblowing—and genuine whistleblowing—as opposed to what might be better characterised as a political leak. Genuine whistleblowing is protected by law, as it should be. Politically motivated leaking is not. Section 70(1) of the Crimes Act says:

A person who, being a Commonwealth officer, publishes or communicates, except to some person to whom he or she is authorized to publish or communicate it, any fact or document which comes to his or her knowledge, or into his or her possession, by virtue of being a Commonwealth officer, and which it is his or her duty not to disclose, shall be guilty of an offence.

So how did the current opposition, when they were in government, treat public servants they suspected of leaking information to the then opposition? In this respect I want to remind the Senate of a particular case. In 2003 the Howard government began investigating an officer of the foreign affairs department they suspected may have been responsible for leaking the details of a conversation between the then foreign minister and a foreign diplomat. This suspicion was apparently based upon a claim—later found to be false—by an informer within the department. As I say, that claim made by that informer was later found to be without foundation. Nonetheless, the investigation proceeded. In the course of their search of this officer’s computer, however, investigators turned up a 2002 email the officer had sent to a staff member of an opposition front-bencher. That email said:

More thoughts on the white paper. The list of individuals consulted could form the basis of an estimates question (it may already have been asked—see Hansard). Regardless, the release of the white paper gives us (DFAT) an excuse to consult with everyone, NGOs, academics, etc—bit of outreach.

In that email—the contents of which I have just quoted—the officer did not disclose any privileged or confidential information. In fact, what that email clearly did was direct the opposition, through the opposition staffer, to go and look in Hansard. Yet on the basis of that email this officer was dismissed from his employment on the grounds that he had breached the code of ethics of the Public Service, in that he had entered into unauthorised contact with an opposition staffer. The officer who had given false information concerning his colleague, on the other hand, was later awarded a significant diplomatic posting by the Howard government.

It is good to record that the dismissed officer, with the staunch support of the Com-
munity and Public Sector Union, embarked upon a significant campaign to clear his name and have his position reinstated. I think I should also note that there was persistent questioning at estimates about these matters by then Senator Robert Ray. In 2007, the officer finally won reinstatement and, indeed, compensation, when the Industrial Relations Commission found that he had been unfairly dismissed. It is interesting to note that, in the then government’s pursuit of this officer—the officer they feared was having unauthorised contact with the opposition—it spent something in the order of $1.5 million. In particular, the then government spent $700,000 investigating this officer, hiring two external consultants. When the time spent by DFAT officers and the pay accrued by the officer during the three years he was suspended are taken into account, the entire exercise of pursuing this officer cost the Australian taxpayer at least $1.5 million. The Industrial Relations Commission found that the treatment of this officer by the Howard government was ‘harsh, unfair and unreasonable’ and that his dismissal had been based on false and malicious allegations by a fellow officer who had a history of making such allegations.

That was how the Howard government treated public servants who came under political suspicion, on the flimsiest of evidence, of leaking information to the then opposition. So when they were in government the Liberal Party took ruthless action against public servants they suspected—even on the flimsiest of evidence—of leaking information to the then opposition. That is how the Liberal Party behaved in opposition. I think it is apparent that, in considering the actions of a whistleblower as opposed to an officer engaged in leaking, there are enormous distinctions. But here the relevant point is that, despite the utterances of the opposition in declaring itself to be the defender of whistleblowers and to encourage such activity and to defend it as a legitimate part of the public policy process, their deeds in office tell the lie that that is.

I would simply finish on this note. Whistleblowing, while a legitimate and important activity—something that obviously brings to the parliament or the relevant officers allegations or information that pertains to unlawful, improper or, dare I say it, even corrupt activity—is not something that the other side of politics respected in their time in office. Rather, what we saw was the pursuit—even to the point of $1½ million of taxpayers’ money—without mercy and without qualification of any person they believed fostered alternative political views inside the Public Service and engaged in even the most harmless contact with the government. I think on that basis the rhetoric of the Liberal Party stands very starkly at odds with their actions.

Senate adjourned at 8.34 pm

DOCUMENTS
Tabling

The following documents were tabled by the Clerk:

[Legislative instruments are identified by a Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (FRLI) number]

Airports Act—Statement about certain decisions under section 243, dated 17 July 2009.

Australian Prudential Regulation Authority Act—Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (Confidentiality) Determination No. 11 of 2009—Information provided by trustees under Reporting Standard SRS 200.0 (2005), SRS 210.0 (2005), SRS 210.1 (2005), SRS 230.0 (2005), SRS 240.0 (2005) and SRS 250.0 (2005) [F2009L03211]*.

Civil Aviation Act—Civil Aviation Safety Regulations—Airworthiness Directives—Part 105—
AD/BEECH 23/43—Trailing Edge Flaps [F2009L03059]*.
AD/BELL 206/178—Flight Control Bearings [F2009L03192]*.
AD/BELL 222/45—Flight Control Bearings [F2009L03197]*.
AD/BELL 407/37—Flight Control Bearings [F2009L03199]*.
AD/BELL 427/11—Flight Control Bearings [F2009L03200]*.
AD/BELL 430/14—Flight Control Bearings [F2009L03201]*.
AD/DAUPHIN/23—Tail Rotor Gearbox Mounting Tripod Internal Surfaces [F2009L03049]*.
AD/DAUPHIN/25—MGB Support Bar Shackle [F2009L03203]*.
AD/JETSTREAM/106 Amdt 1—Main Landing Gear Radius Rod [F2009L03203]*.
AD/MCH/6—Pitot Head Assembly—Modification [F2009L03082]*.


Fair Work Act—Select Legislative Instrument 2009 No. 207—Fair Work Amendment Regulations 2009 (No. 2) [F2009L03140]*.

Health Insurance Act—
Health Insurance (Positron Emission Tomography) Determination 2009 [F2009L03134]*.
Health Insurance (Positron Emission Tomography) Facilities Determination 2009 [F2009L03207]*.

Lighthouses Act—Select Legislative Instrument 2009 No. 204—Lighthouses Amendment Regulations 2009 (No. 1) [F2009L03156]*.

Migration Act—
Select Legislative Instruments 2009 Nos—
143—Migration Amendment Regulations 2009 (No. 6) [F2009L02518]*.
201—Migration Amendment Regulations 2009 (No. 8) [F2009L03097]*.

National Health Act—Instruments Nos PB—
76 of 2009—Amendment determination—pharmaceutical benefits [F2009L03149]*.
77 of 2009—Amendment determination—responsible persons [F2009L03150]*.
81 of 2009—Amendment determination—conditions [F2009L03153]*.

Navigation Act—Select Legislative Instrument 2009 No. 205—Navigation (Supplementary) Amendment Regulations 2009 (No. 1) [F2009L03157]*.

Protection of the Sea (Civil Liability) Act—Select Legislative Instrument 2009 No. 206—Protection of the Sea (Civil Liability) Amendment Regulations 2009 (No. 1) [F2009L03159]*.

Sydney Airport Curfew Act—Dispensation Report 06/09.

* Explanatory statement tabled with legislative instrument.
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The following answers to questions were circulated:

Attorney-General, Minister for Home Affairs and Parliamentary Secretaries: Overseas Travel

(Question Nos 1020 and 1025 amended)

Senator Ronaldson asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General and Minister representing the Minister for Home Affairs, upon notice, on 25 November 2008:

Has the Minister or any associated Parliamentary Secretary travelled overseas on parliamentary or ministerial business since 25 November 2007; if so, for each trip:

(1) What was the purpose?
(2) How many nights were spent overseas?
(3) What were the dates and venues?
(4) How many meetings did the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary attend.
(5) How many departmental and/or personal ministerial staff accompanied the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary.
(6) What was the aggregate cost?
(7) Can an itemised account be provided of the costs for the following: (a) transportation; (b) travel allowance; (c) accommodation; (d) meals; and (e) other expenses, paid for by the Commonwealth in relation to the Minister, Parliamentary Secretary and their staff.

Senator Wong—The Attorney-General and the Minister for Home Affairs have provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

The Attorney-General undertook five ministerial overseas visits during the period 25 November 2007 to 25 November 2008. Details of each of the visits are provided in the table at Attachment A.

The Minister for Home Affairs undertook six ministerial overseas visits during the period 25 November 2007 to 25 November 2008. Details of each of the visits are provided in the table at Attachment B.

With respect to questions 6 and 7, costs of official travel by ministers, parliamentary secretaries, accompanying spouses (where relevant) and accompanying staff employed under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 are paid for by the Department of Finance and Deregulation. Dates, destinations, the purpose and aggregate costs of all official overseas travel are tabled in the Parliament every six months in a report titled ‘Parliamentarians’ Travel Paid by the Department of Finance and Deregulation’.

Attorney-General

Attachment A

Attorney-General’s Portfolio – Overseas Ministerial Travel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trip Number</th>
<th>Attorney-General</th>
<th>Attorney-General</th>
<th>Attorney-General</th>
<th>Attorney-General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>UK, USA</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/s</td>
<td></td>
<td>London, Wash-</td>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>Christchurch,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ington DC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Canterbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nights overseas</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>11 nights</td>
<td>2 nights</td>
<td>7 nights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attorney-General</th>
<th>Attorney-General</th>
<th>Attorney-General</th>
<th>Attorney-General</th>
<th>Attorney-General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of meetings</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>34 meetings</td>
<td>2-day ANZLF program</td>
<td>4-day CLMM program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Attend funeral of former Indonesian President Suharto</td>
<td>Meet with ministerial counterparts and senior government officials in relation to counter-terrorism, civil justice and other bilateral issues</td>
<td>Attend Australia New Zealand Leadership Forum (ANZLF)</td>
<td>Attend Commonwealth Law Minister's Meeting (CLMM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of accompanying staff</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of accompanying family</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of accompanying Departmental officials</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>One (AGD)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Two (AGD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Departmental officials travel</td>
<td>$ 15,684.00</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$ 23,916.00</td>
<td>$ 10,216.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Departmental officials accommodation</td>
<td>$ 4,559.00</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$ 4,350.00</td>
<td>$ 1,439.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Departmental officials other costs</td>
<td>$ 1,977.00</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$ 2,821.00</td>
<td>$ 1,007.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Departmental costs</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$ 22,220.00</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$ 31,087.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

(1) - The Attorney-General’s visit to New Zealand was for a total of four days, with two of these days taken as leave approved by the Prime Minister. All costs borne during the period of leave were met personally by the Attorney-General.

(2) - The Attorney-General was accompanied by his wife and by two children on the visit to New Zealand. All costs associated with the children were met personally by the Attorney.

(3) - The four Department officials who accompanied the Attorney-General and Minister on the visit to New Zealand also participated in other meetings, and some of their costs relate to this work. One official travelled primarily for the treaty signing and related meetings, and did not attend SCAG.

Minister for Home Affairs

Attachment B

Attorney-General’s Portfolio – Overseas Ministerial Travel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minister for Home Affairs</th>
<th>Minister for Home Affairs</th>
<th>Minister for Home Affairs</th>
<th>Minister for Home Affairs</th>
<th>Minister for Home Affairs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>PNG</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Samoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>Madang</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>East Timor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Apia</td>
<td>East Timor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Semarang, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

**Senator Minchin** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, upon notice, on 18 May 2009:

With reference to all legislation administered within your portfolio:

1. (a) How many and which statutory reviews are due to commence and/or conclude in 2009; and (b) what are the specified timelines for the commencement and conclusion of each of these reviews.

2. (a) How many and which statutory reviews are due to commence and/or conclude in 2010; and (b) what are the specified timelines for the commencement and conclusion of each of these reviews.

**Senator Conroy**—The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

1. (a) Statutory Review  (b) Specified Timelines
   1  Australian Airspace Policy Statement review  Commenced in December 2008 and is expected to conclude in 2009.
   2  Review of the National Transport Commission  Commenced in January 2009 and will conclude in 2009.
(a) Statutory Review  (b) Specified Timelines


(2) Nil.

Prime Minister and Cabinet: Program Funding
(Question No. 1610)

Senator Abetz asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister, upon notice, on 29 May 2009:

Can a list be provided, by agency, of all infrastructure and/or capital works projects that fall under the responsibility of an agency within the Minister’s portfolio.

For each of the projects in (1) above:

(a) when was it first announced, by whom, and by what method;
(b) if applicable, what program is it funded through;
(c) what is its total expected cost;
(d) what was its original budget;
(e) what is its current budget;
(f) what is the total Federal Government contribution to its cost;
(g) what is the total state government contribution to its cost;
(h) if applicable, what other funding sources are involved and what is their contribution to the project cost;
(i) what was the expected start date of construction;
(j) what is the expected completion date;
(k) who is responsible for delivering the project, and if a state government is responsible for delivering the project, when will the funding be released to the relevant state government;
(l) is the project to be completed in stages/phases; if so, what is the timing and cost of each stage/phase;
(m) why was the project funded; and
(n) what cost benefit or other modelling was done before the project was approved.

Senator Chris Evans—The Prime Minister has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question

I am advised that:

(1) Capital works projects being undertaken within the PM&C portfolio include:

Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) - Refurbishment Project for the ANAO’s leased accommodation at 19 National Circuit, Barton ACT.
Office of National Assessments (ONA) - Office Fitout of 2 National Circuit, Barton ACT
Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General (OOSGG)

i. Damp-proofing Rectification Works – Admiralty House
ii. Upgrade of In-ground Irrigation System – Government House
iii. Resurfacing of Bitumen Access Road - Government House
iv. Refurbishment of Staff Quarters - Admiralty House
v. Renovation of Public Lookout - Government House  
vi. Upgrade of Bulk Fuel Storage Facility - Government House  
vii. Upgrade of Emergency and Exit Lighting System – Government House  
viii. Upgrade of Government House Lighting - Government House  

National Archives of Australia (NAA)  
i. Upgrade of air conditioning plant – Brisbane repository  
ii. Conversion of pneumatic compactus units to mechanical operation – Sydney repository  
iii. Reconfiguration of fitout for Operations & Preservation – Canberra repository  
iv. Replacement of floor coverings – Canberra repository  
v. Construction of classified material processing room – Canberra repository  
vi. Upgrade of national access control system  
vii. Replacement of CCTV installation – East Block Canberra  
ix. Reconfiguration of fitout – East Block Canberra  
ii. Replacement of Type 1 security panel – East Block Canberra  
iii. Reconfiguration of fitout – East Block Canberra  
iv. Replacement of carpeting – East Block Canberra  
v. Upgrade of classified material assessment area – East Block Canberra  
vi. 57 asset replacement projects each valued less than $80,000

(2) Details are provided in the attached table.

I understand the Minister for Climate Change and Water will provide a response for the Department of Climate Change and the Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADAO Response</th>
<th>ONA Response</th>
<th>OOSGG response</th>
<th>NAA response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) No public announcement was made but the project was referred to in the ADAO’s 2007-08 Annual Report tabled in Parliament. The project was approved as a medium work by the Public Works Committee on 26 June 2008.</td>
<td>Announced in the 2009-10 Portfolio Budget Statements</td>
<td>All projects are part of the Capital Works program funded through the Heritage Property Master Plan in the 2005-06 Portfolio Budget Statements</td>
<td>No announcement was made. All projects are part of the internal Capital Works program funded in the 2008-09 Portfolio Budget Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) ADAO – other departmental</td>
<td>ONA – other departmental</td>
<td>OOSGG – other departmental</td>
<td>NAA – other departmental</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(c)</th>
<th>ANAO Response</th>
<th>ONA Response</th>
<th>OOSGG response</th>
<th>NAA response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>($6.064 million (trade costs) or $7.144 million (including construction managers fees, P&amp;S, and professional fees).)</td>
<td>$17.5 million</td>
<td>i. $40,000</td>
<td>i. $147,410</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ii. $150,000</td>
<td>ii. $1,000,000</td>
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<td>iii. $93,000</td>
<td>iii. $101,119</td>
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<td></td>
<td>iv. $402,000</td>
<td>iv. $162,300</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>v. $85,000</td>
<td>v. $129,061</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vi. $140,000</td>
<td>vi. $90,000</td>
<td></td>
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<td>vii. $150,000</td>
<td>vii. $250,000</td>
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<td>viii. $50,000</td>
<td>viii. $227,472</td>
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<td>ix. $117,748</td>
<td>ix. $44,753</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x. $96,870</td>
<td>x. $1,618,349</td>
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<td></td>
<td>xi. $140,000</td>
<td>xi.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>xii. $150,000</td>
<td>xii.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>(d)</th>
<th>$6.0 million (preliminary estimate)</th>
<th>$17.5 million</th>
<th>i. $25,000</th>
<th>i. $183,500</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>ii. $150,000</td>
<td>ii. $500,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>iii. $93,000</td>
<td>iii. $123,500</td>
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<td>iv. $162,300</td>
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<td>v. $40,000</td>
<td>v. $120,000</td>
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<td>vi. $114,000</td>
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<td>xi. $1,618,349</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>xii. $120,000</td>
<td>xii.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(e)</th>
<th>$6.064 million (trade costs) or $7.144 million (including construction managers fees, P&amp;S, and professional fees).</th>
<th>$17.5 million</th>
<th>i. $40,000</th>
<th>i. $147,410</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>vii. $250,000</td>
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<td>viii. $50,000</td>
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<td>ix. $117,748</td>
<td>ix. $44,753</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x. $96,870</td>
<td>x. $1,618,349</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>xi. $140,000</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>xii. $150,000</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(f)</th>
<th>Total cost of the project</th>
<th>Total cost of the project</th>
<th>Total cost of the projects</th>
<th>Total cost of projects</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(g)</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h)</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION</td>
<td>RESPONSE</td>
<td>DATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(j)</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>August 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(k)</td>
<td>i. ANAO ii. There is no state government involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(l)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(m)</td>
<td>To refresh the ANAO’s 15 year old accommodation and align the office layout to meet the current operational requirements of the ANAO.</td>
<td>ONA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i)</td>
<td>i. ANAO ii. There is no state government involvement</td>
<td>i. OOSGG ii. There is no state government involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii)</td>
<td>To accommodate an expanded ONA</td>
<td>To enable the repair, maintenance and development of the vice-regal properties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv)</td>
<td>As part of the National Archives of Australia’s asset replacement program or to meet changing operational requirements.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(n) Design brief was to develop modest contemporary office environment without significant structural changes which facilitated IT cabling upgrade and complemented painting and carpeting upgrade by new building owner, and upgrade of environmental rating of building.

A Business Case was prepared for the National Security Committee of Cabinet and Finance consideration.

All projects were developed under the advice of the Official Establishments Trust and technical and other specialist advice was sought in developing the costings.

Where appropriate, technical advice was sought in developing costings. The asset replacement program provides indicative replacement costs based on initial cost, estimated life and annual escalation by CPI.

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**Defence: Advertising**

(Question Nos 1657 and 1678)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 3 June 2009:

Since 1 January 2008, has the department or any of its agencies expended any funds on advertising or sponsored links on a search engine such as www.google.com for any government websites administered within the Minister’s portfolio (i.e. websites with ‘.gov.au’ domain names); if so:

(a) which websites have been or are being advertised/sponsored on each search engine;

(b) what was the cost of establishing the advertisement/sponsorship;

(c) what was/is the daily cost of sponsorship;

(d) what was/is the fee that is charged each time an advertised/sponsored site is selected through the search engine;

(e) which words or phrases have been included in the advertisement/sponsorship (i.e. ‘digital television’);

(f) which additional, subcategories or combinations of words have also been included in the advertisement/sponsorship;

(g) how many variables or combinations were entered into the purchase equation;

(h) for how long has the advertisement/sponsorship been running or is intended to run; and

(i) what is the total cost to the department (or the costs to date if the expense is ongoing) of each website advertisement and/or sponsored link.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:


(b) Defence: $420,342 (excl GST).

   DHA: $57,070 (excl GST).

(c) Defence: There is no set daily rate for the Defence’s sponsorship/advertisement as it is calculated on a campaign cost.

   DHA: There is no set daily rate for the DHA’s sponsorship/advertisement as costs are calculated depending on what specific keyword or phrase is typed into the search engine.
(d) **Defence:** Sponsorship/advertising was based on a campaign cost and not a ‘cost per click’ arrangement.

DHA: A set fee can not be provided as costs vary depending on what specific keyword or phrase is typed into the search engine.

(e) **Defence:** A 30 page document containing all of the keywords and phrases used in Defence and DHA’s sponsorship/advertising arrangements has been separately provided to my office. A hardcopy of the list will be provided to the Honourable Senator upon his request.

DHA: Please refer to the above answer.

(f) **Defence:** Nil.

DHA: Nil.

(g) **Defence:** 2,246 keywords and phrases.

DHA: 721 keywords and phrases.


DHA: July 2008 - October 2009.

(i) **Defence:** $420,342 (excl GST).

DHA: $57,070 (excl GST).

**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government:** Advertising

(Question No. 1661)

**Senator Minchin** asked the Minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, upon notice, on 3 June 2009:

Since 1 January 2008, has the department or any of its agencies expended any funds on advertising or sponsored links on a search engine such as www.google.com for any government websites administered within the Minister’s portfolio (i.e. websites with ‘.gov.au’ domain names); if so:

(a) which websites have been or are being advertised/sponsored on each search engine;

(b) what was the cost of establishing the advertisement/sponsorship;

(c) what was/is the daily cost of sponsorship;

(d) what was/is the fee that is charged each time an advertised/sponsored site is selected through the search engine;

(e) which words or phrases have been included in the advertisement/sponsorship (i.e. ‘digital television’);

(f) which additional, subcategories or combinations of words have also been included in the advertisement/sponsorship;

(g) how many variables or combinations were entered into the purchase equation;

(h) for how long has the advertisement/sponsorship been running or is intended to run; and

(i) what is the total cost to the department (or the costs to date if the expense is ongoing) of each website advertisement and/or sponsored link.

**Senator Conroy**—The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
(a) Links to www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au were sponsored on two search engines: Google and google.search.com and Yahoo Search. Banner digital advertisements sponsored by the Department were also placed on Fairfax Digital: http://newsbreak.com.au/?s_rid=WS:drive:top.

(b) The cost of the sponsored links on Google and Yahoo was $12,760 (including GST). The costs of the digital advertisement were $3,498 for design (including GST) and $21,670 for a discounted placement on Fairfax Digital (including GST).

(c) The Government’s advertising placement agency, Universal McCann, advises that this information is not available.

(d) The Government’s advertising placement agency, Universal McCann, reported that the Google search sponsorship generated a Cost per Click (CPC) of $3.47 while Yahoo delivered a CPC of $2.45 over the course of the campaign.

(e) The sponsored links included the following text:
   “Green Vehicle Guide: New car environmental ratings. See how cars rate before you buy!
   www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au”
   The display ads featured the following phrases on a roll-over basis:
   “How many of these cars are green?”
   “An Australian Government Initiative: Make a smarter choice”

(f) This information is not available.

(g) The digital display advertisements on Fairfax Digital featured the Green Vehicle Guide graphic car logo in two configurations: a rotating banner and a medium sized rectangle.


(i) The cost of the sponsored links was $12,760 (including GST). The cost of the digital display ads was $25,168.

Environment, Heritage and the Arts: Advertising
(Question No. 1665)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, upon notice, on 3 June 2009:
Since 1 January 2008, has the department or any of its agencies expended any funds on advertising or sponsored links on a search engine such as www.google.com for any government websites administered within the Minister’s portfolio (i.e. websites with ‘.gov.au’ domain names); if so:
   (a) which websites have been or are being advertised/sponsored on each search engine;
   (b) what was the cost of establishing the advertisement/sponsorship;
   (c) what was/is the daily cost of sponsorship;
   (d) what was/is the fee that is charged each time an advertised/sponsored site is selected through the search engine;
   (e) which words or phrases have been included in the advertisement/sponsorship (i.e. ‘digital television’);
   (f) which additional, subcategories or combinations of words have also been included in the advertisement/sponsorship;
   (g) how many variables or combinations were entered into the purchase equation;
   (h) for how long has the advertisement/sponsorship been running or is intended to run; and

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(i) what is the total cost to the department (or the costs to date if the expense is ongoing) of each website advertisement and/or sponsored link.

Senator Wong—The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(a) Artbank.gov.au on Google Adwords and line entries only on Yellow Pages online in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth
(b) $2043.64 per quarter for Google Adwords and $2438.70 per quarter for Yellow Pages online
(c) Google Adwords is charged at $1.26 per click-through up to a maximum of $20 per day.
(d) As per item c)
(e) • Aboriginal Art hire
    • Aboriginal Art hiring
    • Aboriginal Art rent
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    • Aboriginal Art rentals
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    • Aboriginal Art work hire
    • Aboriginal Art work hiring
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- Sculpture Art renting
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- Sculpture Artworks
- Sculpture hire
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- Sculpture rent
- Sculpture rental
- Sculpture rentals
- Sculpture renting

(f) None

(g) 170

(h) Artbank began using Google Adwords on 19 February 2009 and the arrangement is renewed on a quarterly basis. Yellow Pages online listing is reviewed annually.

(i) Google Adwords is $2043.64 per quarter and the cost to date is $4,087.28+GST

Artbank has been listed with Yellow Pages online since November 2004, and the cost to date is $30,419.41+GST

Attorney-General and Home Affairs: Advertising

(Question No. 1666 and 1671)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General and Minister representing the Minister for Home Affairs, upon notice, on 3 June 2009:

Since 1 January 2008, has the department or any of its agencies expended any funds on advertising or sponsored links on a search engine such as www.google.com for any government websites administered within the Minister’s portfolio (i.e. websites with .gov.au domain names); if so:

(a) which websites have been or are being advertised/sponsored on each search engine;

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(b) what was the cost of establishing the advertisement/sponsorship;
(c) what was/is the daily cost of sponsorship;
(d) what was/is the fee that is charged each time an advertised/sponsored site is selected through the search engine;
(e) which words or phrases have been included in the advertisement/sponsorship (i.e. ‘digital television’);
(f) which additional, subcategories or combinations of words have also been included in the advertisement/sponsorship;
(g) how many variables or combinations were entered into the purchase equation;
(h) for how long has the advertisement/sponsorship been running or is intended to run; and
(i) what is the total cost to the department (or the costs to date if the expense is ongoing) of each website advertisement and/or sponsored link.

Senator Wong—The Attorney-General and the Minister for Home Affairs have provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

Two agencies in the Attorney-General’s Portfolio have expended funds on advertising or sponsored links on websites. They are the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.

The answer in respect of ASIO is:

(a) ASIO uses a range of websites for recruitment advertising purposes. This includes the use of a number of major web based job boards for all recruitment advertising campaigns. ASIO also uses a range of niche web-based recruitment advertising based on the specific skill sets required by the position/s. Table A identifies websites used in ASIO web-based recruitment advertising between 1 January 2008 and 31 May 2009.

(b) The total cost of web-based ASIO recruitment advertising for period 1 January to 31 May 2009 was $906,563. This includes approximately $70,000 in Search Engine Marketing associated costs.

(c) The average daily cost for web-based ASIO recruitment advertising days for period 1 January 2008 to 31 May 2009 was $4,649.

(d) The fee charged for each selected site for period 1 January 2008 to 31 May 2009 was $2.50.

(e) ASIO generally uses key words or phrases including; ASIO, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Security Intelligence, Intelligence. In addition, specific words and phrases that relate or may relate to specific recruitment advertising are included. Attachment B lists words and phrases used in ASIO web based recruitment advertising between 1 January 2008 and 31 May 2009.

(f) Table B lists words and phrases used in ASIO web based recruitment advertising between 1 January 2008 and 31 May 2009.

(g) Table B lists words and phrases used in ASIO web based recruitment advertising between 1 January 2008 and 31 May 2009.

(h) ASIO recruitment campaigns are generally advertised for a minimum period of two weeks through to a maximum of three weeks.

(i) The total cost of web-based ASIO recruitment advertising for period 1 January to 31 May 2009 was $906,563.

The answer in respect of the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service is:

(a) As a component of the SmartGate public information campaign, the SmartGate section on the Australian Customs and Border Protection website (www.customs.gov.au) had sponsored links on the Google and Yahoo search engines.
(b) Flat fee – total $150,000.
(c) Flat fee – Not applicable.
(d) Flat fee – Not applicable.
(e) Table C lists words and phrases used by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service as part of the SmartGate public information campaign.
(f) Table C lists words and phrases used by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service as part of the SmartGate public information campaign.
(g) Flat fee – Not applicable.
(h) The sponsorship ran for the life of the campaign which was from 12 November 2008 until 30 June 2009.
(i) Flat fee – total $150,000.

Table A

Websites used for Web Based ASIO Recruitment Advertising 1 January 2008 – 31 May 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Job Boards used for all recruitment</th>
<th>Niche Websites used by ASIO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASIO.gov.au</td>
<td>APESMA National eNews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEEK.com.au</td>
<td>Electronic News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyCareer.com.au</td>
<td>What's New in Electronics?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CareerOne.com.au</td>
<td>Engineers Australia (General Edition)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TheAge.com.au</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRCareers.com.au (job site of AHRI.com.au)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RecruitMeNow</td>
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<tr>
<td>JobsInSafety</td>
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<tr>
<td>ShortlistOnline</td>
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<tr>
<td>NewScientist.com.au</td>
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<tr>
<td>ScienceAlert.com.au</td>
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<tr>
<td>eFinancialCareers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineeringjobs.net.au</td>
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<td>Engineeringjobs.com.au</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engjobs.net.au</td>
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<tr>
<td>APESMA.asn.au</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radio Comms E-Newsletter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voice &amp; data e-newsletter</td>
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<tr>
<td>JobsServe.com.au</td>
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<tr>
<td>Itwire.com.au</td>
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<td>Gurus.com.au</td>
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<td>Softwaredevelopers.com.au</td>
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<td>JobsSpeed.com.au</td>
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<tr>
<td>Researchjobs.net.au</td>
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<td>Abaa.org.au</td>
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<td>Statsoc.org.au</td>
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<tr>
<td>BrisbaneTimes.com.au</td>
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<td>WAToday.com.au</td>
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<td>Efinancialcareers.com.au</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Major Job Boards used for all recruitment
- Charteredaccountants.com.au
- Jobsguide.com.au
- AITD.com.au
- Hrcareers.com.au
- Primaryschool.com.au
- Jobs.com.au
- Educationreview.com.au
- Humanresourcesmagazine.com.au
- Totallylegal.com.au
- Psychxchange.com.au
- Whirlpool.net.au
- Nowhiring.com.au
- Justsecretarialjobs.com.au
- Alia.org.au
- AHRIA.org.au
- RMAA.org.au
- Sixfigures.com.au
- Thebigchair.com.au
- Marketing.org.au
- PRIA.com.au
- Electralsolutions.com.au
- Justsecretarialjobs.com.au
- ComJobs.com.au

### Table B


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASIO intelligence analyst</th>
<th>ASIO intelligence analyst job description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence analysts</td>
<td>Intelligence jobs analyst</td>
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<tr>
<td>business analysis</td>
<td>business intelligence analyst job</td>
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<td>entry level intelligence analyst jobs</td>
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<td>intelligence analyst jobs uk</td>
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<td>risk analysis security analyst</td>
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<td>security officer job</td>
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<td>security officers</td>
<td>careers security officers employement</td>
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<td>Intelligence analyst</td>
<td>Intelligence analysts Intelligence jobs</td>
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<td>analyst business analysis</td>
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<td>business intelligence analyst job description</td>
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<td>character analysis</td>
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ASIO intelligence analyst ASIO intelligence analyst job Intelligence analyst surveillance investigators surveillance job surveillance jobs surveillance officer surveillance officers surveillance police surveillance policy surveillance services surveillance training united nations employment what does asio stand for working for asio australia government job australia job gov australian army jobs australian customs jobs australian defence force jobs australian defence jobs australian government employment australian government job australian government job search australian government jobs australian job search gov australian job search gov au australian public service jobs defence jobs australian government job government jobs australian job search government local government employment local government jobs public service public service job qld government jobs queensland government jobs IO job Intelligence officer air force intelligence army intelligence asio intelligence job asio intelligence officer cia intelligence intelligence job intelligence jobs intelligence careers intelligence job intelligence officer intelligence officer job intelligence officer job description intelligence officer jobs intelligence officers jobs intelligence online intelligence operations intelligence security intelligence service intelligence training investigation officer investigations officer jobs intelligence officer job ASIO jobs Asio jobs Australian security jobs Graduate employment Graduate jobs Intelligence Intelligence analyst Intelligence analysts Intelligence jobs Rewarding jobs in Australia army jobs asio 2007 asio act asio agent asio agents asio asio australia asio canberra asio career asio careers asio director general asio employment asio files asio gov asio gov au asio interview asio io asio it jobs asio job asio job vacancies asio jobs asio laws asio legislation asio melbourne asio officer asio powers asio problems asio raids asio recruiting asio recruitment asio recruitment process asio recruitment process 2006 asio report asio role asio salary asio security asio security assessment asio security clearance asio spy asio surveillance asio sydney asio terrorism asio training asio vacancies australian defence jobs australian defense jobs australian government gazette australian military jobs australian security agencies australian security agency australian security clearance cia jobs community jobs defence jobs fbi jobs federal government employment gov jobs government agencies government australia government gazette government jobs government positions intelligence intelligence analysis intelligence jobs intelligence officer intelligence online intelligence service investigation officer investigations officer investigator job
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ASIO intelligence analyst ASIO intelligence analyst job Intelligence analyst
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jobs for financial analyst jobs for financial analysts
jobs of business analyst lease analyst jobs
legal analyst job legal analyst jobs
legislative analyst job market analyst jobs
marketing analyst jobs medical analyst jobs
mi analyst jobs performance analyst jobs
pharmaceutical analyst jobs program analyst jobs
programmer analyst jobs property analyst jobs
public health analyst jobs quantitative analyst jobs
real estate analyst jobs report analyst jobs
research analyst jobs resource analyst jobs
sales analyst jobs senior analyst jobs
sports analyst jobs stress analyst jobs
systems analyst job opportunities systems analyst jobs
tax analyst jobs test analyst jobs
trading analyst jobs training analyst jobs
vibration analyst jobs water analyst jobs
web analyst jobs workforce analyst jobs
a job in risk management a risk management job
and risk management job and risk management job description
bank risk management job credit risk management job
financial risk management job for risk management job
health care risk management job healthcare risk management job
insurance risk management job it risk management job
job description for risk management job in risk management
risk management risk management analyst job description
risk management assistant job risk management assistant job description
risk management career risk management consultant job
risk management coordinator risk management director job
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risk management job vacancies risk management jobs
risk management officer job risk management officer job description
risk management position risk management positions
risk management recruiters risk management recruitment
risk management vacancy risk manager job
risk manager jobs
business security systems jobs in national security
national security advisor job national security advisor job description
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protective security officer protective security roles
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- emergency passport
- emergency passports
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Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy, upon notice, on 3 June 2009:

Since 1 January 2008, has the department or any of its agencies expended any funds on advertising or sponsored links on a search engine such as www.google.com for any government websites administered within the Minister’s portfolio (i.e. websites with ‘.gov.au’ domain names); if so:

(a) which websites have been or are being advertised/sponsored on each search engine;
(b) what was the cost of establishing the advertisement/sponsorship;
(c) what was/is the daily cost of sponsorship;
(d) what was/is the fee that is charged each time an advertised/sponsored site is selected through the search engine;
(e) which words or phrases have been included in the advertisement/sponsorship (i.e. ‘digital television’);
(f) which additional, subcategories or combinations of words have also been included in the advertisement/sponsorship;

(g) how many variables or combinations were entered into the purchase equation;

(h) for how long has the advertisement/sponsorship been running or is intended to run; and

(i) what is the total cost to the department (or the costs to date if the expense is ongoing) of each website advertisement and/or sponsored link.

Senator Carr—The Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

Refer to the answer provided in Parliamentary Question number 1663.

Health and Ageing: Legislative Instruments
(Question Nos 1699, 1717, 1721 and 1723)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, upon notice, on 10 June 2009:

(1) How many and which: (a) Acts; and (b) legislative instruments, including select legislative instruments, statutory rules and regulations, are administered within the Minister’s portfolio.

(2) With reference to the ‘clean-up’ of redundant and potentially-redundant regulations being coordinated by the Department of Finance and Deregulation, which Acts or legislative instruments have been identified as redundant or potentially-redundant and why.

Senator Ludwig—The Minister for Health and Ageing has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) I am advised that the Minister representing The Attorney-General will provide in her answer a complete list of legislative instruments and Acts broken down by portfolio.

(2) The Acts and legislative instruments identified in the ‘clean-up’ as redundant or potentially redundant which have been removed are identified in the table below. In relation to redundant and potentially redundant regulations which have not yet been removed, advice relating to these groups cannot be provided at this point in time as the instruments are still subject to policy, legal and other considerations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Redundant Acts</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Account Act 2001</td>
<td>This special account expired on 1 July 2005</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Redundant legislative instruments</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance (Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy) Determination 2007</td>
<td>Incorporated into 2008 remake of General Medical Services Table Regulations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Insurance (Sacral Nerve Stimulation) Determination 2007</td>
<td>Incorporated into 2008 remake of General Medical Services Table Regulations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Insurance (Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injec tion) Determination 2007</td>
<td>Incorporated into 2008 remake of General Medical Services Table Regulations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Insurance (Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery) Determination HS/2007</td>
<td>Incorporated into 2008 remake of General Medical Services Table Regulations</td>
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<td>Redundant legislative instruments</td>
<td>Reason</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Health Act 1953 - Condition of Registration pursuant to subsection 73B(1) (03/11/2005)</td>
<td>Superseded by the Private Health Insurance Act 2007 and Private Health Insurance (Complying Product) Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Health Act 1953 - Determination made under subsections 73AAG(6) and (7) (HIB 32/2006)</td>
<td>Superseded by Private Health Insurance Act 2007 and Private Health Insurance (Benefit Requirement) Rules 2007</td>
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</table>
Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs: Legislative Instruments

(Question No. 1700)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, upon notice, on 10 June 2009:

(1) How many and which: (a) Acts; and (b) legislative instruments, including select legislative instruments, statutory rules and regulations, are administered within the Minister’s portfolio.

(2) With reference to the ‘clean-up’ of redundant and potentially-redundant regulations being coordinated by the Department of Finance and Deregulation, which Acts or legislative instruments have been identified as redundant or potentially-redundant and why.

Senator Chris Evans—The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) I am advised that the Minister representing the Attorney-General will provide in her answer a complete list of legislative instruments and Acts broken down by portfolio.

(2) With reference to the ‘clean-up’ of redundant and potentially redundant regulation being coordinated by the Department of Finance and Deregulation in their 2008 stock-take and subsequently removed, there is one regulation involved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of regulation</th>
<th>Why considered to be redundant</th>
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<tr>
<td>Social Security (Assurances of Support) Determination 2004</td>
<td>This Determination was considered to be redundant because it no longer had any application to social security payments administered by FaHCSIA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to redundant regulations and potentially redundant regulations which have not yet been removed, advice relating to these groups cannot be provided at this point in time as the instruments are still subject to policy, legal and other considerations.

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government: Legislative Instruments

(Question No. 1702)

Senator Minchin asked the Minister representing the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, upon notice, on 10 June 2009:

(1) How many and which: (a) Acts; and (b) legislative instruments, including select legislative instruments, statutory rules and regulations, are administered within the Minister’s portfolio.

(2) With reference to the ‘clean-up’ of redundant and potentially-redundant regulations being coordinated by the Department of Finance and Deregulation, which Acts or legislative instruments have been identified as redundant or potentially-redundant and why.

Senator Conroy—The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) I am advised that the Minister representing the Attorney-General will provide in her answer a complete list of legislative instruments and Acts broken down by portfolio.

(2) The Air Navigation (Charges) Act 1952 was considered redundant as the Commonwealth no longer maintains, operates or provides aerodromes and as there are no charges or penalties owing under the Act, the Act is obsolete.

In relation to redundant regulations and potentially redundant regulations which have not yet been removed, advice relating to these groups cannot be provided at this point in time as the instruments are still subject to policy, legal and other considerations.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE