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SITTING DAYS—2010

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FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SEVENTH PERIOD

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

Senate Officeholders
President—Senator Hon. John Joseph Hogg
Temporary Chairs of Committees—Senators Guy Barnett, Suzanne Kay Boyce, Thomas Mark Bishop, Carol Louise Brown, Michaelia Clare Cash, Patricia Margaret Crossin, Michael George Forshaw, 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
## Members 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—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—B Wright
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—A Thompson
RUDD MINISTRY

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion
Treasurer
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship and Leader of the Government in the Senate
Minister for Defence and Vice President of the Executive Council
Minister for Trade
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Leader of the House
Minister for Health and Ageing
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Minister for Finance and Deregulation
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government and Leader of the House
Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
Minister for Climate Change and Water
Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts
Attorney-General
Cabinet Secretary, Special Minister of State and Manager of Government Business in the Senate
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism
Minister for Financial Services, Superannuation and Corporate Law and Minister for Human Services

Hon. Kevin Rudd, MP
Hon. Julia Gillard, MP
Hon. Wayne Swan MP
Senator Hon. Chris Evans
Senator Hon. John Faulkner
Hon. Simon Crean MP
Hon. Stephen Smith MP
Hon. Nicola Roxon MP
Hon. Jenny Macklin MP
Hon. Lindsay Tanner MP
Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Senator Hon. Kim Carr
Senator Hon. Penny Wong
Hon. Peter Garrett AM, MP
Hon. Robert McClelland MP
Senator Hon. Joe Ludwig
Hon. Tony Burke MP
Hon. Martin Ferguson AM, MP
Hon. Chris Bowen, MP

[The above ministers constitute the cabinet]
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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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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery</td>
<td>Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy, Minister Assisting the Finance Minister on Deregulation and Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs</td>
<td>Hon. Dr Craig Emerson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Nick Sherry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>Hon. Justine Elliot MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth and 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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<tr>
<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>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government</td>
<td>Hon. Maxine McKew MP</td>
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<tr>
<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</td>
<td>Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children’s Services and Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction</td>
<td>Hon. Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance</td>
<td>Hon. Bob McMullan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Parliamentary Secretary for Trade</td>
<td>Hon. Anthony Byrne MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator Hon. Ursula Stephens</td>
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<td>Hon. Laurie Ferguson MP</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation and Industry</td>
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### SHADOW MINISTRY

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<td>Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon. Tony Abbott MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Trade, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government and Leader of The Nationals</td>
<td>Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Resources and Energy and Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Nick Minchin</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<td>Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training and Manager of Opposition Business in the House</td>
<td>Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<td>Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
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<td>Senator Hon. George Brandis SC</td>
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<td>Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Climate Action, Environment and Heritage</td>
<td>Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Deputy Leader of The Nationals</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Finance and Debt Reduction and Leader of the Nationals in the Senate</td>
<td>Senator Barnaby Joyce</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Food Security, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>Hon. John Cobb MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Small Business, Deregulation, Competition Policy and Sustainable Cities</td>
<td>Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research</td>
<td>Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chairman of the Coalition Policy Development Committee</td>
<td>Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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[The above constitute the shadow cabinet]
SHADOW MINISTRY—continued

Shadow Minister for Tourism and the Arts and Shadow Minister for Youth and Sport
Mr Steven Ciobo MP

Shadow Minister for Employment Participation, Apprenticeships and Training
Senator Mathias Cormann

Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs, Financial Services, Superannuation and Corporate Law and Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House
Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

Shadow Assistant Treasurer
Hon. Sussan Ley MP

Shadow Minister for COAG and Modernising the Federation
Senator Marise Payne

Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and Childcare and Shadow Minister for the Status of Women
Hon. Dr Sharman Stone MP

Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs
Mr Michael Keenan MP

Shadow Minister for Defence Science and Personnel and Assisting Shadow Minister for Defence
Hon. Bob Baldwin MP

Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs
Mrs Louise Markus MP

Shadow Minister for Ageing
Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells

Shadow Minister for Seniors
Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP

Shadow Special Minister of State and Scrutiny of Government Waste
Senator Hon. Michael Ronaldson

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Population Policy
Senator Cory Bernardi

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern and Remote Australia
Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Transport
Mr Don Randall MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Emerging Trade Markets
Mr Mark Coulton MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
Mrs Jo Gash MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education and School Curriculum Standards
Senator Hon. Brett Mason

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Murray Darling Basin and Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Action
Senator Simon Birmingham

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Public Security and Policing
Mr Jason Wood MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence
Mr Stuart Robert MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health Services, Health and Wellbeing
Dr Andrew Southcott MP

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector
Senator Mitch Fifield

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families, Housing and Human Services and Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship
Senator Gary Humphries

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck
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Tuesday, 23 February 2010

The President (Senator the Hon. John Hogg) took the chair at 12.30 pm and read prayers.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Afghanistan

Senator Faulkner (New South Wales—Minister for Defence) (12.31 pm)—I seek leave to make a statement on civilian casualties in Oruzgan province in Afghanistan.

Leave granted.

Senator Faulkner—I thank the Senate for its courtesy to enable me to make this statement. Yesterday evening, 22 February, the Chief of the Defence Force informed me that he had received reports of an incident in Oruzgan province that had tragically resulted in a large number of civilian casualties. According to a statement issued by ISAF commander General McChrystal, on Sunday, 21 February, an air strike had been conducted against a convoy of vehicles suspected of carrying Taliban insurgents. According to the COMISAF statement, when ISAF and Afghan ground forces arrived at the scene they found four women and one child amongst the casualties from the strike. A number of the injured were taken to medical facilities in Tarin Kowt. While the number of people injured or killed is not yet reliably known, it appears to be a very significant number—27, according to ISAF estimates.

CDF has informed me that current reporting indicates no Australian Defence Force personnel serving in Afghanistan were involved in requesting or carrying out the air strike. However, I can confirm that ADF medical personnel did provide specialist medical support on board the aeromedical evacuation helicopters which provided immediate medical assistance both at the incident scene and at the military hospital in Tarin Kowt.

This incident will be the subject of an ISAF investigation in partnership with the Afghan authorities. I can assure the Senate that I will take a very close interest in the investigation. At this stage I am not in a position to provide further information about the facts of this matter, and it would not be appropriate for me to do so with the investigation pending.

I can assure the Senate that the Australian Defence Force deploys with rules of engagement designed to ensure they minimise loss of life, especially civilian casualties. As would be expected, these rules of engagement comply completely with Australia’s domestic and international legal obligations. The ADF also takes all appropriate steps to ensure its operations do not put the lives of civilians or noncombatants in jeopardy.

The loss of innocent lives in incidents such as these is a tragedy. It is particularly distressing that this has occurred at a time when coalition forces are putting so much effort into Operation Moshtarak in neighbouring Helmand province. These efforts are aimed at protecting the Afghan population, reversing the Taliban’s momentum and creating the space to develop Afghan security and governance capacity. A key objective of Australian and international forces is to create a secure environment in which Afghan and foreign civilians alike can go about their daily life. I have to say that this objective is undermined by tragic events such as this.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my, the government’s and I know all senators’ sincere condolences to the families of those civilians killed in this tragic event, as well as wishing a speedy recovery to those that have been injured.
Senator BOB BROWN (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (12.35 pm)—by leave—I thank Senator Faulkner for so quickly acquainting the Senate with the tragic circumstances that have again unfolded with a heavy loss of civilian life in a bombing raid in Afghanistan. The whole world will shudder at the news that this was not Taliban, it was civilians in a convoy, and the death toll does include four women and a child. The question has to immediately arise: how could this happen? It is not as if it is new. In the operation in neighbouring Helmand province there have been two bombing raids that have led a large loss of civilian life in the last fortnight, and that comes after similar losses of civilian life going into the many thousands and rapidly growing. Last year, after what is now almost a decade of operations, the loss of civilian life in Afghanistan was the highest by a long shot, by many thousands, in this whole conflict—and it is rapidly mounting. The Senate will know that I have had a great deal of criticism of the Karzai government, but the Afghan government has criticised and condemned, again, this destruction of the lives of innocent civilians.

The question is: how is it that the ISAF, which are led by the United States, can repeatedly make such horrendous mistakes causing such a loss of civilian life in an age of such technological wizardry? The answer surely is that the human factor is missing. The answer surely is that the relationship between the Afghani people and the ISAF is not satisfactory. It is a long way short of that and the hand on the trigger is far too easy in bombing raids which lead to the loss of civilian life. On this occasion, Senator Faulkner has explained it was a convoy. How on earth could information that said ‘this is Taliban, bomb them’ not be checked and not be corroborated before the disastrous consequences that we see again unfold?

I reiterate that the Greens believe the Australian defence forces should be withdrawn from Afghanistan and our effort should concentrate on civil assistance to that nation because of the intractable nature of the war that is going on in Afghanistan at the moment. We are seeing a surge in the number of troops coming, under President Obama, into the fray and to the big operation in the neighbouring Helmand province.

We are also seeing the collapse of the Dutch government over the very question of how rapidly the Dutch troops, who are in a very close relationship with the Australian troops, will be withdrawn. The question is not whether they will be withdrawn but how rapidly they should be withdrawn. The death toll of the troops and the shambles in Afghanistan have caused upheaval and massive public debate in Holland.

Because both the big political parties have determined there will not be a full-ranging parliamentary debate on this issue—that vote was taken just of fortnight ago—we do not have a similar debate in this parliament and we are unlikely to get it. But it behoves us to do so. This is a huge issue not just of international importance but of enormous significance to our Australian defence forces and to our relationship with the region.

There is no doubt that the Afghani people are going through enormous suffering and have been for many decades. Ultimately, it is up to them to determine their own future and their own affairs. This disaster that came across this group of civilians in convoy on Sunday is another very sorry chapter in mismanagement of the occupation of Afghanistan by the ISAF.

I have no doubt that General McChrystal wants to see success in the suppression of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of American troops from this theatre of death and destruction. But the management of the
use of lethal force in an age of massive technology has to be much better than we have seen, repeatedly now, through the killing of innocent civilians in Afghanistan, which not only leaves the world horrified but totally undermines the safety, security and well-being of our own troops in that country. The two things cannot be divorced.

I would be interested to hear from Senator Faulkner or from this government what representations are being made to General McChrystal or President Obama and his administration to have the death of innocent civilians in Afghanistan much reduced if not stopped. The repeated failure to stop these bombing raids, which kill innocent Afghans and therefore increase the insecurity of our own defence forces, must be addressed. There seems to be a failure, a blind spot and an inability of the US administration, the ISAF generally and indeed our own government to tackle the root cause of this very destructive and, one would think, avoidable repeated killing of civilians in Afghanistan in these circumstances.

Senator BOSWELL (Queensland) (12.42 pm)—by leave—I never intended to get into this debate. I do not understand it all that well. I thank Senator Faulkner. He always, at the first opportunity, comes and briefs the parliament on this. I think we owe him thanks for doing that.

But I listened to Senator Bob Brown and I think there has to be some response to this. Senator Bob Brown is attacking the USA administration for incompetence. It is nothing unusual for the Greens to do that. They continually do that and they continually get the ultra-left of the Australian constituency. That is their target and that is what they aim at. But then, Senator Brown, you go on and say we should leave Afghanistan to decide its own future. I might remind you, Senator Brown, five, or six or seven years ago that is exactly what happened. We heard unbelievable horror stories coming through where women were being hanged for not wearing the appropriate dress. It was horrific. People had to wear appropriate clothing—or whatever the Taliban considered appropriate—to go into the street.

Is that what you want to return to? Because that is what you have told the Senate you want. You continually attack the Americans, who stand out there and carry the great weight for the world to stop the Taliban encroaching on neighbouring countries. We owe them a vote of thanks for being prepared to stand up and be counted.

I am surprised that you would say that, Senator Brown. War is cruel and it is bloody, and there are always going to be casualties. We all send our sympathy to the families of the people killed in this tragedy; war is tragic. But to take the next step and say we should withdraw our troops and let the Taliban take over Afghanistan, take over Bangladesh, move through and take over all those Muslim countries, is just unbelievable, and it will not be accepted by the 90 per cent of people that support the Labor Party or the coalition. Yes, Senator Brown, you will win the vote of your leftie 10 per cent; you have got their vote. You do not have to do this—you have got their vote. But you should not go and condemn America. The people who called the strike will be going through hell. They will be examining their consciences and whether they could have done better. You cannot just go and put a blanket cover over it, condemning the Americans for standing up for what the rest of the world believes in, which is that people do have freedom that they never had under the Taliban, and advocate that we go back to that terrible regime that was just horrific. I just cannot find any words that would encourage people to go back to that and I think that, if you are honest with yourself, Senator Brown, you would not
want that to happen. Women were forced into football arenas and hung because they were not dressed appropriately or they went out without a male escort or family. Is that what you really want? Is that what the Greens are asking the Senate to endorse? I do not think 85 to 90 per cent of Australians would want that. So I have to respond that I think Senator Bob Brown has gone right over the top and I do not think his remarks have the support of the Australian public.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (12.46 pm)—by leave—The opposition’s spokesman on defence matters, Senator David Johnston, will want to make a comment on this. He is currently being briefed, with Senator Faulkner’s assistance, by the Department of Defence on this particular issue. That is why he is not here and that is why the coalition is not giving a formal response to Senator Faulkner’s comments now.

Senator Faulkner—We can facilitate that when he is available.

Senator IAN MACDONALD—But Senator Johnston will no doubt want to seek leave later on to do this, and Senator Faulkner has indicated privately and now publicly that the government will facilitate that when Senator Johnston is available.

FAIRER PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE INCENTIVES (MEDICARE LEVY SURCHARGE) BILL 2009 [No. 2]
FAIRER PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE INCENTIVES (MEDICARE LEVY SURCHARGE—FRINGE BENEFITS) BILL 2009 [No. 2]

Second Reading
Debate resumed from 22 February, on motion by Senator Ludwig:

That these bills be now read a second time.

upon which Senator Siewert moved by way of amendment:

At the end of the motion, add: and the Senate calls on the Government to invest the full amount raised by the Medicare Levy Surcharge (approximately $145 million over 4 years) into mental health programs:

(a) Communities of Youth, Mental Health ($30m per annum) proposed by National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission;
(b) Headspace (30 new services at $1m per annum or $30m);
(c) Early psychosis prevention and intervention services ($26 million per annum); and
(d) Lifeline suicide hospital discharge and treatment plan ($15.39 million as a total package over 3 years) and a new Lifeline freecall number ($17.5 million per annum.).

Senator McGAURAN (Victoria) (12.48 pm)—I am in continuation, Madam Acting Deputy President Crossin, having started my address last night amid the furore of Senator Carr and others who managed to wander in very late at night, very suspiciously after dinner, shouting me down. But I rise again in this early afternoon in this Senate to put the case—

Senator Forshaw—We are here to listen.

Senator McGAURAN—of the Labor Party—you be careful, Senator Forshaw, with your interjections—

Senator Forshaw—I’m here to listen. I’m here to listen to you.

Senator McGAURAN—You have got enough to do: you just keep your head down and watch your preselection. There is a point to be made. Isn’t this funny? This is the very point I was being shouted down on last night by Senator Carr, that big voiced leftie. Now I am getting shouted down and interjected on yet again by the Labor Party backbench. The point I was trying to make was: where is the Labor Party backbench on the speakers list? There is not one of them. Not one of them is
on the speakers list. Senator Forshaw, yet again, has failed. He never got up on the ETS and he is not getting up on this issue.

We are told this debate about private health insurance is a possible election trigger, coming through the Senate for the second time—that this will be raised by the Rudd Labor government as an election issue. But not one of them is passionate enough to get up on their feet and debate this coming election issue. It is bit different on this side. We have packed the speakers list. That is the very point. That is the point I was making: not one of them has the courage or the wit or the rebellion in them—if that be the case, being so suppressed by the Prime Minister’s office—to stand up and speak on this issue that you say you are going to carry to the next election, that you say is possibly going to be a double dissolution trigger.

I am not surprised, because this is probably the most cowed and compliant backbench ever in this parliament. The Victorian senators are the worst. They would have to be the worst lot of Victorian Labor senators ever to come through here. I have never heard them get up and speak—not very often anyway, and certainly not on issues of gravity. I am not surprised, because we have the most compliant cabinet ever elected to government. They are willing to sit and have cabinet meetings on Thursday nights, after long sessions of parliament, when everyone is tired and itching to get home. The Prime Minister tells them, ‘We’re having cabinet meetings every Thursday night now.’ They are tired, they are not listening and they are dominated by the Prime Minister. It is a compliant cabinet.

This is a weak and pathetic government, and we are seeing that in the legislative program. It is coming through—don’t think it is not—the legislative program. You are ending up in a shambles and in disarray. You have a whole list of ministers that are now starting to fail after two years in the job. There is of course Mr Garrett. Could one minister be more incompetent? My memory goes back to Ros Kelly. I can tell you Mr Garrett has surpassed that piece of political folklore. Mr Garrett and his pink batts will surpass Ros Kelly and her whiteboard, now part of political folklore. But we are not short of them here in the Senate. We have Senator Conroy, the minister for good times, a good time Charlie—always has been a good time Charlie. Well, his good time Charlie days are about to end. And, of course, there is Senator Arbib. Now there was a nervous Nellie at question time yesterday! What a nervous Nellie Senator Arbib was, because he knows only too well he is caught up in the whole incompetence of it all. But there is more to the abandonment of the legislative program of the other side. And here comes their whip, who does all the spruiking for—

Senator O’Brien—Madam Acting Deputy President, I rise on a point of order. It is pretty clear that this is a filibuster, but could you draw Senator McGauran’s attention to the question before the chair. He is now talking about completely unrelated issues. There is no relationship to the bills whatsoever. If he is going to use the time of the chamber in the way that he is and filibuster on these bills, at least let him talk about them.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Crossin)—Senator McGauran, I draw your attention to the bills that are before us for debate.

Senator McGauran—I want to assure you, Madam Acting Deputy President, I have much research on these bills. I can show you my notes, profuse as they are. They all come back to the Senate economics inquiry on this issue. I am more than happy to enlighten the Senate of its findings. Senator Mathias Cormann has done a lot of work on this issue.
The previous speakers have laid down the foundation argument that I will speak to and enhance.

Rest assured that I know all about the incompetence of Minister Roxon, who has flown under the radar. It is not just this issue; a whole array of issues in her portfolio ought to be brought out. Do not worry, I have done my research on the halving the rebate for cataract surgery, the disability care beds—which *Four Corners* did a show on; when it reaches *Four Corners* you know there are problems—her failure to meet her ambitious promise before the election on the number of nursing places, the $120 million she spent on the swine flu vaccine that is just sitting in storehouses—less than one-third has been used; what a waste of money—and the superclinics. We have perhaps two superclinics out of however many they promised. And it goes on. There was the attempt to cut $100 million from cancer treatment, which thanks to this side and public opinion did not get up.

I was in Ballarat recently for the community cabinet—‘community cabinet’?; it was Mr Rudd’s sideshow. That was all it was. You should have seen the glum faces on all of the ministers who turned up. What a joke. In this portfolio is the midwives issue, denying women the choice to have home births. That was what dominated the community cabinet. I got a guernsey; I was there in the front row. I could not believe it. It was a sight to see the one ego on display. He really does have a big ego. You have to see it to believe it, and you are all compliant to it. It is a joke. When are you going to stand up and speak on an issue?

This Prime Minister is so frightened of the midwives issue he is not willing to meet the public outside of a controlled situation. When he had to unveil the Kevin Rudd bust in Ballarat—as many of you know, in the gardens there there are busts of every Prime Minister—he did not turn up. He left the council, the Mayor and everyone else standing there waiting for him to appear at 11 am. He just did not turn up. He did not even ring ahead to say he was not going to turn up. Can you imagine the embarrassment and the frustration? Do you know why? Because there were midwives protesting there waiting for him and wanting to speak to him. Of course, they have dubbed it as ‘cowardly’. That is the portfolio I want to speak on.

*Senator Ian Macdonald*—Prime Minister Blah Blah.

*Senator McGauran*—Mr Blah Blah—that is his new nickname.

**The Acting Deputy President**—Senator McGauran, it is unparliamentary to refer to members of this parliament in such a way. I ask you to withdraw that.

*Senator McGauran*—I withdraw—and rightly so in the Senate we should not be using such terminology, but I do note that that is a term allowed in the House of Representatives. I know we are a little loftier than the House of Representatives and a little less cut and thrust, but I have noticed that term being used frequently in the House of Representatives. They have different standing orders, I accept that.

Talking about blah blah, let us look at the greatest blah blah of them all. I heard Senator Abetz saying that this is a comment that the Prime Minister used over 20 times in the lead-up to the election and has used since: one of the great moral issues of our time is, of course, climate change. We are whipping up the whole gravity of the issue. He has lived off the gravity of the issue in the last 12 months. Where is that great moral issue? Where are those bills we are meant to be discussing in the first week of parliament? We have been lectured by—

*Senator O’Brien*—Again, on a point of order, Madam Acting Deputy President
Crossin, I make the point that whilst Senator McGauran may wish to filibuster, he needs to be in order. I ask you to draw him back to the subject.

Senator Ferguson—In this chamber historically we have allowed very wide-ranging speeches at the second reading stage. Senator McGauran throughout all of his speech—and I have been here for all of it—while he has sometimes referred to other matters he has always referred back to the bills. So I think that, as in the practice of the past, we do allow wide-ranging debates and he should be allowed to continue.

Senator O’Brien—I acknowledge Senator Ferguson’s contribution that we have allowed members to range widely in these debates. But in the time that I have been listening outside the chamber on my monitor and inside the chamber I have hardly heard this senator refer to the bills in question, which is why I have taken the points of order. So I simply suggest that if he has the material that he has claimed to have—and he has claimed to have a sheaf of material on the bills—that he actually refers to it.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Senator McGauran, both senators have made a good point I think. I do want to remind you that we are not debating climate change; we are actually debating bills relating to private health insurance, and I draw your attention to that.

Senator McGauran—We will soon be referring to it. But it is essential to also discuss the priorities of these bills and the priorities of this government—

Senator Fifield—In context.

Senator McGauran—In context, as my good colleague Senator Fifield says: why this Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives (Medicare Levy Surcharge) Bill is where it is on a Monday and a Tuesday. Debating time in the Senate is—

Senator Jacinta Collins—A filibuster.

Senator McGauran—It is not a filibuster—far from it. You are the ones running scared. I do welcome the Victorian senator, Senator Collins, who has come in here not to debate the issue but to interject. Where is Senator Cameron? We have Senator Cameron, Senator Forshaw, Senator Collins, some of the best interjectors in the parliament, and none of them will get up and actually debate. None of them will take their 20 minutes.

The point is that climate change ought to be debated now—and that is my point—not these particular bills. They have already been rejected by the Senate and we will reject them again—rest assured. These bills are going nowhere. You are going around in circles. You are a government in disarray. We have been lectured by the Prime Minister and Penny Wong on the great moral issue about rising sea levels, melting glaciers, extinct polar bears, the drying up of the Murray River, extreme weather patterns, world temperatures, the Antarctic melting—all of that, have I missed anything? Yes, the Great Barrier Reef and the Amazon of course. They are all in there—

Honourable senators interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Order, Senator McGauran!

Senator McGauran—I thought the whip was about to jump up again. It is all backed up by the great and honourable United Nations committee. This has been the issue of the hour, of the year. It is terrifying stuff. If any of that were true, I would be terrified. I would be terrified to think that the sea levels were going to swamp the eastern coast.

But it has gone off the agenda and these bills have been put in its place. There is a reason for that. They have sniffed the political wind and they have seen the shift. It was
only ever a political exercise to begin with and
the truth has won out. As I say, we quite
welcome debating this issue about health—

Senator Forshaw—I rise on a point of
order, Madam Acting Deputy President. I
have been listening to Senator McGauran
now since he commenced today—and I did
listen to his remarks last night in my room. I
am just concerned that Senator McGauran is
actually debating the bill that is listed as No.
2 on the Notice Paper, that is, the Carbon
Pollution Reduction Scheme Bill and all of
the other bills. I am rather concerned that he
is debating the bill that is next on the list
rather than the bills that are on the list. I was
wondering whether you could draw his atten-
tion—

Senator Fifield—The bills that you do
not want to debate!

Senator Forshaw—The bills are on the
red, and I am just very concerned that Sena-
tor McGauran has wasted nearly all of his
time with the speech that he would have
made for the next bill.

Senator McGauran—I welcome Sena-
tor Forshaw’s interjection. I know that he is
drowning in New South Wales politics at the
time, so any sort of—

Senator Forshaw—What?

Senator McGauran—Well, it is either
you or Senator Hutchins. You are not going
to take the knife to Senator Hutchins—

Senator Forshaw interjecting—

Senator McGauran—the point is that
any stance he takes—now that got you! Why
don’t you get up and prove to your preselec-
tors that you can debate the issues of the par-
liament. You are just not a good old interjec-
tor or capable of good old points of order.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The Acting Deputy President—Order, Senator McGauran! Let me draw your attention to the bills and the debate that is
before us. You have got less than four min-
utes left.

Senator Ferguson—I rise on a point of
order, Madam Acting Deputy President. I
heard Senator Forshaw call Senator McGau-
rain a hypocrite, and I thought you would
have as well. It does not require a point of
order to make him withdraw it, and I sug-
gested he should be made to withdraw.

Senator Forshaw—Senator Ferguson is
correct. I did use unparliamentary language.
I was provoked by the former senator for the
DLP or National Party or whatever he is to-
day, but I happily withdraw the reference
that I made.

The Acting Deputy President—Thank you, Senator Forshaw. No, I did not
hear that, Senator Ferguson, probably be-
cause there is too much screaming and yell-
ing in the chamber. Senator McGauran, we
will call you to finish your contribution.

Senator McGauran—He was made to
withdraw. It made me sound like Billy
Hughes. These bills, as I said, have been re-
jected by the Senate and by Senate commit-
tees—and they have been before every
committee system—but most of all they have
been rejected in the public arena. These bills
have been pretty much universally rejected,
this suite of bills with their aim of reducing
the number of participants in private health.
That is the intent; that is the aim; it is a
budget saving. The government tell us that it
is a budget saving of $300 million. They
want to save $300 million from health but
they do not mind wasting billions on pink
batts. But that is the intent and the aim, and
naturally only the Labor Party, and card-
carrying Labor Party doctors perhaps, sup-
port these bills.

This is just plain bad public policy and we
reject it on those grounds. It is estimated by
the government alone that about 550,000
people will drop out of private health. Access
Economics gives a truer picture, saying it is more likely that 700,000 to one million people will drop out of private health. And we know that, rule of thumb, every one per cent drop in public health forces the states to spend an extra $100 million on public hospitals. So do the figures yourselves. Access Economics says that 700,000 people will drop out—and that is the most conservative of figures—and with about 10 million people taking out private health you can see that there is as much as $700 million that will now be shifted onto the states’ hospital systems.

Our stance against this is not ideological, unlike the Labor Party’s—and you laugh!

Senator O’Brien—Yes, we do. We laugh!

Senator McGauran—When I started speaking on this last night, guess who waltzed in—the most ideological of them all, Senator Carr! Whatever influence he has in cabinet, he has got his fingerprints all over this. But we are not ideological—far from it. We do it on the grounds of good management policy and good health policy.

We have proved it in government. When we came into government the private health system was collapsing, making the Medicare system unsustainable. That was a fact. Even when you left government you accepted that. Some of your ministers, namely, Senator Richardson, even accepted that, and we had to pick up that system.

We had to tweak it in the first term. We introduced the surcharge in the first term. In the second term we introduced the 30 per cent rebate, and in the next term we introduced the third prong of our policy, the life cover. It requires a balance, and it was not until we put the three prongs in place that we got it right. It took several terms of government. And then you saw a surge in uptake of private health and, of course, the obvious rational effect—it is all very rational; it is not ideological: you take the burden off public hospitals so that those who need it—the needy people, those that deserve access to hospitals and are in urgent need, those underprivileged—will have access. That is why we seek a balance between private and public health. Madam Acting Deputy President, I am about to hand over to the former president who is well across this issue and, like him and all the previous speakers, I reject this legislation.

Senator Ferguson (South Australia) (1.07 pm)—It gives me a great deal of pleasure to follow my friend and colleague Senator McGauran, who made so many pertinent points during his speech, about not only this legislation but also a few extraneous matters, which I am sure have kept us both entertained and enlightened, I might say. It reminded me of one of the most important things my father said to me when I was a young lad. He said, ‘Son, if you never tell a lie you won’t need a good memory.’ I wonder whether, when we go back over some of the statements made by the Labor ministers since their change of position in relation to private health insurance rebates, perhaps their parents would have done well to have given them the same advice.

The reason I want to speak on the Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives (Medicare Levy Surcharge) Bill 2009 [No. 2] and the Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives (Medicare Levy Surcharge—Fringe Benefits) Bill 2009 [No. 2]—and I do not get the chance very often to speak on bills—is that these are important bills because all Australians will be affected. It does not matter what the government says about the numbers who are going to be affected by the taking away of the rebate, the taking away of that rebate will eventually affect all Australians, not just the 11.3 million Australians with private health insurance. I rise to speak on this issue particularly because there are over
900,000 South Australians who are covered by private health insurance.

The Labor Party and Labor government ministers have been willing to say anything to support this tax increase—because that is what it is. If you take away the rebate it is equivalent to putting another tax on those people who are already contributing in a large way to private health insurance. It has always been said that every dollar that is given back in rebates to those who have private health insurance injects two dollars more through their premiums into the health system. That is something that this government just does not seem to understand. Labor has said that it needs this tax because of the global financial crisis. But I remember that it started its attack on private health insurance—in its first budget, well prior to the global financial crisis, so named, coming into existence. The Prime Minister says the money is needed for health reform. That is his reason for putting this additional burden on taxpayers. Minister Nicola Roxon says the money from this new tax will be used to fund e-health. So we have another view from the health minister as to why this new impost on people who have private health insurance is being put in place. Then a little later she said that the money from this new tax will be used for new medicines and improved technology. Then the Treasurer really capped it off recently when he spelt out in the budget that this new tax was to pay for the increase in the age pension. Who do you believe in the Labor Party? Which minister has got it right, or has anybody got a right?

Senator Cormann—No-one!

Senator FERGUSON—I put it to you that, as my colleague Senator Cormann interjects, none of them have got it right. This is a tax of envy. It is another tax on those whom they think can afford it. But what they really do is punish those who cannot afford to be in private health insurance. What disturbs me more than anything is the fact that Labor, prior to the last election, repeatedly promised not to alter health insurance rebates. This reintroduced legislation once again breaks that promise that they made to the Australian people. Who are we to believe? When they come to another election and they start making promises to the Australian people, do we take them on face value or do we question them very suspiciously on the record of broken promises that they now have after a little over two years in government?

On 26 September 2007, Ms Nicola Roxon said:

On many occasions for many months, Federal Labor has made it crystal clear that we are committed to retaining all of the existing Private Health Insurance rebates, including the 30 per cent general rebate and the 35 and 40 per cent rebates for older Australians.

She then said:

The Liberals continue to try to scare people into thinking Labor will take away the rebates. This is absolutely untrue.

The Liberals were not continually trying to scare people into thinking Labor would take away the rebate; they knew on past form that Labor would say one thing, get elected and do another. I think that was Peter Garrett’s mantra. And my good friend Senator McGauran had a little to say about Minister Garrett in his speech. I do not want to go on at length or I will have the whip coming in to suggest that I am not speaking to the bills, as he did to Senator McGauran. But, in fact, Mr Garrett said, ‘We will say one thing before the election but when we get elected we will do what we like.’ The Prime Minister in a letter to AHIA on 20 November prior to the election that same year 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 re-
taining the existing private health insurance rebates, including the 30 per cent general rebate and the 35 and 40 per cent rebates for older Australians.

On 25 February 2008, the Prime Minister said:

The private health insurance rebate remains unchanged and will remain unchanged.

I am suggesting that perhaps his father should have said what my father said to me. I am not accusing the minister of lying or the Prime Minister of lying, but all I am saying is that if you do not tell a lie you will not need a good memory. Can you believe the Prime Minister? Can you believe anything he says? This is just one of the promises that he has gone back on. He said:

The private health insurance rebate remains unchanged and will remain unchanged.

It is no wonder that not one Labor Party senator will come in here and defend this decision—not one. You would have thought that at least some of the senators would have come in and given some reasons as to why there has been this change. But not one of them can defend this change in policy—the Prime Minister made a categorical statement and has now reversed it. In 2009, just last year, the Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, said in the *Age* that the government is ‘firmly committed’ to retaining the existing private health insurance rebates.

Over a period of almost two years—certainly 18 months—we had all of these statements saying that the private health insurance rebate would not be changed, guaranteeing it. The strange thing is that Minister Roxon’s comment in the *Age* was made on the very same day that the Prime Minister’s department was providing advice to the government about the specific proposal to slash private health rebates in the budget. You had Minister Roxon saying, ‘We are firmly committed to retaining the existing rebates’ on the very same day that the government was planning to slash them. These changes, of course, are going to further increase the cost of health care and put extra pressure on already overstretched public hospitals.

We even got to the stage where the Treasury in recent times estimated that just 25,000 people would drop their insurance. What a joke! On 16 October 2008 the minister for health, Ms Roxon, said that the projection from Treasury of the number of people who would drop out of private health insurance was just under half a million. Some projections have been even higher. If we get to the stage when you have got those numbers of people dropping out of private health, just think of the impact that is going to have on those who retain their private health and of the impact on public hospitals. Yet here we have a government which tries to maintain that, in giving $1 back to private health insurers for people who insure with private health—who then put $2 back into the system for every $1 that is rebated—that is somehow not going to have an impact on the health system, defies belief.

After the minister for health made this statement, the government was forced to admit that 1.7 million people with insurance would be directly affected, either dropping their insurance completely, or lowering their cover or paying higher taxes. The Australian Health Insurance Association estimated one million Australians would drop their health insurance.

I do not know of a more important matter that has come before this Senate in recent times, which is why I chose to speak directly on these bills. We have had climate change and we have had a lot of other things. The problem with this Prime Minister is that everything is a No. 1 priority. I think he has had about 12 No. 1 priorities in the last 12 months and now we have got to the stage
when I do not know whether they have any No. 1 priorities. What should be one of their priorities is maintaining this existing private health insurance rebate because it is the only way we can keep our health system even moderately in a healthy shape. We all know that there are lots of other problems that exist within the health department. By lowering this rebate all they are going to do is add to those problems.

Increased premiums, which is what is likely to happen with people dropping out of insurance, will drive many of the most vulnerable Australians into the already overstretched public system. I have been around this place for a reasonable length of time and I remember that under the previous Labor government private health insurance coverage plunged to 34 per cent of the population. I remember distinctly the numbers that were dropping out of private health insurance coverage and the stress that that placed on our health and hospital system had to be seen to be believed. Somebody had to do something about it.

In the three stages that Senator McGauran spoke about earlier, the coalition managed by offering the incentives to get private health coverage up to 44 per cent; not as high as we would like to have it. Introducing the open-ended private health insurance rebate enabled more people to be encouraged into the system. Members of health funds contributed $10.6 billion to the Australian healthcare system in 2008, an increase of 10 per cent on the previous year. How much do you think this would decrease if we allowed this bill to pass? How much do you think that would impact on the healthcare system if we were to allow this bill to go through? It is with that in mind that, thankfully, with the support of the Independents, we will be able to knock this legislation on the head for the second time so that those involved with private health insurance will be able to have some confidence that they can maintain their cover and still receive their rebate in the future.

We have always believed as a matter of principle as a coalition in the right of all Australians to take charge of their own health care needs and plan for the future. We have always worked hard to deliver the incentives that will promote the uptake of private health insurance and take the pressure off Medicare. The efficiency of the private health system is absolutely paramount in relieving pressure on the very stressed public system.

Private health insurance in Australia is an issue that has been under debate for as long as I can remember. When I first joined Mutual Community, I think it was, in 1961—the year I left school—we had a very, very strong and healthy private insurance system. We have seen under Labor governments that coverage drop to 34 per cent. We have seen under coalition governments incentives provided to make sure that it is now up to 44 per cent. The incentives required are something that we should never allow to be taken away.

This is very important legislation. I urge my colleagues and others to vote against this legislation because I think it is in the interests of all Australians, but particularly those who want to maintain a sound healthcare system in Australia, that we do not take away incentives for ordinary Australians.

Senator RYAN (Victoria) (1.22 pm)—It is my privilege this afternoon to follow Senator Ferguson’s contribution. In Senator Forshaw’s interjection earlier he tried to defend the government’s view that somehow placing these bills at the top of the legislative agenda for this week did not reflect on the empty words of the Prime Minister about the greatest moral challenge of our time. His only defence was that Labor’s Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme was No. 2. Call this a plain reading of the English language, but I would assume that the greatest moral chal-
lenge of our time would at least rank No. 1 on the list of legislation in a sitting week.

Moving away from that, it is a pity that this debate is being conducted by one side of the chamber. It is a pity that there is no-one from the government standing up to argue their case and to defend their decision. I can only assume that it is out of a sense of shame because this is a clear breach of an election promise. My colleagues have outlined that in detail. There is no ambiguity in this. The Labor Party, the Prime Minister, who was then opposition leader, and then shadow minister Roxon explicitly promised not to take away the private health insurance rebate. They explicitly promised to keep it. Now, for the second time in under 12 months, they bring legislation forward in this place to do the very opposite of that. I will not go through all the quotes again, but there are two in particular that I want to mention. On 26 September 2007, in a media release, then shadow minister Roxon said:

On many occasions for many months, Federal Labor has made it crystal clear that we are committed to retaining all of the existing Private Health Insurance rebates, including the 30 per cent general rebate and the 35 and 40 per cent rebates for older Australians.

The Liberals continue to try to scare people into thinking Labor will take away the rebates. This is absolutely untrue.

I do not see an asterisk on that press release; I do not see a footnote that says, ‘Except if you earn over a certain amount.’ It says ‘all of the existing private health insurance rebates’. There is no ambiguity there. Similarly, only days before the 2007 election, in a letter to the Australian Health Insurance Association, the then Leader of the Opposition 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 cent rebates for older Australians.

Again, there is no ambiguity, no footnote and no qualification. Nowhere does it say, ‘Except if you earn over this much.’ It says ‘the existing private health insurance rebates’. This bill, the Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives (Medicare Levy Surcharge) Bill 2009 [No. 2], does the opposite. It is to the shame of Labor members opposite that they are not willing to come here and own up to that fact.

The truth is that we on this side knew that those words could not be trusted. We knew that the Leader of the Labor Party and their spokeswoman on health could not be trusted because Labor has always wanted to do in private health insurance. The dream of the Labor Party is to have a National Health Service type of system. The dream of the Labor Party is to remove the very choice that allows middle Australia to take care of their own health.

It is the same with independent schools. I guarantee that if the country is unfortunate enough to see the Labor government re-elected, the next schools agreement will do exactly the same thing. They will not stand by their word. This is an example of how they cannot be trusted at all. The government now claim that this legislation is necessary because of the global financial crisis. That is simply fiction, written by world-class fiction writers on the other side. Their fiction is world-class, if not the quality of their writing. Their first attacks on private health insurance began when we were talking about an inflation genie. Who hears about the inflation genie these days? No-one, because it is always an excuse. As Senator Ferguson outlined earlier, there is always a different excuse from a different minister. It is simply another broken promise in a litany of broken promises.
We could talk about the promise to take Iran through the international judicial process. We could talk about the promises to deal with Japan over whaling, the promises about the GP superclinics and the promises about ending the double drop-off. The list goes on. But very few issues are as explicit as this. What we know lurks under the surface of every Labor member and senator is a wish to do away with the universality of the support for private health insurance. That is what Labor wants to do and what this legislation does. Labor constantly says that Medicare cannot be means tested, that Medicare should be universal. But the one thing that cannot be universal is the ability for people to support their own health care. We have heard from my colleagues that $1 in the rebate buys $2 of extra spending. But Labor does not want that. It claims that spending should be determined in the health system on the basis of need, but—and this is the key difference—it does not want Australians to make that determination themselves. It wants the government, a bureaucrat or someone other than the person concerned to determine what health care that person needs and when they need it.

If its management of the public hospital systems in many of our states over the last 10 years is any indication, that should scare the hell out of many Australians. The other side of this chamber cannot be trusted. In my own home state of Victoria, over roughly a decade we have gained a million people but there are fewer hospital beds. How does that equation make it easier for people to access the health system? It does not. No number of press releases advertising how much money you have spent matter when it is harder to get in the door, when there are fewer beds, despite a million more people. The government is trying to make private health insurance harder to have and to appropriate for itself the choice about what health care Australians need and when they get it.

We know that more than half of surgical procedures these days are performed in the private health system. That is not something which this side is concerned about. That is a sign of a strong, mixed healthcare system. The private system allows people who can to prioritise and take care of themselves but also strengthens the public healthcare system by taking pressure off. If you did not have this support for private health insurance, the waiting lists would be longer. The waits on trolleys would be longer and the wait for critical care would be longer. But this government simply does not care. It is continuing its ideological war against choice, against the private health insurance industry and the private health sector. That war goes back for decades, because this is a philosophical fault line.

We believe that Australians should be supported to take care of themselves and their health. We believe that, just as we have a universal national insurance system in Medicare, having universal access to a health insurance rebate allows those who are more fortunate to contribute more to the cost of their own care. And it is those who can contribute to the cost of their own care or choose to make that sacrifice—and they are not all higher socioeconomic groups—who take the pressure off the public health system, who make it easier for those in genuine need, who are without those means, to access our public health system.

We know that this legislation, if it becomes law, will lead to an increase in premiums not just for those who lose the rebate but for all who have private health insurance. All that will do is create a cycle where people increasingly drop out of private health insurance. The people who will pay are not the people the government allegedly targets in
this legislation. The people who will pay that price are those who will be pushed back in the queues in the public hospital system and it will be the other people who remain in private health insurance who seek to take pressure off the public health system and take care of their own health care.

The background to this rebate is important because the Labor Party talk about how they wish to take the rebate from allegedly high-income earners. The rebate was introduced at a 30 per cent level to prevent high-income earners having access to tax deductibility. As we know, if we have tax deductibility for private health insurance, the greater number of benefits go to those on higher incomes who are paying higher marginal tax. The rebate was introduced at a flat 30 per cent tax level and it already provides greater benefits, through the tax system, to those on lower incomes. It is another fiction of the Labor Party that this is somehow removing a benefit from wealthier Australians. The rebate was designed this way specifically to ensure that lower-income and middle-income Australians had access to effective, tax system based support, to underpin their choice of private health insurance.

I am sure we will hear from the Labor Party before the next election, just as we heard before the last election, that they will not do any more with the rebate—just as they have promised to do something about whaling, just as they will probably re-promise to do something about GP superclinics, the double drop-off and Iran. But this explicit promise, which has been broken by the Labor Party, ensures that their word can never be trusted. I urge Australians to listen to what Labor says now, to compare it with their actions in their first few years in government, as well as with what they said before the 2007 election. Just as they will undertake an attack on private health insurance—and this is only the first step, the first chink, in the armour of the private health insurance rebate which supports choice for millions of Australians—they will do it to independent schools and they will try to claim that it is to save money to put elsewhere. We know that the money being saved here will not be put into reform of the health system; it will merely go to plug the gaping deficits which this government has opened up.

There is no shortage of money with the Labor Party because it has the platinum credit card funded by Australian taxpayers. The government has prioritised things that rank so far down the list of the priorities of Australians and their families compared to health that it is completely unjustifiable that you would try to say that this is due to the global financial crisis.

This is merely the first step of Labor’s attack on private health insurance. It represents a breach of an explicit promise stated and restated by the now Prime Minister and the now Minister for Health and Ageing. Just as it is Labor’s first attack, and we will repel it from this side of the chamber, we will continue to do so in coming years because private health insurance and access to choice for Australians is a value and a principle in which we profoundly believe.

Senator HUMPHRIES (Australian Capital Territory) (1.33 pm)—I rise to also draw attention to the hypocrisy of the Rudd Labor government in seeking to break the promise it made to the Australian people at the 2007 election that it would not interfere with the rebate applicable for private health insurance in Australia. I followed this issue very closely in the role I played at the time as Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, which overviews the Department of Health and Ageing, and also at the time of the 2007 election as a senator who was under considerable attack from a
number of parties, including the Australian Labor Party, on the basis that I represented a Senate which had ceased to be accountable to the Australian people and that I represented a government controlled Senate which was incapable of holding the government of the day to account. I am sure members of this place will recall the very strong campaign steered by the organisation called GetUp! in which the argument was put very strongly that people should take back control of their Senate, that the Senate belonged to the people of Australia. We even had the Labor Party, the Greens and the Democrats uniting in television ads to appeal to voters to deprive the Howard government of its majority in the Senate. The argument was that the Senate was not able to perform its duty as a body which would question and hold to account the government of the day if the government had the numbers to control it.

How things have change. Now, a bit over two years later, we have a new government and a Senate which is not controlled by the government and we have the Senate proposing, with its opposition to this legislation, to hold the government to account for the promises it made to the people of Australia at the 2007 election. The Australian Labor Party, which were so very keen two years ago to give the Senate the power to block governments which did things they said they would not do at elections, now have done a 180 degree turn and believe that the Senate ought to pass this legislation and ought to allow the government to break the promise they solemnly made to the Australian people at that election—that they would not interfere with the private health insurance rebate. I have to say that I do not think the Senate should do that.

The Senate has acknowledged that the balance in our health system between publicly funded health care and privately supported health care is an extremely important balance to be struck and that our system would become unsupportable and unsustainable in this country if it were unable to provide for people to afford to take out private health insurance and contribute through their own pockets to greater choice in the provision of health care and to the greater financial sustainability of the entire health system. That is such an obviously true statement; it is almost an axiomatic statement that it rather explains the comments by the then shadow minister for health in September 2007, when she solemnly intoned:

On many occasions for many months, Federal Labor has made it crystal clear that we are committed to retaining all of the existing Private Health Insurance rebates, including the 30 per cent general rebate and the 35 and 40 per cent rebates for older Australians.

She went on to attack the Liberal Party for daring to suggest that the government had other intentions. She said:

The Liberals continue to try to scare people into thinking Labor will take away the rebates. This is absolutely untrue.

It was not untrue; it was perfectly true. We drew attention, as Senator Ryan has pointed out in this debate, to the strong underlying hostility of the Australian Labor Party towards private health. We drew attention to the tendency of the Labor Party to want to undermine the mechanisms we had put in place to make private health insurance both more affordable and more sustainable. We predicted—as it turns out, perfectly accurately—that a Labor government would indeed attempt to wind back on our reforms in this area—reforms which had led to almost 45 per cent of all Australians having taken out private health insurance and thereby improving the capacity of our health system to deliver timely outcomes to Australians and taking pressure off our public hospital system at the same time.
I make no apologies for throwing this legislation back in the face of the Labor government and saying that it has absolutely no right to come to this place and expect the Senate to pass this legislation. It is a disgrace. It amounts to a betrayal of the people of Australia, who were told so many things about what this Labor government would do and who have been deceived on so many occasions in the process. The fact is that the balance in our health system is critical to maintaining an effective health system. It is at the heart of a health system which is, relatively speaking, the envy of many nations around the world. It is a balance in the system which preserves the capacity of people to make choices and to obtain care when they need it in general terms.

This legislation amounts to a tax on health insurance. It will make it harder for people on higher incomes to sustain their private health insurance. It is very likely in the medium- to long-term to lead to people giving up their private health insurance. In some ways, the only reason we have not seen a greater flight from private health insurance is that the public health system, over which so many Labor governments in this country preside, is for many people simply too scary to contemplate as their only safety net in the event that they become unwell. So we have the prospect in this debate of the legislation, if it is passed, undermining the capacity of Australians to afford private health insurance and placing a greater burden on the shoulders of our public hospitals around Australia because people will have given up private health insurance. If this legislation were to pass, there would certainly be an increase in premiums for all Australians who have private health insurance—and not many of those are on higher incomes.

We can see many unfortunate consequences of this legislation. We can see that the government has not thought through the implications of what it is doing here. We know this because the government has a policy on health which is all over the shop. The government was not going to take away the rebates, and now it is. The government was going to fix the public hospital system by 1 July 2009, and it has not. The government was going to hold a referendum to take control of the public hospital system if it had not been fixed by 1 July 2009, and we have no idea whether it intends to do that or not. I suspect that the government is, at this stage, completely at a loss as to what its policy should be.

The Senate is perfectly entitled to say to this government: ‘Go away and sort your policies out. Decide what you want to do. Decide how you’re going to deal with the crisis in Australian health and then come back with a plan to the Australian people and the Senate.’ In the absence of that plan, of that indication of how it is going to deal with this problem, health is a political plaything for this government, and the Senate is perfectly entitled to refuse to play that game. We are entitled to say that we will not engage in the process of passing legislation, the implications of which have simply not been thought through. The government has not explained how it will deal with the extra pressure which this legislation, if passed, would place on our public hospitals.

Every one of us in this place has heard stories of a hospital system in crisis, of longer waiting lists for elective surgery, of people fronting up to emergency departments and being unable to be treated, of people receiving absolutely shocking outcomes in the course of their accessing services in public hospitals. I acknowledge that that is not the universal experience and that many people get very good quality service from our public hospitals; but, regrettably, the number of times that the system fails because of pressure on it is very large, and that is unac-
ceptable. We in this place have a duty to try and mitigate that occurring. This government does not seem to care about that. It wants to put pressure back on the public hospital system, and there is no plan or strategy for dealing with that in this legislation or elsewhere.

We simply assume that the government will somehow be able to persuade state governments or perhaps pay state governments to lift their game with respect to the performance of the public hospital system in order to cope with the additional demand, which surely will be the outcome of this legislation. All I can say to them is that, if that is their tactic, ‘Good luck’, because, frankly, the public hospital system in this country is creaking and groaning from the pressure that it is already under. It simply cannot afford to be placed under greater pressure.

We made it clear that the devices that we were putting in place were designed to support the capacity of Australians to make choices within the health system. We wanted that safety net to be a strong one for Australians who could not afford private health insurance or who chose not to take it out, so that there would still be access to decent quality services to the extent that we could influence that happening. During our time in government, we continued to strengthen the resourcing available to our public hospitals. Let us put to bed very firmly at this point in the debate the myth, which Labor has chosen to pursue and repeated in question time yesterday in this place, that the coalition took a billion dollars out of the public health system. You know that is not true. You know that is simply a falsehood. In every year that we were in government we continued to support to a greater extent the health burden taken on by the states through their public hospitals. When we came into government in 1996, we were supporting public hospitals run by the states to the tune of a little over $5 billion. When we left office in 2007, we had support running at twice that amount at a little short of $11 billion annually. So it simply is not true to say that any money was taken out of that system. But the amounts that we put into the public hospital system would simply not have been adequate to deal with the kind of crisis which the present Rudd government is seeking to shift onto the shoulders of our public hospital system. It simply will not be able to cope if this legislation passes and I sincerely hope that the Senate will not allow that to happen.

We also had the Labor opposition throughout the 11 years of the Howard government continually attacking rises in private health insurance premiums. Every increase in a premium that occurred was ritually attacked by the relevant shadow minister, whoever it might have been, and accusing fingers were pointed at the coalition for allowing this to occur. I note that there have been very significant increases in premiums. The minister for health herself was warning only a few days ago about some very significant increases coming down the line. She appeared to be shaking her finger in the direction of the health funds. When premiums went up under us, it was the government at whom the relevant shadow minister shook his or her finger, not the health funds. Why wasn’t the government doing something about rising health insurance premiums? That does not appear to be the policy of the present Rudd Labor government. They are choosing to blame private health insurance companies and frankly I think that is unfair. It will be absolutely unfair if this legislation is passed because the inevitable consequence will be that there will have to be a substantial increase over time in insurance premiums to account for those people who will leave the system. Of that there can be absolutely no doubt.

I think that the government has very badly failed to plan ahead for the needs of our
health system, and the irony is considerable indeed that by all accounts we are seeing an increase in the government’s focus on health as a political weapon in the lead-up to the coming election. What was in prospect at one stage—an election based around the emissions trading scheme—seems to be evaporating in favour of an election built around health. With such a confused and incomplete picture of what it wants to do with the health system, with endless reports and reviews having put information on its table but without any tangible action to follow from that work, with a policy to increase the cost of private health insurance but no plan to support public health as a result of that policy, with all of these mismatched and confused policies in place it is astonishing that the government would expect the Australian people to trust it on the question of health at the coming election. But apparently that is what it is planning to do.

I think the Australian people are growing more cynical by the day with respect to what this government wants to do. They were a little more cynical when they saw the government attempt to cut rebates for cataract surgery, something which the government had mentioned nothing about before the 2007 election but which apparently became an area of high priority for them to pass. They banged their fists on the table in the Senate and said: ‘We must have this reform. Forget the fact that we did not mention this to the Australian people prior to the 2007 election.’ They said this was an essential reform. We were told that a cut in the rebate for assisted reproductive technology also had to occur, and again there was no mention of that being necessary before the 2007 election. The mother of them all was the government insisting that it is essential to their health reforms, such as they are, that they be able to rip billions of dollars out of private health insurance rebates. We even had the extraordinary claim that, if we did not pass this legislation, there were going to be tens of billions of dollars less available in the health system in the future to deal with challenges in the sector. Of course, if you are taking money away from a rebate and there is no hypothecation of the saving that you are making going back into the health system, then it is perfectly reasonable to assume that the money being taken out is not going to end up in the health system, and nothing in this legislation provides any guarantee or comfort that it will in fact be the case.

On my submission, the Senate is entitled to reject this legislation comprehensively, and to remind the Australian people that this is yet another broken promise by this Rudd Labor government, which is drifting, confused and unable to put together a coherent plan for health, much less the whole set of challenges facing the Australian community. The Senate is doing its job, the job it is supposed to be doing, the job it was set up by the Australian people to do, by rejecting this legislation, because we are holding the government to account. It promised not to interfere with private health insurance rebates and the Senate is absolutely entitled in those circumstances to say, ‘No, we will not support legislation for you to break the promise you made solemnly to the Australian people in 2007.’

Senator BARNETT (Tasmania) (1.52 pm)—I speak wholeheartedly and wholesomely in opposition to the Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives (Medicare Levy Surcharge) Bill 2009 [No. 2] and the Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives (Medicare Levy Surcharge—Fringe Benefits) Bill 2009. If the Prime Minister decides in his wisdom to use this legislation, if it is defeated, as a double dissolution trigger, then I say, ‘Bring it on!’ because I am quite happy to have a debate about the importance of health to the Australian people and about the
importance of a balanced health system with public and private options and support for both. I am committed to upholding a duty of care for my fellow Australians and my fellow Tasmanians in particular.

We know full well that the government promised to the nth degree prior to the last election that they would not change the private health insurance rebate support. We have quote after quote from Prime Minister Rudd—he was then opposition leader—and the Hon. Nicola Roxon, the now Minister for Health and Ageing and the former shadow health minister, promising up hill and down dale that they would not change those arrangements one iota. They expressed strong support for the private health insurance rebate and the current arrangements, yet in this parliament last year they tried to push through changes which will adversely impact not just those who will have to pay increased premiums—those 11-million-odd Australians who have private health insurance and will obviously have to pay extra as a result of the drop-off resulting from the government’s changes—but also those in the public hospital system. They will be forced onto queues, and waiting lists and waiting times will increase.

We know that in Tasmania we have amongst the highest waiting times and longest waiting lists in Australia. We do not want to make it any worse. Last year, St.LukesHealth insurance organisation undertook research on the effect of the changes the government proposed at that time. I commend Colleen McGann, who is the head of St.LukesHealth insurance organisation in Northern Tasmania. She does a great job, she provides leadership and she supports a healthy community. Their research showed that as a result of the proposed changes Launceston General Hospital could face up to an additional 10,000 patients. That would have been a disaster for northern Tasmania.

We know that the effect of this legislation if it were to pass would be to put pressure on the public hospital system. We do not want that. We want to have a balanced approach where those paying private health insurance premiums support the private sector and where there is also support for the public sector. I commend in this chamber the initiative of Will Hodgman, the state Liberal leader, on his announcement of the Smarter Health Care policy for northern Tasmania, released last Wednesday, when he said that under his proposal he would:

- Create a 28-bed transitional care facility at a refurbished John L. Grove Centre ...
- Provide four dedicated palliative care beds in Launceston, more than doubling palliative care availability;
- Significantly boost the ‘Hospital in the Home’ service for chronic disease, frequent hospital users and post discharge care;
- Establish Tasmania’s first Walk-in Care Clinic;
- Create eight funded positions for nurse practitioners to deliver a range of health solutions from the hospital to the home;
- Establish a $500,000 per annum Rapid Response Unit and GP Development Fund; and
- Fully fund the positions of doctors, nurses and allied health staff required to meet the construction of the expanded Department of Emergency Medicine, Acute Medical Unit, Day Procedure Unit and expanded ICU/HDU at the Launceston General Hospital.

Will Hodgman is doing a great job in Tasmania. He and the Liberals support the health system and they want a balanced approach. He says:

These initiatives, combined with the Liberal policy to spend $10m in two years to drastically cut elective surgery waiting lists through a strategic public-private partnership in our Sooner the Better policy, will ensure better health results all round for people in Northern Tasmania.
They have put together a very sensible, comprehensive health policy that will support the health of Tasmanians. We know that the track record of the Labor government in Tasmania is appalling when it comes to waiting lists and waiting times for Tasmanians, whether it be in the north, the north-west or the south. Tasmanians will have an opportunity to decide whether they want real change—whether they want to put up with waiting lists and waiting times that go on and on and on or whether they want those waiting lists and waiting times to be cut so that proper health care services can be delivered to Tasmanians. They deserve better than that which has been delivered under the Bartlett Labor government in Tasmania. They know that Will Hodgman and Brett Whiteley—I commend Brett Whiteley, the shadow minister for health, on the work that he is doing and the leadership that he is delivering on health—

Government senators interjecting—

Senator BARNETT—I see that some of the Labor senators from Tasmania are having difficulty comprehending. Why have they not lobbied their state colleagues to make sure that there is a cut in waiting times and waiting lists in Tasmania? We want to get a balanced approach. Will Hodgman is offering real change and Tasmanians will have an opportunity to decide, to vote, on 20 March to say, ‘Yes, we want to go forward under strong leadership, under the leadership of Will Hodgman, so there will be good health care, whether it be at the LGH or elsewhere.’

We know that the Premier put up a dud proposal to move the Royal Hobart Hospital next to a working wharf in Hobart. Can you imagine: they wasted thousands and millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money on consultants, reports and reviews by the health department and others and they wanted to put the Royal Hobart Hospital into a working port? How absurd. What sort of vision is that? You have to redevelop the Royal Hobart Hospital proposal so that it delivers good health care to the people of southern Tasmania. They know what is best for them. We want them to decide on 20 March whether they will seek and want real change under a Will Hodgman Liberal government.

Debate interrupted.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Home Insulation Program

Senator ABETZ (2.00 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Evans. Does anyone at all in the entire Rudd government bear responsibility for the mismanagement of the Home Insulation Program?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I thank Senator Abetz for the question. I think it is fair to say that the minister has taken responsibility for the program, and he has discharged those responsibilities by answering questions and debating issues around that program in the parliament. He is accountable to the parliament, and he has taken those responsibilities seriously. So he has taken responsibility for that. I also note that I caught a grab of a press conference that the Prime Minister did this morning when he indicated that he also took responsibility for the performance of the government and programs undertaken by this government. So there is no question that the minister and the government generally take responsibility for the programs they administer.

We have made adjustments to programs where we think they are not delivering the results that we hoped for or where they could be more broadly improved. Also, of course, we have sought to make adjustments to programs as a result of serious concerns that have been raised regarding safety and implementation standards. So there is no question of whether or not responsibility is taken;
the minister and the government have accepted responsibility for the programs. The opposition seek to draw some conclusion that the minister ought to resign, because they have a view about his performance, but I think that what we have seen is the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts taking responsibility, making changes where necessary and being accountable to the Australian people and the parliament. I think his personal performance has been exemplary, and I know him to be an honourable man who is acting honourably in difficult circumstances.

Senator ABETZ—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Does the government have full confidence in the way Ministers Garrett and Arbib have dealt with their responsibilities under the Home Insulation Program?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—The government has full confidence in its ministers. The Prime Minister has made that very clear to the parliament when the opposition have raised those concerns. I have great confidence in Senator Arbib’s performance and capacities; he is one of our best new ministers and he is making a large contribution to the government. While the opposition may hate the success that he has shown in his responsibilities, he is an effective minister. So, yes, we have confidence in our ministers, but we also have the capacity to seek to make changes if programs are not running well. Ministers take on the responsibility of making those changes. Minister Garrett announced a whole range of reforms to programs that were of concern. But the Prime Minister, as I say, has made it very clear that his ministers enjoy his confidence, and I share his view.

Senator ABETZ—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Given that the Labor government has, albeit unbelieveably, full confidence in the way Ministers Garrett and Arbib have dealt with their responsibilities, is the Rudd government saying that departmental officials are in some way to blame?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I do not really understand the assertion that Senator Abetz is trying to make. The ministers have accepted responsibility for administration of their portfolios. They have accepted responsibility for responding should concerns arise with the administration of those programs. I am not sure that Senator Abetz is the best placed person either to ask this sort of question or to talk about the role of public servants in the government, given his infamous dealings with Mr Godwin Grech and the lack of proper behaviour in regard to those matters, so I certainly will not be lectured by Senator Abetz. There is no suggestion of people blaming public servants; it is about making sure that problems are addressed and that people respond to problems and seek to take the appropriate action. (Time expired)

National Security

Senator HUTCHINS (2.05 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Evans. Can the minister update the Senate on the emerging terrorism threats as detailed in the government’s counterterrorism white paper?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—The Rudd government believes that the first responsibility of government is to protect the safety and the security of the Australian people. That is why this government has made national security reform a top priority. Today, the Rudd government released a further piece of its national security reform agenda: the counterterrorism white paper Securing Australia, protecting our community. As the Prime Minister stated earlier today, it is important not to become complacent about the threat terrorism poses to Australia’s national
security, because the threat is not diminishing. In fact, the government’s security and intelligence agencies assess that terrorism has become a persistent and permanent feature of Australia’s security environment. They warn that an attack could occur at any time.

More than 100 Australians have been killed in terrorist attacks since 2001, including 88 in the 2002 Bali bombing. The international threat of terrorism is persistent and it is evolving. The white paper outlines two key shifts in the terrorist threat to Australia. There have been some counterterrorism successes, notably in South-East Asia and in exerting pressure on al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but these have been offset by newer areas of concern such as Somalia and Yemen. Secondly, Australia now faces an increased terrorist threat from people born or raised in Australia who take inspiration from international jihadist narratives.

In Australia since 2001, 38 people have been prosecuted as a result of counterterrorism operations and 20 people have been convicted of terrorism offences under the Criminal Code. Over 40 Australians have had their passports revoked or denied for reasons related to terrorism, so the threat is real. As the Prime Minister stated, no government can guarantee that Australia will be free from the threat of terrorism, but we can guarantee we will take all necessary steps to combat the threat. (Time expired)

Senator HUTCHINS—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Is the minister aware of any alternative views about how serious the threat of terrorism is to Australia’s national security?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I must say I am very concerned by the comments by Liberal frontbencher Senator Birmingham today. When asked about the threat of terrorism, he said:

The greatest threat to the safety of many Australian families over the last 12 months has been the home insulation program …

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—that is what Senator Birmingham said. I think those comments are disgraceful. I remind those opposite that 100 Australians have died at the hands of terrorists since 2001. Trying to make cheap political points when discussing the threat of terrorism is below Senator Birmingham—I expected better of him.

Honourable senators interjecting—
The PRESIDENT—Senator Evans, I need order!

Senator CHRIS EVANS—We have had a serious threat from terrorism. The government expects the opposition to join with it in treating that threat seriously. We expect them to show leadership as the alternative government. I request the Liberal Party to show that leadership rather than what we have seen today. (Time expired)

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! On both sides I need order!

Home Insulation Program

Senator BIRMINGHAM (2.11 pm)—My question is to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Government Service Delivery, Senator Arbib. Yesterday the minister told the Senate that he had done ‘everything possible to ensure that adequate safety arrangements have been in place for the home insulation program’. The minister went on to say that risks of fire or electrocution from negligent installations ‘were never raised with me and were never raised at any of the meetings I was involved in’. If the threats of fire and electrocution were not raised at all, despite the minister participating in weekly meetings, what safety issues was he addressing when he did ‘everything possible’ to ensure that adequate safety arrangements were in place for the Home Insulation Program?

Senator ARBIB—I thank the honourable senator for the question. I think you will find if you look at the Hansard, Mr President, that I did not say there were weekly meetings with the environment department. Senator Birmingham said that there were weekly meetings.

Yesterday I did talk a great deal about training. Again I will restate: this was previously a largely unregulated industry with no clear qualifications for those working in it. There were discussions, with regard to training, that occupational health and safety would need to be a part of any training course they developed and rolled out. Also, there was discussion about measures to deal quickly with complaints about poor or shoddy workmanship. That is why a memorandum of understanding was developed with the Housing Industry Association, DEWHA, the environment department and, of course, NESA. This was to ensure job-seekers were able to access the training package that had been developed through the Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council, along with the CFMEU and industry representatives.

In relation to the training, DEWHA, as the lead department for the development of the Home Insulation Program, contracted the relevant industry skills council, the Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council, to develop the training package for home insulation workers. This is normal practice for determining the level of training required in particular industries or for specific activities in those industries. This is a role played in Australia by industry skills councils, who are expert bodies made up of industry, trade, employer and employee representatives, as government departments do not have the industry specific experience. These councils have the relevant expertise to develop— (Time expired)

Senator BIRMINGHAM—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Is the minister now saying that the advice in the Minter Ellison report commissioned by the government that said there were weekly meetings with the parliamentary secretary, as he was then, and advisers, is incorrect? Who did the minister consult with about safety and risk issues to address issues of training so that he could, in his words, do ‘everything possible’ to ensure that adequate safety arrangements were put in place? Did he talk to anybody in
industry or rely purely on departmental briefings?

Senator ARBIB—Can I just say again that there were no weekly meetings; there were regular meetings. I urge the coalition to go back to the Hansard. I never said yesterday that there were weekly meetings. Those comments, I think you will find, were made by Senator Birmingham. Can I confirm that in the meetings that did take place, while the discussions did include risk to the Commonwealth and program delivery risk, did not include fire or electrical hazard.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Given the tragic deaths of four Australians and 93 house fires, does the minister agree that the safety arrangements he helped put in place were clearly inadequate? Does the minister accept that it was a gross failure of process for such fundamental issues as fire and electrocution, which were identified in two government initiated Minter Ellison reports, to never have been raised in his briefings?

Senator ARBIB—Minister Garrett and his department undertook a risk analysis of the program and responded to the risks that were identified. I am advised that there was a whole suite of work that formed an overall risk assessment for the program that was not confined to one document. Let me just address some of the issues that were raised in the Minter Ellison report. Page 5 of the report identifies risks of safety, house fire and damage and it recommends an effective process for registration of installers. This was done with the National Installer Provider Register launched on the 29 June 2009. Second, it recommended that installers be hooked into Australian standards. This was done with program guidelines requiring adherence to Australian Standard 3999, ‘Thermal insulation of dwellings—Bulk Insulation—Installation requirements’. Page 17 identifies risk: inability to attract enough people to train to become installers. (Time expired)

Higher Education

Senator STERLE (2.17 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research representing the Minister for Education, Senator Carr. Can the minister inform the Senate why reform to Australia’s student income support regime is so urgently needed? Can the minister advise the Senate how the university sector has responded to the government’s proposed reforms?

Senator CARR—I thank Senator Sterle for that question. The Liberal and National parties were antistudent when they were in government and they are antistudent now. Nothing has changed. The Liberal and National parties have left Australia with an inadequate system of student income support and this is simply not delivering for those who need it most. I specifically referred to people from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and students from rural and regional areas. The government’s reforms fix this. They will make student support more available for students.

Yesterday virtually every vice-chancellor in this country wrote to senators seeking their support for the government’s reforms. Vice-chancellors said that our reform package:

... properly targets less well-off students across Australia for whom income support is critical.

They said the increases to the parental and personal income thresholds will mean that more students from lower socio-economic backgrounds will be able to access the full rate of Youth Allowance. Australia’s university leaders understand, even if those opposite do not, that this package will mean that a greater number of needy students will be
able to attend university and meet their up-front expenses. They understand, even if those opposite do not, that we need to ensure that publicly funded student income support is more appropriately targeted.

Students around the country are already on campus for orientation week. Thousands of them are wondering if they can afford to stay. The government wants to end this uncertainty right now. It is time for the opposition to stop using these young Australians as political playthings. It is time for the opposition to come clean and support the students of this country. (Time expired)

Senator STERLE—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate whether there is general community support for the government’s reforms? How many students are likely to benefit from the proposed changes?

Senator CARR—The government’s reforms are supported by every state and territory education minister, every university group and the National Union of Students. They are supported by the Australian Greens, by Senator Xenophon and by every Independent member of the House of Representatives. The opposition is completely out of touch with mainstream Australia on this matter. The government’s reforms will deliver new scholarships to all university students on income support—that is, 150,000 young Australians. The opposition cares nothing about these students. It cares nothing about working parents who have to scrimp and save to get their kids to university. All the opposition cares about is playing sordid political games. They have been hostile to students in government and now in opposition. Nothing has changed.

Senator STERLE—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister explain to the Senate how the government’s reforms will affect students from rural and regional Australia?

Senator CARR—The government is determined to ensure that rural and regional students do get a fair go when they are attending universities. In the last five years of the coalition government, the number of students from the bush going to universities fell. But this is worse than just incompetence. It is a betrayal by the National Party, and that perfidy continues. The government’s reforms will increase support for rural and regional students. But the opposition says, no, it would rather have a cheap headline. Tony Abbott, of course he says that he loves to have a fight, and apparently that fighting includes fighting Australian families. It is time for the opposition to abandon its campaign of obstructionism, its campaign of sabotage, and start thinking about Australia’s future. (Time expired)

Home Insulation Program

Senator BARNETT (2.23 pm)—Mr President, my question is to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Government Service Delivery, Senator Arbib. Given the minister yesterday stated:

Every time advice was provided to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts on issues and problems in relation to the implementation of that program—

the Home Insulation Program—

the minister acted and brought in tougher guidelines ... and given that Minister Garrett received 21 warnings, can the minister detail the alleged 21 changes the minister made and the dates on which the changes were made?

Senator ARBIB—I did say yesterday that the minister had acted when required to act—

Senator Abetz—No, ‘each time’.

Senator Minchin—‘Every time’.
The PRESENT—Order! Senator Arbib, ignore the interjections. Continue your answer.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESENT—Interjections are disorderly. There is time to debate this at the end of question time.

Senator ARBIB—Mr President, obviously I do not have all of the information that Senator Barnett seeks, but I am happy to take that on notice.

Senator BARNETT—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I am sorry that the minister does not have that information with him. When was the issue of the metal staples being a danger first raised with the minister? When did the government respond?

Senator ARBIB—Mr President, I do not represent the minister for the environment, so I do not have that information with me, but I am happy to take that question on notice and try to find out that information.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESENT—Order! I need silence on both sides. Senator Barnett, I will give you the call when there is silence. You are entitled to be heard in silence.

Senator BARNETT—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I am only referring to quotes that the minister provided to this chamber yesterday. How soon after the issues of fire danger and electrocution were first raised did the government act to mitigate those risks?

Senator ARBIB—Mr President, these are detailed questions of the minister for the environment.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESENT—Order!

Senator Barnett—Mr President, I rise on a point of order. It was in relation to the personal knowledge of Minister Arbib with respect to the question of how soon after the issues of fire danger and electrocution were first raised did the government act to mitigate those risks.

The PRESENT—There is no point of order at this stage because Senator Arbib is answering the question. I cannot instruct the minister how to answer the question. If the minister has indicated to you that he is taking that on notice, I cannot force the minister to answer the question in a particular way. Senator Arbib, is there anything further that you have to answer the question?

Senator ARBIB—No.

Nuclear Energy

Senator LUDLAM (2.26 pm)—Mr President, my question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Resources and Energy, Senator Carr. Today Minister Martin Ferguson announced that fairness had been restored to the process for selecting a national radioactive waste dump site. Can the minister confirm that the nomination of Muckaty Station as a site for the dump was only possible under the Radioactive Waste Management Legislation Amendment Act 2006, which the ALP opposed and described at the time as a major attack on the rights of traditional owners and an abuse of power? How can the government continue to progress the nomination of Muckaty while claiming to repeal the act that made it possible?

Senator CARR—The Minister for Resources and Energy, Martin Ferguson, has indicated that tomorrow he will introduce the National Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2010. This honours the government’s long-standing commitment to repeal the Howard government’s Commonwealth radioactive site—

Senator Ludlam—Mr President, I rise on a point of order going to relevance. I have read the minister’s press release. I draw the
minister’s attention to the specifics of the question relating to the nomination of the Muckaty site.

The President—The minister has been proceeding for a very short period of time; he is 21 seconds into the answer. I draw the minister’s attention to the question.

Senator Carr—Senator Ludlam says he has read the press release. Then he would be aware that the new legislation will provide a proper process to establish a purpose-built facility for managing radioactive waste generated by Australia’s medical, industrial, agricultural and research use of nuclear materials. I am sure the senator does appreciate that the purpose of that matter—and in the minister’s view he has made this very clear—is that a site selection process has to be concluded. Of course there can be no facility automatically imposed on any particular community. The minister has indicated that the new bill will require that any site is to be volunteered by the landowners. It also says that affected landowners and communities must be consulted, and that is exactly what the minister is doing.

I would expect that this chamber would be only too happy with that process, and I look forward to the support of the chamber on this important matter. There will be procedural fairness and the rights that were stripped away by the Howard government will be restored. The bill will ensure that a selected site will go through full environmental heritage and approval processes. I look forward to the support of the chamber on those matters as well.

Senator Ludlam—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Does the minister accept that the Muckaty nomination for a nuclear waste dump is heavily contested—it was at the time—and that it does not have the continued support of the Ngapa clan, as Minister Ferguson’s press release wrongly states? Can the minister outline what appeal rights will be available to people aggrieved by the Northern Land Council’s unilateral nomination of their land for this facility? Does the Minister appreciate how divisive this will be and has been within this community?

Senator Carr—The senator would be aware that the minister’s statement does go to what the minister will assert are the views of the direct landowners concerned at this particular site. The previous government announced in July 2005 that there would be an assessment of the three Defence sites in the Northern Territory, and the act gave powers to establish the facility at any of the Defence sites or the sites nominated by the Aboriginal land council or the Northern Territory government. The previous government also assisted the volunteer Aboriginal site at Muckaty Station and signed a site nomination agreement committing the Commonwealth to a $12 million compensation package if the site was selected. The Ngapa people, the traditional owners, remained committed to that nomination. That is the advice I have been given, and that is the advice I tender to the chamber.

Senator Ludlam—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister confirm on behalf of the Minister for Resources and Energy whether that minister ever read the correspondence sent to him by 55 traditional owners from the Muckaty Land Trust? And can he explain the logic of a federal radioactive waste management scheme based on the routine transportation of large volumes of radioactive waste over long distances and through many regional centres and communities?

Senator Carr—I have no reason to doubt that the minister would be reading his correspondence. As to which particular letters the minister has read or has not read, I
am at a loss and cannot provide further advice. I have absolutely no doubt that the minister has pursued his responsibilities diligently and he has pursued these matters with great care. I know of his commitment to consultation with Indigenous communities and I have absolutely no doubt about his sincerity in these matters.

Home Insulation Program

Senator McGauran (2.32 pm)—My question is to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Government Service Delivery, Senator Arbib. I refer to the minister’s answer to a question in the Senate yesterday in which said, ‘met regularly with all departments and all ministerial officers involved in the rollout of the stimulus package’ and that he ‘was present at discussions concerning risk in the Home Insulation Program’. I ask the minister: were representatives of the Prime Minister’s department and officers including from the Prime Minister’s own office present at any of those meetings at which safety and risk were discussed?

Senator Arbib—I did confirm yesterday that in my role as the Parliamentary Secretary for Government Service Delivery I did meet with departments, ministerial offices, who were involved in the delivery of the stimulus package. These meetings were designed to ensure strong reporting and lines of communication between Commonwealth agencies and state governments to provide feedback between agencies, governments and ministerial offices to ensure the rollout was proceeding smoothly and on time. Again, while the discussions did include risk to the Commonwealth and program delivery risk, they did not include fire or electrical hazard. I will need to go back and check my records as to who was at those meetings. To the best of my recollection, there was no member of the Prime Minister’s office there. There were obviously officers from the OCG, the Office of the Coordinator-General, present for a number of the meetings, but I will need to check my records.

Senator McGauran—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. The minister’s answer is in direct contradiction of an answer he gave to the Senate yesterday, and that was that all departments and all ministerial officers were present. So the minister has either misled the Senate or he is covering up for the Prime Minister, who would have been aware, or his officers would have been aware, of all the problems with the program. So the question to the minister is: was anyone present from the Prime Minister’s office? Do you stand by your comment yesterday that all officers from all departments and the ministers—(Time expired)

Senator Arbib—Obviously Senator McGauran has misunderstood what I related yesterday. There were no weekly meetings; there were regular meetings. There were meetings with ministerial officers who were involved in the rollout of the stimulus. I am happy to check my records, but I do not believe anyone from the Prime Minister’s office was at these meetings. But, of course, there would have been members from the OCG, the Office of the Coordinator-General.

Senator McGauran—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Were the issues of safety and risk in the Home Insulation Program ever raised with the Prime Minister by the minister himself, officers from the Prime Minister’s department or officers from the Prime Minister’s office? Did anyone speak to the Prime Minister?

Senator Arbib—That question obviously should be directed towards the minister for the environment. I would be in no position to know—

Senator McGauran—Mr President, I raise a point of order on relevance. The ques-
tion was: did this minister raise this with the Prime Minister or his officers at any stage?

The PRESIDENT—I believe the minister is answering the question. I cannot direct the minister how to answer the question. I draw the minister’s attention to the question given that there are 53 seconds remaining.

Senator ARBIB—Mr President, I thought from the question that he was talking about the minister for the environment. Again, and I hate to have to make this point, I was not a minister at the time of these meetings. I was not a minister; I was a parliamentary secretary. So next time, Senator McGauran, get your facts straight.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! The minister is entitled to be heard in silence. Minister, you may continue.

Senator ARBIB—that is fine.

The PRESIDENT—You have finished?

Senator ARBIB—that is it.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT—Order! I draw to the attention of honourable senators the presence in the chamber of a delegation from the Parliament of Bangladesh led by the Hon. Abdul Hamid MP, Speaker of the Parliament. On behalf of all senators, I wish you a warm welcome to Australia and, in particular, to the Senate. With the concurrence of honourable senators, I would ask the Speaker to take a seat on the floor of the Senate.

Honourable senators—Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Broadband

Senator McLUCAS (2.38 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. Senator Conroy. Can the minister advise the Senate of the progress of the rollout of the National Broadband Network?

Senator CONROY—I thank the good senator for the question. I am pleased to say that, in addition to the progress that we are making in Tasmania with first services to be switched on in July of this year, construction of the first building blocks of the NBN on mainland Australia has now commenced. Last week I launched construction in Mount Isa of the link that will traverse from Darwin through Mount Isa, Emerald and Longreach and all of the way to Toowoomba—over 3,800 kilometres of fibre-optic backbone cable. Nextgen Networks has been selected to deliver competitive backhaul to the six priority locations under the National Broadband Network regional backbone black spots program. The Darwin-Mount Isa-Toowoomba link is the longest and is expected to take approximately 18 months to complete. However, the shorter lengths are expected to be completed earlier. This demonstrates the Labor Party’s commitment to regional Australia. This marks another significant milestone for the NBN. In total the NBN regional backbone black spots initiative will involve approximately 6,000 kilometres of new optical fibre, around 2½ times the amount of new backbone links that would have been built under the former government’s OPEL proposal. It will benefit more than 100 regional locations, in turn benefiting a total of approximately 395,000 regional residential and business consumers in regional Australia. (Time expired)

Senator McLUCAS—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate on why investment in regional fibre-optic backbone links will help to deliver high-speed broadband to Australian homes and businesses, including those in small rural and regional towns?

Senator CONROY—I thank Senator McLucas again. As I was saying, Nextgen expects this investment to create more than 1,000 full-time-equivalent jobs and provide
economic stimulus to regional locations. Backbone links are the communication highways that connect our towns, our cities and our rural areas to each other and the world. The six links that we are building will enable the provision of high-speed broadband, including to rural and remote areas. I am aware that some members of the opposition are running a scare campaign, claiming that the people in regional Australia will miss out on high-speed broadband under our NBN plan. Let me make it clear that all Australians will have access to high-speed broadband under Labor’s NBN plan. The NBN will deliver a next generation wireless and satellite service to those outside the fibre-to-the-premise footprint, delivering speeds— *(Time expired)*

Senator McLUCAS—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate of the reaction from industry on the rollout of fibre backbone links to key parts of regional Australia?

Senator CONROY—The government’s announcement has been welcomed by some of the largest telco carriers in the country, including Macquarie Telecom, Internode, iiNet, NetSpace, Ancon and Adam Internet. It has also been welcomed by key figures in the regional community. Dr Bill Glasson AO, the Chair—appointed by those opposite—of the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee, said:

This development will make a huge difference to telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote Australia. This announcement addresses major recommendations of the RTIRC review and we congratulate the government on this timely endeavour.

Mary-Lou Corcoran, the Victor Harbour Mayor, said, ‘This is a fantastic result.’ Councillor John Duscher, the Bass Coast Shire Mayor, said, ‘I can’t overstate what this means for the region—’ *(Time expired)*

Telecommunications

Senator MINCHIN *(2.43 pm)*—My question is also to the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Conroy. I refer the minister to a report in the *Age* on 20 February stating that before Christmas broad agreement between the Prime Minister and the free-to-air network chiefs had been reached at a meeting at Kirribilli House about ‘a cut’ to licence fees. Can the minister confirm the accuracy of this report, and if so did the minister attend this meeting? Further, I ask: on what date was the decision to award the rebates formalised by the government? Considering the minister claims this is part of a ‘package of measures’, why won’t he announce the remaining measures now that he has been forced to prematurely announce the $250 million handout to the networks?

Senator CONROY—I have seen some of those reports in the newspapers. I can confirm that I was at the said meeting. Let me be clear—as I said yesterday—that we make no apology whatsoever for seeking to take the media sector into the 21st century. I noted yesterday that those opposite favour a commentator named Mr Peter Cox. Well let me give you Mr Peter Cox’s comments from his website entry on the digital revolution. He says:

In my 30 years in the media industry I have never seen such rapid technological, market and regulatory changes that we are witnessing today. Every company and individual in Australia is affected by the paradigm shift occurring in the media, communications and entertainment markets caused by the Digital Revolution in Australia and around the world.

In October, he went on to say:

If all these people think, out in the future, advertising is going to pay for everything, it cannot and it will not. The advertising model is not broken yet, but it is a limited model.
That is the preferred commentator of those opposite. We agree entirely with Mr Cox. That is why we have put in place a package of measures that include announcements we made in January—

Senator Minchin—Where is the rest of the package?

Senator CONROY—You would not have noticed, even if you were still the shadow minister for communications, Senator Minchin, but your new number in charge of shadow communications is fully aware of it because we put the press release out in January. On 5 or 6 January we put out a press release which outlined freeing up spectrum— (Time expired)

Senator MINCHIN—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Considering that the free-to-air networks have absolutely rejected the minister’s reckless claims that they are in ‘terminal long-term structural decline’, is the minister capable of coming up with a better defence of his $250 million licence fee reduction than his irresponsible and damaging remarks about the state of the free-to-air TV industry?

Senator CONROY—I appreciate that you were not able to quote anyone to sustain your question, Senator Minchin. Let me repeat the words of Mr Rupert Murdoch who yesterday said, ‘It is not going to be possible to sustain the advertising model.’ He said it himself. At the News Corp shareholder meeting, he also went on to say:

In fiscal 2010, we will depend on advertising for significantly less of our total revenues across the company and I am confident this trend will continue to grow in the coming years

What we are seeing here is a model that, without the measures that this government is putting in place, is in structural long-term decline. This is a permanent shift or, to borrow from your favourite commentator at the moment, Mr Cox, ‘a paradigm shift’ occurring in this sector. So let me be very clear: this government is ahead of the game. (Time expired)

Senator MINCHIN—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. When does the minister plan to introduce regulations to give effect to these licence fee rebates and what, if any, conditions will the networks have to meet in order to receive them?

Senator CONROY—I have noticed that there seems to be some confusion among those opposite about what they are going to do. Last week, Mr Abbott—in his usual habit—wanted to claim it was a bribe, yet on Sunday, the shadow Treasurer, Mr Hockey, dumped him completely. It is not a bribe; it is not dodgy—not at all. So we have Mr Abbott taking one position and Mr Hockey taking another in the space of three or four days. It is very simple.

The PRESIDENT—I draw your attention to the question.

Senator CONROY—We will be introducing the regulation shortly and I have a very simple question for those opposite: are you voting for it or not? I will tell you, Mr Murdoch is not going to like Tony if you do.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Senator Conroy, address your comments to the chair. Order!

Time for debating this would normally be at the end of question time.

Senator CONROY—So you are voting for it! Senator Minchin is blushing.

The PRESIDENT—Senator Conroy, address your comments to the chair.

Senator CONROY—I know Hansard cannot record that Senator Minchin is blushing at the moment, but he is. He knows that they are voting for it and each and every one of those— (Time expired)
Health

Senator BILYK (2.49 pm)—My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Ludwig. Can the minister inform the Senate of the government’s achievements across the health area? In particular, can the minister outline for the Senate—

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! Senator Bilyk is entitled to be heard in silence.

Senator BILYK—the improvements to Australia’s health infrastructure which have resulted from the government’s actions, and how does this compare to previous performance?

Senator LUDWIG—I thank Senator Bilyk for her question. The record shows that the Rudd government can be justly proud of its record on health. Here are some of our key achievements.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT—Order! Senator Ludwig, resume your seat and when we have silence we will proceed. When we have silence on both sides, we will proceed.

Senator LUDWIG—Let us start with the government’s record: a $64 billion funding agreement for health and hospitals. These health dollars started flowing last year and represent a 50 per cent increase on the previous government’s funding agreement. Then there is our $600 million elective surgery waiting list reduction plan, which has already started to deliver 62,000 procedures—64 per cent more than the target of 25,000 procedures. And 125 hospitals have received new elective surgery equipment and operating theatres, with 37 hospitals around the country receiving upgrades to their emergency departments.

In addition to that, these achievements would not have been delivered under the previous Liberal government, in which Mr Abbott was the health minister. He preferred to cut the health funding, neglect services, cap doctor numbers and ignore nurse shortages. That is the record of the opposition in this regard. Let us be clear: as health minister in the previous government, Mr Abbott cut $1 billion from public hospitals and ignored the need for more nurses, despite a shortage of 6,000 nurses across the country. In contrast, under the Rudd Labor government, as part of our government’s $1.7 billion investment into building a world-class hospital system, 17 hospitals are being upgraded. What is more, as part of the government’s $430 million investment, 12 medical research and hospital workforce facilities are receiving capital upgrades. There are 12 new MBS-eligible MRI machines—

(Time expired)

Senator BILYK—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister explain to the Senate how the government is securing the health workforce for the future and why these actions are necessary?

Senator LUDWIG—I thank Senator Bilyk for her supplementary question. Building health services for the future needs vision, planning and determination, and this government has them. We have been working to fix Australia’s shortage of doctors, nurses and other health professionals so that Australians can get the high-quality, timely care that they deserve. First, let us remember whose out-of-touch agenda got us into this mess in the first place. After the extreme measure of ripping a billion dollars from the public hospitals and capping GP training places, the result was a nationwide medical workforce shortage stretching across 74 per cent of Australia and affecting about 60 per cent of the population. This government immediately lifted Mr Abbott’s cap and increased GP training places by 35 per cent to over 800. The Rudd government has also
funded 1,134 new training places for nurses. 

(Time expired)

Senator BILYK—Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate on additional measures the government has put in place to ensure Australia’s health workforce gets the support it needs?

Senator LUDWIG—I would like to note at the outset that those people who care for and treat us are one of the major strengths of our health system and that more needs to be done to support them in their work. Since coming to office, the Rudd government has worked hard to build a strong, sustainable home-grown health workforce. We have backed clinical training to the tune of $1.1 billion, the biggest commitment to the health workforce ever by the Commonwealth. GPs will benefit from a simpler, more streamlined Medicare Benefits Schedule with higher payments for longer consultations. Bulk-billing rates are now among the highest they have ever been. Nurse practitioners and, of course, midwives will this year get access to the MBS and PBS for the first time. This will be delivered by the Rudd government after many years of delay by the former government. Comprehensive health reform is needed—(Time expired)

Asylum Seekers

Senator HUMPHRIES (2.55 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Evans. I refer the minister to recent figures from the UNHCR which show that asylum applications in Australia increased by more than 25 per cent in the nine months to September last year, whilst global applications have increased by only five per cent. Given that Australia has had a surge five times greater than the international increase, will the minister correct the record and reverse his and the Prime Minister’s repeated claims that the arrivals are due to so-called push factors rather than the pull factors in Labor’s open door policy?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I thank the senator for the question. I would remind him, though, not to just believe the shadow spokesman’s press releases but to actually go to the original sources before he quotes information. Then he would not be so badly misled. The senator, if he actually had the UNHCR document, would realise that the figures were not complete for 2009, that the figures used by the shadow spokesman were incomplete, only had three-quarters of the year for most of the major receiving countries and basically were totally dodgy. If you want to come into this place, Senator, and make claims, wait until you have got the annual figures. But, no, you want to make claims based on incomplete figures. So the assumptions in the senator’s question are wrong, dead wrong, because he was not able to rely on full figures for the year and sought to believe the dodgy figures provided by the shadow spokesperson in order to try and get a media run.

The first point is that the figures are not the annual figures. It looks like, on present indications, that the rate of asylum seeking around the world will be approximately the same as it was the previous year, based on forward projection of those figures that were available for only the first three-quarters, which are for some of the larger countries. So first of all the figures are dodgy. Second of all the argument that somehow the application rates are the same around the world of course is a nonsense. They vary according to the populations fleeing and their normal countries. As the senator would know, when the Howard government was dealing with a large increase in arrivals in 1999-2001, it was dealing largely with people from two source countries, Afghanistan and Iraq. Those countries, at the time, were seeing a lot of people leave. Those are the sorts of
things that influence application rates. But the key point is: the figures the senator quotes are not complete and he misrepresents the position in the claims he makes. (Time expired)

Senator HUMPHRIES—Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Will the minister concede that the rate of applications in Australia greatly exceeds the number of applications being made on average around the world? If so—if there is a disparity between Australian applications and global applications—will the minister concede that the Rudd government’s border protection and immigration policies have manifestly failed and are in fact encouraging illegal boat arrivals, with 14 arrivals this year alone?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Again we see the senator trying to make a cheap political point without going to the facts. I refer him to the comments made just the other day by Ms Erika Feller, the UNHCR’s Assistant High Commissioner, Protection, who is visiting Australia. She said, as to the real cause of arrivals here:

The instability in places such as Afghanistan and Sri Lanka does impact greatly on the numbers of people moving to and through this region, including Australia.

That is what the UNHCR’s senior representative said. There have been increases in the numbers of Afghans and Sri Lankans seeking asylum. Many of those have gone to Europe. I think the current numbers reflect that over 90 per cent of the Afghans have headed for Europe. We have had our share of Afghans fleeing the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. (Time expired).

Senator HUMPHRIES—I ask a further supplementary question. Why will the minister not confirm that the rate of applications to Australia for asylum is greatly in excess of those averaged around the world for global applications? When will he concede that if that is the case—and he has not denied it—the evidence of pull factors in Australian government policy is contributing to a failure of Australia’s border security?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I do not have the time to take the senator through all the issues but since 2006 the number of claims by Afghans in industrial countries worldwide has increased by 185 per cent. We have had our share of those applications but the vast majority have gone to Europe. There has been a pipeline from Afghanistan to Australia since the time of the Howard government. Where were the arrivals coming from in 1999 to 2001, Senator?

Afghanistan has been a source of arrivals to this country. There are large numbers of Somalis on the move, who tend to go to countries other than Australia. So the figures differ in terms of the source country and the traditional routes that people take. You well know that. I refer you to Minister Ruddock’s press releases at the time that explained those things in the period 1999-2000 and 2001-02. You understood it then. You choose not to understand it now for cheap political point scoring. (Time expired)

Senator Chris Evans—Mr President, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Broadband

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy) (3.02 pm)—I have some further information relating to one of the questions that Senator Minchin asked yesterday. I seek leave to incorporate the answer in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The answer read as follows—
Further information - NBN Co Melbourne Office

In response to one of Senator Minchin’s questions on 22 February 2009, I can provide the following information.

While decisions regarding the location and leasing of office space is a matter for NBN Co and its board, I have been advised by the company that, to date, it has offices in Sydney and Melbourne.

In relation to the Melbourne office, I am advised by the company that:

- NBN Co has leased two floors at 360 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne for an eight year period.
- The company’s decision to enter this lease followed a comprehensive review of Melbourne office accommodation and advice from the Victorian State Government on suitable office space.
- The rental struck is competitive with other Government and non-Government tenants in the building. It should be noted that both floors came fully fitted-out at no cost to NBN Co.
- Other government agencies in the same building are the ACCC and the ACMA. Both agencies took accommodation in the building under the previous Government.
- I am seeking further information on another question asked by Senator Minchin.

Forestry

Senator SHERRY (Tasmania—Assistant Treasurer) (3.02 pm)—Yesterday during question time Senator Brown asked:
Can the minister inform the Senate as to the amount of taxpayers’ money which has gone into the genetic modification program which has led to the eucalyptus nitens producing the added flow-off of toxin?
And:
... will the minister concede that flow-off from genetically altered and enhanced plantations cannot be described as natural?

I am advised there is no genetic modification program for Eucalyptus nitens approved in Australia by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator. Further, I am also advised that these trees were not genetically modified but rather were bred from naturally-grown trees in Victoria to improve growth rates and tree form.

Home Insulation Program

Senator ARBIB (New South Wales—Minister for Employment Participation and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Government Service Delivery) (3.03 pm)—Earlier today I took on notice a question from Senator Barnett about the home insulation program. I have some information.

Following discussions with stakeholders, Minister Garrett took the following action on 1 November to make changes to the home insulation program. The insulation rebate was reduced from $1,600 to $1,200 to drive greater efficiencies in the market and improved competition. Metal fasteners for foil insulation were banned. Mandatory installation of covers over down lights and other ceiling appliances was put in place. There was a target electrical safety inspection program for Queensland homes with foil insulation, as well.

Commencing in December, the minister also committed to a name-and-shame list of businesses struck out from the program, the two-quote requirement, and a mandatory formal risk assessment requirement prior to work on any installation before any installer is allowed to start work. On 30 December, Minister Garrett again moved to tighten the program to improve safety by requiring every single installer going into ceilings to have a trade-specific competency, prior insulation industry experience or to have completed a registered or accredited training course.
Finally, last week Minister Garrett again took action by closing the scheme once advice was received that the risks were ‘unacceptably high’, caused by ‘unscrupulous, sometimes illegal and shonky operators’.

I also took on notice a question from Senator McGauran. I can confirm that with regard to meetings with departments, members of the OCG—the Office of the Coordinator General—were present and the former Coordinator General, Mike Mrdak.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE:
TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS
Home Insulation Program
Asylum Seekers

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania) (3.05 pm)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answers given by the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship (Senator Evans) and the Minister for Employment Participation (Senator Arbib) to questions without notice asked by Opposition senators today relating to the Home Insulation Program and to asylum seekers.

Today we witnessed again Labor’s pitiful incapacity to take genuine responsibility for the massive and glaring failures of the home insulation program. Sure, Mr Rudd glibly says, ‘I take responsibility,’ but the insincerity of that oozes everywhere, because this program has been responsible for four dead, others injured—permanently scarred—90-plus roof fires, thousands ripped off and dangerous materials installed. You name it; it went wrong—disastrously wrong. So you then ask: who’s responsible? Mr Rudd says, ‘I am, of course, but I’ve got full confidence in the minister and his mini-me, who were required to implement this program.’

Labor walks away from any responsibility in relation to this disastrous program—a program which Mr Tanner admitted they were trying to rush out—deliberately not crossing every t and not dotting every i, because they just wanted to rush the program out the door. If any building contractor in New South Wales were to say to the occupational health and safety authorities, ‘Sorry: I breached my duty of care because I was in a rush to finish the contract,’ they would be up on criminal manslaughter charges under the law of New South Wales that Senator Arbib, whilst he was in New South Wales, helped to implement.

That is the reality. That is the truth. If this occurred in the private sector, those responsible would be up on criminal manslaughter charges under the New South Wales Labor government’s regime. Yet, surprisingly, Mr Rudd, Mr Garrett and Senator Arbib think they can simply walk away from this. It is an interesting insight into the way the Labor Party—and Mr Garrett in particular—do business. Remember those silly ‘Sorry’ pyjamas Mr Garrett wore? He is always willing to say sorry for everybody else’s alleged mistakes but is completely incapable of saying sorry for his own mistakes.

What is it about Mr Rudd? Remember how he was so nauseatingly pompous before the last election? He was telling us about Mr Downer’s responsibility: he should have read 1,000 cables that had been delivered to his office and, because he had not, he should resign in disgrace. Remember that? Moralising, pompous and nauseating. Today, his government is confronted with one Minter Ellison report—not 1,000 cables but just one report—and Mr Rudd simply says: ‘I never saw it. Sure, it came to the government, but I never saw it.’ Guess what! Nor did Mr Garrett; nor did Senator Arbib. It reminds me of the three monkeys, but these three were not very wise. They saw no evil, heard no evil and now are not willing to talk any evil about this program.

Let us be quite clear here. If these ministers want the ministerial stipend and if they
want to be driven around in their limousines, then they have to take responsibility for what their departments do. The Prime Minister cannot simply say, ‘I have full confidence in these ministers.’ Senator Evans then said, I think quite appropriately, that there was also full confidence in the department. Who is actually responsible? If it is not the ministers and it is not the departments, then who is it? As Senator Brandis interjected, ‘I suppose it’s society’s fault.’ Nobody is to blame here; it is just something in society.

We know who is at fault. It was Prime Minister Rudd, Deputy Prime Minister Gillard, Finance Minister Tanner and Treasurer Swan who insisted that this program be rolled out—the quicker the better and don’t ask any questions—and the poor, hapless Messrs Garrett and Arbib were the ones who were required to implement it. That is why the Prime Minister is protecting them: he knows that he is personally responsible, along with these incompetent ministers. The Australian people deserve answers—better answers than we were given today.

Senator FORSHAW (New South Wales) (3.10 pm)—The opposition clearly will not accept the responses of ministers, whether they are given in this chamber or in the other chamber. We have just heard from Senator Abetz the repetition of this quite scurrilous accusation of industrial manslaughter. Let me direct the opposition to somebody who could be considered to be a most impartial commentator on this program and, indeed, on many other government programs—a person who has never been a friend of this government and has often been very critical of governments of all persuasions. I refer to Mr Tony Harris. Tony Harris, for those who do not know—and I am sure most senators would know—is a former senior Commonwealth officer and a past New South Wales Auditor-General. He is a person who has a reputation for sticking it up the government of the day, if I may use that phrase, when he thinks there is a failure in proper government or public service processes. He wrote an article in today’s Australian Financial Review which I urge all senators to read. It will give you some perspective and it may stop people, particularly the Leader of the Opposition and members of the opposition, from running around the country and making these outrageous, malicious and scurrilous allegations and accusations and claiming, for instance, that the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts or the Prime Minister are guilty of industrial manslaughter. Mr Harris is an impeccable commentator without any bias in regard to this matter. I quote from his article titled ‘Abbott spurns the facts’:

But Opposition Leader Tony Abbott and coalition environment spokesman Greg Hunt are not worried by lack of evidence. All blame belongs to Environment Minister Peter Garrett, including responsibility for the deaths of four workers killed while installing insulation.

We are learning, in dribs and drabs, that some of these deaths cannot be fairly sheeted home to the commonwealth. But Abbott has no wish to be tainted by facts or courtesy. Of today’s politicians, only Abbott—fast becoming a brazen image of Mark Latham—would question Garrett’s “moral universe” for failing to resign and accuse him of “industrial manslaughter”.

The opposition’s approach has been adopted by the usual frenzied commentators, none of whom has ever administered more than an opinion.

There are a couple of those on radio in Sydney, for a start. The article goes on: . . . the opposition has succeeded: the electorate is given self-serving accusations in place of considered facts . . . judgements are prejudicial, especially those as rabid as the opposition’s. I quote further:

. . . government requirements issued early last year—well before troubles emerged—suggest that the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts dealt with the issues as we
would have expected. For example, most applicant householders were required to obtain two independent quotes. Quotes had to name the type of product to be installed, its insulation or "R" value, and itemise material and labour costs as well as an estimate of the area of the residence to be insulated (all of the living areas had to be insulated).

When householders—they were the parties who had contractual relations with installers—were satisfied with the installation, they would sign the form allowing the government to pay. To obtain payment, installers had to be in the insulation business (or later be a registered supplier). They had to provide details of the product, and they had to certify that it met the minimum R value specified for the region and that it met Australian standards. They also had to certify that their work met relevant building and safety standards. If installers failed to provide reasonable service, householders should not have approved their work. If an installer duped a household, the commonwealth is entitled to (and should) get the taxpayer's money back.

These guidelines were tightened in July, September, November and December.

The article goes on. As I said, I urge all senators to read it. It goes on, for instance, to refer to the number of deaths that occur every year in industries like construction. The former government introduced Work Choices laws which removed many of the opportunities for union officials to inspect safety standards. The point about this insulation program is that there were strict guidelines in place, and they were improved upon through the program. The opposition should deal with the facts and not prejudicial accusations. (Time expired)

Senator BARNETT (Tasmania) (3.15 pm)—Who remembers Sergeant Schultz from that wonderful program? ‘I know nothing’—that is the response we have received today from Senator Mark Arbib, the minister responsible in this place, and indeed from Mr Garrett, over not only days and weeks but months and months: ‘I know nothing’. We ask questions and we get glib responses saying safety is a top priority. That is the best we can get.

I asked Senator Arbib three questions today. He did not answer one of those questions. He took them on notice, and at the end of question time today gave a glib, short response which was entirely inadequate and did not answer the question. The answer he gave was: ‘I know nothing.’ I asked about the 21 warnings that the minister received. I quoted from his answer to a question yesterday in the Senate. I wanted to know what happened in response to those warnings, and the dates on which the changes were made. At the end of question time he comes up with four—four out of 21 is not a very good track record, Minister. You took those on notice. So I ask you to do the right thing by the Senate, by the public, and come back in here to the chamber and answer those questions. If you cannot do that then do it in quick time, by the close of business, and you will be let off. But the ‘I know nothing’ approach is the Sergeant Schultz response we are getting from this government.

Minister Garrett has said that he has ‘taken advice’ and he has acted on it. In the dark of the night, at six o’clock last night, this government had the temerity to come in here and table a document, the Minter Ellison risk register, which should have been tabled earlier, which was given to the department in April last year. The tabled document was an attachment to the Minter Ellison report, which was released last Friday, which was made public and given to the department in April last year. What does the risk register say? It highlights the risk of fires, fraud, inflated costs and waste. What else does it say? It recommends a three-month delay in the commencement of the project from July to September last year. The minister has said categorically, black and blue, up hill and
downdale, ‘I acted on advice.’ Mr Deputy President, please can we get an honest answer from the ministers responsible, Mr Garrett and Senator Arbib, today? Please can they come clean and explain in detail exactly the advice they received and when they acted on it—because it beggars belief that no minister, and no ministerial adviser, saw or read the Minter Ellison report of April last year, were advised with respect to it or were informed with respect to the risk regarding this Home Insulation Program, which is now an absolute fiasco.

This government has no shame. We now have 80,000 homes across the country with safety risks from their insulation. We have 160,000 homes across the country with substandard or non-compliant insulation. In Tasmania, on a population share basis, that is 2,000 homes with a safety risk and 4,000 with substandard or non-compliant insulation. That is not good enough.

As to the time frame, apparently, according to the Herald Sun, Mr David Wise rang the hotline yesterday and was advised that it would take five years before his house would be checked by the government. Come on! Is there a duty of care to the families, to the people in these homes that have had insulation installed? Come clean. This is just another broken promise from the list of broken promises that the government have made. They have had so many blunders: GROCERYchoice, Fuelwatch, the hospitals that were to be fixed by 30 June 2009, the private health insurance rebate broken promise, the childcare places broken promise, the GP superclinics broken promise—it goes on and on. When will this government stand responsible and accountable for their actions? It is a great shame.

Senator BILYK (Tasmania) (3.20 pm)—I rise to take note of the answers given by Senator Evans with regard to the UNHCR figures. Those figures were completely disingenuous.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Senator Parry on a point of order?

Senator Parry—The point of order was going to be relevance, in that we had strayed off the topic. But I will withdraw the point of order until I check my facts. It might be the case that it was not put that we were only taking note of the answers given by Senator Arbib.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—No. We were asked to take note of the answers given by Senator Arbib and Senator Evans.

Senator BILYK—I will try again. I understand why there might have been a point of order taken, because I do not think the opposition really want to hear this—they do not want to know what the true facts are. Once again, they are being malicious and fearmongering and completely disingenuous with regard to the UNHCR figures. The data that the opposition immigration spokesman, Scott Morrison, is using, is actually from an incomplete UNHCR report. We need the opposition to learn to deal with facts—to read their reports and make sure they understand them—and to make sure that they are not just fearmongering, trying to scare people. I will get to the reason they are trying to do that in a moment.

That UNHCR report was not published on the 15th, and final figures for asylum applications in 2009 were still to be determined.
But that did not stop the opposition. We know that what they really want to do is reintroduce the disgraced ‘Pacific solution’ to detain asylum seekers. In a radio interview with 2GB on 2 February, the opposition’s immigration spokesman, Scott Morrison, said:

We have no problem with finding alternative offshore detention arrangements, whether that’s in another country or within another excised Australian territory. The government has said no to that. I mean, that’s what they should have been doing for the last six months when they knew that the boats were surging. They should have been looking for an alternative offshore destination, as we did—we had Nauru and Manus.

Under John Howard’s so-called Pacific solution, 1,637 people, including 452 children, were packed off to Nauru and Manus Island, where the average length of stay was 501 days, or approximately one and a third years. This is what the opposition want to do again. The longest length of stay was 1,958 days—more than five years. The opposition ought to be ashamed of themselves for that issue alone. Of the 1,637 people detained in the Nauru and Manus facilities, 1,153, or 70 per cent, were ultimately resettled in Australia or another country. Of those, 705 were resettled in Australia.

The Howard government’s Pacific solution was condemned internationally and did nothing to foster regional cooperation on people-smuggling or promote international cooperation on providing protection to refugees. In its submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee on the Migration Amendment (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill, the UNHCR expressed concern that the Pacific solution detracted from Australia’s international responsibilities. But we do not hear the opposition mentioning that at all—‘No, we’ll just forget; we’ll go back to scaremongering.’ Why can’t they get their facts right? It is beyond belief that they come in here and try to scare people.

Their latest claim, as I said, uses selective data and ignores the truth about their own record. The highest number of boat arrivals on record came under John Howard’s Liberal government in 2001, when 5,516 people arrived in 43 boats.

Senator Scullion—But we were able to actually fix it.

Senator Back interjecting—

Senator BILYK—The months of August and September 2001 saw more than 2,200 people arrive in just 10 boats. I understand why the opposition are interjecting—because they really do not want this to come out. They want to scaremonger; they are trying to frighten everybody into thinking that something awful is going to happen. They need to learn to tell the truth; they need to get their facts straight and stop being so disingenuous with the people of Australia by coming in here in question time and asking completely spurious questions and making out that in some way the fault lies with the Rudd government. Those on the other side never let the truth get in the way of a good story. 

(Time expired)

Senator BOYCE (Queensland) (3.26 pm)—I wish to further comment regarding Senator Arbib’s answers in question time today. I generally do not at all mind being right, but I must admit that on this occasion it is a somewhat sour experience. On 11 February this year, with regard to the Home Insulation Program, I said:

… this is going to cause a frenzy of activity in the market, but for what purpose? I said it would simply allow the ‘cowboys’ in. I continued:

It is one small section of a market. It will attract … people who do not have a clue what they are doing, and it will attract people who are dishonest. We will have dozens and dozens of stories of
pensioners who are ripped off by people who go up into their roofs, apparently fiddle around for a while and then leave. It will be months before they discover that they did not get what they paid for; they will be lucky if they get anything.

I had assumed then that the inordinate haste with which the government was developing this program would encourage shonks and cowboys and cause fraud and dishonesty. I did not realise that it would be worse than that—that it would cause deaths and untold damage to what has been for years a very stable industry in Australia.

It is interesting to look at the figures that both Senator Arbib and Minister Garrett have used, and tried very hard to avoid, on the costs of checking out the current disaster. We are talking about up to $60 million at present simply to check whether or not what has been done is adequate. That is just the cost of checking. All these stories ignore time after time the costs not only, regrettably, to the families who have lost people but to the many small and medium family businesses in Australia that for years—20 or 30 years in some cases—have been installing insulation in Australia. They are companies like that run by Mr Russell Browning in Bulimba, in Brisbane, where yesterday 14 sackings were announced. That is being repeated in hundreds of family businesses all over Australia. Why? Because this government could not wait to be seen to be doing something. Thank God, I suppose, they did something, but why, when they have so little expertise in this area, when their ranks are composed of people who have not worked in the construction industry ever or for dozens of years, do they think they know how to run this program?

Senator Forshaw told us that it was a good thing that the government had been tightening this scheme in September, in October, in November and in December. I am sorry, but four attempts to fix it? Did Minister Garrett and Senator Arbib not realise after the second attempt that in fact this could not be fixed and that it was a bad program? This is not an example of good activity; this is an example of a bad scheme and of throwing bad after bad.

I am bemused by the fact that this government will not acknowledge that we have not said that Minister Garrett was guilty of industrial manslaughter. In fact, Mr Abbott has simply made the point that in New South Wales consideration would be given to raising the matter of investigating whether Mr Garrett would have been guilty of industrial manslaughter had he been working in the private sector. In his defence we have Minister Gillard saying, ‘Peter can’t be in every roof in Australia,’ meaning Minister Garrett. But I bet Minister Gillard will be there beside every family business owner and every small business in Australia when they are forced to put off staff and have debts they cannot meet because of the way the government has behaved. I bet Minister Gillard will manage to be at their shoulder. As has been pointed out by Mr Abbott, the buck stops with the CEO—in this case, the minister. He has not acted appropriately. He was warned that this was becoming shonky. He was warned that there had been death and that there would be ongoing, irreparable damage to a very worthwhile industry.

Question agreed to.

Nuclear Energy

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (3.31 pm)—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (Senator Carr) to a question without notice asked by Senator Ludlam today relating to radioactive waste sites.

I rise to take note of the answer that was given by the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Senator Carr, a short time ago on behalf of the Minister for
Resources and Energy, Mr Martin Ferguson, who we are told will tomorrow introduce legislation, presumably into the House of Representatives, repealing the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act 2005 and the amendments to it that were passed in 2006. Both the original act and the amendments in 2006 were opposed by the Labor Party, who were in opposition at the time. I can remember their words well. I was working for Senator Siewert at the time and we were gobsmacked that the Howard government was moving with such speed to coercively land a radioactive waste dump, which is the responsibility of the entire country, on a series of politically vulnerable communities in the Northern Territory. I can remember very clearly the positions that were taken at the time by ALP senators in this place, who spoke with heart and conviction I believe on the absolutely unjust tactics that were being used against politically vulnerable communities in the Northern Territory. It is entirely the wrong way to go about dealing with some of the most intractable and most dangerous categories of waste that industrial society has ever produced.

It is profoundly sad to see how close Minister Carr could have come to getting it right with the announcement that we have seen today. The government has announced that it is opening the process up to take another look and to take nominations for other sites, and that is an acknowledgement that the former process was really going nowhere. But it leaves live the nomination of a site on Muckaty Station—an Aboriginal managed cattle station outside Tennant Creek—and that is absolutely unconscionable. It was based on a nomination that was flawed. It was based on legislation that members of the present government opposed when it was passed. They said that it ran ‘roughshod over affected Indigenous communities’ and that it was legislation ‘driven at the behest of one land council in the Northern Territory’ that effectively shut out traditional owners. The government thinks that it will somehow be able to let that nomination—which has been put forward under the 2006 amendments to the act—stand, built on that foundation that was condemned at the time by the Australian Greens, by the Democrats and by the Labor Party.

A little bit of history: I think it would really have helped if the minister had read the unanimous report that the Senate Environment, Communications and the Arts Legislation Committee produced at the end of 2008. Senator Birmingham, who is in the room at the moment, attended those hearings, and I am sure that it made as strong an impression on him and other senators as it did on me to hear the evidence from the people most closely affected at Muckaty—people with traditional responsibilities for the lands around Muckaty Station who gave clear and unambiguous evidence at the time that the nomination around that area was absolutely contested and not shared by the five families who make up the Muckaty Land Trust. I read one quote—and I wish the minister had read it or been in the room at the time that it was said—from Ms Marlene Bennett. She tendered this evidence to the committee in Alice Springs on 17 November 2008, and she travelled a long way to be there. She said:

I am also very disappointed in the NLC consultation process. The NLC is the Aboriginal people’s voice, and they failed to represent them.

She went on:

I think the consultation process was very flawed and that the time for trying to pull the wool over people’s eyes is past. Open and honest discussion should be happening involving all the right people, not just with certain elements of the people. All they are asking for is inclusion and for the opportunity for their voice to be heard. When the committee visited Alice Springs—
we have never been to Muckaty Station—it was the first time that those people had been invited to have their voice heard in this debate. I thought that was shameful at the time. They really appreciated the opportunity to do that and I hope that that same committee, or whichever committee the Senate chooses to refer the bill to when it is finally introduced into this place, will be given time to sit down with the people most intimately concerned rather than with bureaucrats sitting in offices thousands of kilometres away and making these decisions which have profound implications for the lives of people with responsibilities for culture and country a long way from this building.

Finally, I touch on the fact that there is no engineering or scientific reason why we prefer remote sites, for why we continually choose remote Aboriginal communities as repositories for this waste. We heard from Mr Bradley Smith from the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies, who said:

'It would appear that politically the pragmatics seem to be that that is the only viable site at the moment that I am aware of for a Commonwealth facility.'

Similarly, Mr Steven Mackintosh, from ANSTO, when asked 'Why does Australia mainly look at remote sites?' answered:

'I believe it is for political reasons, Senator. There is a lot more of this story yet to tell.'

Question agreed to.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia) (3.36 pm)—I seek leave to make a brief personal explanation as I claim to have been misrepresented.

Leave granted.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—I thank the chamber. If Senator Evans and, indeed, the Prime Minister in the other place wish to take selective quotes out of comments I may make in media interviews—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Order! You must move directly to where you claim to have been misrepresented, Senator Birmingham.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—I claim to have been misrepresented by Senator Evans in a response to a question he gave during question time today. If Senator Evans, in that response, chooses to take selective quotes out of a comment I made on the doors this morning, I would like to add the additional quotes. I said in addition: ‘The counterterrorism strategy is very important—absolutely—and of course the government needs to deliver on its counterterrorism strategy.’

Let there be no doubt about my commitment or the coalition’s commitment to combating terrorism and protecting all Australians, as demonstrated by those remarks I made this morning.

RUDD GOVERNMENT

Censure Motion

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

That the Senate—

(a) censures the Government for its gross and systematic failure in the delivery of its climate change programs including home insulation, green loans, solar rebate, renewable remote power generation program and the renewable energy target; and

(b) calls on the Government to put in place a unified ministry and Department of Climate Change and Energy.

I begin by assuring the Senate that this is done with great gravity. There has not been a motion of censure of a minister or of the government in the period the Rudd government has been in office. The use of the censure, I can assure senators, is not taken by
me, after 24 years parliamentary experience, lightly at all.

However, as a nation we are witnessing one of the grossest episodes of mishandling of the public money and the public trust in recent governance history. The Rudd government came to office in a very large part on the basis of its commitment to the Australian public to address the issue of climate change. Two big election promises to that end were the 20 per cent renewable energy target and the promise that 150,000 Australian homes would be given green loans to improve both their water efficiency and their ability to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels and therefore help in the fight against climate change.

In the event, the 20 per cent renewable energy target program has failed, not least because of the government’s refusal to take note of warnings from my colleague Senator Milne. Instead of including photovoltaics and solar hot-water services within the target, Senator Milne advised to make them additional to the target. The government did not take that advice; the Prime Minister did not take that advice; the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts did not take notice of that advice; and, in this place, the Minister for Climate Change and Water did not take notice of that advice. Now we have a renewable energy target program which is in corrosion if not at the point of sheer collapse. The wind energy system in Australia, which had such promise of investment, job creation and clean energy creation, is in the doldrums, to say the least, with hundreds of jobs and the expectation of many small businesses and, indeed, some large businesses blighted by the government’s failure to take better advice, on this occasion from a Greens senator who knew much better and was much better informed about the state of that industry and the delivery of this program.

The second commitment to the Australian people, which attracted a great deal of voter approval, was the promise by the government of 150,000 green loans. In the event, 1,000 have been and will be delivered. This is a less than one per cent success rate on that promise. Amongst the blighted promises is the program rollout to skill people to be able to take part in this program, thousands of whom now are skilled with nowhere to go, with their investment lost and with no promise of future employment.

When we look at the now renowned Home Insulation Program, which was part of the stimulus package, there was a promise which led everybody in Australia to believe that they could safely have their homes insulated and their power prices brought down to make a contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. In the event, we know that this is now an utter shambles. It has led not only to potential loss of life and injury but also to some 90 house fires and some 1,000 or more potential electrified ceilings. Many people around Australia who have had this insulation installed in their homes wanted to think they would feel good about this as a result of their contribution to climate change and their lower power bills; but instead they are worried about whether death lurks in their attic or ceiling. It is a terrible situation.

I quote from an article on the front page of the *Age* today which outlines one account of the outcome of this program:

LIKE a chain of dominoes, the once booming insulation industry was collapsing yesterday, with hundreds of jobs axed and thousands more expected to go amid warnings the sector could freeze for a year.

At the top of the insulation food chain, Australia’s biggest ceiling batt manufacturer warned that factories could close within weeks.

Several companies have been running their factories 24 hours a day, seven days a week for
months, creating a huge glut of batts that are now largely unwanted in the wake of the rebate scheme being axed on Friday by Environment Minister Peter Garrett.

Fletcher Insulation makes about 40 per cent of Australia’s insulation, and managing director David Isaacs said he expected 8000 jobs to be lost from the industry.

It is an utter shambles. We have been left to wonder how the government could get into such a mess. One of the problems is that there was not due diligence from the top. We do know that the Prime Minister’s office is inordinately interested in what the various departments, including the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, and the Department of Climate Change, are doing in the delivery of infrastructure and public spending. As the Prime Minister himself has said in the last 24 hours, he takes—and Prime Minister Rudd must take—responsibility for the way in which this extraordinary failure of billions of dollars of potential investment of taxpayers’ money, and money from the private sector, has been botched. That is what has happened.

Then we discover that the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts commissioned last year a report from Minter Ellison about the proposed programs and Minter Ellison reported to the department and to the minister—and no doubt to the Prime Minister himself—in April last year that there was great concern about the government’s ability, the department’s ability, to handle such a mammoth program. They recommended a delay of three months from July to the end of September. The report warned otherwise of the extreme risk of house fires, fraud and poor quality insulation, amongst many other things, and said that up to $195 million of taxpayers’ money could be wasted if delay, due diligence and prudent rollout were not undertaken. But we also now know that neither the Prime Minister nor the minister for the environment looked at that report until a couple of weeks ago. In other words, it was commissioned by the government and it gave a warning of things that were to happen.

We are not talking about hindsight here; those things happened because the government did not take notice, and the ministers, the Prime Minister included, must take responsibility. Now we understand that neither the minister nor the Prime Minister even read the report. We have it from the bureaucracy that government was told about the consequences coming from those reports. I am not going to split hairs here, but when ministers—even if they have not read a report they have commissioned themselves—get advised on the content of that report with such dire warnings and such horrendous consequences if advice is not taken, and they listen to neither, they have to accept that there has been a gross failure of governance by the Rudd government in this area of the rollout of a green program in an age of climate change which had such promise and should have had such a massive triple dividend—economic, employment and environmental—for the Australian people.

This censure is warranted. This government ought to be censured. This government stands censured, if this motion passes by the Senate, for a gross failure of governance which involves several ministers, not least the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts and the Prime Minister himself.

Senator CHRIS EVANS (Western Australia—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (3.48 pm)—Has there been an agreement on speaking times?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—No.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Could you just clarify?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—The normal 20 minutes is available for you.
Senator CHRIS EVANS—Except the clock has been set for 10 minutes.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—I have not been notified of any agreement.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Neither have I been notified. Mr Deputy President, could you clarify what is going on, because, as far as I know, there is no agreement. Equally, I do not want Senator Brown being prevented, if he thinks there is an agreement, from using his full time.

Senator Bob Brown—The leader has not been notified? His side, I can assure you, has been. I have no trouble with him speaking his full 20 minutes.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Senator Brown, the chair has not been notified of any speaking arrangements, so the normal speaking arrangements of up to 20 minutes apply.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Senator Brown claims that we are in on some sort of arrangement. I have both the whip and the relevant minister here and they do not seem to know anything about it. Perhaps, Senator Brown, in doing a deal with the Liberal Party on this motion you forgot to include us in such arrangements. In any event, nothing turns on it.

Senator Brown in introducing this motion said he did it with some gravity. Quite frankly, I do not think he is serious and I do not think the Australian public will think he is serious. A censure is a very serious matter. It is something that has not been undertaken lightly in this chamber before. It usually has been treated very seriously by all senators and very seriously by the government of the day. This is not such an occasion. This reeks of an ill-conceived stunt and is not an appropriate vehicle for the sort of debate that Senator Brown wants to have.

As I understand it, because the Liberal and National parties have agreed to support this motion, it will pass, but I suspect it will disappear very quickly as an irrelevancy in the political debate in this country. The motion reflects poorly on the Greens and I think confirms that the Liberal Party are irrelevant and unfit to govern. It seeks to censure the government over delivery of all its climate change related programs, which is an interesting to do in a censure motion. It does not actually specify any of the alleged failings, so we have been censured in general. We have been censured for being the government; we have been censured because the Greens are unhappy with our programs.

Senator Hanson-Young—‘Systematic failure’.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Systematic and broad failure, apparently, is what the problem is. It does not specify anything that warrants a censure. No argument was made by Senator Brown of anything that would warrant a censure of a minister, let alone the whole government. It goes on, in an unusual break from tradition, to call on the government to:

… put in place a unified Ministry and Department of Climate Change and Energy.

This is a very unusual Senate censure motion. I do not know who drafted this for Senator Brown, but he ought to look for a new drafter. I do not know who provided this advice on the understanding of parliamentary processes, but he ought to get some better advice.

Senator Bob Brown—that’s your opinion!

Senator CHRIS EVANS—It is my opinion, and I am putting it very strongly because this is an absolute nonsense! You are not serious. You do yourself a disservice by seeking to move this censure. It is poorly worded, it does not outline its case and it reflects a poor understanding of the role of censure motions in the parliamentary process. This is
more about the Greens trying to get into the limelight in this debate because they have been noticeably absent and removed in the debate over Minister Garrett and the programs he administers. This seems to be a belated attempt to get involved.

I would be more convinced of the seriousness of the Greens on this matter if they displayed that this week. The Greens get very few questions in this place. They only get one a day, I acknowledge that, and they do not have the opportunity to ask as many questions as I am sure they would like, even though the government has facilitated above pro rata representation in question time. This week the Greens have had two opportunities to ask questions: one yesterday and one today. If they were so concerned about this matter, if they thought the government warranted censure, then Mr Deputy President you would of course assume that both questions to the government this week would have been about these matters. But they have not been. Yesterday we were asked about toxins in forests. Senator Sherry was asked about that by Senator Brown. Today Senator Ludlum asked a question about nuclear waste dumps. So these are the Greens: really serious about this issue, absolutely concerned. This is a very grave issue according to Senator Brown, but not so grave as to warrant a question in the two opportunities they have had this week. It is not as important as a question about toxins in Tasmanian forests yesterday or as important as the nuclear waste dump proposition was today.

The Greens are not serious. This is more about relevance deprivation in this debate than anything else. If they were serious they would have been pressing this argument, this case in the parliament, much more forcefully than they have. And rather than do an MPI or another debate, which probably would have been a better vehicle for them to raise whatever concerns they have, we have a censure motion to which Senator Brown spoke for 10 minutes. They are not serious; it is not a serious resolution.

Quite frankly, I would urge the Liberal Party to rethink whether or not this is a road that they ought to go down. The Liberal Party, by supporting this, are saying this is serious, that it is one of the gravest things being considered by a parliamentary party that professes to be the alternative government, and yet they have signed up to this piece of nonsense that is illogical and poorly constructed. Quite frankly, I think it has a couple of hooks in it for them. I know the Liberal Party have adopted a policy under their new leader, Mr Abbott, that they do not need policies, they just need to dirty up the government, and that they are going to oppose everything for the sake of opposition. That is what Mr Abbott stated, and this is a classic case. They have signed up to the Greens’ censure motion because they are about trying to dirty up the government. It is not because, on any analysis of the motion, they should be voting for it—and they will regret voting for it. Interestingly, it seems to me now that the Liberal Party are endorsing a call for there to be a new ministry of climate change and energy.

Senator Parry—No, we’re not!

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Well, that is contained in the resolution. So the Liberal Party are endorsing this.

Senator Birmingham—You haven’t seen my amendment.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I have not seen the senator’s amendment. All I know is that he has signed up to this and it interests me because—

Senator Birmingham interjecting—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I divert for a second, Mr Deputy President. I table the transcript of Senator Birmingham’s interview
today because I thought his personal explanation was disingenuous in the extreme. And, so as to set the record straight, I table the full transcript that I quoted from today. People can make their own decisions about whether Senator Birmingham’s explanation was disingenuous or not, but I am happy for the record to be there. Senator Birmingham, if he claims to be misrepresented next time, ought to be a bit more frank because the full record supports exactly what I said about what he said today. But I digress.

It is interesting that maybe the Liberal Party have now had a rethink about supporting a new ministry of climate change and energy. I was wondering whether Senator Minchin had thought through his agreement to abandon his Energy portfolio as part of his responsibilities, to be demoted to only being the shadow minister for resources. I would have thought that would be a fairly large fall in status for the senator. I wondered whether he was going out there to industry to explain how the Liberal Party now supported the Energy portfolio being part of a climate change department rather than being connected to Resources. I am sure the mining industry and the energy industry were very interested in this development from the Liberal Party in supporting this Greens’ motion.

This is nonsensical, this is poorly drafted and it reflects an attempt to try to get into the public debate in a way that does the Greens and the Liberal Party a disservice. The seriousness the Liberal Party are showing in relation to this is reflected in their lead speaker. As I understand it, their lead speaker in this censure motion will be a shadow parliamentary secretary, Senator Birmingham. I am sure he will do his case justice, but, quite frankly, if you are serious about a censure, you do not send in a shadow parliamentary secretary. I have never, ever heard before of a serious censure in this parliament that has not been supported by the leader of the government or the Leader of the Opposition, and to send in the shadow parliamentary secretary says you are not dinkum.

Senator Parry—That’s the depth of our talent!

Senator CHRIS EVANS—The depth of your talent? I am happy to discuss that some other time. It is a very shallow gene pool.

This is how serious the Liberal Party are: they support a motion that seeks to take Energy into a Climate Change portfolio, which as I say is not something that was reflected in their decisions about their shadow ministry structure in December, and now we find they treat this issue so seriously that they send in a shadow parliamentary secretary in a censure motion. I will go back after this debate to see when a major political party in this country failed to send a senior frontbencher into the debate when they were supporting a censure motion. I have not had time to check on that and I am happy to have a look at the record, but I would be amazed if an alternative government in this country sought to prosecute a censure against the whole government and did not actually send in one of its leadership group. That shows that the Liberal Party are not serious about it; it shows that the Greens are not serious about it. This is a joke. It is not taken seriously by this government. The nature of the motion and the nature of the approach clearly indicates that this is more stunt than serious attempt to debate the issues or make a case against the government. No case has been made, and Senator Brown did not attempt to make a case in moving this motion.

As my major response to this motion, I want to take up the reference to delivery of climate change programs. It is interesting that they left out the reference to delivery of climate change programs. It is interesting that they left out the major climate change program that this government has introduced—the CPRS, and the move to try to set up an emissions trading scheme in this coun-
try. That was the largest measure introduced by this government to try to tackle the serious nature of climate change. The motion rightly refers to a range of other measures that this government has introduced: the government having made a serious attempt across a range of areas to tackle climate change and the protection of our environment. The list shows how serious the government has been by detailing some of those measures—by no means all, but some of them.

If you are going to be serious about a debate on the government's climate change programs, you have to start with the CPRS. You have to start with our attempt to introduce an emissions trading scheme. That is left off the list provided by the Greens in support of the Liberal Party. Why? Because they have blocked the government’s attempts to introduce that legislation. They have twice opposed that legislation in the Senate and prevented us from implementing the major measure that we took to the last election to address climate change. So they are saying to us, 'Oh well, we are concerned about these other measures,' when in fact they have used every endeavour at their disposal to prevent us honouring our key election commitment in this area. That shows a level of hypocrisy in those supporting this motion.

We have attempted to work with the Liberal Party, the National Party and the Greens to fulfil our election promise to introduce an emissions trading scheme in this country. That is left off the list provided by the Greens in support of the Liberal Party. Why? Because they have blocked the government’s attempts to introduce that legislation. They have twice opposed that legislation in the Senate and prevented us from implementing the major measure that we took to the last election to address climate change. So they are saying to us, ‘Oh well, we are concerned about these other measures,’ when in fact they have used every endeavour at their disposal to prevent us honouring our key election commitment in this area. That shows a level of hypocrisy in those supporting this motion.

Senator Brandis—Then it wasn’t an issue at the election.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—You might say it was not an issue in that sense, and I suppose that it is right, in a way—there was not the complex debate about the detail of competing claims. But I do remind the opposition that they swore to the electorate that they would support the introduction of an ETS. I heard Malcolm Turnbull last night indicate that he supported the great, progressive former Prime Minister of this country, John Howard, in his determination to introduce an ETS. Malcolm Turnbull is still loyal to John Howard and his agenda and the commitments made by the Liberal Party at the last election. Unfortunately, the election commitment has been abandoned by the Liberal Party.

Senator Brandis—You don’t still believe in nationalising banks, do you?

Senator CHRIS EVANS—This is the last election, Senator Brandis, and that was your policy. It was your policy until about three months ago. Mr President, you cannot have a debate in this chamber about the government’s climate change programs without including the ETS and the CPRS more generally. The Greens conveniently forget that. It is conveniently dropped off the list of issues when they are talking about programs that this government has implemented to address the effects of climate change. I think there is a lot of cheek involved in the moving of this motion. There is not a lot of seriousness; there is not a lot of gravity. There has been no real effort to justify the very serious charge involved in moving a censure motion against a government.
This party, this government, is very proud of its record in environmental issues in its two years in government. We promised we would sign the Kyoto Protocol, and we did. We promised we would move to introduce a carbon pollution reduction scheme and emissions trading in this country, and we have consistently attempted to deliver on that commitment. In addition to those measures, we have introduced a whole range of other initiatives that have sought to improve homes by improving energy efficiency through increasing access to solar hot water systems and phasing out incandescent light bulbs, and there have been improvements in energy efficiency standards. No doubt Senator Wong will run through the many, many things we have done to improve support for our environment and improve and tackle climate change. This is not a serious attempt to deal with those issues. It is a stunt, and it is not one that should be supported by the Senate. The government will treat it with contempt because we do not take it seriously.

Senator Brandis—This is the Senate, and you are treating the Senate with contempt.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Well, you go out and defend this nonsense in the public arena. I know what the view of the general public will be. They will regard it as a political stunt. I have already been out, on the weekend, talking to people and listening to what they had to say about some of the charges against Mr Garrett. He is getting a great deal of support out in the community. I spoke to an electrician on the weekend and had reported to me a conversation with a plumber. They know very well where the responsibilities for these matters of workplace health and safety lie. One of them referred me to a 1994 safety pamphlet that he had knowledge of that dealt with this question of safety with insulation and raised some of these concerns. My experience of dealing with the general public is they treat much of this as a political stunt. They do think the deaths of those poor young men are serious. They do think we ought to treat this seriously.

Senator Birmingham interjecting—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—But they do not like the way, Senator Birmingham, that you and some of your colleagues have sought to use those deaths in pursuing a political point. It does you no credit. The Australian public do not like it. Holding a minister to account is one thing but accusing him of being responsible for deaths is quite another.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator CHRIS EVANS—I think, just like you did this morning, that you and the Liberal Party have overreached, just like you did with Godwin Grech. You do not show the judgement required in these matters and I think you will regret the excesses of this matter because you have sought to go beyond what is a reasonable attempt to hold a minister accountable for his portfolio. That is perfectly reasonable when the parliamentary opportunities are there to do that and Minister Garrett has had to come into the House of Representatives chamber and defend himself and defend himself publicly, and that is as it should be. But I think you have overreached and you have unfairly sought to take advantage of those tragic situations in advancing your case. That is regrettable. The Liberal Party ought to reconsider how far it has gone with some of the accusations that it has made.

This proposed resolution is a joke. I think the fact that Senator Bob Brown could not do more than 10 minutes in supporting it indicates how seriously he takes it. There have been no questions from the Greens on this issue this week. There has been no concerted attempt to argue that censure is warranted. I think the Liberal Party ought to think more
carefully about signing up to this sort of stunt. They are increasingly getting a reputation of not being fit to be an alternative government in this country.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Troeth)—Minister Evans, I think you were intending to table a document.

Senator CHRIS EVANS—Thank you, Madam Acting Deputy President. I table the document I referred to, which is a transcript of what Senator Birmingham said at the doors this morning.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia) (4.09 pm)—Firstly, I move this amendment to the motion:

That the paragraph “The Senate calls on the Government to put in place unified Ministry of Climate Change and Energy” be deleted.

At the outset let me address a couple of the comments that Senator Evans made. Firstly, in relation to the timing of speeches, let me be very clear that I have been advised by the Chief Opposition Whip and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate that there was no agreement with the Liberal Party or the coalition with regard to the timing of speeches. So any assertion that Senator Evans has made about some cosy agreement between the coalition and the Greens on this matter is quite plainly wrong. While reflecting on the timing of speeches, I would also note that I think Senator Evans has unleashed something at the end of his remarks by commenting about Senator Bob Brown only contributing 10 minutes. I am pretty confident that we all know what the consequences of that will be when Senator Brown rises to conclude this debate.

Senator Evans also sought to cast aspersions on who was leading this debate for the opposition. Let me be quite clear that I am very happy to lead the debate against Senator Evans or Senator Wong—or Senator Brown—on any day of the week, especially when it comes to the mismanagement of the government’s environmental programs. This motion has been moved by the Greens. It has not been moved by the opposition. Therefore as a censure motion it has not been moved by the opposition and taken up by our leader or deputy leader. It has been taken up by me as the spokesman on these issues in this chamber.

Senator Wong—Where are your senior frontbenchers?

Senator BIRMINGHAM—I am very happy, Senator Wong, to debate you and to debate Senator Evans on these and other issues any day of the week that you choose, because your record stands as a testament of failure by the government in the management of these issues. That is why the censure component of this motion, its part 1, is commanding the support of the opposition. It is commanding our support because it identifies very clearly failure across a number of programs that this government has sought to implement, a number of programs where this government has got its implementation strategy seriously wrong, and the consequences of its errors in implementing those policies have been devastating. They have been devastating to the budget where hundreds of millions of dollars have been squandered, devastating to the lives of Australians, both families hurt by the mismanagement of programs and businesses hurt by the mismanagement of programs. These programs—the Home Insulation Program, the Green Loans Program, the solar rebate, the remote renewable power generation program and the renewable energy target—all stand out as beacons of failure by the government in their implementation strategy, beacons of failure to deliver on their promises or to deliver on their promises in a manner that actually gets those promises through rather than ending up in absolute disaster. This is a serious motion. It is a censure motion and the opposition
considers its support or otherwise as to the censure of the government very seriously.

Senator Wong—Where’s Minchin? Where are your senior frontbenchers? Where are they while you are talking? Where’s Minchin?

Senator BIRMINGHAM—I do not see too many people sitting around you either, Senator Wong. There are far more people on this side of the chamber than on your side of the chamber.

We know that there are more censure motions moved in the other place. Censure motions are moved with far greater frequency in the other place. In this place this is the first censure motion moved since 2005. Indeed, it has been moved after some weeks of debate about one particular program, the Home Insulation Program. That has been coupled in a less public way with a lot of angst and a lot of community concern about the Green Loans Program. There have also been concerns about solar hot water support that has led to problems with the renewable energy target. All of these issues have been brewing over a number of weeks. We, as an opposition, have sought to prosecute our case in the House of Representatives time and time again. We have sought time and again to bring to the attention of the House of Representatives the failures in particular of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Mr Garrett, to act responsibly and to manage his portfolio appropriately and to manage his responsibilities in implementing these key policy areas appropriately.

He has failed to do so. The opposition, led by Tony Abbott and Greg Hunt, has highlighted time and time again the programs of Minister Garrett and the problems that are manifest in his portfolio. Given that the government has used its numbers in the House of Representatives to block our efforts time and again over the last few weeks, I welcome the fact that the Greens have accepted many of our valid points and criticisms. I acknowledge that Senator Milne and others have also been making these points and criticisms for some time. The Greens have decided to accept the manifest failure of the government and to bring a censure motion to this place to pass judgment on the government’s failings.

Judgment is an important thing. Senator Evans attempted to talk about judgment when he tried to bring into question the judgment of the opposition. Let us consider the judgment of the government in promising to introduce these policies. It has promised policies that are far from achievable and are far from sensible, measured or deliverable. The government has promised the world but instead has delivered chaos. That is this government’s legacy on its environmental policies. It promised the world going into the last election, but it has simply delivered chaos in the implementation of these policies.

Senator Brandis—It is the most calamitous government since the Whitlam government.

Senator BIRMINGHAM—Thank you, Senator Brandis. It is the most calamitous government since the Whitlam government. By the way the Australian people are reacting to the failures of this government, it is evident that they—and, in particular, Minister Garrett—are in more strife than the early settlers when it comes to these portfolios.

Firstly, the story on the Home Insulation Program is an absolutely tragic one. Senator Evans acknowledged that. It is tragic because it has involved the loss of the lives of four young Australians working on installing insulation. I do not blame Minister Garrett directly for that loss of life; nor does the opposition. We blame Minister Garrett for failing to recognise, in implementing a government promise, the consequences of how the industry and the market would respond to work-
place safety. That is the tragedy of this program. Associated with the House Insulation Program are around 93 house fires. We know from estimates of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts today that there are around 1,000 homes at risk of electrification as a result of dodgy installation and that there are more than 200,000 Australian homes estimated to have received inadequate or dodgy insulation. A number of them are at risk of fire.

These are serious issues and serious statistics, and these are things that could have been avoided had the minister acted appropriately when implementing the Home Insulation Program. Did Minister Garrett act on the advice that he received? We now know not only that there were multiple warnings—more than 20—coming from industry and state government sources and elsewhere about the risks inherent to this program but also that the government commissioned its own independent external advice. It commissioned not one but two reports from that esteemed law firm Minter Ellison, where my colleague Senator Brandis used to practise.

Senator Brandis—I am a Minter Ellison alumnus!

Senator BIRMINGHAM—Indeed, and I am sure you are a proud and well-recognised member of their alumni. These two reports provided by Minter Ellison to government—the risk management plan and the risk register—identified a number of concerns that should have been recognised and acted on by the government. The Minister for Employment Participation, Senator Arbib, came into question time today and, in one of the rare instances where he has been questioned about these issues, attempted to provide some level of detail to an answer. He tried to go through the risk management plan and say that each of the issues had been adequately addressed. They quite clearly were not adequately addressed. The proof is in the outcome, and the outcome is the tragic statistics I spoke of before.

It is not just that the government did not act on the concerns. The government even had suggestions put to them by Minter Ellison that it failed to act on. It was suggested to the government that risks in certain areas were not tolerable. Minter Ellison, in documenting the risks of implementing this program, found that on 9 April 2009, when they delivered these reports to Minister Garrett’s department, the risks of going ahead and implementing the programs were not tolerable. They recommended, instead, that the government consider delaying the start date for the Home Insulation Program by three months. This was so there could be more time for the government to put in place appropriate regulations, registration, training, restrictions around procurement processes and the types of things that could have ensured installers were well trained and that the pink batts or other insulation materials they were installing were up to scratch. These are the things that the government could have done had it bought an extra three months to get the implementation right. Instead, it ignored that advice. The government ignored the advice in a report that it paid more than $20,000 to get which suggested it should just wait three months.

They ignored it because the great haste was on; the pressure to deliver quickly was on. They needed to be seen to be taking ‘decisive action’—which at the time was the buzzword from the government, the ‘well-focus-grouped’ term. The government needed to be seen to be a government of decisive action, so they wanted to rush this program through as quickly as possible. That was the brief, clearly, from the Prime Minister. It was the brief given to Senator Arbib when he was appointed into the executive. I note that the best excuse Senator Arbib could
offer up today as to why he was not as cul-
pable as Minister Garrett in the implementa-
tion of this program was that he was not a
minister at the time; he was just a parlia-
mentary secretary. Well, parliamentary secretar-
ies are appointed with executive responsibili-
ties, and his executive responsibility was to
assist in the implementation of the stimulus
package. He should have assisted in the im-
plementation of the Home Insulation Pro-
gram. Rather than saying, ‘Go faster, go
faster, go faster,’ he should have been saying:
‘Hasten slowly. Take the cautious approach
and make sure we get this right, because, if
we don’t get this right, lives could be at risk.’

It is not just the Home Insulation Program
for which the government stands con-
demned. Yes, that program has caused im-
mense suffering to many families and im-
mense damage to the insulation industry in
Australia—damage that some businesses
who have existed not just for 12 months but
for 12 years or longer will struggle to re-
cover from—but the government also stands
condemned for the other programs that the
Greens have highlighted in this censure mo-
tion. There is the Green Loans program. It is
worth recounting a little bit of the history of
Green Loans. Green Loans was one of those
great election policies of Team Rudd back in
2007. It was one of those policies where they
promised the world and we can see now that
they have delivered chaos. What did they
promise? Kevin Rudd and Peter Garrett, in
their 2007 policy document Solar Schools,
Solar Homes, promised to:

Offer low interest Green Loans of up to $10,000
each to make 200,000 existing homes more en-
ergy and water efficient, with subsidised envi-
nmental audits and free Green Renovations
packs.

That was the promise: 200,000 green loans
of up to $10,000 each. How many have been
delivered? At last estimates, it was 1,008 out
of the 200,000. And guess what. In the
changes announced by Minister Garrett last
Friday, we discovered that the Green Loans
program will no longer have a loans com-
ponent. That is right. If it were not so serious,
you would think it really was an episode of
The Hollowmen: a Greens Loans program
without a loans component.

Of course, this is not the first downsizing
or change to Labor’s election promise on
Green Loans. In the 2009 budget, the Labor
government quietly downsized their promise.
It went from being a promise to provide
200,000 green loans to instead providing
75,000 green loans. So they sliced more than
60 per cent of the loans off before they even
started implementing the program. The loans
were promised to be 20,000 this year, 20,000
each of the next couple of years and 15,000
in the last year. But, as I said, 1,008 out of
the 20,000 budgeted for this year are all the
government have managed to deliver.

The government promised to appoint
some auditors to go into homes and conduct
sustainability assessments of homes. They
left the impression that there would be 1,000
auditors. In his 8 May 2009 media release—
the one where he downsized the program
from 200,000 loans to 75,000 loans—
Minister Garrett said that there would be
1,000 home sustainability assessors. On 20
August 2009, Ms Kruk, the Secretary of the
Department of the Environment, Water, Heri-
tage and the Arts, told the Australian Eco-
nomic Forum that the program would be de-
levered through training 1,000 home sustain-
ability assessors. Guess what. Instead of
training 1,000 home sustainability assessors,
the government trained 3,648. That was the
estimate given at estimates, although I note
that the industry body is citing figures far
higher than that as the number who appear to
have been accredited.

There are some questions there that need
to be answered which I have posed in corre-
spondence to Minister Garrett. I hope that, when he finishes defending himself over the Home Insulation Program, he might address this issue, because again we have thousands of Australians who have invested their time, their money and their lives in becoming home sustainability assessors, on the premise that there would be 1,000 of them around Australia, on the premise that the work would be shared between 1,000 of them. Instead, the government has gone and at least trebled the number of assessors. Indeed, in the announcement made on Friday, the government said the number would be capped at 5,000. So 5,000—five times the number that was originally promised—is what the government has ended up putting into the marketplace.

Little wonder that assessors are complaining that there is not enough work, that when they can get work they cannot get through to the government’s booking service to book the assessment and that when they complete the assessment and they send the audit of homes back to the department it sits in the department for Lord knows how long. We have complaints from numerous assessors who say that these audits of homes have been sitting in the department of the environment not just for a couple of weeks but for several months at least—months and months of sitting there in the department before they get back to the homeowner. Of course, the homeowner wonders what is going on, blames the person who undertook the assessment, harasses the person who undertook the assessment and obviously is not able to take out a green loan even if they want to, because they have not got their audit back. It is another example of the gross mismanagement of these programs by this government.

On the issue of solar—very briefly—the government has flipped around time and again. It brought in, without any notice, a means-testing of the solar rebate. When the industry went mad in terms of the amount of rebates being claimed, the government decided to change the rules again. Again, it changed the rules without notice to industry, just ending the program overnight without warning. People got an email in the morning saying, ‘The program will end by close of business today.’ That is how this government treats the people in the solar industry.

The government also ended the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program earlier than planned and with no appropriate substitute, leaving people in regional areas reliant on diesel power instead. It is a litany of failures by this government in the way they have managed these environmental programs. In particular, Minister Garrett, who has responsibility for all of them, stands condemned. As a result, the government should be censured for its mismanagement on these issues.

Senator MILNE (Tasmania) (4.30 pm)—I rise today to support this censure motion of the government for its gross and systematic failure in the delivery of its climate change programs, including home insulation, green loans, the solar rebate, the renewable remote power generation program and the renewable energy target.

I heard Senator Evans, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, say that he would regard this censure motion with contempt. He did not take the censure motion seriously; he believed it to be a joke and that there was not a lot of gravity behind it. I hope that he will front the workers at Fletcher Insulation, Bradford Insulation and Loyastar Insulation; I hope that he will go and tell them, today, that they are a joke and that he will treat the censure motion with contempt. They have lost their jobs. They were called together in the last 24 hours and told that they no longer have work.
I happen to think that that is a serious matter. Senator Evans should go and tell the people who paid $3,000 to train as home sustainability assessors that they are now not going to be accredited and that they will not have work. I have hundreds of emails from people who have said that they borrowed $3,000 in order to get the training and to get the accreditation. People left well-paid jobs in order to go and do this because they thought it was a worthwhile contribution that they could make.

And then we had Senator Evans ridiculing the Greens because Senator Brown spoke for 10 minutes. Well, Senator Evans had better come back in here and apologise very shortly because it was a member of Senator Evans’s staff who rang the Greens and asked the Greens if we would restrict our time on this debate. And we agreed to that because we want orderly management of the business of this house. We agreed to that. Usually when that happens—when we agree—the government then organises the time with the coalition and with the other parties in here so that there is a proper allocation of time. That is what happened. So if there is contempt in this place then Senator Evans had better look a little bit closer to home.

I want to go through this, because the government is being censured here because its failure is systemic and has occurred over a long period of time—since its election, in fact. It has failed to take a whole-of-government internally-consistent approach to its climate change policies. What we have is one part of government advocating one thing and another part advocating another. On the very day that the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme was first introduced into the House of Representatives, the Prime Minister was in the Hunter valley turning the first sod on the expanded coal railway and coal export port facility. There was a very clear media management strategy: let’s get the press gallery in Canberra to tell people that the Rudd government is moving on the carbon pollution reduction scheme but let’s go up to the Hunter valley and give a wink-wink, nudge-nudge to the coal industry to say, ‘You’ll be all right; we will look after you. The Rudd government is not going to see any winding back in coalmining or coal exports whilst we get everybody else focused on a five per cent reduction in emissions.’

Only a couple of weeks ago we had the Premier of Queensland out there absolutely ecstatic about the opening of new coal mines in Queensland. The new coalmine in question will be exporting 30 million tonnes of coal to China per year—90 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions from China via Australia. And we have national emissions of around 600 million tonnes so we think we are doing great strokes here—a five per cent reduction whilst exporting to China mega emissions way in excess of any of those reductions here.

So let us look at a holistic, internally-consistent government approach to climate change. What we have is a case of spin over substance. In terms of all these programs the government has never seen an opportunity to transform our economy—our way of life—to a low-carbon economy. If you were serious about it you would be looking at system change—whole-of-systems changes in transport, whole-of-systems changes in approaches to the built environment, and whole-of-systems change to energy in this country. There would be transformation away from fossil use into the renewables and into efficiency. But we do not have that. We have boom and bust cycles managed by the government when they roll out small programs—a few hundred thousand houses here and a few hundred thousand there—that go for short periods of time. Businesses are given a signal that there is going to be a shift...
in policy and then, without notice, it is wound back.

So, whether you are in an energy efficiency technology business, a renewable energy business—whether you are an installer, an assessor or whatever else—you never know from one day to the next what your future is going to be. It is all dependent on government programs and government largess. It is not as a result of a system-wide driver. That is why the Greens have argued strongly for the increase in the renewable energy target to be higher than it is, but also for a gross feed-in tariff so that you get away from industry and people being dependent on government largess and the decision, one day, to turn it on and, one day, to turn it off.

I want to go through the systemic failures here. Let me start with the solar rebate. It was an $8,000 rebate but suddenly it was stopped and we went to a means test. People absorbed that for a short while and then suddenly there was an announcement that the program was ending there and then on a particular day.

What happened to the photovoltaic industry? People in the industry said: ‘I’m having to put people out of work. I can’t deal with this. I ordered all this because of the rebate program, and now you have stopped it.’ So the government said: ‘Okay. We’ll look at the renewable energy target. When we bring that in, we’ll put a multiplier for photovoltaics into the renewable energy target.’ The solar hot water people and the energy efficiency people are now saying: ‘What about us? What about these technologies? They were included in the renewable energy target.’

Then the government came along and interfered with a mechanism like that by giving the rebates and completely flooding the renewable energy target with renewable energy certificates from solar hot water and from heat pumps and from phantom RECs. That stole from wind power, because the people who expected to make money out of the renewable energy target and to actually get a boost and an investment signal were those in the wind industry. But, no—it just pulled the rug out from under them.

Last week Pacific Hydro, opening their wind farm in South Australia, said, ‘That’s the last of the wind farms until the government fixes the renewable energy target.’ In Tasmania, the Musselroe Bay wind farm is now stalled, and people are losing their jobs there—another lot of jobs, Senator Evans. You might think it is a joke to talk about systemic failure, but people in north-eastern Tasmania—rural and regional Tasmania—do not think it is a joke. The people elsewhere in Australia do not think it is a joke, either—$20 billion worth of investment in wind sitting on the sides because the renewable energy target has been wrecked.

What about the renewable remote power generation program? This is a fantastic program which brought renewable energy to remote parts of Australia and in particular to Indigenous communities. One of the programs affected as a result of the Renewable Remote Power Generation program going west is the Bushlight program. That was an innovative renewable energy project to increase access to sustainable energy services in remote Indigenous communities across Australia. The project has gone west because of the restriction on the size of the solar systems for which there is a multiplier to 1.5 kilowatt hours.

I remind Senator Evans, who thinks this is not to be taken seriously, that, without reliable access to fresh food, refrigeration, fuel and qualified technicians, Australia’s remote communities are left in limbo. These remote programs actually assisted Indigenous communities in accessing technologies that made
their lives easier and gave them the kinds of support for technologies like refrigeration that they had not been able to access on a consistent basis in the past.

I will now go to the Green Loans Program. Again, this represents systemic failure. We heard Senator Birmingham outline some of it, and I have been persisting with this for weeks. The fact that Senator Evans thinks that this is a sudden idea of the Greens shows that he did not listen when I, supported by the coalition, put a motion through the Senate only a couple of weeks ago on the renewable energy targets. The government clearly took no notice whatsoever on the RET. They took no notice whatsoever of the work I have been doing on the Green Loans Program for weeks and in Senate estimates—not to mention these other programs that we have persistently gone through, explaining to the government where the failure is.

Not only do we now have no green loans, but there are many people who have not received from the government their report on their assessment. Without that report they cannot go to the bank and borrow the money. The government has said that 21 March is the deadline. If you have not gone to the bank and asked for your loan by then, you cannot get a loan. But what if you are sitting at home and you had your assessment six, eight or even 12 weeks ago, and you still do not have your report? You are going to be denied a loan because the department has not issued the report. Whose fault is this? ‘Ask the department, not us’, they say. ‘Ask the minister, not us’, they say. ‘Ask the government, not us’, they say. And everybody goes out there and says: ‘The problem out here is dodgy people. Somewhere out here there are dodgy people. It is all dodgy people’s fault.’

It is not dodgy people’s fault that minimum, nationally accredited training standards were not in place before the programs rolled out. It is not dodgy people’s fault that registered training organisations were not the only ones offering training. Anyone could walk in off the street and get training, not just the registered training organisations that were providing that training. And where were the auditors? How many auditors were out there on 1 July when the insulation program rolled out? How many auditors are out there with the Green Loans Program?

Even worse, now that the government has abolished the green loans, you can now get a sustainability assessment. But since you cannot borrow any money at the end of it at no interest, in a lot of cases it is going to cost you substantially to buy the technologies. You would expect the report you get from these assessments to be accurate and to give you the information you need to make informed decisions. Now, however, we discover that the government or the department—somebody—has been fiddling with the calculator that weights the various parts of the loading to determine what the calculator spits out at the end as a recommendation for your house. These changes to the calculator have been going on on a fortnightly basis. If you change the loadings, what you get in the report is different each time. Because of the manipulation of the calculator that is used when you feed in the data in this green loans process, the community has a right to ask, ‘What confidence would I have in the report, when I eventually get it?’

What about the 5,000 people who had paid for training and will now not be accredited? What about the fact that the department promised people that the government would pay to have their training upgraded to certificate IV? What about the assessors who went into this thinking they were going to have a job and are now being told, ‘Five assessments a week, and that’s it’. That is less than two days work.
And what about the companies? I am one who has been critical of the fact that the government entered into discriminatory and preferential arrangements with certain companies that gave them access to a booking system that the self-employed person did not have. Nevertheless, contracts were signed with those companies. For example, I know that one of these assessor companies has spent nearly $1 million for training assessors, setting up a call centre, setting up support staff and making sure the occupational health and safety standards are in place. That company is now employing 525 people in this particular program. That company does not know if the five-booking limit now applies to them as well or to their assessors—how that is going to work. There has been no consultation, and there are at least five companies in that particular position with the government.

So, does this constitute gross and systemic failure? Does it say that the Rudd government does not take green jobs, green businesses and the green carbon economy seriously? I think that is exactly what it says. I think what it says is that the Prime Minister takes the old fossil fuel economy very seriously. He gets himself up to multimillion and multibillion dollar announcements when it comes to coal railways, coal ports and coal mines. But when it comes to transformation of the economy in energy efficiency, in fuel efficiency, in any of these programs, then the government is not prepared to let go of the fossil fuel economy and allow the shift to renewable energy, the shift to energy efficiency, to become systemic across the whole of Australia—no way. It is restricted to management by a department that has clearly shown it does not have the competence to roll it out. That is why this censure motion says the government has not taken it seriously. It is all spin over substance. There are many disappointed, unemployed people across Australia today, and people whose businesses are about to go bust—and I happen to think that is a serious matter.

This government is also about uncertainty—no long-term investment signals, no nothing when it comes to the whole energy efficiency and renewable energy sector. That is why we need to take energy and put it together with climate change and have all these policies managed in a department which has the competence to do it, a department which actually recognises the issues. Does the Prime Minister, with his Department of Climate Change, want to transform the Australian economy to a low-carbon, zero-carbon economy? Or does he want a department which oversees photo opportunities and announcements for election campaigns while getting on with the real business of an ongoing fossil fuel economy? Because that is how it looks at the moment.

The Minister for Resources and Energy, of course, is totally focused on Gorgon gas, on big new development—all in the fossil fuel sector. He is prouder with his coal-to-liquids project for motor vehicles rather than actually getting on with the low-carbon, zero-carbon economy. That is the tragedy: consumer confidence that Australia can move to this new economy is at an all-time low, even though community enthusiasm for it was high. I hold the Prime Minister responsible for that. These programs have been oversubscribed many times over, because the Australian community really wanted to do its bit for this transformation. But now people are afraid, because if they open the door there could be a shonky operator standing there saying: ‘I’m here to deliver the government’s insulation program. I don’t have to come inside; just sign here—this will do for an energy assessment; I’ll just send it in and get the money.’ We have had endless reports of people who say that the assessor did not even
come inside their house, yet we have had other assessors who have spent hours and hours, and have done a fantastic job, and consumers say: ‘This is the best thing that’s ever happened; I really understand my house now and what I need to do.’ There is that unevenness of quality, unevenness of audit.

Somebody has to be held responsible for this, and it is the government—it is not just one minister; it comes straight out of the Prime Minister’s office. We know, for example, that all these warnings that were given by Minter Ellison went to the project control board, which had on it a representative of the Coordinator-General. They were told about the risks embedded in the insulation program. We know the government knew that it could not roll these programs out effectively in the time frame. They were warned time and time again, and none of those shortcomings were fixed in the time frame—nor were they fixed before the programs rolled out, even though they were warned about the problems beforehand, including the RET.

So this censure motion stands. We want a new department that is capable of managing these programs, and we want some real effort and competence put into it—not what we have at the moment: ad hoc, internally inconsistent and contradictory policy and program delivery.

Senator Wong (South Australia—Minister for Climate Change and Water) (4.49 pm)—I have to say that, whilst I respect that Senator Milne does put some work into these issues, it is somewhat difficult to listen to a lecture about the need for a long-term price signal, a long-term transformation of the Australian economy, when it is the case that the Greens could have delivered precisely the price signal she is calling for had they not sat with Mr Abbott’s people and not sat with Senator Fielding, but with the government—and the two Liberal senators who showed the courage to cross the floor—to deliver a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. For the first time in this nation’s history we would have actually capped the carbon pollution we produce. That is precisely the long-term price signal that was required. Regrettably, we saw the Greens put politics over policy in a decision which I think will prove, when history looks at it, to be most unwise.

But I want to return to some of the issues raised. Senator Milne at least had some substance—whilst I disagree with it—in her contribution. Senator Bob Brown demonstrated the truth of Senator Evans’ contribution that this is about politics over policy. This is about the Greens party wishing to insert themselves into the current debate and the current attack by the coalition against Minister Garrett. The issue for the Greens now, and after the next election, is whether they will be a party of responsible parliamentarians or a party of protest. At the moment they are being a party of protest. That is fine if you are not actually interested in doing anything other than lecturing people.

I want to respond specifically to Senator Birmingham’s contribution. Whilst I do not mind Senator Birmingham—there are worse people on the other side! And he is not a bad debater—

Senator Williams interjecting—

Senator Wong—I wasn’t pointing at you, Senator Williams! Whilst he is not a bad debater—he has a few interesting hand moves, but I am prone to that at times myself—the fact that the opposition chose to bring to this debate neither the Leader of the Opposition in this place nor any frontbencher shows that they are not taking this seriously. It demonstrates that this is a stunt they are jumping on board with. They do not have the courage of responsible opposition to treat it seriously—or to simply not support the mo-
tion. They should know, as a former government, as a party of government, that censure motions are serious business. To not have anybody of any seniority on the other side leading off, or speaking at all, in this debate demonstrates how they regard it.

Senator Birmingham tried to defend the opposition’s credentials on the environment whilst in government. A couple of facts ought to be put on the record. The first is in relation to the renewable energy target, which he trumpeted as a Howard government achievement. Well, yes, it was, but let us remember, firstly, that it was only a five per cent target: 9½ thousand gigawatt hours by 2010. We are going to deliver four times that. More importantly in many ways, the coalition in government commissioned at least one review—the Tambling review reported in September 2003—which recommended increasing the target out to 2020, and what did the Howard government do? Absolutely nothing. They ignored even their own advice from the Tambling review, which included former Liberal senator David Kemp. So, when Senator Birmingham comes in here trumpeting the renewable energy target, he should also say: ‘And we ensured that we ignored advice about how we could make this better. We stopped at five per cent because we didn’t want to go any further.’

The senator also went on about solar panels. If those opposite want to have a go at this government for what it has done, let us remember that this government has put more solar panels on Australian roofs than any other government in Australia’s history—full stop. In 12 years, solar panels were provided by the Howard government to about 10½ thousand homes. In two years, we have funded, or are on track to fund, more than 120,000 installations. That is 10,500 in 12 years compared to 120,000 in two. In their 12 years, solar hot water rebates were provided to 4,000 households—in two years, 100,000 households have received a solar hot water rebate. So for senators from the other side to come in here and talk about their environmental credentials, citing solar panels and renewable energy, is kicking an own goal, because their record after 12 years in government is extremely poor.

I will turn now to a couple of points made by Senator Milne. Senator Milne talked a lot about coal, and I understand that the Greens have a view about wanting to close that industry. It is not a view shared by the government, and that is not because we are corrupt or we are in the pockets of anybody; we just do not agree. I want to take the following global perspective around the industry of coal. It is something which seems to have escaped some of the contributions to this chamber on this issue. If Australia chose to stop mining and exporting coal—which is not the government’s position—does anybody in this chamber honestly believe that the demand for coal in other nations would decline? Of course not. There are many other countries which already export coal, and the International Energy Agency’s prediction out to 2050 is that coal usage will increase globally. If you do not have a low-emissions solution for coal, you do not have a solution on climate change. The answer is not Australia deciding not to export it, because some other country would simply export it—it would have absolutely no effect on global emissions. That is the logical position: it would have no effect on global emissions if we did not export. What would have an effect would be to find, along with other coal-producing nations, a technology which reduced emissions from coal. I know that is a logical position that many on the other side of the chamber disagree with, but the facts are inescapable. You have to find a lower emissions solution for coal, and that is why we are putting in excess of $2 billion on the table: to
help work up that solution, a solution the planet, the globe, needs.

I would also like to remind the chamber that we are not disregarding solar energy. The $1.5 billion Solar Flagships Program is about substantial investment in developing the baseload renewable solar power that the world and also Australia needs. That is part of the government’s agenda. Frankly, to deal with climate change we need a whole range of policy mechanisms which will work. The proposition that seems to be being put—that somehow it is wrong for us to recognise that Australia is a coal-producing nation—is simply illogical.

The reality is Australia’s carbon pollution is rising, it will continue to rise and by 2020 it will be around 120 per cent of what we were producing at the year 2000. It is this pollution which is contributing to climate change. Carbon pollution is what causes climate change. The fact is that the Greens have made tackling climate change an explicit part of their platform for many years and they have had not one, but two, opportunities in this chamber to vote to reduce Australia’s carbon pollution. Not once, but twice, they decided that it was better politically for them to oppose that reduction. Not once, but twice, they sat with Tony Abbott or his senators and Senator Fielding, people who do not believe in climate change. Tony Abbott, who believes that climate change is absolute crap, is who Senator Brown voted with. The Greens voted to ensure that Australia’s carbon pollution would continue to rise. The question is now, and will be in the years to come: why did they do that?

It is well known around this place that some in the Greens have made the strategic decision that, if there were an election fought on climate change, they would gain more seats. I am only quoting from the Greens themselves. Drew Hutton, one of the Greens campaigners in Brisbane, is quoted in the Brisbane Times as saying that his party would be ‘the big winners’ in an ETS double dissolution and could expect to at least double their current representation of five senators as well as pick up lower house seats. The article reads:

‘We would be very confident of winning our first Queensland (Senate) seat,’ Mr Hutton said.

Senator Brown said on Lateline last year: … if it could go to a climate change double dissolution, if you like, at the expense of the Opposition, it would try that, and the analysis is that the Greens will come out stronger in the Senate as a result of the next election, and if it’s on climate change, we Greens will be the constructive opposition going to the Australian people …

If this is why the Greens have voted this way, it is a cynical political decision indeed—a cynical political decision to vote to allow Australia’s carbon pollution to rise. Let us remember that there were two Liberal senators who honoured the agreement we struck with Malcolm Turnbull and who crossed the floor to vote with the government and if the party that claims to be the party of the environment had also voted with the government Australia would now have a carbon price. It is regrettable that this party chose to stand in the way of that progress. It is an unfortunate reality that the Greens wasted that opportunity not just to do something very significant for our environment but to put in place the required changes to our economy.

This government is committed to tackling climate change. It is committed to a comprehensive strategy to tackle it and to support investment in renewable energy. As I said, we have delivered through this chamber a fourfold increase in Australia’s renewable energy sector by 2020 on top of the commitments I have already outlined on the Solar Flagships program. The government had a big ship to turn around. Let us remember that renewables actually went backwards
under the previous government. Over the 10
years between 1997 and 2007, renewables
dropped from 10.5 per cent to 9.5 per cent.

The reality is that some in this chamber
who profess to be pro environment should
think very carefully about whether they are
prepared to take responsibility for the sorts
of policies which are required to implement
that change, because we have too often seen
the members of the Greens playing politics
without regard to policy. I recall being
chided quite stridently in this chamber by
Senator Hanson-Young, who demanded that
I deliver the amount of water that a particular
academic report was proposing for the
Lower Lakes. I pointed out to her that that
amount of water was in fact more than we
had drawn at the time from the River Murray
for Adelaide and for all the towns—

Senator Hanson-Young—Where’s your
plan? You’ve got no plan.

Senator Wong—I know that Senator
Hanson-Young is shrieking at me again be-
cause she does not like the facts. If you were
serious about the environment, you would
responsibly address the facts. But you refuse
to do that. The fact of Senator Hanson-
Young’s position is that she was putting to
me that we should shut down—

Senator Hanson-Young interjecting—

The Acting Deputy President
(Senator Boyce)—Order! Senator Wong has
the call.

Senator Wong—That is really extraor-
dinary. Senator Hanson-Young is honestly
putting to me that it is somehow a green po-
sition to shut down all drawing of water from
the Murray River, including for Adelaide.
That is the position you put. That is not a
responsible environmental position.

The Acting Deputy President—
Please address your remarks through the
chair, Senator Wong.
not hide from. It is extraordinary that a party that says, ‘We’re pro tackling the environment,’ somehow also says, ‘We’re going to vote it down because it’s not perfect.’ It was quite an extraordinary position when the extreme ends of politics combined to stymie this reform.

As I said, this is an opportunistic motion. Senator Milne made some comments about jobs and Senator Birmingham made some comments about the tragic deaths. I know Senator Milne, and I do not think that she would have meant to suggest that the government does not care about jobs. I hope she would know that we of course do. I do not think anybody in this chamber—Senator Hanson-Young interjecting—Senator WONG—Would you like to get up and speak, Senator, or could I finish? Of course, everybody in this chamber regards the deaths as tragedies. No-one on this side of the chamber regards them as anything less than that, and I hope there is no implication from that side of the chamber that that is the case. As Minister Garrett has said, they are deeply regrettable incidents, and our thoughts do go out to the families and friends of those involved.

I do not think this government has hidden from the fact that there are very significant problems with the Home Insulation Program. It was a very large program and there were problems with it—we have been upfront about that. The Prime Minister has said that quite clearly. The minister has outlined how he has taken action when advised to reduce the risks about which he was advised and the government has made a decision to close the program. The minister has made clear how he has acted appropriately on the advice he was provided and the government has closed the program as a result of the advice provided. Obviously, as I said, we do not shy away from the fact that there were problems in this program. That is why the program was changed and has been discontinued. The minister has been full and frank with the House as well as with the Australian people about the way in which he has approached that.

If you look at all that this government is seeking to do on these issues—unfortunately having been stymied by some in this chamber—you will realise it is a government that is serious about tackling climate change. It is a government that does have an ambitious agenda. I note that Senator Birmingham was critical of that. We are unashamed about that—we have an ambitious agenda because there are many things to be done. Whilst some of these policies may not have been perfect, there have also been many good things delivered. These include, as I said, a very substantial increase in investment in renewable energy and, of course, a whole range of other programs across government for businesses and households in terms of reducing energy use, reducing water use and assisting people to make this transition.

I come back to this very simple fact: we will not transform our economy in the way we have to if we are going to tackle climate change unless we put a price on carbon. Unless the Greens change their position or the opposition change their position, we will see the extreme left and the extreme right of Australian politics stop a very important reform.

Senator FISHER (South Australia) (5.09 pm)—I rise to speak in favour of this motion as amended and to speak about what has indeed been gross and systematic failure by this government in the management of a range of its programs, in particular the Home Insulation Program. In so doing, because I will not go missing in action, I take head-on comments by government members in this place about a shadow minister not being pre-
sent in the debate on this motion. I take head-on suggestions by members opposite that somehow this motion of censure is not serious. In respect of the Home Insulation Program, I believe that the Australian people are looking to the very government that has got them into this mess to now get them out of it.

Their comments about shadow ministers are the height of hypocrisy. Talk about the pot calling the kettle black! Where has Minister Garrett been at every step along the torturous way of the Home Insulation Program? Missing, missing, missing—the minister has been missing in action. As recently as two weeks ago, when a meeting was held to consider restarting the rolling out of foil insulation, where was the minister? Missing in action. The headlines were ‘Garrett goes bush as batts keep burning’. He was inspecting creepy-crawlies, instead of being back at his home base attending to his program, which was unravelling as fast as it was insulating. If you are going to bother to insulate, Minister, insulate right, not wrong.

The minister has been missing in action at every step of the way—and there have been quite some steps, but it has taken us a while to learn about these steps because the government has not been particularly forthcoming about them until now. The minister has received more than 20 warnings about the failings of the Home Insulation Program, and where has he been? Missing every step of the way. He was missing every step of the way when warned by his department’s own experts, Minter Ellison, of some 19—let’s call it 20; let’s round it up; what’s an extra one?—risks that needed to be addressed in the rollout of the Home Insulation Program. Some 20 risks were identified by Minter Ellison as many as 10 months ago, of which the minister, we are led to believe, did not become aware until perhaps some 10 or so days ago. Where was the minister every step along the way when it came to identification of risk, risk assessment and risk management? He was missing in action on every one of those 20 risk management steps.

Is the opposition serious in supporting this motion to censure the government for gross and systemic mismanagement in the Home Insulation Program? Please! This is from a government that supposedly established the Home Insulation Program for three reasons: to stimulate the economy, to create jobs and to help the environment. Opposition not serious? Please tell that to taxpayers and watch-ers of the economy, who see this program not stimulating the economy but backing money right out of it. Not serious? Please say that to the workers who were told they would have jobs created for them and protected and instead find they lost their jobs at the stroke of the minister’s pen last Friday, whilst he manages to hang on to his. Not serious? Tell that to those who support good environmental outcomes and find instead this program doing just the opposite.

How is it that the wrong sort of insulation gets installed in the wrong places? In hot places we get insulation that keeps the heat in, instead of stopping it coming in in the first place. In cold places, it stops the heat coming in instead of the reverse. It is incubating houses in hot places, effectively, instead of cooling them. Guess what happens then? Householders utilise electricity or whatever they have got that supposedly ain’t good for the environment to neutralise the effects of the insulation that was supposedly put in there to help the environment. Not serious about censuring the government? Please! Tell that to those who really want to believe that the Home Insulation Program was going to stimulate the economy, create and protect jobs, and help the environment.

Not serious? Not serious about censuring the government? Please, please, please! Tell
that to the taxpayer who finds out as a result of the recent Senate committee inquiry that they have paid Minter Ellison some $28,000 for a risk assessment and a risk register. Hey, what’s $28,000 in a $2.7 billion or so program? It is a fair bit of money to mums and dads. It is a fair bit of money, particularly when the minister seems to think he can go missing in action when it comes to hand. It is a fair bit of money, when, had the minister cared to have a look at the results of that fair bit of money, there is every argument that we would not be where we are today: we would not have homes of mums and dads with accidents waiting to happen; we would not have an industry with, at best, its reputation tarnished, particularly in the minds of the community; and we would not have workers who had a job and now they haven’t.

Tell that to the taxpayer who learns more once we see the Minter Ellison risk assessment and risk register—that is the sneaky, tricky bit we got out a couple of days ago from the government through the Senate inquiry process. The risk register identifies more fully those almost 20 risks faced by the government in rolling out the Home Insulation Program and then quantifies the cost of failing to adequately address those risks or failing to address them at all. It quantifies it. Guess what? Minister, hello! Minister, are you there? Minister, if you fail to address these risks, it could cost, says the Minter Ellison risk assessment, anything between some $250 million to $800 million to $900 million. Three times $900 million and you are pretty much hitting the supposed outlay of this program in the first place—$2.7 billion. Minister, hello! Are you still missing, Minister? I am not sure we are going to be missing you, Minister. Minister, remember that, had these risks been assessed and had you listened to the taxpayer funded risk assessment, the results might have been different.

Try telling the mums and dads who are now looking to the very government that got them into this mess to help them get out of it that the censure motion is not serious. Try telling that to mums and dads who want to know: ‘Had a guy my roof—in fact, had several guys in my roof. Is my home safe? How do I know? When do I know? Will you help me find out? Who will come to look? How long will it take? Will I have to pay for it? If they say it is not safe, what then? Who gets to fix it? The same rogue who stuffed it up in the first place?’

Not serious? Tell that to mums and dads who want to know what is going to happen to businesses that they have in the industry. What is going to happen to the reputations of those who have been in the industry for a long time and had livelihoods before the so-called Home Insulation Program and still hope they have sustainable livelihoods after the Home Insulation Program? Tell that to the long-term players in the industry. Tell that to the short-term players in the industry, who supposedly are all now fly-by-nighters and shonks because they obeyed the beckon of the government to, ‘Come in, come in and help us, please.’ Supposedly, if you have not been in the industry for long, supposedly if you are a business that set up in this industry after the start of the Home Insulation Program, you are shonk, you are a bad person. Tell all those people that the government has not failed to manage this program.

Not serious? Tell that to the workers in this industry who lost their jobs last Friday at the stroke of the minister’s pen. Not serious? Tell that, for example, to Mr Franz Mueller, who runs an insulation business in South Australia and has for many years. Tell that to Mr Franz Mueller of, I think, Insulation Matters, who until Friday had 30 workers. Now he has 12, because he had to act. Tell that to Mr Franz Mueller who has insulation materials on hand and laying idle—for three
months, he reckons—until the government restarts the program. If you are someone thinking about insulating, why the hell would you bother to move in the next three months when there will probably be another government handout, if you can take Minister Garrett at his word. Oh, the minister is back in the action! Or is he, or will he be?

Not serious? Please! ‘Not serious,’ says the government—this from a government who got us into this mess in the first place and now expects us to trust them to get us out of it. Not serious? Who was not serious? It was the minister who was missing in action. We are expected to take him seriously when he says that the first bit of the Minter Ellison documentation, some 20 pages, which came to his department some 10 months ago, he saw about 10 days ago. We are supposed to take the minister seriously when now he apparently says that the risk register, which also went to his department some 10 months ago, he actually only read after it was tabled by his department as a result of the Senate inquiry a couple of days ago. We are supposed to take the minister seriously. Come on, Minister!

Extracting the risk register of the Minter Ellison report, the second bit of it, was like extracting blood from a stone. Why do you reckon that might be? Because the government machinery took that risk register pretty seriously. They know that the risk register is a bit different from the risk assessment document, the first document, which we have had for two or three days longer. They know that the risk register—this pretty thing here that identifies 19, call it 20, because what is an additional risk between friends—which identifies the 20 risks, also quantifies the cost of not addressing and not mitigating the risks. It talks about the bucks which are going to be backed out of the economy, clearly, if the government fails to mitigate and deal with risks identified.

More than that, it then has recommendations about what the government should do to mitigate the risks. Even more than that, it then assesses the strength of the mitigation tactic. Just take one risk out of the 19 risks as an example. Take the risk about procurement and licensing, the need for the program to be determined and fulfilled by 1 July 2009. The scale of the task is new to the department, yet this government imposed upon its departments—plural—the delivery of this program within government time frames. Why then does the Minter Ellison risk register effectively go on to suggest: ‘Minister, why don’t you delay the commencement of this program for three months?’ This was just one recommendation that the minister missed. Was that because the minister was missing in action or because he missed seeing this recommendation? We plan to find that out, but at least at this stage it is very clear that the government did not take heed of that risk and implement the risk mitigation strategy identified by its very own experts at taxpayers’ expense of some $29,000.

More than that, what else does the risk register say? In a convenient column—hang on, let’s go with the three columns. We have paid for it, so we might as well go for it all. No. 1, it says the risks of fallout from procurement and licensing are rated 5 on a scale where 5 is ‘most likely to happen’. In a further column it talks about the letter ‘E’. Look at the key to the risk register and you will find that ‘E’ means the highest rating: ‘extreme risk’. Worst of all, most indictable of all, most serious of all, is the rating in respect of the particular risk of ‘weak’. But ‘weak’ is not so much the risk itself as the likelihood of the mitigating factor recommended by Minter’s succeeding at all. So translate that to English, which the minister might have been able to have done for him had he asked his department, from Minters to minister: ‘Mate, delay the implementation of
this program by three months. It’s going to blow up and out if you don’t. And, by the way, even if you do delay, there is a very weak prospect of it helping this program to achieve the outcomes.’ Through all of that, the minister was missing in action, so the taxpayer funded risk assessment and risk register might as well have been likewise.

Opposition not serious? Please say that to the Australian community. Say that this is not a serious censure motion of this government for gross and systematic failure in delivery of a range of its programs, in particular the Home Insulation Program. Say that to the mums and dads who want to know if they have home insulation accidents waiting to happen and want to know, if so, what is going to be done to help them stop them. Say that to the industries and the businesses who now have their reputations tarnished. And, please, say that to the workers who supposedly were going to have their jobs protected and, instead, have lost them overnight at the stroke of a ministerial pen. Please say that, and please say that to an Australian community that knows that it is this government that got them into this mess and somehow they are supposed to be relying on this government to get them out of it.

Senator FEENEY (Victoria) (5.27 pm)—I rise to speak against the motion. In speaking against this motion I confront a familiar alliance, or one might say ‘axis’—that is, the axis between the coalition and the Greens parties. It is an axis that has unfortunately wrought an enormous amount of damage in terms of the capacity—

Senator Fisher—The only rorts are in your program, Sir! And that’s r-o-r-t!

Senator FEENEY—I endured the vaudeville of the last 20 minutes in courteous silence. What we have here is this Berlin-Moscow axis, this coalition of interests, which pits Green fundamentalists with climate change deniers. It is that coalition of interests which most fatally at the end of last year finally voted down the CPRS as it was then amended. So it strikes me that what we really have here in this censure motion is that after months of assiduous sabotage by the Greens party, by in fact delivering to the coalition and to the climate change deniers a spectacular victory on the CPRS at the end of last year, they now have the political hide to come into this place and complain about a lack of progress in advancing those important environmental interests that the government sets itself so determinedly to accomplish.

This is an extraordinary act of two-faced politics, where on the one hand the attempts of this government to introduce a carbon price is sabotaged, while on the other hand a censure motion is brought into this place complaining about the government’s lack of progress in these issues more generally. This is indicative of a party that would rather rule in hell than serve in heaven. This is a party that will never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. In striking down the CPRS at the end of last year, in delivering those five votes to Tony Abbott and his climate change sceptic party, the Greens stand accused and convicted of having sunk that piece of legislation that would have done so very much for this country, so very much for our continuing effort to deliver action on climate change.

My favourite component of the censure motion is not part (1) but, rather, part (2). Part (2) calls on the government to put in place a unified ministry and department of climate change and energy. I cannot help but suspect that here we have one small, cherished insight into what must be the grand reorganisation of government planned in the central presidium of the Greens party. It would be with wonderment and joy that I would observe the remainder of their plan—their ministry for truth, their ministry for no
energy, their ministry for a command economy—because to introduce this unified ministry in this form is of course a nonsensical incursion into government and the business of government which, by their own admission, they are ill-equipped to handle. Whether they headhunt Yogi Bear or Hugo Chavez to head this glorious new department of theirs, it will not change the fact that the failure to make progress in the critical area of CPRS rests at their feet and not at the feet of the government. They made themselves the handmaidens to the coalition and its environmental policies, and they must now wear that crown of thorns through 2010.

I note that with the Birmingham amendment the coalition has quite correctly moved to extricate itself from the proposition that this grand new department designed in the Greens central presidium should go forward. Of course that is a correct separation—and perhaps the first chink in this Berlin-Moscow axis. There is of course one outstanding example of ‘gross and systemic failure’, and that is the actions and the words of Tony Abbott and his coalition.

Senator Troeth—Madam Acting Deputy President, I rise on a point of order. Senator Feeney should be directed to address Mr Abbott by his proper title.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Boyce)—Thank you, Senator Troeth.

Senator FEENEY—I am sorry; the Leader of the Opposition. In considering the Leader of the Opposition’s spectacular rise to power at the end of last year, the whole of Australia, and most specifically we senators, was privy to an extraordinary series of events where those forces inside the Liberal Party who had laboured for so long to deliver a reasonable position, a position that accepted the reality of climate change, were struck low. They were undermined and ultimately brought down by the determination of a Liberal majority, and that Liberal majority does not believe climate change is real. In fact, to quote the Leader of the Opposition, it believes climate change is crap.

Since becoming Leader of the Opposition, we have now seen Mr Abbott deliver three clangers in this critical area. In November, the Leader of the Opposition claimed that the CPRS would cost average households about $1,100 each, and only one week later he was forced to admit that that number had been produced by the opposition on the basis of a Google News search rather than any true and exacting research on the part of the opposition. As we all know, Treasury found that the CPRS would cause prices to rise by 1.1 per cent by 2013, on average costing a household $624 a year, and of course, as the government has made clear again and again and again, there is an expensive compensation program at the heart of the CPRS which makes sure that working families are compensated for those increases.

But, undeterred, the Leader of the Opposition pressed on and in December of last year he made a $250 billion blunder in his climate change costings when he claimed that the total cost of permits to achieve a 15 per cent target to 2020 would be up to $400 billion. In fact, Treasury modelling released in 2008—that modelling that those opposite often cry for—suggested that the total cost of permits to achieve the government’s 15 per cent target over the 12 years to 2020 would be around $150 billion—$250 billion less than the Leader of the Opposition claimed. Finally, in December, we had that magical moment when the Leader of the Opposition declared that global warming had stopped. This is the kind of flat-earth viewpoint which is now prevailing amongst those opposite.

We perhaps should not be surprised that that view is prevailing amongst those oppo-
site, but it does give pause to reflect on some of the utterances of the former Leader of the Opposition, Mr Malcolm Turnbull. In recent times Mr Turnbull’s blog has become a source of inspiration for many of us on this side, and today should be no exception. Malcolm Turnbull has said on his blog:

So any suggestion that you can dramatically cut emissions without any cost it is, to use a favourite term of Mr Abbott, ‘bullshit’. Moreover, he knows it.

The Liberal Party is currently led by people whose conviction on climate change is that it is ‘crap’ and you don’t need to do anything about it. Any policy that is announced will simply be a con, an environmental figleaf to cover a determination to do nothing.

There we have it, from the former Leader of the Opposition—that the coalition’s con job of a policy on climate—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Boyce)—Senator Feeney, I am advised that using the term that you did, whether you are quoting or not, is unparliamentary and is not to be used even if it is used as a quotation.

Senator FEENEY—Very good. I have heard the term used in this place previously, Madam Acting Deputy President, and this is the first time this ruling has been brought to my attention.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Nevertheless I think we need to ensure that we maintain decorum.

Senator FEENEY—If there is a newfound determination to do that, I will of course abide by it.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Thank you, Senator Feeney.

Senator FEENEY—My pleasure. So we have the former Leader of the Opposition revealing clearly and starkly the fact that those presently in command of the opposition, those presently in command of the alternative government of this country, are engaged in a policy which is about doing nothing, a policy which is about buying them time. It is a policy which is about them pretending that, so trying to look like, they care about action on climate change while they hope the whole issue disappears. It is a climate change con job.

That kind of conduct from the coalition is not the kind of stuff that would generally shock those of us on this side. That is par for the course, one might say. But what should not be forgotten is that in this task they have found themselves unlikely allies of the Greens party, who, by coming into this place and producing censure motions of this kind, do nothing more than assist the coalition in its continuing attempt to avoid serious scrutiny on these important issues. It has been suggested that the Greens party is doing this in an effort to gain publicity. Having quickly observed the media gallery above, I think that strategy has failed. But that is a matter for regret, not celebration, because the Greens party should be made as well to endure that sort of scrutiny about how it is that the lack of a carbon price in this country stands at their feet, the fact that the failure of the CPRS legislation to be passed was due to a decision that was made and ultimately they must bear responsibility for it.

Senator Scullion—We will!

Senator FEENEY—In fact, I was talking about the Greens party, but I am pleased you will too. We come to some of the specifics. We are talking about things such as household energy efficiency measures. The assertion being put is that the government has made no real progress and that there has been, to quote the motion, ‘gross and systemic failure’. But there are important successes that this government can and does claim. There are important successes which
in fact everyone in this parliament should take great pride in. The first that springs to mind is the household energy efficiency measures. These measures have been referred to in this debate, but what has not been referred to in this debate is the total effect that they are having in providing a more efficient use of energy and in contributing to action on climate change. These household energy efficiency measures are expected to deliver energy savings of 32,000 gigawatt hours per year by 2020. That is equivalent to 14 per cent of all electricity generated in Australia in 2006-07—a spectacular sum. These measures will prevent up to 19½ million tonnes of carbon emissions every year by 2020. They will save the Australian economy up to $22 billion over the next 16 years and, perhaps most importantly, they will save Australian householders up to $5 billion by 2020. These are real and tangible outcomes. These are outcomes that are measurable and demonstrable. As much as those opposite may loathe hearing it, the fact is that there are important successes in this area that have been achieved despite the program of opposition and sabotage that the Australian people have witnessed taking place here in the Senate. Millions would have benefited from the CPRS householder assistance and what we have is an example of how the gross and systemic failure was in fact in rejecting those bills and not accepting them.

Turning our thoughts to the Home Insulation Program, Minister Wong set out a few moments ago the fact that the government has accepted and takes responsibility for the program and how it has been administered. We have witnessed a minister who has acted honourably, a minister who has kept faith with his ministerial responsibilities. As the Prime Minister said earlier today, this is a minister who has commissioned and sought advice and then has acted upon that advice. He is a minister who has acted on that advice and has acted properly and prudently, a minister who is an honourable man, a minister who has behaved honourably and a minister who enjoys the complete confidence of his Prime Minister and his party.

The CFMEU had an interesting comment—I think it was made today—concerning occupational health and safety. The CFMEU is the organisation of employees that, amongst other things, represents workers in the construction industry.

Senator Milne interjecting—

Senator FEENEY—Senator Milne is referring to its forestry division, which happens to not be the division that I will be quoting in a moment. The CFMEU, like many of us on this side, chaffed when listening to those opposite trying to pontificate to us about occupational health and safety. What a nonsense that those opposite have discovered for the first time occupational health and safety and now seek to try and beat us over the head with it! The CFMEU pointed out that on average one Australian dies every week in the construction industry in this country. That is of course an appalling statistic. It is a statistic that I am sure would appal every senator and everyone in this building. But in reflecting upon that statistic, Mr David Noonan, the divisional national secretary from the CFMEU’s construction division, had this to say:

“Mr Abbott presided over a government that slashed workers’ entitlements to safety in the construction industry, that brought in laws that made it harder for unions to police safety on construction sites … and everybody in the industry knows that it is unions that make workplaces safer in construction.

“Mr Abbott put in legislation which has seen an increase in deaths in construction. This is an industry which, on average, loses one worker every week.”
What we note is the fact that, firstly, those opposite, having cynically discovered occupational health and safety, are now being very selective indeed. Secondly, we on this side are not going to be lectured to about how a proper occupational health and safety process should be run.

Senator Scullion—You certainly need a bit of advice. You should have taken it a few months ago.

Senator FEENEY—That advice is coming from the proper quarters, Senator. It is not coming from your nonsensical approach to public policy. Senator Milne made the assertion—which I think I could characterise as an allegation—that Senator Wong and this government take the old fossil fuel economy very seriously. That is true. We do take the old fossil fuel economy, as Senator Milne characterised it, very seriously. That is the economy which has built this country, and that is the economy which we are charged with the responsibility of managing and transitioning.

Australia is a trade-exposed and commodities-based economy. That makes it a particularly emissions-intensive economy and that means that the transformation challenge is very acute for all of us. We have a challenge which, I would submit, is greater than that confronted by any European country and I daresay by the United States.

Our great challenge is to change the trajectory of emissions so that we can bring our emissions into line with international obligations and agreements, and so we can try and achieve those targets that were set out at Copenhagen. In taking on this challenge, and accepting that challenge as real, we do understand the need for long-term investment signals. Long-term investment signals would have been set out clearly and effectively by the CPRS that the Greens party—the author of this censure motion—struck down.

The proposition that we destroy the coal industry is simply indicative of a mindset which is fundamentalist in its approach. It assumes that its opposition is always motivated by corrupt or vested interests, is always evil and is not simply comprised of persons who reach different conclusions in good faith. The proposition that we destroy the coal industry is ridiculous. The idea that we unilaterally dismantle our economy, our prosperity, our way of life is ridiculous. Unilateral disarmament was a ridiculous notion in the Cold War and the unilateral dismantling of our economy today is just as absurd.

This censure motion should be treated for what it is—a stunt. It is a stunt that has attracted no interest from the media and very little interest from those opposite. It has only attracted our contempt that a party which worked so assiduously to sabotage action on climate change now seeks to censure us on matters pertaining to the environment.

Senator TROETH (Victoria) (5.47 pm)—I would like to say how surprising it was that in Senator Feeney’s remarks of approximately 20 minutes he devoted only eight minutes to defending his minister and his government. I compare it to the actions of the Prime Minister during the censure motion yesterday in the House, when he did not have the courage to stand up in the parliament and defend his minister, his program or himself. He left Minister Garrett to defend himself. It was a truly insipid and weak performance.

I recognise that this motion put forward by Senator Brown also covers other policy failures by the Rudd government, but I particularly wish to focus on the Home Insulation Scheme. By far and away, it is the most serious failure of a minister to undertake his most basic responsibilities that I can remember in my years in this place. This government and this minister have presided over a
policy that has left four people dead, four families grieving and hundreds of thousands of homes at risk of burning to the ground, threatening the lives of the people living in them.

Today, the Prime Minister says he is ultimately responsible for the failures of this program. But as is usual with this Prime Minister, those words are hollow and very different from the reality—that everyone else can plainly see—around him. The Prime Minister has not even taken the responsibility to sack his incompetent minister.

These sorts of numbers are staggering. We now have in this country 240,000 homes with unsafe or substandard installations. We have 160,000 installations that did not meet product standards. We have 80,000 installations that did not meet safety standards. We have 1,000 electrified homes and we have had 93 house fires. And we have had the tragic deaths of four young men. Yet, in the last four days, the Prime Minster had the nerve to call Mr Garrett a first class and very effective minister. This is despite the fact that the minister received at least 21 individual warnings over safety and reports on the four deaths. This is despite the minister’s officials receiving the Minter Ellison report exposing deep concerns in April of last year and a further risk register, from the same firm, with a clear warning to delay the program for three months to correct the problems. He claims he knew nothing about it until 11 days ago.

I am a member of the committee that cross-examined the department on Monday morning and I will say again what I said then. It is astounding that the minister did not know of a report, detailing those basic mistakes, from a firm that is a household name in this country for high level professional advice. Everyone in the department seemed to know about it, but no-one mentioned the report to the minister. The risks were apparently detailed in other ways, but obviously not enough. That is a very convenient lapse in ministerial procedure.

As early as last year, the minister was warned in writing by the National Electrical and Communications Association that this program was a disaster waiting to happen. In late April he was warned by state and territory ministers that this program was a disaster. On 14 October last year we had the first death directly linked to this program. On 16 October last year the Master Electricians Association formally wrote to the minister, warning him that without an immediate suspension of the foil insulation program there would be further fatalities. In November, the Australian Council of Trade Unions—surely the bible as far as this government is concerned—called for the suspension of the foil insulation program. And yet he took no action. The New South Wales minister warned of the fire risk from this program. The South Australian minister warned of the fire risk from this program. These were Labor government ministers warning this minister of the risks inherent in this program—and still he took no action. It was only in February that he finally acted.

Without question this is a breach of the most basic ministerial responsibility, and yet the Prime Minister and the minister do not have the dignity, or the respect for the victims or the people who are at risk, to do the honourable thing. The fact that Mr Garrett is still calling himself ‘the honourable minister’ is a contradiction in terms at the moment. If this kind of incompetent decision making and its disastrous consequences do not get you sacked in the Rudd government, you would have to ask what does.

Given that I have a limited amount of time, I would like to turn to the Green Loans scheme. I want to read a letter I received from a constituent in Victoria who has been
left very much out of pocket by the scheme. This person writes:

I first heard of this scheme in November—last year—and was interested in training to become a Home Sustainability Assessment Scheme assessor. I'm primarily a professional person—

… with an interest in this area, and was very careful to do my homework …

I was aware of the total up-front cost to me; about $3000 … so I proceeded carefully. I calculated I would have to complete about 15 assessments in 2010 to break even, and that the assessments after this would provide a small income for me this year. I did not expect this scheme to provide a new job for me, just a part-time income which I could possibly increase over time with extra training in the area. There is no way I thought it possible that I would be looking at losing my $3000 investment entirely, a prospect I am facing right now.

… I carefully checked the figures in late November on the Australian Building Surveyor's Association website as to how many assessors had been registered. According to their website, 1500 assessors were registered at this time, and there weren't many assessors registered in the area where I wanted to work. So I decided to continue with the process …

There were no statistics from the DEWHA—Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts—available at this time as to how many assessments had been completed. I assumed, along with many others I guess, that if this scheme was running out, they would have let the general public and ABSA know.

I was gob-smacked in January when I found out, courtesy of ABSA, that 5000 assessors had been registered before the 24/12 [3500 in December alone! ] and that my application to assess was amongst another 5000 waiting for approval. The other shock was the fact that over half the 360000 assessments—that were originally budgeted for—had already been completed [in a scheme that was supposed to run till 2012!!]

Now, according to ABSA, I should get my accreditation in about a week's time, but I am really wondering now if I’ll make even one cent from this whole government-sponsored endeavour!

There are so many assessors who have been intending to take this up that by, mid-February, this gentleman calculates:

… that leaves 80000 assessments to be carried out by 10000 assessors, an average of 8 per assessor [well below the number required to break even]

This is a tragedy for this gentleman. He says: I know I’ll be lucky if I can even book a couple of appointments.

… I’ve blown $3000. Now, with 2 teenage children, we’re currently struggling to cope with the early year bills; school fees & expenses and bills from the Christmas period. And I believe there are 1000s more in the same boat as me.

Regardless of whatever answers the government provides to those questions, the broader question remains of how so many mistakes, along with negligence, lack of attention to detail and gross incompetence, can be tolerated. How much more can we take? The government should be censured, the minister should resign and the Prime Minister should stop trying to look like he has friends on Good News Week, try showing some leadership on a serious issue for once and sack his minister if he refuses to resign.

Senator FIELDING (Victoria—Leader of the Family First Party) (5.56 pm)—Here we are debating a motion to censure the government for its gross and systematic failure in the delivery of climate change programs, including the Home Insulation Program—the pink batts or batty batts program. First of all, I would like to say: what did the government expect from holding hands with the Greens and rushing ahead with wacky policy ideas?

It is unreal that you would hold hands with them. Maybe you were hoping they would vote for your crazy Carbon Pollution Reduc-
tion Scheme. But that completely failed, and this is what you get.

Maybe we should be having a censure motion of the Greens for their wacky policy positions that would actually wreck the Australian economy. I find it farcical that the Greens have moved a motion to censure the government, when it is their ideas that the government have rushed ahead with, trying to please the Greens. They are wacky policy positions. The renewable energy targets that they were putting forward were wacky. Sorry, but they were wacky. The government have been holding hands with the Greens over their wacky policy ideas, and now you have got yourselves in a heck of a mess. The Greens did not even support your Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. It is absolutely ridiculous.

Maybe we should just change this motion to say that the Greens should be censured for their wacky policy positions—renewable energy targets of 30 per cent. That would cripple our economy. It would absolutely spiral up electricity prices. Families could not even pay their bills. And here we have the government jumping into bed with the Greens. They have got themselves in a mess because they tried to rush ahead with their crazy ideas. When it came to the emissions trading scheme, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, the Greens had a wacky idea again—of signing up for even bigger targets before Copenhagen. Gee, what an embarrassment that would have been for Australia. Copenhagen was a farce, a huge flop. We would have been embarrassingly and recklessly signing ourselves up for targets that would expose Australian jobs and our economy.

Yes, this censure motion is real. Yes, the government should be censured on this issue, but surely the Greens should also be censured. Their whacky policies would send us back to the horse-and-buggy days. It is ridiculous to think that they would jump into bed so quickly. What did you expect? You were that much of a fool that you did it!

Bob’s forest is a dangerous place. Lurking behind every tree is a whacky dangerous Greens policy position. Look at RET—the renewable energy targets. They would have wrecked our economy. Look at their position on the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. That position was whacky. It is crazy to think that you have, gullibly, let yourselves into this.

How many times could the coalition flip-flop on the climate issue? Maybe you should have gone to the Winter Olympics. You could have won an elegance award in aerial skiing for double backflips—with a smile on your face at the same time! How credible are you guys? How credible can you be? I do not think you can be credible. It was not that long ago when you were signing up for Copenhagen. You would have been elegant in the Winter Olympics doing your double backflips with smiles on your faces! We are all dizzy from how many twists and turns you have done on the ice-skating rink.

Let us look at Labor. Let us just think about this for a moment. Censure is harsh criticism or disapproval; to reprimand or rebuke formally. Labor should be rebuked. They could not manage themselves out of a wet paper bag! It is disgraceful to think that Mr Garrett has not got the decency to resign. If you could put aside the debt—which is hard to do—you would still hear about how much waste has gone on with this program. There has been up to one billion dollars worth of waste with ineffective insulation being used, some dangerous. It is incompetence at the highest level, and Mr Rudd has not got the guts. If the minister has not got the sense of decency to resign Mr Rudd should do something about it.
Senator Bob Brown—I rise on a point of order, Acting Deputy President Barnett. I am sorry for interrupting the flow of this speech but I ask that you ask the senator not to belt the desk. It is very hard for Hansard to be able to interpret through that.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Barnett)—Thank you, Senator Brown. I note your comments and I call Senator Fielding.

Senator FIELDING—Mr Rudd, on The 7.30 Report, a month or two after being elected, was talking to Kerry O’Brien, beating his chest to the Australian public and saying, ‘I will hire and fire my ministers on performance.’ I kept that transcript, by the way. I then went to Senate estimates the following year and I asked one of the ministers—I cannot remember which one it was—‘Have you got your performance measures from the Prime Minister?’ The answer was, ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about.’ Bingo! They were not even given any performance measures to start with. How embarrassing that a minister did not even know that they were supposed to get letters from the Prime Minister of the day.

What is the performance standard for this minister? There has been up to a billion dollars worth of wastage and deaths and he says, ‘Not my fault.’ Does he know what is going on in his department? He thought saying that he had never read a report was a good excuse, but for me that made it even worse. Most Australian people on the street thought: ‘You didn’t read a report which you asked for and which was pretty significant! You didn’t read it!’ It is outrageous to think that he could stand there and get away with this.

The Prime Minister said on The 7.30 Report that he would hire and fire his ministers on performance but it is a disgrace. The Prime Minister has to show some real leadership on this issue. A $2.5 billion insulation program has gone belly-up. That is gross incompetence. If it is not the Prime Minister and it is not Minister Garrett it is even worse: you are trying to blame the department now. Someone has to own responsibility for this. If the minister gets away with this there is no responsibility for any ministers in the entire Rudd government. Mr Fitzgibbon must be really thinking: ‘Blimey, I got pinged! I got pushed for what? What about Garrett?’

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Order! You should refer to the minister by his correct title.

Senator FIELDING—Thank you. The issue at hand here is really responsibility. This censure motion is absolutely real. I have problems with this idea of a unified ministry and department of climate change and energy. I will not be supporting that. I really think that the word ‘censure’ in this motion means harsh criticism, disapproval; to reprimand and rebuke formally—and that is what needs to happen here. There has been gross incompetence with this program, and the Australian public are watching this issue. They may not be listening to this debate or watching it but they have been watching what has been happening with the Prime Minister and Minister Garrett about who is going to take ownership and responsibility for this issue. This issue is bigger than you think, out on the street.

Senator BOB BROWN (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (6.06 pm)—I thank the participants in this censure motion debate. I end by repeating what I said when I began: it is a very serious step for any Senate to censure the government and, inter alia, several ministers involved in the failure of due process, proper accountability and delivery of programs, and the ignoring of advice which could have prevented those failures. We have had from a number of speakers a reiteration of the litany of prob-
lems in the $2 billion programs that have led to this censure motion coming before the Senate. Those problems include the potential loss of thousands of jobs, the blighting of hopes of some 250,000 householders who have had their houses audited for potential green loans—and now only 1,000 loans will be delivered to households—and the massive loss of confidence among people who have skilled up to audit houses and to take part in insulation programs and other components of this spectrum of delivery of climate change programs.

The awesome failure of control and due prudence in the delivery of the Home Insulation Program has led to 92 house fires, which may be related to the deaths of four young Australians and which has resulted in a large number of investors coming into an industry that has now suddenly been faced with effective closure and a consequent huge loss for most people who did make the investment. When we look at the solar hot water rebate, which on Friday was reduced from $1,600 to $1,000, we have to ask: what are the businesses that have ordered systems for clients supposed to do with the cancelled orders?

This is a real problem for businesses now as a result of the mismanagement of this program by the government and the ministers involved. Who is going to cover their cash crisis? Is this indeed not systemic failure? Whether we look at the failure of the insulation program, at the collapsing of the renewable energy target program, particularly the wind energy component of that, at the application of photovoltaics out of solar panels, at solar hot water systems or at the other components of the program, including the delivery of renewable energy to remote communities in Australia, it is easy to go to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts and say that he has failed. There is no doubt that in terms of due prudence and management he has failed.

But several ministries are involved. When it comes to the colossal failure of governance with these multibillion dollar programs, all roads lead to Rudd. It is at the Prime Minister’s office that the buck stops. This is a Prime Minister who controls his departments and the administration of governance with a great deal of personal interest for a lack of initiative given to people who are within his cabinet, I believe. The Prime Minister himself has taken responsibility for the circumstances in which the government now finds itself.

I cannot recollect ever having heard such a failure of defence of a censure motion as we have witnessed here today. The Leader of the Government in the Senate and then the Minister for Climate Change and Water and finally a backbencher all failed to address the central thrust of the censure motion. None of them addressed the massive incompetence, the failure of management and the failure to heed proper warning that has led to this problem. The nearest we got to it were 10 words from the Minister for Climate Change and Water when she said, ‘There were problems with the program; the government has closed it.’ There was no defence at all of what has been so eloquently put by Senator Milne and Senator Troeth and others as the problem and which, moreover, has been emblazoned across the newspapers, television and radio for weeks now in this country.

This is a massive failure of governance, and it requires the government to face this censure motion. We have found in the Senate this afternoon a complete failure to address the problems which the government was charged to defend. There is no defence. The government has no defence. It has put forward no defence. The best it could do was to go to the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and blame the Greens and the opposition for the failure to get that scheme through this parliament. Given the record of
every other climate measure that has gone through this parliament and that has ended up so manifestly mismanaged, one has to wonder how gross the mismanagement of the CPRS—with its more than $100 billion program—would have been had it gone ahead.

I also reiterate, seeing the government has drawn attention to the CPRS, that it was a determined failure before it began. This is a CPRS which aimed at a five per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in this nation in the next decade plus. But, when you take into account the ability of the big polluters to buy credits from overseas and do nothing about reducing greenhouse gas emissions in this country, it could well have led to quite the reverse—not just less than a five per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions but an actual increase in greenhouse gas emissions while $24 billion compensation went to the polluters.

What I would like to have heard from the minister for climate change is a more coherent and positive reaction to the Greens proposal, which has been endorsed by Professor Garnaut and, I heard today, Mr Shergold, for a carbon levy to be implemented with an increasing price in the coming few years until a proper and responsible target system is brought into play. That system, which does not allow for external credits to be bought by the polluters, would ensure that greenhouse gas emissions in this country fall in the immediately coming years. That surely has to be the baseline test of any credible scheme that is going to tackle climate change.

I would have thought the Minister for Climate Change and Water, who chose to attack the Greens for voting against her prescription for failure in the CPRS, would have been much more positive, and maybe would have given to the chamber an account of why it is taking so long for us to get a response from the government on this positive program, which we Greens have brought forward—let alone acknowledgement of the fact that, while the opposition obstructed, it was the Greens who delivered the stimulus program which helped this country, during the last 12 months, avoid recession and massive job losses.

We are a responsible entity on this cross-bench. We are determined to continue to act that way. We have brought forward this censure motion with a great deal of deliberation. We do not do it lightly; we certainly do not do it lightly to a government in its first term of office. But the failure of governance here is so gross, it affects so many tens of thousands of Australian citizens, the programs have been so manifestly poorly applied—despite the warnings of the government's own consultants 12 months ago—that the government absolutely deserves to be censured in the way in which this motion puts it.

We will not divide on the matter of the motion's call for a unified ministry and department of climate change and energy, but let me say this: I heard Senator Feeney, who diverted Labor preferences, unknown to Labor voters, who did not have a say in this, and helped Senator Fielding take a seat in this place—and I congratulate Senator Fielding—instead of another Labor or Greens senator, attack the Greens in here. Senator Feeney, the architect of that, was attacking the Greens in here today. I want to say this to him: he, like the leader and the minister, left the chamber after their speeches. That is the determination they have to defend the government in this place. But let me say this: five per cent was the target, with a $24 billion price-tag given to the big polluters, had the best outcome emerged from the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme put forward by the government.

Senator Milne gave us the story of the Prime Minister being in the Hunter Valley in
support for the coalmining industry. Prime Ministers and premiers of course will do that. But in the last few weeks we have heard Mr Palmer from Queensland announce this massive program for selling, from his one scheme only, 30 million tonnes of coal a year to China. That would lead to the increase of greenhouse gases going into the atmosphere—produced in Australia, burnt in China—equivalent to increasing Australia’s greenhouse gas output by 12 per cent. So in one fell swoop a massive coal export operation—not helping Australia but to be burnt in China—would more than double any gain made by the $24 billion compensation-to-polluters prescription that this government has put forward. You can see the problem, the muddled thinking that is within government.

If you do not bring energy and climate change within the same portfolio, you have the internal contradiction of the government, which on the one hand wants to put a $24 billion compensation program, producing a five per cent result, but at the same time wants to spend billions of dollars of taxpayers’ money to cancel that and give us a plus-12 per cent result in greenhouse gas emissions. You can see the inherent contradiction within this government. It is that sort of contradiction that we believe would be eliminated by the creation of such a department, were it to be properly equipped and financed and be headed by a competent minister.

So I commend this motion to the chamber. The government has been incompetent in the management of these massive programs, which use taxpayers’ money and ought to have delivered a marvellous dividend to this nation but, instead of that, at minimum, has delivered blighted hopes, expectations, business investment and job prospects for thousands of Australian citizens. I commend the motion to the Senate.

Question put:
That the amendment (Senator Birmingham’s) be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [6.24 pm]
(The Acting Deputy President—Senator G Barnett)

Ayes......... 31
Noes......... 31
Majority....... 0

AYES

NOES

PAIRS
Birmingham, S. Cormann, M.H.P. Eggleston, A. Arbib, M.V. Sherry, N.J. Carr, K.J.
The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Barnett)—There being 31 ayes and 31 noes, I will read the following statement. The result of the division indicates that the amendment lacks majority support. The alternative interpretation is that paragraph 2 of the motion lacks majority support. In keeping with the precedent of the Senate, a proposition that lacks majority support is not carried. Therefore, paragraph 2 is omitted from the proposed resolution for lack of majority support. The question now is that paragraph 1 of the censure motion be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [6.30 pm] (The Acting Deputy President—Senator G Barnett)

Ayes............. 36
Noes............. 25
Majority........ 11

AYES

NOES

* denotes teller

Question negatived.

NOTICES Presentation

Senator Cormann to move on the next day of sitting:

That the resolution relating to the censure of the Government be communicated by message to the House of Representatives for its concurrence.

Question agreed to.

Senator BOB BROWN (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (6.34 pm)—Pursuant to standing order 154, I move:

That the resolution relating to the censure of the Government be communicated by message to the House of Representatives for its concurrence.

Question agreed to.


PAIRS

* denotes teller

That the resolution of the Senate of 25 June 2008, as amended, appointing the Select Committee on Fuel and Energy, be amended to omit “30 March 2010”, and substitute “30 June 2010”.

Senator Barnett to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) major flaws in the design of the Federal Government’s renewable energy target
legislation have led to a dramatic drop in the price of renewable energy certificates and stalled investment in the renewable energy sector,

(ii) the Federal Government was warned of these flaws by industry and the Opposition but chose to ignore these warnings, and

(iii) the Federal Government’s failure to act is now threatening the financial viability of major renewable energy projects such as the Musselroe Bay Wind Farm project in north-east Tasmania; and

(b) condemns the Government accordingly.

Senator Moore to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Community Affairs Legislation Committee be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 25 February 2010, from 4 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the provisions of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Reform and Reinstatement of Racial Discrimination Act) Bill 2009 and the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (2009 Measures) Bill 2009, along with the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Restoration of Racial Discrimination Act) Bill 2009.

Senator Hurley to move on the next day of sitting:

That the Economics Legislation Committee be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 25 February 2010, from 7.15 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiries into the Safe Climate (Energy Efficient Non-Residential Buildings Scheme) Bill 2009 and the provisions of the Tax Laws Amendment (Confidentiality of Taxpayer Information) Bill 2009.

Senator Moore to move on the next day of sitting:

That the time for the presentation of the report of the Community Affairs Legislation Committee on the Plain Tobacco Packaging (Removing Branding from Cigarette Packs) Bill 2009 be extended to 26 August 2010.

Senator Hurley to move on the next day of sitting:

That the time for the presentation of the report of the Economics Legislation Committee on the Trade Practices Amendment (Material Lessening of Competition—Richmond Amendment) Bill 2009 be extended to 13 May 2010.

Senator Eggleston to move on the next day of sitting:

That the time for the presentation of the report of the Economics References Committee on the Australian dairy industry be extended to 18 March 2010.

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

That the Senate—

(a) congratulates the Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, and the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, for meeting His Holiness, the Dalai Lama in December 2009 and February 2010 respectively; and

(b) calls on the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, to meet His Holiness, the Dalai Lama at the earliest possible opportunity.

Senator Abetz to move on the next day of sitting:

That—


(2) In undertaking the inquiry, the committee should consider.

(a) the package of amendments announced by the Government on 24 November 2009 and incorporated in current proposed legislation, including the impact of the bills on the Australian resources sector, Australian exports, the competitiveness of Australian industry, employment levels and electricity prices;
(b) the modelling underpinning the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) including the lower projected carbon price and the cost of the CPRS package over the current budget period to 2014-15;

(c) the outcome of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Copenhagen in December 2009;

(d) the current state of progress of other countries in implementing emissions and abatement measures to meet non-binding emissions reduction targets; and

(e) the status of, and likely prospects for, the United States of America’s emissions trading legislation.

(3) The committee should seek evidence from, but not limited to, the Productivity Commission, Frontier Economics, the Minerals Council of Australia, the Australian Coal Association and the Energy Supply Association of Australia.

Senators Milne and Bob Brown 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 17 June 2010:

The toxicity of the George River in north-east Tasmania, with particular reference to:

(a) possible causes, including the potential impact of leachate from Eucalyptus nitens plantations;

(b) the impact of the toxicity on human health, wildlife and regional oyster farms;

(c) previous investigations into the toxicity of the George River and any consequent actions, including whether the actions of local, state and federal governments and the private sector have been adequate;

(d) whether past selective breeding or genetic modification of plantation trees has deliberately or inadvertently increased the trees’ toxicity and whether any risk assessments or monitoring of impacts have been conducted;

(e) the current breeding programs for eucalyptus species and any ecological and human health implications of current research into reducing foliage palatability;

(f) possible short- and long-term mitigation measures; and

(g) any related matters.

Senator LUDWIG (Queensland—Manager of Government Business in the Senate) (6.36 pm)—I give notice that, on the next day of sitting, I shall move:

That the provisions of paragraphs (5) to (8) of standing order 111 not apply to the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Bill 2010 and 10 related bills, allowing them to be considered during this period of sittings.

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

Leave granted.

The statement read as follows—

Purpose of the Bills

The bills implement the government’s commitment to establish a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS). They provide for the establishment of a scheme regulator and a registry, and address such matters as emissions coverage of the scheme, emissions caps, the definition of liable entities, obligations on liable entities to surrender emissions units to match emissions for which the entity is liable, allocation of emissions units, and the use of international units for compliance.

Reasons for Urgency

The bills are required to address the urgent need to respond to climate change through the CPRS.

The bills give effect to the outcomes of negotiations agreed by the government and the opposition in November 2009. Provisions that give effect to these agreed outcomes were considered in detail by the Senate committee of the whole in November and December 2009. The CPRS is the key mechanism for meeting emissions reduction
targets that have the support of both the government and the opposition.

Uncertainty created by delay in the passage of the bills raises risks for business regarding the future costs of climate change action, and is hampering investments that enable the transformation to a low-carbon pollution economy.

Some elements of the CPRS, such as the crediting of carbon sequestration by reforestation projects, commence on 1 July 2010, and passage will enable businesses and farmers who intend to participate in the scheme to design and commence their projects. Passage of the legislation would also give business time to prepare for the CPRS and associated regulations.

Introduction and passage of the bills in the same sittings will not limit consideration by the Senate. There has been ample opportunity for proper consideration of the bills, consistent with the government’s longstanding commitment to ensuring adequate scrutiny and debate of proposed legislation. The content of the proposed legislation and government policy underpinning the scheme have been considered in depth by the parliament in 2009, including through inquiries by the Senate Standing Committee on Economics into exposure draft bills in March-April 2009 and into the 2009 bills in May-June 2009, a number of other Senate and select committee inquiries that examined aspects of climate change, and extensive debate in both Houses of the parliament from the first introduction of the bills during the winter and spring 2009 sittings.

Failure to deal with the bills will result in continued uncertainty for business and further delay in new investments which will lead to a low pollution economy.

Senator Milne to move on the next day of sitting:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act relating to water heaters and phantom renewable energy certificates, and for related purposes. 

Postponement

The following items of business were postponed:

General business notice of motion no. 694 standing in the name of the Leader of the Family First Party (Senator Fielding) for today, proposing the introduction of the Protection of Personal Information Bill 2010, postponed till 24 February 2010.

General business notice of motion no. 702 standing in the name of Senator Hanson-Young for today, proposing the introduction of the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Scholarship Payments) Bill 2010, postponed till 24 February 2010.

WILD RIVERS (ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT) BILL 2010 [No. 2]

First Reading

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory) (6.38 pm)—I move:

That the following bill be introduced:

A Bill for an Act to protect the interests of Aboriginal traditional owners in the management, development and use of native title land situated in wild river areas, and for related purposes.

Question agreed to.

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory) (6.38 pm)—I present the bill and move:

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

Question agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory) (6.39 pm)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Leave granted.

The speech read as follows—
The Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010 is an important piece of legislation that will enable the Indigenous people of Cape York to use or develop their land as any other landholder may. Land is one of the greatest assets that Cape York and indeed many Indigenous people have yet they are unable to use this asset as the basis of economic opportunity for themselves and for future generations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had their legal rights as our first Australians recognised through a long process that has delivered land rights and Native title rights. I am a firm believer that the recognition of rights over land ownership should be the start of Indigenous involvement in land and sea based economic activity.

Unfortunately the recognition of these rights has been viewed by some as the end of the struggle. Our first Australians have steadily won land ownership only to see this land steadily locked up as national parks and reserves. Right across Australia it has been a growing practice to award native title rights over tracts of land only to immediately have the government of the day declare the land a park or reserve.

This is the effect of the Queensland Wild Rivers Act. Land that could be subject to development has been converted into a park, or in this case a Wild Rivers conservation zone, preventing our first Australians from pursuing economic developments.

One of the greatest challenges we as members of parliament face in the area of Indigenous policy is putting in place legislation that ensures Aboriginal people have the same or equitable economic opportunities that other Australians enjoy. I recognise that the land has a spiritual or cultural value to Indigenous people, however it also has an economic value. The Queensland wild rivers legislation may preserve the cultural value, but it will deny forever any economic value to the Aboriginal land holders in Cape York.

In introducing similar legislation in the other place on the 8 Feb 2010, Mr Abbott reflected on comments made by the Prime Minister during the historic apology two years ago. In that speech the Prime Minister said:

“… unless the great symbolism of reconciliation is accompanied by an even greater substance, it is little more than a clanging gong”.

Mr Abbott stated: “In making that statement, the Prime Minister was absolutely right: unless the great symbolism of reconciliation is accompanied by an even greater substance, it is little more than a clanging gong. Yet, paradoxically, on the same day that the Rudd government subscribed to the International Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Bligh government in Queensland applied the wild rivers legislation to the significant rivers of Cape York—effectively blocking Aboriginal people from developing their land in the catchments of the Archer, Stewart and Lockhart rivers in Cape York.”

This bill, the Wild Rivers (Environmental Management) Bill 2010, will restore the economic potential of the Cape York land covered by the Queensland wild rivers legislation to Cape York Aboriginal people. By exercising the powers under section 51(xxvi) of the Constitution, this parliament has the ability to make laws for the people of any race. As a parliament should support this bill and pass laws to ensure that the Indigenous people of Cape York are given back their birthright in respect of their land.

Environmental laws that protect the unique biodiversity values of regions in Australia are important and must be enacted. The price paid to enact these laws in respect to loss of economic potential or supporting conservation initiatives must be born equally by all Australians. The cost of the Queensland wild rivers legislation is not born equally. It is manifestly born by Aboriginal land owners. That must not be permitted to remain in place.

We have also moved on as a nation from holding a belief that conservation management and sustainable land use are somehow mutually exclusive.

Encouraging and supporting our first Australians to create economic activity and opportunities through sustainable land use for future generations is an ideal that we as Senators must fully embrace. By supporting this objective we must move beyond the symbolic and deliver the practical. Our First Australians are not asking for some special right to use their land. They are simply
expecting to be able exercise the same rights as any other Australian.

Our First Australians do not want paternalistic governments to control their interests, they want to participate in and contribute to our economy. If parts of their land hold special biodiversity or cultural values then they should be protected. Aboriginal people do not dispute this. In fact as I said earlier Indigenous Australians have very strong ties to the land and want these aspects protected. The key issue is that they must have the right to decide on the use of their land under the same rules and regulations as any other Australian.

Mr Abbott did not raise the issue of the impact of the Queensland wild rivers legislation upon Cape York Indigenous land to attack the QLD government. He raised the issue and I introduce this legislation today because Indigenous people right across Australia, and in Cape York in particular deserve the right to develop their land. They do not deserve to always have their land locked up as national parks or reserves.

I urge all Senators to support this bill and by doing so, provide economic opportunities for our first Australians in Cape York.

Senator SCULLION—I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES
Public Accounts and Audit Committee
Meeting
Senator O’BRIEN (Tasmania) (6.39 pm)—At the request of Senator Lundy, I move:

That the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit be authorised to hold public meetings during the sittings of the Senate, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the review of Auditor-General’s reports, as follows:

(a) Wednesday, 10 March and 17 March 2010, from 11.30 am to 1.30 pm; and
(b) Thursday, 11 March 2010, from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm.

Question agreed to.

Economics Legislation Committee
Extension of Time
Senator O’BRIEN (Tasmania) (6.39 pm)—At the request of the Chair of the Economics Legislation Committee, Senator Hurley, I move:

That the time for the presentation of the report of the Economics Legislation Committee on the provisions of the Tax Laws Amendment (Confidentiality of Taxpayer Information) Bill 2009 be extended to 11 March 2010.

Question agreed to.

EDUCATION SERVICES FOR OVERSEAS STUDENTS ASSURANCE FUND
Order
Senator CORMANN (Western Australia) (6.39 pm)—I seek leave to amend general business notice of motion No. 698 standing in my name in the terms circulated in the chamber.

Leave granted.

Senator CORMANN—I move the motion as amended:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) after sustained pressure in the Senate, the Rudd Government has finally released information about the financial position of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Assurance Fund as at 31 January 2010,

(ii) the Government also announced additional funding for the ESOS Assurance Fund of $5.1 million,

(iii) no information about the financial position of the ESOS Assurance Fund after 31 December 2008 had been made publicly available until 22 February 2010,

(iv) in 2008 the ESOS Assurance Fund lost $1.3 million and was left with only about $1.8 million in cash and cash equivalents,
(v) the financial position of the ESOS Assurance Fund would have been impacted by successive closures of private training colleges throughout 2009 and early 2010, and

(iv) in 2009 other than the regular ESOS Assurance Fund levies imposed on relevant education services providers the Government had to go back to providers on an ad hoc basis to impose additional levies; and

(b) orders that there be laid on the table, by 12pm on Wednesday, 24 February 2010:

(i) any documents and information about the target to be raised through regular contributions to the ESOS Assurance Fund set by fund managers in 2009,

(ii) total contributions made by relevant providers to the ESOS Assurance Fund in regular annual fund contributions in the 2009 calendar year,

(iii) any documents and information about the target to be raised through any additional special contributions to the ESOS Assurance Fund set by fund managers in 2009,

(iv) the total contributions made by relevant providers by way of additional special levies in the 2009 calendar year,

(v) the current estimated contributions of providers to the ESOS Assurance Fund and total estimated liabilities as a result of college closures for the 2010 calendar year,

(vi) the cost of managing the fund in 2009 and the estimated cost of managing the fund in 2010, and

(vii) all communications between the Minister, her office and the department and the ESOS Assurance Fund from 1 September 2009 to 22 February 2010 regarding:

(A) the financial viability of the fund,

(B) government contributions to the fund,

(C) annual contributions, and/or

(D) special levies.

Senator O’BRIEN (Tasmania) (6.40 pm)—by leave—The government opposes this motion relating to an order for the production of financial information relating to the Education Services for Overseas Students Assurance Fund. It proposes a very short time scale in which to comply with a notice to produce documents. I am not sure if it is feasible to comply. Nevertheless, we will not call a division on this matter recognising that, with the support of the Greens, Senator Cormann has a majority in the chamber.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Community Affairs References Committee
Extension of Time

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia) (6.41 pm)—I move:

That the time for the presentation of reports of the Community Affairs References Committee be extended as follows:

(a) impact of gene patents on the provision of healthcare in Australia—to 17 June 2010;

(b) hearing health in Australia—to 13 May 2010; and

(c) suicide in Australia—to 24 June 2010.

Question agreed to.

WAITANGI TREATY

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia) (6.41 pm)—I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes the 170th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between the Crown and Maori leaders in New Zealand;

(b) congratulates the first peoples of Aotearoa on the progress they have made in the recognition of their human rights and in closing the gap on health disadvantage;

(c) recalls that directions from the Crown to negotiate a similar treaty with Australia’s first peoples were never enacted by our colonial governors; and
(d) calls on the Australian Government to recognise the human rights of Indigenous Australians, to test via a referendum the inclusion of recognition of former occupation and sovereignty in the Australian Constitution, and to commence formally negotiating a treaty once a national representative body is elected.

Question negatived.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS
National Archives of Australia

Senator LUDWIG (Queensland—Special Minister of State and Cabinet Secretary) (6.42 pm)—by leave—I make a ministerial statement on ensuring access to the National Archives of Australia. The Rudd Labor government is committed to assisting individuals in their search for information about themselves, their families and their country. The vast holdings of the National Archives of Australia provide a rich resource for academics, researchers and other interested groups, whether they are searching for information on the dramatic events that shaped our nation’s history or the decisions that touched individual lives. Each family’s history forms part of the fabric of our national story. That is why the National Archives is today hosting Shake Your Family Tree Day to encourage more Australians to see what information they can unearth about their own family.

Today I can announce that the government has responded to community concerns about the closure of the National Archives of Australia’s Darwin, Adelaide and Hobart offices and will guarantee that a physical National Archives presence will be maintained in every state and territory. The stand-alone National Archives offices in Darwin, Adelaide and Hobart will remain open in each instance until a permanent solution involving co-location with a local organisation has been found.

This solution aims to remove the operational inefficiencies inherent in running stand-alone offices of the National Archives in each jurisdiction. It will also reflect the changing reality, which is that people overwhelmingly access records online today, while ensuring a National Archives presence in every jurisdiction and maintaining local access to the services provided by the National Archives.

The November 2009 decision to close these National Archives offices was a fiscally responsible decision. The offices in Hobart, Adelaide and Darwin are the National Archives’ smallest offices, with the lowest visitor numbers. Each of these offices costs over $800,000 per year to operate, with the Darwin office costing around $1 million. Yet visitor numbers to these offices are low: in 2008-09 they totalled just 337 in Darwin, 720 in Adelaide and 635 in Hobart, compared with 22,290 nationally. This equates to an average cost to the Australian taxpayer of over $1,000 to $3,000 per visit—a cost which is simply unsustainable in today’s fiscal environment.

I do understand the importance of maintaining a National Archives presence at a state and territory level—after all, that is where Australia’s history emerged. The Rudd government has listened to the concerns of the local community, academics, researchers and other interested groups over the proposed closure of National Archives offices. I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of the statement in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The remainder of the statement read as follows—

I would like to acknowledge the work done by my colleagues including the Member for Solomon, Damian Hale, the Minister for Indigenous Health, Warren Snowdon, Senator Trish Crossin, the Member for Lyons, Dick Adams, the Member
for Hindmarsh, Steve Georganas, the Member for Franklin, Julie Collins, the Member for Port Adelaide, Mark Butler, and the Minister for Sport and Youth, Kate Ellis, in representing constituents' concerns over the closures. I also acknowledge the work of all of the individuals and members of historians’ and archivists’ societies who have highlighted the significance of the local offices of the National Archives, and I thank them for their contribution. I also recognise the petition on the office closures tabled in the House of Representatives earlier this month by Julia Irwin, the Member for Fowler.

National Archives repositories around the country hold many records containing important information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their history. I would like to particularly emphasise the fact that the Government will not change existing access arrangements for records relating to the separation policies imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; these access arrangements were strengthened in response to the landmark 1997 Bringing Them Home report on the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

The reality is that fewer people are visiting the National Archives in person to access their records. Instead, the country has moved to an online environment: in 2008-09 more than 1.9 million records were accessed online compared to 57,000 records accessed in reading rooms nationally. Demand for online access to records is expected to continue to increase apace, and the National Archives is developing plans to provide digital access to ever more of its records, including those currently held by the National Archives in Darwin, Adelaide and Hobart.

In today's society, we need to explore other ways of ensuring access to archives other than a fully functioning National Archives office at a cost to the taxpayer of up to $3,000 per visit. In what is a very successful partnership, the National Archives already co-locates with the state institution in Victoria. The National Archives will be required to work with local cultural heritage institutions and other organisations in pursuit of further co-located reading rooms and record storage facilities. In this way, the Government can ensure that the National Archives maintains face-to-face services in all jurisdictions, while shaping its operations in a way which will meet the needs of future generations.

The Rudd Government is committed to ensuring continued public access to records documenting Australia's history. This is part of our broader aim of restoring trust and integrity in the use of government information through improved transparency and accountability. The Rudd Government is committed to promoting a pro-disclosure culture across government, and ensuring that Australians can realise their right to access government information.

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria) (6.46 pm)—by leave—I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

Obviously, the coalition welcome this change, but it does come on the back of the electoral education centres issue, where the government moved to close the centres down. I just want to say a couple of things, particularly in relation to page 2 of the ministerial statement. Honestly, the nerve of the minister and the government trying to give this hotchpotch of government members any credit at all for this decision—it is complete and utter rubbish. I want to put on the record who actually was involved in this. I am talking about Senator Bernardi, Senator Birmingham, Senator Abetz, Senator Scullion and Senator Hanson-Young. They were actively involved. It had nothing to do with that ragtag of people named in the ministerial statement. Honestly, the nerve of the minister and the government trying to give this hotchpotch of government members any credit at all for this decision—it is complete and utter rubbish. I want to put on the record who actually was involved in this. I am talking about Senator Bernardi, Senator Birmingham, Senator Abetz, Senator Scullion and Senator Hanson-Young. They were actively involved. It had nothing to do with that ragtag of people named in the ministerial statement. Those people came in at the end of it when they realised what damage was being done. It is senators on the opposition and middle benches who actually stood up for this. They are the same people who stood up for the education offices of the Australian Electoral Commission.

Finally—because I am sure others will want to speak on this—I want to turn to page 3 of this statement. My colleagues will be fascinated to hear these words:
This is part of our broader aim of restoring trust and integrity in the use of government information through improved transparency and accountability. The Rudd Government is committed to promoting a pro-disclosure culture across government, and ensuring that Australians can realise their right to access government information.

I reckon there are a lot of people who were part of the insulation program who would like to see those words put into practice. There would be a lot of people who are wondering at this very moment why they were not told by this government what the state of play was. There will be a lot of people wondering: what is the disclosure culture of this government? It is a disclosure culture that has left a thousand people wondering whether their homes are safe. It is culture in which there is a dangerous situation for many Australians, not of their own making but due to the utter incompetence of Minister Arbib and the minister for the environment, both of whom refused to acknowledge any responsibility at all for the insulation program. This is not a pro-disclosure government. This is a government, quite frankly, that should sack at least two ministers—and, while they are at it, the minister for mates should go as well: Senator Conroy. There are a group of people responsible for saving these offices, but they are not on the Labor Party side. It is the coalition and the Greens who can take ownership of this decision.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (6.49 pm)—by leave—On the same matter, just briefly: I do tend to agree with Senator Ronaldson in that I think it is a little ironic that the government are now taking credit for the work of saving the National Archives offices around the country. It is of course because of the people in Hobart, Adelaide and Darwin who came to their elected representatives and said, ‘We need to see these offices saved,’ and it is because of the work of their senators on this side of the chamber—the opposition and the Greens, including Senator Milne and Senator Brown in Tasmania—to ensure that those people’s voices were heard. That is why those offices have been saved.

Debate interrupted.

**DOCUMENTS**

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Barnett)—Order! It being 6.50 pm, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of government documents.

**Consideration**

The following government documents tabled earlier today were considered:

- Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)—Equity and diversity—Report for the period 1 September 2008 to 31 August 2009. Motion to take note of document moved by Senator Parry. Debate adjourned till Thursday at general business, Senator Parry in continuation.
- Northern Territory Fisheries Joint Authority—Report for 2007-08. Motion to take note of document moved by Senator Parry. Debate adjourned till Thursday at general business, Senator Parry in continuation.

Government documents Nos 1 to 9, and 13 tabled today were called on but no motion was moved.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Barnett)—There being no further consideration of government documents, I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

**Hon. John Kilday ‘Jock’ Ferguson**

Senator PRATT (Western Australia) (6.52 pm)—It is with a heavy heart that I rise
in tonight’s adjournment debate to pay tribute to my dear friend and comrade Jock Ferguson, who died suddenly a little over a week ago. He was a remarkable man and an inspiration to many, including me. He was a strong leader, whose leadership style was underpinned by strong values. He was a fighter for Western Australian jobs and opportunities for Western Australians. He campaigned for WA jobs by tackling companies that brought in from overseas or components for big industrial projects. He strove to see WA develop its potential, working with government and industry to see the Jervoise Bay project and the Australian Marine Complex get off the ground.

Jock Ferguson could be a militant unionist but, as was highlighted by those contributing to his eulogy, he was not a mindless militant; he was thoughtful and strategic. He fought tooth and nail against individual workplace agreements, agreements that sought to destroy union representation and protection in Western Australia’s north-west. He worked to see smaller companies given the opportunity to bid for work in major projects, by lobbying companies to break down their work into pieces that local firms could bid for. He campaigned against the importation of foreign labour when there were local workers who could do the job, but he also worked hard to protect 457 visa workers from exploitation. He was dedicated to the development of training opportunities for young Western Australians.

It is not hard to understand what shaped his character as a man and a political leader within the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union when you look at the circumstances of his life. He was born in the working-class area of Possilpark in Glasgow. The industrial revolution of the 1880s saw it become a vibrant manufacturing area, with a foundry, engineering and other manufacturing works. But in the 1960s, as the Hon. Jock Ferguson highlighted in his first speech to the WA parliament, the foundry was shut down, taking with it thousands of jobs and many more jobs in associated industries.

From this Jock Ferguson saw firsthand what a life without opportunities meant—high crime, drugs, violence, low life expectancy, malnutrition and poverty. He also knew the strength of unionism. He was mentored by his grandfather, who was a convenor of the Boilermakers Union and a member of the Communist Party. The Western Australian union movement and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union were very fortunate that he made Western Australia his home and put his leadership talents to work there.

But there is much more to Jock’s story and his political leadership than working-class struggle. He was born to an unwed Catholic woman. He was raised by his grandparents, believing that they were his parents. He had no idea that in fact his ‘sister’ was his mother. He only found out some eight years ago that he had a sister who was adopted outside of the family. Jock and his sister, Monica, were born to Protestant and Catholic parents who were forbidden to marry. Jock’s sister spent many years looking for her family and eventually she found her brother, Jock. As Jock said in his first speech to the WA parliament, when he told his story:

…I relate this part of my history … because it is a very human story, steeped in prejudice and secrets that had tragic consequences for my family.

He went on to say:

Of all my life experiences, the discovery of my sister and parentage has highlighted the truly cataclysmic effect that ignorance and discrimination can have on the everyday lives and experiences of families and individuals. My sister was robbed of ever meeting her mother and we were separated from each other for over 50 years.

He said when he was elected to parliament that he intended to work hard as a law-maker.
towards breaking down some of the barriers and prejudices that exclude people and their families from fully participating in our society and achieving personal fulfilment. Sadly, Jock’s time in parliament was too short. However, in the years I have known Jock, he was true to this vision as a political leader throughout his career. He worked very hard to make sure that people from all walks of life were included, regardless of race, gender or sexuality. This was not something that was always easy in a blue-collar union. He worked hard to give people from diverse backgrounds a political leg-up. His life experiences taught him never to make room for prejudice or discrimination.

Jock was the very embodiment of the fact that the labour movement is about a lot more than protecting workers. He fought for environmental sustainability and against the Iraq war. He fought for human rights and against discrimination. Jock knew that people come together in unions not just because they want to get a fair deal for themselves and their families but because they want a fair deal for everybody. The underlying motivation here, as his life’s work demonstrates, is to protect and defend people’s and individuals’ collective dignity.

Jock’s partner, Tina, his children and all those who were close to Jock should take great comfort in the legacy he left and the knowledge that the love and care from family and friends that surrounded him underpinned his capacity to give service to others. There are a great many people who, like me, will dearly miss Jock Ferguson. We will miss him as he was a man who had the courage to back his convictions and he displayed great leadership. He was smart and strategic and he could make a tough call. He had a disarming sense of humour and was a great wit. But most of all, he will be missed for his love and compassion for people.

Jock, I know a great many people, including me, will remain inspired by you and seek to be true to the legacy that you have left: to remain motivated by love and compassion for people and to work to make the world a better place for everyone. Jock, you were a man whose vision inspired us, whose strength sustained us, and whose humour lightened our load. When you saw injustice you stared it down. Where you found unfairness you fought it every step of the way. Where you saw equality you drove people towards it. You worked for justice and equality for people everywhere and you made the world a better place. Vale to the honourable Jock Ferguson.

Extreme Rolling

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria) (7.01 pm)—Last Wednesday I had the real delight and honour to be at the launch in Melbourne of ‘extreme rolling’. Madam Acting Deputy President Brown, you might wonder what extreme rolling is. If you are anything like me, when you first heard of it it brought to mind that 1970s classic movie Rollerball about a violent rollerskating sport set in the future. I think Senator Bernardi remembers that movie—Senator Sherry—I do too.

Senator FIFIELD—and, yes, I thought Senator Sherry might as well, circa 1975. Extreme rolling actually is not a violent futuristic sport. It is a great adventure currently being undertaken by two great Australians, Andreas Dagelet and Dale Elliott. Andreas and Dale are hand-pedalling from Melbourne to Darwin, a distance of about 5000 kilometres. It will take them five months to hand-pedal. You might wonder what exactly is hand-pedalling. It is a bicycle style of vehicle where you sit, put your feet in stirrups, and actually use your hands to pedal. It is quite a gruelling form of transportation. Apart from completing this gruelling epic,
Andreas and Dale have two objectives. The first is to raise money to treat African children with club foot, and the second objective is to visit more than 150 schools and community groups to raise awareness about disability.

It was a surprise to me that children with club foot were still failing to receive the care that they need. It costs just $200 to treat club foot, and the extreme rollers aim to raise $200,000 to treat 1,000 children with club foot. Club foot affects one in 750 children worldwide and most children in Africa who have club foot never receive treatment. Yet it is a condition that is easily treated at birth and, if caught before the age of two, a series of casts can avoid the necessity of having surgery. Andreas and Dale are certainly dreaming big. Over the next 10 years they hope to expand the program to eradicate club foot.

Both Andreas and Dale acquired their own disability—each is a paraplegic—through accident. But neither of these terrific individuals has allowed this to define them or to slow them down. It would be fair to say that Andreas and Dale have the spirit of adventure in their hearts. They are like a cross between Bear Grylls, that ex-special forces soldier who has a show on SBS at the moment, and MacGyver, that 1980s TV action character. Andreas and Dale are two very adventurous individuals.

Andreas has previously circumnavigated Australia on a handcycle and Dale became the first Australian and second person in the world to skydive solo as a paraplegic. Andreas and Dale have a great philosophy: ‘to contribute to the world one roll at a time’, and they are wanting to use this current adventure as a catalyst for change.

Their effort is underpinned by a great support team: Kat Skull, Bec Skull, Renee Dagelet and Mick Meeham. This venture deserves support. The progress of this venture by the Extreme Rollers can be followed on www.extremerolling.com and today the extreme rollers are travelling from Kinglake, in the heart of the area affected by the tragic Victorian bushfires, through to Kilmore. Donations can be made at that website and I would encourage colleagues and those listening to support Dale, Andreas and the team in this great endeavour.

Sexual and Reproductive Health Program in Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations (SPRINT)

Senator McEWEN (South Australia) (7.07 pm)—Tonight I would like to inform the Senate about the implementation of an important and innovative foreign aid program that is funded by AusAID and which is directly and practically assisting women and children in countries afflicted by crises such as floods, earthquakes and landslides. The program to which I refer is the SPRINT program, an acronym of sorts for Sexual and Reproductive Health Program in Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations in East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific. The intention of SPRINT is to build regional capacity to respond to sexual and reproductive health services in crisis situations. While the international community responds generously and willingly to calls for assistance from less-developed nations afflicted by unexpected natural disasters, there is usually—and rightly—a focus on providing emergency food, shelter and health care. This is the right thing to do, but we also need to remember that women who are displaced from their homes and communities by disasters such as floods and earthquakes will still be giving birth and will still be nursing their babies, and will still need access to relevant support and health services to ensure that they and their babies survive childbirth.
Women who are displaced by natural disasters and who are living in emergency camps and evacuation centres are more susceptible to rape and sexual assault. Women and men who use contraception still need access to that contraception while they are attempting to rebuild their lives in a crisis situation. Women and men living in crisis or in evacuation centres still have sex and need to be able to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections and diseases.

As we know, natural disasters disproportionately affect the poor. It is those living in poverty who are most exposed to disasters because the poor, and poor nations, lack the capacity to prepare for disasters, and lack the resources to respond when disaster strikes. Women are disproportionately affected by poverty and by disasters. According to 2007 figures, 67 million people around the world are displaced by conflict or natural disaster, and 75 per cent of all displaced persons are women and children. And it is estimated that 20 per cent of women of reproductive age in a refugee population will be pregnant at any one time. It is sobering, for example, to note that in Haiti in January 2010 there were approximately 63,000 currently pregnant women in Port-au-Prince, 7,000 of whom would deliver babies in the subsequent month. Of course, these babies would be delivered in the most austere of circumstances—the risk to both mother and child greatly enhanced in a country where maternal mortality was already high. The SPRINT program is designed to help women and their newborns in situations like Haiti.

SPRINT was launched at Parliament House in February 2008 by the Hon. Bob McMullan, the Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance. Mr McMullan is a long time and tireless advocate for those living in poverty in our region, and he will be sorely missed when he retires from the parliament. SPRINT is strongly supported by the Parliamentary Group for Population Development, of which I am, proudly, a member. It is a three-year initiative funded by AusAID and led by the International Planned Parenthood Foundation in partnership with the University of New South Wales, the United Nations Family Planning Association and the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance.

The program provides practical support to women and children, particularly in the provision of the minimal initial services package, or MISP, for women about to give birth or for lactating mothers. SPRINT also supports advocacy to governments and other organisations to integrate sexual and reproductive health services into their emergency response plans. So far, SPRINT has trained over 2,900 people in 30 countries and held 62 in-country training programs. Progress has been made to integrate sexual and reproductive health services into the national emergency response preparedness plans in China, Mongolia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste and the Philippines. SPRINT has already been implemented in a number of crisis situations, including: in Bangladesh after Cyclone Alia; in Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis; in Sri Lanka after the 2009 conflict; and in Haiti after the earthquake earlier this year. And it has been rolled out in the Philippines.

I was very fortunate to be able to visit the Philippines late last year to see SPRINT in action. Areas of the Philippines were severely affected by Typhoon Ondoy, which devastated most of Luzon Island and caused massive floods in September last year. In some areas, flooding was up to six metres high. That was followed by hurricanes and landslides in October 2009, during which nearly 300 people were killed and many thousands more had to flee their homes, and lost everything. When I was there in December, the massive clean-up was still underway.
During the disasters, landslides swept villages down mountainsides and by December hundreds of people remained in camps. By then the camps were well organised and well supplied, but nevertheless we saw up to 20 families living in one school room while the school attempted to continue functioning around them.

Many weeks after the floods we visited areas near Manila that were still surrounded by water that had become putrid and dangerously unsanitary. It was not just homes that were lost. For the homeless there were appalling losses too. I met a family of seven living with other families in a drainpipe under a road bridge on the edge of one of Manila’s slums. There were five children in this family. The father was unable to work because he was knifed in a slum fight and his wounds were incapacitating him. The mother needed to be with her young children full time. They have no income and little future. Because their home was a drainpipe, when the floods rose during the hurricane they became homeless. By the time I met them the water had receded enough and they had been able to claim their place back in the drainpipe and re-establish themselves. How do people cope with such events? It is hard enough in Australia where our magnificent emergency services provide assistance, but in one of our neighbours where the economy is contracting and the birth rate increasing there is not enough to go around even in the good times.

In the Philippines, according to the United Nations, the maternal mortality rate is increasing and the infant mortality rate is as high as ever. In a country where contraception is only available to the well-off and where more than half of all pregnancies are unintended, families are desperate for help. When disaster hits everything gets worse.

The SPRINT program provides one of the most important aspects of assistance that is often forgotten when disaster and conflicts strike. As I said earlier, women become pregnant and give birth regardless of hurricanes and regardless of circumstance. The SPRINT project provides basic kits to help women who are pregnant and giving birth. I was honoured to be able to distribute some of the kits to women in the countryside and in areas around Manila. The kits are simple: a bucket with a clean cloth to wear while giving birth, a plastic sheet to lie on while giving birth, a sharp razor blade and some soap. You cannot stop a baby coming just because your home has been washed down the mountain or because your drainpipe is flooded. SPRINT saves lives, the lives of babies and of their mothers. SPRINT also trains humanitarian workers who may already know all about water supplies, how to fix broken bones and diseases, but may know nothing about reproductive health or how to deal with pregnancy, childbirth, and with the aftermath of rape and violence. It is a great program. It is practical, it is saving lives and it works. I urge our government not just to continue funding but to increase its support to the initial $3 million that was given to this program.

My visit to the Philippines was supported by AusAID, the Family Planning Organisation of the Philippines and many local government authorities. I visited many women in evacuation centres or emergency accommodation. I met with many local healthcare workers and FPOP staff and volunteers who are striving to provide sexual and reproductive health services for women and their families. I had the opportunity to meet mayors and councillors who were attempting to provide services to people displaced by floods and landslides. They were extremely appreciative of Australia’s support but entirely cognizant of the need for the Philip-
pines to address its population growth as an essential step to addressing poverty. I had an invaluable opportunity to see a great Australian aid program implemented in the Philippines.

Rudd Government

Senator BERNARDI (South Australia) (7.17 pm)—Listening to the recent debates on the attempt by the Rudd government to change the Medicare levy surcharge made me consider the number of promises that this government has failed to implement or promises on which it has misled the Australian public, and although I have only 10 minutes in which to describe so many of them—and I will probably be back on repeated occasions to complete the list—I thought it important to explore just some of those broken promises so that the Australian public is aware of how poorly this government has performed at any particular level.

The first of these comes in the private health insurance rebate. Before the election in 2007, Kevin Rudd, the now Prime Minister, committed both himself and his Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, to retain the private health insurance rebate. Mr Rudd said:

The private health insurance rebate remains unchanged and will remain unchanged.

But the reality is somewhat different, because Mr Rudd has sought to means test the private health insurance rebate. The government have proposed—and it has been rejected once, thanks to the coalition—and they are continuing to propose that there be a sliding scale of means testing for the rebate. If that is not bad enough, because it is going to drive people out of private health insurance, the government are also seeking, and have had it rejected for the second time, to increase the Medicare levy surcharge, which is simply an additional tax on the Australian people. That is, quite frankly, two broken promises by a government that has a long, long list of broken promises. During the 2007 election campaign, Mr Rudd promised to provide every Australian secondary school student from years 9 to 12 with access to their own computer. He said:

Today I announce that, if elected, federal Labor will undertake a groundbreaking reform by providing for every Australian secondary school student in Years 9 to 12 access to their own computer at school.

The reality, of course, is somewhat different. Yes, there is an undertaking, but most of the students that Mr Rudd made that promise to will have completed university by the time this government get around to fully implementing their program. As it stands, there are around 780,000 more computers that are required by these students waiting to be supplied by the government. It has taken over two years to implement just a fraction of what they promised, yet these students now have been left in the lurch. It cannot be interpreted in any other way than another failure to implement a promise made by this government. In superannuation, something that concerns so many Australians, particularly in these volatile economic times, Mr Rudd said before the election:

There will be no change to the superannuation laws, not one jot, not one tiddle.

He incorrectly pronounced it. It should be ‘tittle’ but he said ‘tiddle’. But the Rudd government did change superannuation. They halved the maximum limit on concessional contributions and also cut the co-contribution rate by one-third. This has impacted on people’s planned retirement. When asked by Australians why he changed the superannuation arrangements, despite his election promise, he said he meant there would be no ‘substantive’ changes and that his changes were just ‘fine tuning’. But that is not what he said before the election. I know we need a dictionary to understand
most of what Mr Rudd says, but does the Prime Minister really require a dictionary himself to see that ‘substantive’ is not the same as ‘no change’—not one jot, not one tittle?

What about childcare centres? In 2007, Mr Rudd and the Labor Party promised to provide an extra 260 childcare centres close to schools and community facilities. The reality is that after two years in power the Rudd government have only got three centres operational. The hope is that 38 will be completed by the end of this year. So in their first term in government the best they can do is to build 38 out of their promised 260 new childcare centres, and that is being optimistic.

The government cannot even give us a time frame for when these childcare centres will be completed. A spokeswoman for the minister responsible, the hapless Minister Ellis, stated that establishing 38 centres by the end of 2010 was in line with the government’s commitment given at an estimates hearing in June 2008. But 38 centres! What about the other 222 that were promised in 2007? What happened to them? Ms Gillard blames the collapse of ABC Learning Centres. What, then, happened to ‘the buck stops with me’? It is another promise unfulfilled.

A worse example comes in the trade training centre arena. Before the 2007 election, Mr Rudd promised:

... a Federal Labor Government would ... build new trade centres in all of Australia’s 2,650 secondary schools.

It was revealed just weeks ago in Senate estimates, thanks to my colleagues Senator Cash and Senator Cormann, that only one trade centre had been established, and that centre is in Mr Rudd’s hometown of Brisbane. Lucky Brisbane! What about the 2,649 other trade centres that were promised? Three months ago, government officials informed my colleague Senator Cash that it was hoped that 15 trade training centres would be completed by the end of January 2010. We are yet to see that happen too. It is a broken promise on top of a broken promise on top of a broken promise.

We are keeping watch on these broken promises, just like the government promised to keep watch on the price of fuel. It announced that it was going to have a national Fuelwatch scheme. According to the Treasurer, Mr Swan, it was going to save Australians up to $10 a tank. He said:

... today in metropolitan Sydney the difference between the minimum and maximum rate being charged at the bowser is something like 27c a litre, so you can easily save $10 a tank.

But, soon after its announcement, the Fuelwatch scheme was exposed as an irresponsible and ridiculous initiative. It would have prevented motorists from taking advantage of natural price cycles and discounting. It would have disadvantaged independent operators and encouraged price collusion. So we have to say thank goodness that this scheme could not make it past the Senate, because everyday Australians would have been disadvantaged.

What about hospitals? Mr Rudd and Ms Roxon stated that federal Labor’s health reform would involve the following commitment:

... a Rudd Labor Government will seek to take financial control of Australia’s 750 public hospitals if state and territory governments have failed to agree to a national health and hospital reform plan by mid-2009.

Put simply so that people can understand it: if hospitals were not fixed, Mr Rudd was going to take them over by the middle of 2009, and the buck stopped with him. Do we remember that? Let us just check the calendar. It is early 2010. Mid-2009 has come and gone and Mr Rudd is backing away from his
promise at a million miles an hour. It is a broken promise, just like our broken hospitals that Mr Rudd is failing to fix.

What about GROCERYchoice? Do we remember that? Mr Rudd promised to bring down grocery prices for everyday Australians, and the government’s GROCERYchoice website was the tool that was going to do it. It was going to deliver fairer and more open and transparent pricing for consumers. The government said that it would play a part in empowering consumers ‘to find the best deals at the supermarket’. But the reality was somewhat different from the spin put forward by this government. Far from empowering consumers, the GROCERYchoice website ended up costing consumers—Australian taxpayers—millions and millions of dollars. It was cancelled less than one year after it commenced. It was a monumental failure. It had no impact on the pricing of groceries. It did not get a fairer deal for the Australian consumer; it gave them a worse deal because their taxpayer dollars were wasted. This government has wasted billions of dollars.

What about the baby bonus? On various occasions, Labor mentioned that they would not change the baby bonus, but change it they have, because they have started means testing it, limiting it to those families who are on an income under a certain defined amount.

Another promise was rainwater tanks for surf-lifesaving clubs. The government were going to invest $3 million to provide surf-lifesaving clubs with the wherewithal to install rainwater tanks, or to contribute towards a large water-saving project. Just 45 tanks have been delivered in two years. What a disgrace. (Time expired)

Ovarian Cancer

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (7.27 pm)—Tomorrow in this place we are going to be part of a national campaign to raise awareness in all sectors of our community, all across the country, of the issues around ovarian cancer. February is the month when we try to ensure that women know more about themselves and look for the symptoms of ovarian cancer. It is when we pay tribute to all those women who have suffered with this disease—all too many of whom we have lost.

In October 2006, the Senate Community Affairs References Committee brought down a particularly valuable report. We called it Breaking the silence: a national voice for gynaecological cancers. In the speech that I made on that report, I said:

I want to commence the comments today by paying great tribute to all the people who gave their time, their effort and their genuine courage to come before our committee, sharing their stories and encouraging us as a committee to move forward on this very important challenge. The challenge before all of us as members of the committee is to accept that gynaecological cancer is killing too many women in our community and we must share in the efforts to stop that happening. That sharing will be done by all of us, and indeed our committee has looked closely at moving forward to encourage awareness campaigns and genuine research efforts to reinforce the wonderful work that is already being done.

Those words remain true. There are still way too many women being killed by this condition. We know that in 2010 more than 1,500 Australian women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Unfortunately, more than 850 of those women will die from the disease. I do not know how they come up with these stats, but I have read that one woman will die from this condition every 11 hours and 75 per cent of women are still diagnosed at way too advanced a stage of the disease and will not have a lifespan of more than five years beyond diagnosis.

In 2010, ovarian cancer is the sixth most common cause of cancer death in Australian
women. There is no typical woman who will have this condition. We cannot presume that just because you have a family history, just because you have reached a certain age or just because of lifestyle factors that you will necessarily be subject to ovarian cancer or that, probably more particularly, you will be safe from it. There are known cases of girls as young as seven being diagnosed. So our advanced maturity is no protection. Every woman should be looking at her own body and understanding it herself.

As I have said before in this place, one of the clear messages given to us all by the women who came before the Senate Community Affairs Committee in 2006 and who continue to talk with us about these issues is that we must take ownership of our own health. It is not good enough to sit back and wait for other people to provide information to us. It is not enough to sit back and wait for some professional intrusion that would be able to tell us what our risks are and what we should do for our health. The message is that we must see what the symptoms are, we must ask about them and we must ensure that we work effectively with the range of professional services that are available to us in this country.

We do have fine medical services—no one argues with that. But all too often, as we have been told in the case of this particular cancer, women do not take that step of asking about their own health. They self diagnose, they dismiss the causes as something else and they do not work effectively with their doctors. The symptoms of ovarian cancer are very general, and one of the things that we must do is to ensure that we understand them and work with doctors to ensure that they understand them. Doctors alone cannot work with our health.

Ovarian Cancer Australia—an organisation I know and whose work I support strongly—developed a symptom diary, which is available on the web so that women can take ownership themselves, look at their own symptoms and ensure that they keep a record. That way, when you as a woman go to talk with your doctor, you can: Clearly and confidently tell your doctor that you’re worried about the possibility of ovarian cancer.

Having listed your symptoms, taken note and kept your own record, you can then have a level of knowledge and confidence with which you can work with the doctor and so not be too easily dismissed.

One of the stories we hear regularly is that because of their vagueness and their general nature the symptoms could be put down to a range of things including just being tired or overworked. Also—and it still happens to this day, though I find it particularly offensive—people can be accused of being hysterical about their health. That is not acceptable. What we need to do—and I hope this will be the message that comes out of Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month and the knowledge sharing and seminars that come with it—is to realise that we are not being hysterical about our health; we are being confident and protective of our bodies and our health.

You should also make a clear list of the concerns before you go to the doctor, so that when you are asked why you are there, you are able to confidently answer. I keep repeating this statement about the confidence element that is required, because nobody knows your body better than you—you are the expert. Then, when you are at the doctor, with the help of the completed diary that you have with you, you should describe the symptoms in as much detail as you can. You should then be able to work through with your doctor what could happen next.

You should also be sure of your own family history—once again, it is no one’s job to
do that but your own. Check out your family history of all health conditions, because we know that sometimes the fact that you do have a family history of some conditions can make you more susceptible to a diagnosis. As I have said, it is not always the case—nothing is guaranteed—but you need to know your own situation and work with it.

Most importantly, do not be satisfied if you are not comfortable with the response you get from your medical practitioner. We now have a large number of support facilities which are available and with which you can share and sort out where you want to go next. One of the things that the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Mark Butler, announced quite recently was extended funding for a telephone service that people can contact on all kinds of issues, including ovarian cancer, to ask questions in order to find out where they can go next.

There is also the extraordinary work of the National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre—a store of knowledge and support, a range of publications and a website—to which we can turn to learn more. The National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre existed formally since 2009, although it has been running for much longer than that. It provides linkages with practitioners, people in the field and consumers who understand the circumstances and are there to produce a sense of confidence through shared knowledge and awareness. In fact, people from that centre will be here tomorrow in Parliament House to once again raise awareness. I hope that many of our parliamentary comrades will be there with something teal-coloured—teal being the signature colour of ovarian awareness—so that we are again part of a wider sharing of awareness and knowledge and of the extension of a sense of confidence and solidarity, knowing that the messages that were put to the Senate Community Affairs Committee in October 2006 are being taken forward.

We looked particularly at putting out a strong message about breaking the silence. We cannot be silent, and we have a great chance to put forward ideas to ensure that people who may have the symptoms of ovarian cancer will be able to have that diagnosis confirmed more quickly so that there is a greater rate of success in curing the disease. We can do something about knocking down the terrible death rate of this particular condition. We have this responsibility. We have the opportunity to be part of a much wider movement, and I encourage all people to be part of the ongoing fight against this condition.

Cycling

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales) (7.37 pm)—I rise to talk about a growing sport that becomes more popular every week, it seems—the sport of cycling. My home town of Inverell is a keen cycling community and this year the Grafton to Inverell Cycle Classic will celebrate its 50th year. It is held over a distance of 142 miles, or 228 kilometres. When the event began 50 years ago, much of the road was gravel and only 30-odd riders took part, including the Australian champion, Alan Grindal of Victoria. A huge crowd of some 6,000 welcomed the riders onto Otho Street in Inverell for the very first Grafton to Inverell Cycle Classic. A bloke by the name of Harold Strahley was regarded as the father of the race, and his nephew, Don Strahley, whom I know well, went on to win the 1970 Grafton to Inverell Cycle Classic. A bloke by the name of Harold Strahley was regarded as the father of the race, and his nephew, Don Strahley, whom I know well, went on to win the 1970 Grafton to Inverell Cycle Classic. In fact, he and Leon Cook, who won the race in 1965, are the only two locals to take line honours over the past 49 years.

Since that first race in 1961, many thousands of cyclists from Australia and overseas have competed in this one-day cycling classic, the toughest single-stage race in Austra-
lia. The route climbs the Great Dividing Range and the Gibraltar Range to the summit and descends through Glen Innes to Inverell, with many steep hills and downhill gullies to contend with. For many years, Jack Griffin was the driving force behind the event, then the late Malcolm Campbell and then Robert Munday. Inverell has produced plenty of state cycling champions, but in 1986 Scott Sunderland won the Australian road title before embarking on a very successful professional career based in Belgium. Today Scott Sunderland is the sports manager of Team Sky in Britain.

I would like to talk about a current champion, whom our community is very proud of, a young man by the name of Heinrich Haussler. We must not get confused here, because Heinrich’s father is also called Heinrich, and Heinrich Haussler Sr and his wife, Wendy, have been a great support to young Heinrich. Young Heinrich left Inverell at the age of 14 to live in Germany, a country halfway around the world where he could not speak the language, so he could pursue his career in cycling. What a career he is having—and there is much more to come. At the age of 25, in the great cycle classic the Tour de France, Heinrich last year won the 13th stage. I do not know how many thousands of cyclists have competed in the Tour de France and never won a stage, but I do know that last year young Heinrich was rated No. 1 rider in the world. We are very proud of him. It was good to have him back in Australia prior to Christmas to welcome him to my office in Inverell and present him with a small token from my staff and me. Scott Sunderland and Heinrich Haussler are two young cyclists from Inverell who have really made their mark internationally. As I said, young Heinrich left his family at the age of 14 to go overseas and live in a strange country where he could not even speak the language. With determination, training and persistence he has become one of the best in the world—a magnificent feat.

But he is not satisfied with that; he is now making a contribution back into the sport. This makes young Heinrich a real shining star. He sponsors the Grafton to Inverell Cycle Classic each year. Just a couple of weeks ago I attended a function in Inverell, where some 300 people were present, to launch the Racing Kangaroos. This is an initiative of Heinrich Haussler Sr and Wendy Haussler. With the support of their son, young Heinrich, they are getting behind a sport that has given the family so much satisfaction. They have raised a lot of sponsorship and have formed the Racing Kangaroos, based in Inverell. It is the brainchild of Heinrich Haussler Sr and Inverell coach Kurt Pollock and is designed to give young cyclists an opportunity to receive the same professional training and experience here in Australia as they would gain overseas, without having to go overseas. Also, they are pursuing education for the young riders along with their cycle training so that, when the youngsters grow up and, hopefully, become champions in their sport, they have a decent education and have a career to go back to when they leave the sport of cycling. There is a strong focus on team members completing their education, including through scholarships at special boarding schools, and it is also aimed at helping them grow as people and become good citizens.

There are 12 riders in the Racing Kangaroos team, with four from each age group of under 15s, under 17s and under 19s. The aim is not just to make each rider a better cyclist and ambassador for the sport but also to help steer them into the professional ranks. The team consists of world record holders and Australia medal holders, including Tirian McManus, who is a six-time Australian road and track champion. The Racing Kangaroos, based in Inverell, is not just about sport; it is
also about teaching our young to have a healthy lifestyle. It has great support from the cycling fraternity, sponsors and parents. Maybe one day one of these youngsters will proudly ride to victory in one of the world’s great classics.

At the function in Inverell a couple of weeks ago, there was an auction for the jersey that Heinrich wore when he won the 13th stage of the Tour de France, and $4,000 was raised. A considerable amount of money has been raised to give these youngsters a start in life in a professional sport. I have no doubt that at some time in the future, hopefully the near future rather than the distant future, the Racing Kangaroos will return gold medals to Australia in the Olympics, in the Commonwealth Games or in some of the world’s classics. It was announced just yesterday that the 50th Grafton to Inverell Cycle Classic will be held on Saturday, 23 October. It will cap a big year of cycling in the Inverell community.

The amazing thing about the Hausslers is the way they contribute back to the community. The support that young Heinrich has received from his parents has enabled him to go around the world, focus on a career and become a world champion—and now to contribute back to the sport. The whole idea of the Racing Kangaroos is to train these cyclists locally instead of their having to leave their families and travel overseas, with the cost of food, accommodation and so on, and, of course, education is required. It is a magnificent scheme that is supported by so many. I think that in time to come this will prove to be a great success not only for the Inverell cycling community but for Australia as a whole. I commend those people who have committed so much to it. We look forward to the great results that I know our nation will see in the future. I thank the Senate.

Resale Royalty Scheme

Senator WORTLEY (South Australia) (7.44 pm)—Late last year the Resale Royalty Right for Visual Artists Bill 2009 was passed by the Senate. It was a bill in which I had taken a particular interest. The act had a lengthy genesis. It was not until 1978 that Australia formally entered into the Berne convention of 1971, under which the works of visual and literary artists are protected around the globe. One hundred and sixty-four countries, among them the members of the European Union, signed the Berne convention. More than 50 of these have implemented variants of a resale royalty scheme. Finally we have a response to that convention—a response that fulfils our election commitment, protects the interests of visual artists and makes sure that they receive proper entitlements upon the commercial resale of their works.

The scheme will see visual artists share for the first time in the commercialisation of their work in the secondary art market. Visual artists who garner their income from the sale of original works do not have the same opportunities to license reproductions, performances and the like—as, for example, composers or writers. This is the essence of the act. It addresses the imbalance between visual artists and those who can reap financial gain from multiple reiterations of the works they have created, just as composers, musicians, authors and playwrights do.

It is part of being human that we cherish meaningful images and objects. We all have favourite artists, even if their work may be beyond our individual reach. Some people buy for investment, some purely for the pleasure of owning a beautiful piece of work and some for the acutely personal resonance that a work of art may hold. We decorate our homes and our workplaces with pictures, prints, photographs, fabrics, ceramics and
other representations of places or things that have significance for us. But what of the creators of those works? The conception and realisation of the works of art we hold dear represent their inspiration.

My mother is an artist who, after primary school, went on to attend the Girls Central Art School on North Terrace in Adelaide, where the daily lesson focus was on the arts. Students from this school and other schools like this around Australia, and many self-taught artists without any formal education, went on to make a living from their works, although for many it was one that had to be supported by additional income from other sources.

I have already mentioned the paradox that visual artist works are commercialised by their sale and resale rather than through exploitation of the rights available to copyright owners, whose works are commercially reproduced. As well, while the artists’ work may appreciate in value, sometimes to an extraordinary degree over a career, a visual artist did not benefit in the same way as those who later sell the work on at a premium. I highlight the work particularly of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, whose work was initially often sold for relatively little but is now collected—in a number of cases worldwide—and is extremely valuable. For example, a painting by the late Clifford Possum Japaltjarri sold in 1977 for $1,200. A dealer bought it for $36,000 in 1996. The National Gallery of Australia bought it for $2.4 million in 2007. The artist benefited only from the initial sale and not from the 1996 transaction. His estate, after his death in 2002, benefited not at all. We know that some artists have been exploited by unprincipled dealers.

This act redresses the imbalances, as I have said, and protects the interests of all visual artists. It is they, after all, who communicate in a very particular way our people and our country to ourselves and to the world. The resale royalty will exist for the creator’s lifetime, plus an additional 70 years. It is by virtue of this provision that the artist’s estate may be entitled to the royalty. For the resale royalty right to be activated there must be a commercial resale. This is fulfilled if there is a transfer of ownership from one person to another after the first transfer of ownership for monetary consideration and with the involvement of an art market professional. Private sales are not included. The first transfer may be a sale, gift or other transaction where monetary consideration is not an element, such as exchange or inheritance. But the second transfer must attract monetary consideration.

The scheme applies to resales of work first acquired after the commencement of the legislation. Works made before the commencement of the legislation and works by artists who have died are captured by the provisions. However, works acquired before the legislation commences will not attract the royalty until the second resale has been transacted during the period after the scheme came into effect. The resale royalty only applies to works resold commercially for a price of more than $1,000 or as prescribed by the regulations. The royalty will be payable at the rate of five per cent of the sale price on the commercial resale of the work. There is no upper limit to the royalty.

The right is inalienable, except where allowed by the provisions related to the succession test, so it cannot be assigned nor can it be waived. The holder of the right may, however, instruct the collecting society not to enforce the right. Civil penalties will apply for the contravention of a pecuniary penalty provision. The establishment of the collecting society which will manage the scheme and collect and distribute royalties is underway. The Resale Royalty Scheme is
simple, it is easy to understand, and it recog-
nises the importance of our visual artists’
contribution to our community and to our
identity as Australians. The Resale Royalty
Right for Visual Artists Act 2009 represents a
long-awaited acknowledgement of the value
of the works of our artists, and I could not let
it pass without putting on the record my sup-
port.

Hon. Sue Napier

Senator Barnett (Tasmania) (7.52
pm)—I stand tonight to pay tribute to the
outstanding contribution to Tasmanian poli-
tics made by the Hon. Sue Napier MP, state
member for Bass and, in so doing, I speak on
behalf of the Tasmanian Liberal Senate team.
Sue Napier was a true pioneer of Tasmanian
politics. Sue Napier has been an outstanding
state representative for the people of Bass for
almost two decades. Her courage, her deter-
nination and her compassion have set her
apart. As a woman in politics, Sue blazed a
trail for others to follow: she was Tasmania’s
first female Liberal cabinet minister, its first
female Deputy Premier and the first woman
to lead the Liberal Party. She has served with
distinction in a range of portfolio and minis-
terial duties, while never losing touch with
the grassroots.

I have enjoyed working with Sue Napier
on a range of issues important to northern
Tasmania and the state as a whole. I admire
her as a quiet achiever with a can-do attitude.
More recently, we have worked on the need
to save the Australian Technical College in
Northern Tasmania, and that campaign was
successful. We worked with former federal
member of parliament, Michael Ferguson,
shadow Treasurer, Peter Gutwein, and other
state and federal Liberals to save the Austra-
lian Technical College. We have worked in
the north-east, and last October, for example,
with other members of the Liberal Senate
team, we visited Flinders Island. So, on be-
half of the Tasmanian Liberal Senate team, I
would like to acknowledge Sue’s outstanding
collection to Tasmanian politics.

I also note that my fellow Liberal senator
from Tasmania, Senator David Bushby,
went a thoughtful letter to the editor in the
Hobart Mercury, and I would like to read it.
It says:

I HAVE had the pleasure of knowing Sue Napier
since she first entered Parliament. I also had the
honour of serving Sue as her chief of staff while
she was State Leader of the Tasmanian Liberal
Party.

Sue Napier has been a great representative, not
only for the people of Bass but for all of Tasma-
nia and I feel privileged to have worked with her.
She was an excellent minister and Deputy Pre-
mer and it was a great shame that circumstances
of the time transpired against her putting forward
her best claim to be Premier.

Sue has led the way for Liberal women in
Tasmania and will be sorely missed in the front
line of public life. However, I am sure Sue will
still contribute in a significant way in her new life
as a private citizen and I look forward to working
with her as she concentrates on her passions and
causes.

I would like to wish Sue and her family all the
best in the coming months as I am sure do all
Tasmanians.

A very thoughtful letter.

A range of tributes have been given to Sue
Napier, but, before I mention some of those,
I would like to acknowledge on the record
her wonderful profile. In doing this, I want to
say that last Friday I had the honour, on be-
half of the Bass electorate of the Liberal
Party in Tasmania, to pay tribute on their
behalf to Sue Napier. It was a great honour
indeed. It was one of the few occasions I
have seen Sue Napier a little bit emotional as
she responded to that tribute where there was
a standing ovation in her honour and to give
her the due praise that she deserves.
Sue is a fifth generation Tasmanian who, prior to entering state parliament in 1992, worked as a popular and successful teacher and university lecturer with an active profile in sport, community and youth affairs. She has accumulated a number of firsts in state parliament, which I mentioned earlier: the first female leader of the Tasmanian Liberal Party, the first female Deputy Premier and then its first female Leader of the Opposition and its first female Liberal state minister.

She has undertaken a broad range of portfolio responsibilities since her election in 1992. In 1994 she was Assistant Minister for Women and Youth Affairs; in 1995-96, Minister for Transport, TT-Line and Youth Affairs. She was re-elected in 1996 and became Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, the Arts, and Sport and Recreation. She was re-elected in 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2006. Sue became the first woman to lead the state parliamentary Liberal Party from July 1999 to 2001. She was shadow minister for health and human services, shadow minister for racing, sport and recreation, and shadow minister for women Tasmania from 2000 to 2006. She was shadow minister for education and skills from 2006 to 2010, as well as the shadow minister for the environment, heritage and the arts, shadow minister for social inclusion, shadow minister for climate change, shadow minister for women Tasmania, and the leader of opposition business—a very heavy workload indeed. She has announced that she will not be seeking a further term and will conclude her term on 20 March.

Sue has a BA (Hons) from the University of Tasmania, she has a Master of Arts from Leeds, specialising in sport psychology and motor learning, and she has a Diploma of Physical Education from the University of Tasmania. Sue’s personal interests include golf, fishing, walking the dog and spending time with the family, which is fantastic. She certainly supports families and her friends alike.

The Hon. Will Hodgman, leader of the state Liberal Party, gave a tremendous tribute to Sue Napier on 9 February when he said:

It is typical of Sue Napier’s character that she felt unable to honestly commit to a four-year term in Parliament, and I respect her decision.

Sue has made an enormous contribution to Tasmania. She has many ‘firsts’ …

He went on to say:

She has served the people of Bass with distinction for eighteen years, since 1992, and is widely respected across all parties for her integrity, her commitment to Education and her knowledge of parliament.

It is typical of Sue that she wanted to ensure our major Education policy, announced on Sunday, was completed and released before she made this decision.

Will Hodgman continued:

On a personal note, I have valued Sue’s advice and guidance since I was elected.

She has an incredible capacity for hard work and for being a terrier with an issue until it is resolved.

Sue’s determination and love of politics led her to work hard on the Liberal’s education policy and, as a tribute to her, I would like to note that that education policy was released on Sunday, 7 February. It is headed ‘The Liberals’ $30 million plan to fix our education system’. It goes on to say:

A Hodgman Liberal government will raise education standards by overhauling Tasmania tomorrow and investing $30 million and revitalising our high schools, focusing on results, and providing more support to students and teachers.

Under a Hodgman Liberal government, there will be no more experimentation with our children’s education.

Frankly, voting for real change on 20 March, next month, would be a tribute to Sue Napier. Sue was a committed liberal and is
determined to see real change in the election of a Will Hodgman majority Liberal government.

I also want to acknowledge the wonderful work Sue Napier has done with the other state Liberal members for Bass and the candidates for Bass, including Peter Gutwein, Tasmania’s shadow Treasurer, and of course former federal member for Bass Michael Ferguson, who is also running in the state election. He is a very fine and upstanding and outstanding candidate and indeed he is a future member of parliament. Michelle McGinity has been chosen by the Liberal Party to fill the gap, and she has a very fine pedigree as well with a marketing and public relations background. She is very articulate and feisty, and I think she will represent the interests of the community very well. Of course she is the daughter of Dr Paul McGinity, who has been so unfairly and inappropriately treated by the state Labor government and in my view by the process laid down by the Medical Council of Tasmania.

Last Friday night at the Bass electorate Liberal Party meeting I had the honour of launching the campaign of Nick Pedley. He will be another colleague working hard for the election of a Will Hodgman Liberal government on 20 March, as indeed will Pam Dakin, who is also running to support Will Hodgman in the electorate of Bass. I want to pay tribute to the work of Rob Mantach, who chaired the meeting last Friday night. He has done much to support and lead the Bass electorate. I know David Fry, a former state member for Bass, would also want to be recognised in this message to the Senate.

On behalf of the Tasmanian Liberal Senate team, and from me personally, I want to say congratulations Sue Napier; well done to you for your years of service to the people of Tasmania, particularly in the north. You are an outstanding citizen, you have contributed brilliantly and I want to wish you and your husband Drew all the best, particularly with the challenges that you face in the weeks and months ahead and for your time together. I wish you well and I pay tribute to you.

Mother Mary MacKillop
Sister Joan Farrell

Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (8.02 pm)—Last year, Australia celebrated the 100th anniversary of the passing of Mary MacKillop. This year of course we will prepare to honour her canonisation, making her Australia’s very first saint. In 1866 she founded the Sisters of St Joseph, a religious order dedicated to helping the poor. Mary and the Sisters of St Joseph went on to establish many schools across Australia, both in cities and in the outback. She has a special significance in my home state of South Australia, as she lived there for 11 years from 1872 to 1883.

While much has been written about her good works in Penola in the south-east, less well known is her work in Adelaide itself. Sister Mary MacKillop, as she was known then, was responsible for building a chapel and convent in Kensington which are integral parts of the community and are still used today. Also in Kensington is Mary MacKillop College, a Sisters of St Joseph school for young women. Three of my cousins attended that school. My friend and colleague Vini Ciccarello, the state member for Norwood in South Australia, has been working tirelessly for several years towards gaining recognition for the work of Mary MacKillop and the Sisters of St Joseph in Adelaide and their ongoing contribution to the community.

Today, however, I want to refer to another nun, Sister Joan Farrell, known to her former students as Sister Mary Owen, who, without achieving any miracles, reflects the reasons why we honour those who have given their lives to the work of the Catholic Church.
Sister Joan has dedicated her life to the education of young children. Born in Glen Osmond, South Australia, in 1918 to Nicholas and Mary Farrell, she will turn 92 in April this year and is one of the oldest nuns living in South Australia. Today she lives in a nursing home adjacent to the convent established by Mary MacKillop in Kensington.

Following her schooling at St Raphael’s Parish School, where interestingly enough two of my own children went to school, and Saint Aloysius College, where Senator Anne McEwen went to school, Joan Farrell joined the Sisters of Mercy at the Mercy Convent on Angas Street in Adelaide in May 1941 at the age of 23. Following this she began to teach in schools around South Australia including Mount Gambier, Riverton and Henley Beach. Despite not having any teaching qualifications, Sister Joan was always wonderful with children and instantly became a well respected and popular teacher with all her students.

Always ahead of her time, Sister Joan was known for creating an exciting environment for children to learn, refusing to let education be dull. She possessed a fantastic sense of humour and had an ability to engage others with great stories about her life and interests. She was passionate about both sport and animals; she was an exceptional tennis player and always enjoyed the cricket. She used her passion and skill with the children every day in the classroom and consequently made many lasting impressions. As testament to this, numerous students have kept in contact and visited Sister Joan as long as 40 years after she taught them, recalling only good memories.

When she retired to Henley Beach in the late 1990s, Sister Joan had spent over 50 years as an educator. As a woman of high spirit, Sister Joan has been a sociable woman throughout her life and so she has made countless friends from each community that she has worked in across South Australia. One of the most important of these communities is, of course, the Sisters of Mercy.

It would be of no surprise to you, Madam Acting Deputy President Moore, that Sister Joan chose to join the Sisters of Mercy as she was surrounded by religious influences even as a child. Her family home on Glen Osmond Road was known as a place where young priests who had just arrived from Ireland could go and always be welcome. Further, one of her great influences was her twin brother, Owen Farrell, who was a priest. The two were very close and always encouraging of each other. He was ordained in 1944 and, like Sister Joan, worked across South Australia, serving in churches—including the cathedral—at Glenelg, Pinaroo, Marion and Colonel Light Gardens, where, as it happens, he was my parish priest. While Sister Joan’s interests were in teaching children, Father Owen’s interests were the arts. His interests were widely recognised as he was appointed an official Vatican representative to the International Society for Education, for the arts. Throughout his life he built up a large and impressive art collection. He also served for nine years on South Australia’s Art Gallery Board from 1969 through to 1978, having been appointed and reappointed by both Liberal and Labor governments. After his death in 1979, he left his entire collection to the Art Gallery of South Australia.

I am very proud to say that Sister Joan and Father Owen significantly and positively contributed to South Australian society, perhaps not in obvious ways as they were not necessarily leaders or miracle workers, but their impact was made in small ways on a daily basis as they worked to help children, the poor and members of their communities. As Sister Joan celebrated her golden jubilee of 50 years as a Sister of Mercy, she said she never once regretted the decision she made.
to join the Sisters of Mercy. It is, in many ways, astounding that one person can give themselves entirely to a life of helping others. It takes incredible strength of character and provides our country with both strong ideals and role models as we begin to celebrate the canonisation of Mary MacKillop. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise other nuns and priests, past and present, who work or have worked quietly and selflessly every day to better our society.

Environment: Tasmania

Senator O’BRIEN (Tasmania) (8.10 pm)—Whilst I had not intended to speak this evening, some information came to my attention this evening which I think ought to be shared with this chamber and the public. There have been on two consecutive Monday nights Australian Story programs relating to alleged toxic run-off in North-Eastern Tasmania. According to the story as portrayed by the group of proponents of that view, it was attributable to certain eucalyptus species which we were told had been genetically modified and were contributing a toxic component to the foam in the run-off into the George River. That river runs into the bay at St Helens, which has an important aquaculture facility. As well as that, the suggestion was that this would have an impact on drinking water. It was a very alarming story to raise and I note that Senators Bob Brown and Milne have proposed that the matter be referred to a Senate committee for examination.

One would expect that that sort of information should be given the greatest examination and scrutiny because it would certainly be in the public interest to ascertain the veracity or otherwise of the claim. Indeed, I understand that the chief public health officer in Tasmania has made contact with Dr Alison Bleaney, the GP who has been one of the spokespeople for the group, with a view to obtaining the research into the claims that cancer and other human illnesses and also oyster deaths were linked to the toxic run-off from plantations. He has made that request and, as reported on the AAP wire this evening, he has been referred to the group’s lawyers. I really struggle with that approach to a matter of public health. If indeed there is reliable research being conducted on an issue which impacts on public health and on an aquaculture industry in North-Eastern Tasmania, it is incumbent upon the claimants, who after all have taken this matter to the nation in Australian Story, to enable public health authorities to examine that claim so that if it is valid they can take the necessary steps, whatever they may be, to address the matter. For the public authorities to be told, ‘We aren’t going to comply with your request. Talk to our lawyers,’ indicates to me that we should be suspicious about the motives of those who make this proposition. It may be that there is some validity to the claim. I cannot say.

What I can say is that, firstly, the claim that the toxic run-off is due to a genetic modification of the tree species Eucalyptus nitens is heavily contested by the Forest Industries Association of Tasmania spokesman, Mr Terry Edwards, who has told the public, subsequent to the programs, that in fact the species has not been genetically modified and that any modifications that have taken place have been in terms of normal tree breeding over time, as with many other plants, including food-producing plants, which we humans consume. So the first aspect of the claim that it is somehow due to genetic modification of a species Eucalyptus nitens seems to be questionable. The other aspect of the claim which seems to be being contested by the state government is that the toxicity of highly concentrated surface scum may relate to a number of things and certainly cannot be related to drinking water.
taken from below the surface. The claim states that high toxicity is to be expected in surface river scum, and that it is not a revelation.

What is most concerning is that these claims, which apparently are not allowed to be properly examined by the public health authorities, are out there in the public arena. There are aquaculture operators who have to sell their product in an environment where an untested claim suggests there is a toxic substance affecting the product they are growing. On that ground alone, one would have thought there was some obligation by those who produce the material to allow it to be publicly tested. Equally, there is the suggestion that this toxic substance, as it finds its way into public drinking water, is going to affect public health. One would have thought that, on public health grounds, Dr Bleaney would have accepted the need for a public examination of those claims, lest the public be alarmed by claims made in the media. It is suggested that these substances are cancer-causing agents which have led to a higher incidence of cancer. I note that the Director of Public Health, Dr Roscoe Taylor, has said that the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services has not discovered a higher incidence of any disease, including cancer, in the population affected within this catchment. My recollection is that, in previous discussions with Dr Bleaney and an examination of her records, no such disproportionate cancer or other disease population has been discovered.

I am concerned that if we have a public debate about this we ought to have impartial scientific examination of the material which is claimed to have been discovered. In the absence of that and, might I say, in the run-up to a state election, one might form the view that the motives of those making the claims and going on national TV are less than those of the statements that have been made. I urge Dr Bleaney and her associates to make all the research material available to Tasmanian health authorities so that the public can be either properly warned or assured that there is nothing to be afraid of.

**Senate adjourned at 8.18 pm**

**DOCUMENTS**

**Tabling**

The following documents were tabled by the Clerk:

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

  - Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act—Notice under section 45—Cultural Initiatives Australia Pty Ltd.
  - Corporations Act—ASIC Class Order [CO 10/111] [F2010L00484]*.
  - Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act—Amendment of list of exempt native specimens—EPBC303DC/SFS/2010/02 [F2010L00502]*.
  - Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act—Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code – Amendment No. 114 – 2010 [F2010L00357]*.
OZO0100213—Regional Express Holdings Limited, dated 18 December 2009.
Veterans’ Entitlements Act—Veterans’ Entitlements Income (Exempt Lump Sum – Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme Payment) Determination No. R11 of 2010 [F2010L00496]*.

* Explanatory statement tabled with legislative instrument.

The following government documents were tabled:

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)—Equity and diversity—Report for the period 1 September 2008 to 31 August 2009.
Gene Technology Regulator—Quarterly report for the period 1 July to 30 September 2009.
International Monetary Agreements Act 1974—Loan agreement between the Australian Government and the Republic of Indonesia for a standby loan for the Australian dollar equivalent of US$1 billion, 5 November 2009—National interest statement.
Northern Territory Fisheries Joint Authority—Report for 2007-08.
Private Health Insurance Administration Council—Report for 2008-09 on the operations of the registered health benefits organisations.
Torres Strait Regional Authority—Report for 2008-09.
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The following answers to questions were circulated:

Prime Minister: Overseas Travel
(Question No. 2488)

Senator Ronaldson asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister, upon notice, on 11 December 2009:

(1) At what time on Friday, 4 December 2009, was the decision made to change the itinerary of the Prime Minister for his trip to Copenhagen.

(2) Did the Prime Minister make this decision personally; if not, who made this decision.

(3) (a) At what time was the decision not to travel communicated to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF); (b) who communicated that decision to the RAAF; and (c) in what form was the communication made.

Senator Chris Evans—The Prime Minister has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

A possible visit to Copenhagen in early December was under consideration for a short while, but as no decision was ever taken to make such a visit at that time, no itinerary had been established.

Prime Minister and Cabinet: Travel
(Question No. 2489)

Senator Ronaldson asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister, upon notice, on 11 December 2009:

(1) Since 1 November 2009, how many times has the departmental Secretary travelled to Western Australia.

(2) For each of these occasions:
   (a) how many other members of the Australian Public Service travelled with the Secretary;
   (b) how many Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 ministerial staff travelled with the Secretary;
   (c) what was the total cost of the trip;
   (d) can an itemised list be provided of the following costs:
       (i) airfares, (ii) VIP aircraft travel, (iii) accommodation, (iv) meals, (v) entertainment, (vi) car travel, and (vii) other expenses;
   (e) for each night of accommodation in Western Australia, which hotel (or other establishment) was used by the Secretary;
   (f) what was the purpose of the trip; and
   (g) who did the Secretary meet.

Senator Chris Evans—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) On one occasion — from 8 – 11 November 2009.

(2) (a) Six – details set out below:
   Ms Robyn Kruk, Secretary, Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
   Mr Mike Mrdak, Secretary, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.
Mr John Pierce, Secretary, Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism
Mr Jim Murphy, Deputy Secretary, The Treasury
Ms Glenys Beauchamp, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Ms Kerrie Burmeister, Executive Officer, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

(b) None
(c) The total cost of the Secretary’s travel was $3638.10.
(d) (i) The Secretary’s airfares costs were $2,767.45.
(ii) Nil VIP aircraft travel
(iii) The Secretary’s accommodation costs were $499.50.
(iv) The Secretary was paid $99.00 for meals.
(v) Nil Entertainment
(vi) Comcar costs met by this Department for the group in Western Australia were $200.15, however arrangements for cars were shared between the Departments involved.
(vii) In accordance with the Remuneration Tribunal Determination 2004/03, the Secretary received a payment of a daily incidentals allowance of $24.00 – paid for 9, 10 and 11 November – total $72.00.
(e) The Secretary stayed in the Hyatt Regency in Perth on 8 and 10 November and the Esplanade Hotel in Port Hedland on 9 November.
(f) The trip provided an opportunity for the Secretary (and delegation) to inspect the facilities and activities of key resource industry operators in the Pilbara region. The trip also provided an opportunity to visit local indigenous communities in the Pilbara and participate in an IPAA event in Perth.
(g) The Secretary met a range of employees from the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, Rio Tinto, Woodside, BHP, and the Port Hedland Port Authority, as well as representatives of local indigenous communities. He also met with colleagues from the West Australian Public Service and with the Premier of Western Australia.

Treasury

(Question No. 2490)

Senator Ronaldson asked the Minister representing the Treasurer, upon notice, on 11 December 2009:
(1) Did the departmental Secretary attend a meeting at the Lobby Restaurant on Wednesday, 2 December 2009.
(2) Who else was present at that meeting.
(3) (a) Who paid for the food and beverages consumed at that meeting; and (b) if the bill was paid for by the department, what was the cost.
(4) What was the purpose of the meeting.
(5) Was the Treasurer informed of the meeting beforehand; if so, did the Treasurer give approval for the meeting to take place.
(6) Did the Secretary notify the Treasurer of any potential conflict of interest in attending the meeting.

Senator Sherry—The Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
(1) No.
(2) Unknown.
(3) (a) Unknown. (b) Unknown.
(4) Unknown.
(5) Unknown.
(6) No, meeting not attended so there was no potential conflict.

**Treasury: Commonwealth Credit Cards**

(Question No. 2491)

**Senator Ronaldson** asked the Minister representing the Treasurer, upon notice, on 11 December 2009:

(1) Does the Treasurer have a department-supplied credit card; if so (a) what is the name of the organisation on the card; and (b) what was the expenditure for the 2008-09 financial year.

(2) Does the Assistant Treasurer have a department-supplied credit card; if so (a) what is the name of the organisation on the card; and (b) what was the expenditure for the 2008-09 financial year.

(3) Does any Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 ministerial staff have a department-supplied credit card; if so (a) what is the name of the organisation on the card; and (b) what was the expenditure for the 2008-09 financial year.

**Senator Sherry**—The Treasurer has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) The Treasurer does not have a department-supplied credit card.
(2) The Assistant Treasurer does not have a department-supplied credit card.
(3) There were five departmental credit cards supplied to Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 ministerial staff during 2008-09; (a) All cards have the organisation name: Dept of Treasury; (b) Total expenditure in 2008-09 for all cards was $7,207.41.

**Jobs Fund**

(Question No. 2492)

**Senator Cormann** asked the Minister for Employment Participation, upon notice, on 11 December 2009:

With reference to grants under the $132 million first round of the ‘Local Jobs’ and ‘Get Communities Working’ streams of the Government’s Jobs Fund (the fund):

(1) How did the Government advertise the grants.
(2) Were these grants advertised equally across all electorates.
(3) Did the Minister or his office provide special encouragement to Australian Labor Party (ALP) members and senators to promote these grants in their electorates; if so, how.
(4) Was special promotional material provided to ALP members and senators at taxpayer’s expense to promote these grants in ALP electorates; if so, (a) what material was provided; and (b) at what cost to the taxpayer.
(5) Was the same encouragement provided to non-ALP members and senators; if not, why not.
(6) Did the Minister or his office provide any material to the ALP to assist it in encouraging ALP members and senators to advertise these grants from the fund; if so: (a) what material was provided; (b) by whom; (c) to whom; and (d) at what cost to the taxpayer.
(7) (a) How were decisions made to allocate funding; and (b) by whom were the decisions made.
(8) (a) What were the criteria for decision-making; (b) how were these criteria developed; and (c) were the criteria strictly applied on an objective basis.

(9) What involvement did the Minister or his office have in developing the criteria for decision-making on grants under the fund.

(10) What changes, if any, were made to the criteria by the Minister or his office after receiving any initial recommendations from the department.

(11) Given the Minister’s spokesperson has ruled out any personal involvement by the Minister in the decision-making, was there any involvement from staff in his ministerial office (including departmental liaison officers) in the decision making; if so, what was that level of involvement.

(12) Did the Minister, his office or the department receive any communications including correspondence, phone calls or emails, from ALP members or senators in support of particular projects being funded; if so, (a) from whom; and (b) regarding which projects.

(13) (a) How many applications were received; and (b) by state and territory, what was the total amount of funding applied for.

Senator Arbib—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) and (2) Round One of the Jobs Fund was advertised in all national newspapers, regional newspapers in the announced Priority Employment Areas, through media releases and on the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website. Advertisements were placed in the following national and regional newspapers: the Sydney Morning Herald, the Age, the Australian, the Canberra Times, the Hobart Mercury, the West Australian, the Brisbane Courier Mail, the Adelaide Advertiser, the Northern Territory News, the Burnie Advocate, the Launceston Examiner, the Illawarra Mercury, the Ipswich Advertiser and the Albert and Logan News.

(3) and (6) These questions relate to a period of time in which I was not the relevant portfolio minister.

(7) and (11) I refer the Senate to the material provided at Supplementary Estimates 2009-10, particularly at EW681_10.

(12) I am advised departmental records show that 97 letters of support were received from members and senators (see Attachment A). Please note these letters of support could be for projects submitted under any of the three streams in Round One of the Jobs Fund, including Temporary Financial Assistance, Heritage, Bike Paths and Infrastructure Employment Projects. In addition, a number of letters of support from MPs and Senators were submitted as part of the application process. These letters are all stored separately on the applicant files and have not been included in this count.

(13) (a) for the Local Jobs and Get Communities Working streams administered by the department 1611 applications were received. (b) of the 1611 applications the total amount of funding applied for by state and territory was:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
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Attachment A
Correspondence received from Members of Parliament
Note: this excludes letters of support submitted as part of the application process
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Party</th>
<th>Electorate/Position</th>
<th>Organisation Submitting Proposal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Alby Schultz MP</td>
<td>LIBERAL</td>
<td>Federal Member for Hume</td>
<td>The Vine Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Chris Hayes MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Werriwa</td>
<td>Lifeline Macarthur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Chris Hayes MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Werriwa</td>
<td>University of Western Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Chris Trevor MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Flynn</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Mr Craig Thompson MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Dobell</td>
<td>Central Coast Community Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Craig Thompson MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Dobell</td>
<td>Central Coast Group Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Craig Thompson MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Dobell</td>
<td>Gosford City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Craig Thompson MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Dobell</td>
<td>Samaritans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Darren Chester MP</td>
<td>NATIONALS</td>
<td>Federal Member for Gippsland</td>
<td>Committee of Management for Gippsland Centenary House Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Darren Chester MP</td>
<td>NATIONALS</td>
<td>Federal Member for Gippsland</td>
<td>Gippsland Rotary Centenary House Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Darren Chester MP</td>
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<td>Youth Insearch Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr David Bradbury MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Lindsay</td>
<td>St Mary Magdalene Anglican Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Don Randall MP</td>
<td>LIBERAL</td>
<td>Federal Member for Canning</td>
<td>Communicare Inc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr John Forrest MP</td>
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<td>Federal Member for Mallee</td>
<td>Christie Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr John Forrest MP</td>
<td>NATIONALS</td>
<td>Federal Member for Mallee</td>
<td>Natimuk and District Gymnastics Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Kelvin Thomson MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Wills</td>
<td>Brunswick Industries Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Mark Dreyfus QC, MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Isaacs</td>
<td>City of Greater Dandenong (6 x proposals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Mark Dreyfus QC, MP</td>
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<td>Federal Member for Isaacs</td>
<td>City of Kingston (3 x proposals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Federal Member for Lyne</td>
<td>Port Macquarie Indoor Stadium</td>
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<td>Mr Tony Windsor MP</td>
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<td>RSPCA NSW</td>
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**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**
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<th>Organisation Submitting Proposal</th>
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<td>the Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
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<td>University of Western Sydney</td>
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<td>the Hon David Hawker MP</td>
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<td>Federal Member for Wannon</td>
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<td>Old Courthouse Community Centre</td>
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<td>Maritime Union of Australia</td>
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<td>the Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<td>the Hon John Murphy MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Lowe</td>
<td>St Johns Ambulance NSW</td>
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<td>the Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Adelaide</td>
<td>Arts Access SA</td>
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<td>the Hon Laurie Ferguson MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Reid</td>
<td>Australian Arab Business Network</td>
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<td>the Hon Lindsay Tanner MP</td>
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<td>Jesuit Social Services (3 x proposals)</td>
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<td>the Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Batman</td>
<td>Sliding Door Café</td>
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<tr>
<td>the Hon Peter Garret AM, MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Kingsford Smith</td>
<td>North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club</td>
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<td>the Hon Roger Price MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Habitat for Humanity (NSW) Ltd</td>
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<tr>
<td>the Hon Simon Crean MP</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Federal Member for Hotham</td>
<td>Kingston City Council</td>
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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Radiofrequency Spectrum  
(Question No. 2494)

Senator Ludlam asked the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, upon notice, on 11 December 2009:

(1) With reference to Very High Frequency (VHF) radio frequency regulation:
   Can a self-regulatory system be supported by the expansion of the radio class licence system.

(2) How does the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and its responsibility to promote self-regulation apply to the operation of the Citizen Band Radio Service (CBRS) which operates on the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) waveband.

(3) What are the merits of a system where revenue can be obtained from radio users such as within the Australian inshore boating community which operates on the VHF waveband versus the CBRS that operates on the UHF waveband.

(4) Can an update be provided on the progress of the review of the 5 year management plan for the UHF waveband.

(5) What restructuring of the operation of the UHF section of the CBRS is being contemplated.

(6) Is ACMA considering relocating the CBRS given the pressures on other users of the UHF waveband.

(7) Given that the ACMA is currently reviewing the operation of the VHF marine service for recreational boat users:
   (a) how many complaints have been received regarding the activity currently taking place on the international distress channel 16 and channel 67;
   (b) can a breakdown of these complaints, by state and territory, be provided;
   (c) have any state or federal agency made a complaint regarding this activity; if so, which agencies have made these complaints; and
   (d) is there also a need for the authority to look at the congestion that is increasing on all VHF channels, including channel 73.

(8) Are there any financial penalties that can be applied to any radio operator or coastal radio station that misuses these channels.

(9) Given there is some movement to do away with the marine Medium Frequency and High Frequency radio service, can ACMA provide its position on whether it supports a shift away from boat operators using these bands.

Senator Conroy—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is responsible for the regulation of spectrum. I have received the following advice from ACMA in relation to the question:
(1) The Radiocommunications Act 1992 (the Act) provides for management of the radiofrequency spectrum in Australia. The promotion of self regulation is not one of the objectives of the Act. However, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) encourages self regulation where it would be efficient and appropriate.

The three radiofrequency licence categories - apparatus, class and spectrum – authorised under the Act can all have elements of self regulation that offer operators varying levels of discretion within the parameters of the particular licence.

(2) ACMA’s responsibilities are determined by the Australian Communications and Media Authority Act 2005. ACMA’s responsibilities include the management of the radiofrequency spectrum in accordance with the Act. As mentioned in the answer to Question 1 above, the Act does not have self regulation as an explicit objective.

(3) Citizen Band (CBRS) and inshore (inshore waters and inland waterways) maritime radio are both generally regulated under class licences. Class licensing is an effective and efficient means of spectrum management for services where a limited set of common frequencies are employed, and equipment is operated under a common set of conditions. It also involves minimal licence administration by ACMA. A class licence sets out the conditions under which any person is permitted to operate. Class licences are not issued to an individual user, and do not attract individual licence fees.

The CBRS is regulated under the Radiocommunications (Citizen Band Radio Stations) Class Licence 2002. Any person in Australia can operate a Citizen Band radio, for recreational, domestic or business purposes. CBRS operators pay no licence fees. CBRS operates in the HF and UHF bands. There are 40 CBRS channels in the HF band, ranging from 26.960 MHz to 27.410 MHz. There are 40 CBRS channels in the UHF band, ranging from 476.4125 MHz to 477.4125 MHz.

ACMA does not treat inshore maritime radio as a source of revenue. Certain inshore maritime radio users pay cost recovery fees, as set out below. Some of these are paid to ACMA, and some are paid to the Australian Maritime College (AMC).

Inshore maritime radio is regulated under the Radiocommunications (Maritime Ship Station – 27 MHz and VHF) Class Licence 2001. The class licence specifies that the operator of a VHF maritime radio must hold a relevant certificate of proficiency. Operators obtain a lifetime certificate of proficiency by completing an exam administered by the Australian Maritime College (AMC). The AMC charges cost-recovery fees for the exam ($56) and for the Marine Radio Operators Handbook that is used in preparing for the exam. In the 2008/09 financial year, the AMC collected a total of over $600,000 in cost-recovery fees. Details of AMC fees can be found on the AMC website at: http://www.amc.edu.au/omc/fees.

In some cases related to international requirements for ships that travel outside Australia, individual apparatus licensing (as opposed to class licensing) is still considered necessary to authorise the operation of maritime radios. Individual marine licensees pay an annual fee of around $50, which is set to recover ACMA’s direct and indirect costs. There are over 8,000 such licensees from which ACMA annually recovers around $400,000 in costs.

(4) ACMA is currently undertaking two activities relevant to the future management arrangements for spectrum in the UHF band. The first activity is the Five-Year Spectrum Outlook (FYSO) which is an ongoing assessment of the demand for different parts of the radiofrequency spectrum. (http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_311686). The FYSO assists in the identification of emerging pressures and changing uses and contributes to the debate on spectrum management generally.

The second activity considers spectrum options for arrangements in the frequency band 403-520 MHz which is sometimes referred to as the 400 MHz band or the UHF band. ACMA has

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
released two public consultation papers intended to outline ACMA proposals for future arrangements in the 400 MHz band and seek comments on future band arrangements. The papers are “Spectrum Proposals: 403-520 MHz – Proposals for future arrangements in the 400 MHz band” released in March 2009 and “Spectrum Options: 403-520 MHz – Initial consultation on future arrangements for the 400 MHz band” released in April 2008. A third discussion paper is due for release in the 1st quarter of 2010. As part of this review, ACMA is currently considering appropriate spectrum for a harmonised government band within the 400 MHz band.

(5) The CBRS currently uses 40 of the 25 kHz bandwidth channels in the UHF band, over the frequency range 476.4125 – 477.4125 MHz. ACMA has proposed, in its public consultation paper “Spectrum Proposals: 403-520 MHz – Proposals for future arrangements in the 400 MHz band” of March 2009, to reduce the channel bandwidth to 12.5 kHz. This proposal recognises the advancement of technology which results in the creation of additional channels, and thus greater use, within the same spectrum space.

ACMA has also proposed that the band be extended by 6.25 kHz to enable operation in the range 476.4125 – 477.41875 MHz to allow for an additional voice channel. Channel numbering and raster (i.e. alignment by frequency) arrangements within the band are also under review.

(6) Relocation of the CBRS is not currently being considered by ACMA.

(7) (a) Over an 18 month period to 11 December 2009, ACMA received 19 complaints about channels 16 and 67. (b) Yes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) Yes. Complaints have been received from a state police force and a ports corporation.

(d) ACMA staff are currently examining the use of the VHF Maritime Mobile band including the extent of the congestion.

(8) Yes. There are a variety of financial penalties that can be applied under Radiocommunications Act 1992 for breaches of licence conditions, including misuse of certain radiofrequency channels.

(9) ACMA has not had to drive the transition to VHF maritime mobile transceivers. This shift has been market driven through individual and industry preference. VHF Maritime Mobile transceivers have become more affordable and readily available. Consequently, individuals and industry have moved away from the interference prone uniquely Australian maritime 27 MHz equipment. As such ACMA is not aware of any need for regulatory intervention in this respect.

Defence: Pine Gap

(Question No. 2495)

Senator Ludlam asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 December 2009:

(1) Can the Minister confirm that deployment of elements of the United States of America’s missile defence system is progressing at Pine Gap.

(2) What steps have been taken toward replacement of the Defence Support Program satellite system with a Space-Based Infrared System (SBIRS).

(3) Has the reported SBIRS ground station been built at Pine Gap; if so: (a) is it online; and (b) if it is not online, when is it expected to be.

(4) What changes have occurred at the Pine Gap facility to accommodate the SBIRS.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) There has been no recent change in the support provided to the United States missile defence system by the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap. The Relay Ground Station at Pine Gap, formerly located at the Joint Defence Facility Nurrungar, has played a role in the United States’ ballistic mis-
silence early warning program for over 30 years. It collects early warning information on missile launches and nuclear explosions, thereby contributing to Australia’s non-proliferation policy.

(2) While Australia cooperates on the Defense Support Program (DSP) and Space Based Infrared System (SBIRS) through the activities at the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap, the capabilities are part of a wider United States monitoring system. Both DSP and SBIRS will continue to be supported by Pine Gap.

(3) There are no plans to build a ground station in support of SBIRS at Pine Gap. The existing Relay Ground Station was designed to accept data from both DSP and SBIRS satellites. The activities at the Pine Gap facility take place with the full knowledge and concurrence of the Australian Government.

(4) As the Relay Ground Station will support both DSP and SBIRS, no changes in the Station have taken place at Pine Gap.

Adoption
(Question No. 2496)

Senator Pratt asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 17 December 2009:

(1) How many intercountry adoption applications have been processed by the relevant state and territory authorities for each of the following financial years: (a) 2007-08; (b) 2008-09; and (c) 2009-10.

(2) What was the average cost of processing each application for: (a) states and territories; and (b) the Commonwealth.

Senator Wong—The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) The Community and Disability Services Ministerial Advisory Council (CDSMAC) considered a recommendation of the Overseas Adoption in Australia Report for performance information on intercountry adoption applications to be published including data on timeliness, separations and efficiency indicators such as the cost of each file processed. At the CDSMAC meeting on 5–6 November 2009 members unanimously agreed to not support further work implementing this recommendation. While the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare publishes figures on finalised adoptions by State and Territory each year, many more applications are at the various stages of processing both in Australia and overseas. For 2007/08 there were 271 finalised intercountry adoptions across Australia. No data is yet available for 2008-09 or 2009-10.

(2) (a) State and Territory Governments are solely responsible for processing individual adoption applications. As such, the cost associated with processing applications is a matter for the relevant State or Territory Government. (b) The Commonwealth Government is responsible for the establishment and management of Australia’s intercountry adoption arrangements, and for related policy. The Commonwealth has no role in processing individual adoption applications. The Commonwealth Government allocated $2.7 million to oversee Australia’s intercountry adoption programs in the 2009-10 Budget.

Veterans’ Affairs: Clarke Review
(Question No. 2497)

Senator Ludlam asked the Minister representing the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, upon notice, on 21 December 2009:
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

(1) With reference to the review announced on 9 September 2008 to revisit the Clarke Review recommendations which were rejected by the then Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, has it reported; if not, when will this review be completed.

(2) (a) Who is undertaking the review;
    (b) what resources have been allocated to this study; and
    (c) with whom is the reviewer consulting.

(3) What are the Australian Government’s intentions concerning the recognition and entitlements for veterans exposed to nuclear radiation.

(4) Does the Australian Government accept the findings of Mr Justice Foskett of the British High Court of Justice in AB & Others v Ministry of Defence that the Government of the United Kingdom has a case to answer for the suffering, injury, disability or death in consequence of exposure to ionising radiation as a result of the presence of veterans near, or their involvement in the aftermath of, nuclear tests carried out by the British Government during the 1950s.

(5) Has the Australian Government reviewed the scientific study by Professor Al Rowland which shows significant genetic damage to a group of New Zealand sailors who witnessed the tests which Mr Justice Foskett said had provided new evidence of the potential health impacts of the tests.

Senator Faulkner—The Minister for Veterans’ Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) No, the Government has not reported on the review; the Government is reviewing those recommendations of the Clarke Review rejected by the previous Government. Over 470 submissions have been received in the current review process. These submissions are being carefully examined. A number of the recommendations are complex and require detailed consideration. No decisions will be made on a Government response to the recommendations until the consideration process is completed.

(2) (a) I am undertaking the review with the assistance of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs;
    (b) the Department has been providing resources within existing budget allocations to undertake the review; and
    (c) I called for submissions from the public in September 2008. In addition to inviting the public to comment on the unimplemented recommendations of the Clarke Review, I have consulted with the Prime Minister’s Advisory Council on ex-service matters. The Department has consulted with other relevant Commonwealth agencies and the Ex-Service Organisation Roundtable.

(3) The Clarke Review of Veterans’ Entitlements recommended that the service of Australian Defence Force personnel who participated in the tests be declared ‘non-warlike hazardous’. The Minister is reviewing this recommendation as part of the revisitation of recommendations of the Clarke Review not acted upon by the previous Government. Currently Australian participants of the British Nuclear Tests are eligible to apply for compensation under the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988. Eligible Australian participants are also provided with a White Card to cover the cost of testing and treatment for any cancer.

(4) Justice Foskett’s decision only removes the Statute of Limitations period for those individuals who wish to sue the UK government for compensation relating to the British Nuclear Tests. The lifting of the limitation period does not guarantee a successful claim. It will still require individual claimants to satisfy causality of their health condition to the nuclear tests to succeed in their substantive claim.
I understand that the UK Ministry of Defence has since appealed this decision. The Government is monitoring the progress of this matter.

(5) The Department of Veterans’ Affairs has examined the New Zealand studies undertaken by Professor Al Rowland from Massey University.

The Massey University research was a cytogenetic study, not an epidemiological health study. The research investigated changes at the cellular level only. Changes were observed but the Study report specifically makes no comment on health effects or outcomes for NZ nuclear test participants in relation to these changes. The NZ Government is currently seeking a second peer review of the study.

Ure-Chan Group
(Question No. 2502)

Senator Abetz asked the Minister representing the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 21 December 2009:

With reference to the answer to question no. 68 taken on notice during the 2009-10 supplementary Budget estimates of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee:

(1) In regard to the statement, ‘The Commonwealth has considered a number of legal opinions put forward on behalf of the Ure-Chan Group’: (a) how many and which legal opinions were considered; and (b) has the department prepared full legal opinions in rebuttal and provided these in-depth opinions to the Commonwealth: (i) if so, where are they, and (ii) if not, why not.

(2) In regard to the statement, ‘The Commonwealth remains of the view that the Ure-Chan Group has no right or title to Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs under either Australian law or international law’, can the department provide a detailed explanation as to why it remains of this view.

(3) In regard to the statement, ‘The Commonwealth position does not place in jeopardy the resources of the exclusive economic zone or continental shelf’, can a detailed explanation be provided as to why not.

Senator Wong—The Attorney-General has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

(1) (a) The opinions provided on behalf of the Ure-Chan Group that have been considered by the Commonwealth are as follows:

(i) Memorandum of Law Submitted to the Government of Australia on behalf of the Ure-Chan Group dated 15 September 1994 signed by John Norton-Moore and Monroe Leigh. The Ure-Chan Group asserts that this was first provided to the Commonwealth on 15 November 1994. It was again provided to the Commonwealth on 6 October 1995.

(ii) The legal position of the Ure-Chan Group was conveyed by its lawyers, Professor James Crawford, John Norton-Moore and Monroe Leigh at a meeting between the Commonwealth and the legal representatives of the Ure-Chan Group held on Monday, 8 January 1996. At that meeting, it was agreed that the Ure-Chan Group was to provide a further Memorandum of Law to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and that the Commonwealth would consider that Memorandum and the position of the Government on the matter.

(iii) Legal Memorandum: The Legal Status of Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs in International Law following the Entry into Force of the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention dated 16 February 1996 prepared by Monroe Leigh, Merritt R Blakeslee, Clint N Smith, John Norton-Moore and Professor James Crawford. A copy of this Memorandum has been sent subsequently to the Commonwealth on a number of occasions, including to the then Attorney-General, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP on 1 March 2004.

Elements of these opinions have been reiterated by Ure-Chan and its successive advisers throughout their correspondence with the Commonwealth.

(b) The most detailed opinion given on behalf of the Ure-Chan Group is that referred to in (1)(a)(iii) above. A legal opinion from this Department was prepared, dated 28 September 1996. A further legal opinion from this Department was prepared, dated 8 October 2004.

(2) It would not be appropriate for the Commonwealth to reveal its legal arguments in support of its rejection of the claim of the Ure-Chan Group to alleged rights and title over Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs.

(3) The Commonwealth’s sovereign rights over the resources flow from its entitlement to an exclusive economic zone and continental shelf. The Commonwealth does not consider that the matters put forward by the Ure-Chan Group have the capacity to place those resources in jeopardy.

Climate Change

(Question No. 2507)

Senator Ronaldson asked the Minister representing the Prime Minister in the Senate, upon notice, on 21 December 2009:
With reference to the 15th United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (COP15): Did any departmental or Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 staff act in the capacity of a valet (or similar personal assistant) during any part of the trip for the: (a) Prime Minister; if so, who; and (b) Prime Minister’s wife; if so, who.

Senator Chris Evans—The Prime Minister has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:
(a) No; not applicable.
(b) No; not applicable.

Job Capacity Assessment Program

(Question No. 2509)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister for Employment Participation, upon notice, on 22 December 2009:
By state and territory:
(1) Since 1 July 2009, how many work capacity assessments have occurred under the Job Capacity Assessment program.
(2) (a) How many referrals have been made following job capacity assessments; and (b) how many of those assessed have found work as a result of such referrals.

Senator Arbib—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
(1) Job Capacity Assessments including assessment of the person’s work capacity are conducted as required for initial employment services referral, reassessment of employment services eligibility where the job seeker’s circumstances may have changed significantly, temporary incapacity exemptions from the activity test and, eligibility for the Disability Support Pension. Assessments are
conducted for activity tested allowees, non-activity tested allowees (e.g. Parenting Payment recipients) and eligible non-allowee volunteers. Table 1 shows the total numbers of assessments completed between 1 July and 30 December 2009, by State and Territory.

Table 1 Job Capacity Assessments - 1 July to 30 December 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>94,345</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>67,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>61,511</td>
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<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>25,166</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>23,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>7,406</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>2,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>4,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>286,163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) (a) Table 2 shows, by State and Territory, the numbers of recommended employment services referrals as recorded in Job Capacity Assessments.

Table 2 Employment Services Recommended Referrals - 1 July to 30 December 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<td>Queensland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Table 3 shows, by State and Territory, the total numbers of job placements for job seekers undertaking a Job Capacity Assessment prior to or during their employment services participation. Job seekers who undertake a Job Capacity Assessment are more disadvantaged in the labour market than job seekers generally.

Table 3 Job Placements for Job Seekers Subject to Job Capacity Assessment - 1 July to 30 December 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>Victoria</td>
<td>11,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>12,649</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>4,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>5,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>1,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54,281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apprenticeships
(Question No. 2510)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister representing the Minister for Education, upon notice, on 22 December 2009:

By state and territory:

1. For each financial year since 2000/2001: (a) how many apprenticeships commenced in Australia; (b) how many were completed; and (c) what was the completion rate.

2. How many apprenticeships commenced during the following periods: (a) 24 November 2007 to 30 June 2008; (b) 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009; and (c) 1 July to 22 December 2009.

3. How many apprenticeships were completed during the following periods: (a) 24 November 2007 to 30 June 2008; (b) 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009; and (c) 1 July to 22 December 2009.

Senator Arbib—The Minister for Education has provided the following answer to the honourable senator’s question:

1. Australian national data and breakdown by State and Territory

   (a) The number of commencements in apprenticeships in Australia in each financial year since 2001-01 was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>60161</td>
<td>68501</td>
<td>78198</td>
<td>74057</td>
<td>72378</td>
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<td>79137</td>
<td>88918</td>
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<tr>
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<td>82925</td>
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<td>79481</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>38187</td>
<td>45265</td>
<td>51273</td>
<td>49554</td>
<td>51923</td>
<td>55007</td>
<td>60903</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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<td>14270</td>
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<td>17967</td>
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<td>2248</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
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<td>3264</td>
<td>4394</td>
<td>5112</td>
<td>4653</td>
<td>5265</td>
<td>5083</td>
<td>4952</td>
<td>4959</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>215274</td>
<td>244300</td>
<td>288014</td>
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<td>260842</td>
<td>265750</td>
<td>271486</td>
<td>289074</td>
<td>271249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCVER National Apprentice and Trainee Collection no. 61, September 2009 estimates, released 4 December 2009.

Commencement data for each State and Territory are in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
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<td>260842</td>
<td>265750</td>
<td>271486</td>
<td>289074</td>
<td>271249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(b) The number of completions of apprenticeships in Australia in each financial year since 2000-01 was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Years</th>
<th>Completions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCVER National Apprentice and Trainee Collection no. 61, September 2009 estimates, released 4 December 2009.

(c) The Australian apprenticeship completion rate was 49.6% for the cohort that commenced in 2001, 48.4% for the cohort that commenced in 2002 and 48.5% for the cohort that commenced in 2003.

The equivalent data for each State and Territory are in the following tables:

| Contract completion rate for cohorts that commenced in the indicated years |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                             | 2001             | 2002             | 2003             |
| New South Wales             | 46.7%            | 47.2%            | 45.9%            |
| Victoria                    | 45.2%            | 43.6%            | 45.3%            |
| Queensland                  | 56.0%            | 53.5%            | 53.9%            |
| South Australia             | 52.4%            | 49.5%            | 48.9%            |
| Western Australia           | 56.3%            | 56.6%            | 56.4%            |
| Tasmania                    | 65.0%            | 66.1%            | 64.8%            |
Completion data for cohorts commencing in 2004 or later will not be available until the end of the potential period for completion (approximately 6 years from commencement) and the data have been processed.

(2) Apprenticeship commencement data for specified periods

(a) Apprenticeship commencement data for the period 24 November 2007 to 30 June 2008 are unavailable as these data are collated on a quarterly and annual basis each year.

(b) In the period 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 the number of apprentice and trainee commencements was as follows:

**Apprentice and trainee contract commencements, 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>84831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>72186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>54703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>21234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>23526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>7477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>2333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>4959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>271249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCVER National Apprentice and Trainee Collection no. 61, September 2009 estimates, released 4 December 2009

(c) Apprenticeship commencement data for the period 1 July to 22 December 2009 are unavailable as these data are collated on a quarterly and annual basis each year and the data are, so far, only available up to the June quarter 2009.

(3) Apprenticeship completion data for specified periods

(a) Apprenticeship completion data for the period 24 November 2007 to 30 June 2008 are unavailable as these data are collated on a quarterly and annual basis each year.

(b) In the period 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 the number of apprentice and trainee completions was as follows:

**Apprentice and trainee contract completions, 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>47251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>40983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>34488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>11256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>13637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>5629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>1071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>2585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>156900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCVER National Apprentice and Trainee Collection no. 61, September 2009 estimates, released 4 December 2009.
(c) Apprenticeship completion data for the period the period 1 July to 22 December 2009 are unavailable as these data are collated on a quarterly and annual basis each year and the data are, at this stage, only available up to the June quarter 2009.

**Green Jobs Corps Program**

(Question No. 2511)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister for Employment Participation, upon notice, on 22 December 2009:

With reference to the National Green Jobs Corps and its predecessor, Green Corps:

1. (a) By state and territory, how many participants have undertaken one of these programs, as at: i) 1 December 2007, ii) 1 December 2008, and iii) 1 December 2009; and b) how many participants are expected over the 2009–10 financial year.

2. How many participants completed the Green Corps program over the following financial years: a) 2007–08; and b) 2008–09.

3. (a) What is the average length of time that a participant is expected to stay at a Green Jobs Corps program; and b) what is the current average.

4. What was the average length of time that a participant stayed in a Green Corps program.

Senator Arbib—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

1. (a) The state and territory breakdown for participants commenced on the Green Corps program delivered under the Employment Services Funding Deed 2006-2009, for the financial years 2006–07, 2007–08 and 2008–09 was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>2108</td>
<td>2104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since 1 July 2009, Green Corps activities have been offered by Job Services Australia providers as one of the work experience activity options for job seekers to participate in to meet their work experience activity requirement.

The state and territory breakdown for participants continuing on Green Corps Work Experience activities in the period between 1 July and 31 December 2009 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>243</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>515</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The National Green Jobs Corps program commenced 1 January 2010. As such, no participants had commenced this program as at 1 December 2009.

(b) The number of participants expected in these respective programs over the 2009–10 financial year is:

- Green Corps: The Green Corps program under the Employment Services Funding Deed 2006–2009 ceased operation on 31 December 2009, following a transition period which commenced 1 July 2009. No additional participants commenced the program in the 2009–10 financial year. However, there were 726 participants undertaking Green Corps during the transition period as part of activities they commenced in the 2008–09 financial year.

- Green Corps Work Experience activities: Under Job Services Australia, Green Corps is one of a number of options available to job seekers undertaking Work Experience activities.

- National Green Jobs Corps: There are 2500 National Green Jobs Corps places available over the 2009–10 financial year.

(2) Under the Green Corps program, 1548 placements were completed over the 2007–08 financial year, and 1583 placements were completed over the 2008–09 financial year.

(3) (a) A National Green Jobs Corps Placement is 26 weeks. (b) National Green Jobs Corps commenced on 1 January 2010, so there is no current average time of participation in the program available at this point in time.

(4) The average length of time a participant stayed in the Green Corps program delivered under the Employment Services Funding Deed 2006-2009 was 19.7 weeks.

Job Services Australia

(Question No. 2512)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister for Employment Participation, upon notice, on 22 December 2009:

(1) by state and territory, how many full-time equivalent staff within the department were assigned to the development and implementation of Job Services Australia: (a) prior to 1 July 2009; and (b) since 1 July 2009.

(2) What was the total budget for the implementation of job services Australia for the following financial years: (i) 2008-09; and (ii) 2009-10; and (b) what was the actual total spent for the: (i) 2008-09 financial year, and (ii) 2009-10 year to date.

(3) By state and territory, how many complaints were received regarding the tender process for Job Services Australia.

(4) (a) by state and territory, how many outstanding complaints are still being dealt with by the department; and (b) what is the nature of these complaints.

(5) How many employment service providers have applied for funding under the $3.5 million Agency Adjustment Fund.

(6) As at 17 December 2009 and by agency and the state and territory in which they predominantly operated, can a breakdown be provided of how much of the $3.5 million Agency Adjustment Fund has been spent.

(7) (a) how many employment service providers who were unsuccessful tenderers under Job Services Australia did not apply for Agency Adjustment Fund support; and (b) has the Minister’s office or the department undertaken any inquiries as to why agencies did not apply.

(8) (a) how was the agency adjustment fund advertised to agencies; (b) what was a total marketing budget for the fund; and (c) did the marketing budget come out of the $3.5 million.
Senator Arbib—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) (a) Development and implementation of Job Services Australia was a key business priority for the department for 2008-09 and resources across the department contributed to this as part of their core business. As such it is not possible to identify all the full-time equivalent staff resources as the department does not collect data on what activities full time equivalents are working on a day to day to basis. However, for 2008-09, there was a budget allocation for the tender process and this equated to 122.5 full-time equivalent staff resources across National and State Offices associated with IT and tender assessment and other purchasing related activities.

(b) For 2009-10, the full-time equivalent staff allocation from the budget is 25.4.

(2) (a) the allocated funding for the development and implementation of Job Services Australia was:

(i) 2008-09:
   - DEEWR Operating: $23,147,000
   - DEEWR Capital: $6,056,000 (partly funded by accumulated depreciation)
   - Centrelink: $30,206,000

(ii) 2009-10:
   - DEEWR Operating: $4,856,000
   - DEEWR Capital: $7,944,000 (partly funded by accumulated depreciation)
   - Centrelink: $11,765,000

(b) the actual total funding expended was:

(i) 2008-09: all resources allocated for DEEWR were expended.

(ii) 2009-10: this information will not be available until the end of the financial year.

(3) and (4) Between 29 September 2008 and 3 July 2009, 7,130 calls and 8,317 emails were made to the Employment Services Purchasing Hotline regarding the Employment Services 2009-12 Tender. The Employment Services Purchasing Hotline is unable to attribute an individual query by state or territory as some organisations are contracted to deliver employment services across a number of states and nationally. Similarly, it is unable to attribute a query type.

All contacts to the Employment Services Purchasing Hotline were responded to and finalised by 31 July 2009.

(5) The Department received 111 applications for funding under the Agency Adjustment Fund.

(6) As at 17 December 2009, the following funding has been spent under the Agency Adjustment Fund:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation Name*</th>
<th>Total Payments up to and including 17 Dec 09 (GST inc)</th>
<th>Primary Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caloola Farm Company</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Quest Group</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Australia</td>
<td>115,000</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley Uniting Employment (NSW)</td>
<td>115,000</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield Community Resource Centre</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastlake Skills Centre</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Care</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Centre Australia Ltd</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penrith Skills for Jobs</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narromine Community Skills Project Inc</td>
<td>63,973</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North St Marys Neighbourhood Centre Inc</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation Name*</td>
<td>Total Payments up to and including 17 Dec 09 (GST inc)</td>
<td>Primary Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northnet Inc</td>
<td>94,718</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pole Depot Community Centre Inc</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Training Employment Program Inc.</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St George Youth Services Inc</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Counselling Centre Pty Ltd</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallsend Employment and Training Services</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waverley Action for Youth Services</td>
<td>35,500</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wollongong City Employment Training Inc</td>
<td>94,500</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WorkVentures Ltd</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgeworks Employment and Training</td>
<td>54,982</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centacare Toowoomba</td>
<td>87,920</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Support Agency Ltd</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worklink Employment Support Group Inc</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARA Jobs Pty Ltd</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs Statewide Inc</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para Worklinks Incorporated</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status Works Pty Ltd</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Roman Catholic Trust Corporation of the Archdiocese of Hobart</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>TAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bendigo Access Employment</td>
<td>14,500</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community AXIS Governance Board Inc</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djerriwarrh Employment and Education Services Inc</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland Support Services</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume Employment Service Ltd</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JobCo Employment Services</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westgate Community Initiatives Group Inc</td>
<td>94,300</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Projects Inc</td>
<td>24,960</td>
<td>VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth Centacare Employment and Training</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Region Employment and Community Services (Community Key)</td>
<td>92,375</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Choice Employment</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercy Community Services Inc</td>
<td>45,500</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEP Community Services Inc</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East Metropolitan Youth Action Inc</td>
<td>65,000</td>
<td>WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,714,227.50</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* this list only includes organisations that have received funding under the AAF, and excludes four organisations that have had funding approved but have not yet accessed it.

(7) (a) 187 employment services providers lost at least some business under the Job Services Australia tender. As provided in response to question 5, 111 AAF applications were received.

(b) There have been no inquiries into the reasons why agencies did not apply for funding under the Agency Adjustment Fund.

(8) (a) The Agency Adjustment Fund was first announced to providers on 1 April 2009 by the Hon Brendan O’Connor, then Minister for Employment Participation. The Secretary of the Department subsequently wrote to not for profit organisations that were identified as potentially
eligible as they had been significantly impacted by the outcomes of the tender and were. Two letters were sent: 7 and 17 April 2009 advising of the existence of the Agency Adjustment Fund. Both letters advised providers to access further information from the Department’s website. Information about the Agency Adjustment Fund, including the program guidelines and the application for funding form, were available from the Department’s website on the evening of Friday 17 April 2009. The National Employment Services Association and DEEWR State and Territory offices were also notified, enabling further promotion of the funding at a local level.

(b) There was no marketing budget for the Agency Adjustment Fund.

(c) not applicable.

Disability Employment Services
(Question No. 2513)

Senator Cormann asked the Minister for Employment Participation, upon notice, on 22 December 2009:

(1) How many full-time equivalents within the department were assigned to the development and implementation of the latest disability services tender.

(2) For each financial years from 2005-06 to 2009-10, what was the total budget for Disability Employment Services.

(3) For each financial years from 2005-06 to 2009-10, what was the actual total spent on Disability Employment Services.

(4) For the past four Disability Employment Service tender rounds, by state and territory, can a breakdown be provided of: (a) the successful tenderers; and (b) the total value of accepted tenders.

(5) (a) How was the disability services tender advertised to agencies; and (b) what was the total marketing budget for the tender.

Senator Arbib—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) Staff (FTE) within DEEWR assigned to the development and implementation of the Disability Employment Services Tender was 38.4 full-time equivalents in the financial year 2009-10.

(2) and (3) Disability Employment Services (DES) including the Employer Incentives Scheme begin on 1 March 2010 and as such, budget figures for DES are available for 2009-10 only. Existing programs, ceasing on 28 February 2010, providing similar services are:

- Employment Assistance and Other Services
  This includes the Disability Employment Network (DEN) and a suite of initiatives to assist employers to employ people with disability including the Wage Subsidy System, Workplace Modifications Scheme and Supported Wage System.

- Rehabilitation Services
  Providing specialist employment assistance combined with vocational rehabilitation.

2005-06
Employment Assistance and Other Services - $226.089m
Rehabilitation Services - $125.739m

2006-07
Employment Assistance and Other Services - $232.199m
Rehabilitation Services - $165.706m

2007-08

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Employment Assistance and Other Services - $287,963m
Rehabilitation Services - $198,259m

2008-09
Employment Assistance and Other Services - $337,173m
Rehabilitation Services - $217,846m

2009-10
Employment Assistance and Other Services - $214,214m
Rehabilitation Services - $158,011m
Disability Employment Services - $208,658m

(4) The total value for the contracts awarded in the tenders cannot be provided as the services are provided on a demand basis and are outcome based.

The outcomes of the Disability Employment Services 2010-12 Program A and Employment Incentives Scheme Tender and Vocational Rehabilitation Services Tender 2007-09 are publicly available.

Successful Disability Open Employment Services (DOES) 2006-09 Tenderers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>TENDER NAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Advance Personnel (Canberra) Incorporated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centacare Australia Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ostara Australia Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vision Australia Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>ABILITY OPTIONS LIMITED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BEST Employment Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Castle Personnel Services Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centacare Australia Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenge Armidale Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenge Disability Services Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consortium Name: People Solutions Australia (PSA), Trading Consortium Name: People Solutions Australia, Lead Member: Break Thru People Solutions (Members; WorkAbility Personnel Inc. &amp; Western Plains Workforce Inc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disability Services Australia Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Essential Personnel Association Incorporated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greenacres Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hume Employment Service Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Futures Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key Employment Association Incorporated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kurrajong Waratah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leichhardt Community Youth Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macarthur Disability Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mai-Wel Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MAXNetWork Pty Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NOVA Employment and Training Program Incorporated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oasis Pre-Employment Network (OPEN) Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OCTEC Incorporated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On -Q Human Resources Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ORS Rehabilitation &amp; Placement Services Pty Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ostara Australia Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peel Valley Training Enterprise Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE</td>
<td>TENDER NAME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practical Employment Services Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shore Personnel Incorporated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spinal Cord Injuries Australia Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SYDNEY COUNSELLING CENTRE PTY LTD</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sydney Rehabilitation Services Pty Ltd</td>
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<td>Teldraw Pty Ltd</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Deaf Society of New South Wales</td>
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<td>The Disability Trust</td>
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<td>THE SPASTIC CENTRE OF NEW SOUTH WALES</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust(NSW) for Wesley Mission</td>
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<td>Tweed Training and Enterprise Company</td>
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<td>Vision Australia Limited</td>
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<td>Wills IM Pty Ltd</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wiradjuri Country Community Development Group Ltd.</td>
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<td>WISE EMPLOYMENT LTD</td>
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<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>DARWIN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SCHEME INCORPORATED</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MAXNetWork Pty Ltd</td>
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<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
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<td>BEST Employment Ltd</td>
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<td>Bundaberg Skills Centre Incorporated</td>
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<td>Advance North Queensland Consortium</td>
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<td>Direct Employment Services Ltd</td>
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<td>Endeavour Foundation</td>
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<td>Epic Employment Service Inc</td>
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<td>HELP ENTERPRISES</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Industry Education Networking Pty Ltd</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Innovative Disability Employment and Liaison Placements Assoc. Inc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Job Futures Ltd</td>
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<td>Jobmatch Association Inc</td>
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<td>MAXNetWork Pty Ltd</td>
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<td>On-Q Human Resources Limited</td>
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<td>Ostara Australia Limited</td>
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<td>Redlands Bayside Disability Services Inc</td>
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<td>Roma Town Council</td>
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<td></td>
<td>South Burnett Jobmatch Association Inc.</td>
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<td>Spinal Injuries Association Inc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>St Mark’s Lutheran Church Dalby</td>
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<td>STEPS Disability Qld Inc</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane - Centacare</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Uniting Church (Ipswich&amp;Toowoomba Employment)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Westside Community Services Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Consortium Name: EMPLOY SA &amp; HETA SERVICES, Trading Consortium Name: &lt;empty&gt;, Lead Member: EMPLOY SA Incorporated (Members; HETA Incorporated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding Workable Solutions Inc. (prev. FWS Employment Services Inc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Harrington Family Trust</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interwork Limited</td>
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<td>Minda Inc</td>
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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Tender Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Multiple Sclerosis Society of South Australia &amp; Northern Territory Inc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SACC Pty Ltd</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UnitingCare Wesley Port Adelaide Incorporated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Anglicare Tasmania Incorporated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Headway Support Services “Southern Region” Inc</td>
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<td></td>
<td>North West Support Service Incorporated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Northern Group Training Ltd</td>
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<td>WISE EMPLOYMENT LTD</td>
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<td>VIC</td>
<td>Access Employment Sunraysia Inc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>BENDIGO ACCESS EMPLOYMENT INC.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Central Victorian Group Training Company Limited</td>
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<td>Community AXIS Governance Board Inc.</td>
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<td>Deaf Children Australia</td>
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<td>Echo Australia Incorporated</td>
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<td>Highlands Support Services Inc.</td>
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<td>Hume Employment Service Limited</td>
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<td>Interact Australia (Victoria) Limited</td>
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<td>Job Futures Ltd</td>
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<td>Karingal Inc.</td>
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<td>MADEC</td>
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<td>Midland Support Services Incorporated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Options Victoria Inc.</td>
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<td>Oriel Services Ltd (Previously City Of Heidelberg Handicapped Person)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sarina Russo Job Access (Australia) Pty Ltd</td>
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<td>SkillsPlus Inc</td>
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<td>St John of God Services Victoria Limited</td>
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<td></td>
<td>St Laurence Community Services (Barwon) Inc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Victorian Deaf Society</td>
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<td>Vision Australia Limited</td>
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<td>Wesley Mission Melbourne</td>
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<td>Western District Employment Access Incorporated</td>
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<td>WESTGATE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES GROUP INC</td>
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<td>Wills IM Pty Ltd</td>
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<td>WISE EMPLOYMENT LTD</td>
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<td>Work Solutions Gippsland Pty Ltd</td>
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<td>WA</td>
<td>BIZLINK INCORPORATED</td>
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<td>EDGE Employment Solutions Inc</td>
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<td>Forrest Personnel Incorporated</td>
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<td>Good Samaritan Industries</td>
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<td>Great Southern Personnel Incorporated</td>
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<td>Intework Inc.</td>
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<td>Ostara Australia Limited</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PEP COMMUNITY SERVICES INCORPORATED</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prof Vocational Serv Pty Ltd ATF B Trust &amp; C Trust T/as PVS Workfind</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Metropolitan Personnel Inc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Successful Remote Services Tender 2006-09 Services which were awarded business in the tender that included a Disability Employment component were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Tender Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof Vocational Serv Pty Ltd ATF B Trust &amp; C Trust T/as PVS Workfind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
(5) (a) The Request for Tender for Disability Employment Services 2010-2012 Program A and Employer Incentives Scheme was advertised on AusTender and the Workplace websites, and in national newspapers. (b) Marketing was limited to advertising the release of the Request for Tender in all national newspapers, consultation sessions and notifying interested parties of the progress/results of the Request for Tender, including on the Department’s website. The budget for these activities was $121,000.

Special Minister of State
(Question No. 2514)

Senator Ronaldson asked the Special Minister of State, upon notice, on 22 December 2009:

With reference to the ‘20 non-standard home bases and six alternative work locations’ approved by the Minister, as mentioned in the 2008-09 Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 annual report, can a table be provided which indicates the following for each of the 26 positions:

(a) the name of the employing senator or member;
(b) the MOP(S) classification level of the staff member;
(c) the city or town where the staff member is based;
(d) whether the staff member has a non-standard home base or an alternative work location;
(e) a brief description of any reasons given for the arrangement being put in place, i.e. family reasons, medical reasons, no reason given etc; and
(f) the date on which the non-standard home base or alternative work location was approved.

Senator Ludwig—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

A table containing the requested information is attached. Please note that column (e) has been excluded from the table due to concerns regarding the disclosure of personal information. The reasons for the non-standard home base arrangements are not always provided to the Department of Finance and De-regulation, but where reasons are provided, they have included: temporary relocations, personal/family commitments, privately funded electorate office(s) and home based work approved in accordance with the Commonwealth Members of Parliament Staff Collective Agreement 2006-2009 Guidelines for Home-Based Work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>TENDER NAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Centacare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Skills Development Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ITEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Futures Ltd</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>STEPS QLD Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>ITEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Futures Ltd</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>JobFind Centres Australia Pty Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>ITEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JobFind Centres Australia Pty Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Community Support Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Futures Ltd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senator/Member</th>
<th>Assistant Adviser</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Non-standard Home Base/Alternative Work Location</th>
<th>Date Arrangement was Approved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senator Bob Brown</td>
<td>Assistant Adviser</td>
<td>WA - Metropolitan</td>
<td>Non-standard Home Base</td>
<td>8 July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Senator/Member</td>
<td>(b) Employee’s classification</td>
<td>(c) Employee’s location</td>
<td>(d) Non-standard home base/alternative work location</td>
<td>(f) Date arrangement was approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Doug Cameron</td>
<td>Electorate Officer B Adviser</td>
<td>NSW - Regional</td>
<td>Alternative work location</td>
<td>20 April 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucus Committees Support and Training Unit</td>
<td></td>
<td>SA - Metropolitan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Simon Crean MP</td>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>QLD - Metropolitan</td>
<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>19 December 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
<td>Senior Adviser Chief of Staff Non Cabinet Adviser</td>
<td>VIC - Metropolitan</td>
<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>20 October 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Dr Craig Emerson MP</td>
<td>Senior Adviser Chief of Staff Non Cabinet Senior Adviser</td>
<td>NSW - Metropolitan</td>
<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>29 October 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Dr Craig Emerson MP</td>
<td></td>
<td>NSW - Metropolitan</td>
<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>25 January 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator the Hon John Faulkner</td>
<td>Media Adviser Senior Electorate Officer B Principal Adviser Adviser Level 1</td>
<td>NSW - Regional QLD - Metropolitan VIC - Regional</td>
<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>28 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP Senator Steve Fielding</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>18 December 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Julia Gillard MP</td>
<td>Electorate Officer B Adviser Level 1</td>
<td>NSW - Metropolitan</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Michael Keenan MP</td>
<td></td>
<td>NSW - Metropolitan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Hon Dr Mike Kelly AM MP</td>
<td></td>
<td>QLD - Metropolitan</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Hon Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
<td>Electorate Officer B Adviser Level 1</td>
<td>TAS - Metropolitan</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
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<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>9 September 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator the Hon Nick Minchin MP</td>
<td>Adviser Level 1</td>
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<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>29 October 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Roger Price MP</td>
<td>Clerk to Whip</td>
<td>QLD - Metropolitan</td>
<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>29 May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Kevin Rudd MP</td>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>VIC - Metropolitan</td>
<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>28 April 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Hon Kevin Rudd MP</td>
<td>Senior Adviser Cabinet 1 Senior Adviser Cabinet 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Hon Kevin Rudd MP</td>
<td>Electorate Officer B Electorate Officer B</td>
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<td>15 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Janelle Saffin MP Senator Rachel Siewert</td>
<td>Electorate Officer B Electorate Officer B</td>
<td>NSW - Regional VIC - Metropolitan WA - Metropolitan</td>
<td>Alternative work location</td>
<td>16 April 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Hon Wilson Tuckey MP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alternative work location</td>
<td>22 October 2008</td>
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<td>3 November 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(a) Senator/Member  (b) Employee’s classification  (c) Employee’s location  (d) Non-standard home base/alternative work location  (f) Date arrangement was approved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</th>
<th>Assistant Adviser</th>
<th>NSW - Regional</th>
<th>Non-standard home base</th>
<th>13 January 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
<td>Senior Adviser</td>
<td>VIC - Metropolitan</td>
<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>29 October 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator Nick Xenophon</td>
<td>Adviser Level 2</td>
<td>VIC - Metropolitan</td>
<td>Non-standard home base</td>
<td>20 January 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Defence: Staffing**  
(Question No. 2515)

**Senator Johnston** asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:

As at 30 September 2009:

(a) how many uniformed staff were there in each of the three service areas (i.e. army, navy and air force); and

(b) how many civilian staff were there in each of the service areas.

**Senator Faulkner**—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(a) Navy - 13,178 Permanent, 540 Continuous Full Time Service Reserves, 4,356 Active Reserves, 203 Gap Year, Total 18,277;

   Army - 28,112 Permanent, 790 Continuous Full Time Service Reserves, 16,154 Active Reserves, 246 Gap Year, Total 45,302; and

   Air Force - 14,329 Permanent, 178 Continuous Full Time Service Reserves, 3,495 Active Reserves, 101 Gap Year, Total 18,103.

(b) Navy - 882

   Army – 1.087

   Air Force - 926

Note: These figures include non-ongoing and part-time employees.

**Defence: Staffing**  
(Question No. 2516)

**Senator Johnston** asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:

For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many uniformed personnel were recruited to each of the service areas (i.e. army, navy and air force).

**Senator Faulkner**—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

Navy - 465 Permanent, 22 Reserves, 52 Gap Year;

Army - 772 Permanent, 590 Reserves, 0 Gap year; and

Air Force - 246 Permanent, 42 Reserves, 0 Gap year

Note: These figures include ab initio and prior-service personnel.

**Defence: Staffing**  
(Question No. 2517)

**Senator Johnston** asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:

(1) For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009:
(a) how many uniformed staff resigned from each of the service areas (i.e. army, navy and air force); and
(b) how many civilian staff resigned from each of the service areas.

(2) For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many civilian staff were made redundant or accepted severance packages in each of the:
(a) service areas; and
(b) service areas as part of the Strategic Reform Program.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) (a) Navy – 188
    Army – 304
    Air Force – 144
    These include personnel who left each of the Services through resignation, within 90 days of enlistment, as a transfer to another Service, or completion of an employment contract.
(b) Navy – 11
    Army – 36
    Air Force – 11

(2) (a) Navy – Nil
    Army – 2
    Air Force – Nil
(b) Nil.

Defence: Staffing
(Question No. 2518)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many temporary civilian positions existed in the department.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
During the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, there was an average of 251 temporary civilian positions in the Australian Defence Organisation. As the workforce is monitored on a fortnightly (pay period) basis, the data has been averaged over the requested period.

Defence: Staffing
(Question No. 2519)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many temporary civilian positions were created in the department.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
(1) 29.

Defence: Staffing
(Question No. 2520)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July 2009 to 30 September 2009, how many civilian employees have been employed on contract and at what levels of remuneration.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
A small proportion of civilian Australian Public Service employees in Defence have ‘contract’ arrangements in place to determine their remuneration. A breakdown by month is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number of civilian employees</th>
<th>Range of Remuneration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>$53,600 - $566,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>$53,600 - $566,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>$53,600 - $566,791</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Includes Senior Executive Service and non-Senior Executive Service personnel.
2 Remuneration range rounded to nearest $100.

Defence: Staffing
(Question No. 2521)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what was the average cost in recruiting each new uniformed person into each of the service areas (i.e. army, navy and air force).

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
The average cost per recruit for the period 1 July to 30 September 2009 is $12,999 per recruit across Army, Navy and Air Force.
This is an average based on the total direct expenditure by Defence Force Recruiting in the period 1 July to 30 September 2009 ($25.309m) divided by the total number of uniformed personnel recruited to the Australian Defence Force through Defence Force Recruiting in this period (1947).
Whilst ceremonial activities and community based activities have an indirect benefit to recruitment, they are not classified as direct recruitment costs and as such are not included in these costs.

Defence: Staffing
(Question No. 2522)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what was the total expenditure spent on recruiting.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
The total direct expenditure by Defence Force Recruiting on recruitment into the Australian Defence Force in the period 1 July to 30 September 2009 was $25.309m.
Whilst ceremonial activities and community based activities have an indirect benefit to recruitment, they are not classified as direct recruitment costs and as such are not included in these costs.

Defence: Staffing
(Question No. 2523)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how much was paid to the Australian Defence Force prime recruiting agency for the provision of services.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
The total amount paid to the Chandler Macleod Group for the provision of Australian Defence Force recruiting services in the period 1 July to 30 September 2009 was $9.085m.
Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2524)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2009:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what total net savings have been made in the Strategic Reform Program ‘Provisional Savings and Costs’.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
(1) Savings relating to the Strategic Reform Program were provisionally allocated across the decade in the 2009-10 Budget context. The savings to the Defence budget have been attributed annually and will be reported on this basis. Total Strategic Reform Program Net Savings from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010 will be $529m.

Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2525)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2009:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what net savings have been made in the Strategic Reform Program (SRP) ‘Provisional Savings and Costs – Gross SRP Stream Savings’ for: (a) information and communications technology; (b) inventory; (c) logistics; (d) non-equipment procurement; (e) reserves; (f) shared services; and (g) workforce.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
(1) The ‘Gross SRP Savings’ do not have net savings as they reflect the stream gross savings component only. Savings relating to the Strategic Reform Program were provisionally allocated across the decade in the 2009-10 Budget context. The savings to the Defence budget have been attributed annually and will be reported on this basis. The 2009-10 SRP gross savings will be:
(a) Information and Communications Technology $49m
(b) Inventory $64m
(c) Smart Maintenance $197m
(d) Logistics $5m
(e) Non-Equipment Procurement $179m
(f) Reserves Nil
(g) Shared Services $14m
(h) Workforce $48m

Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2526)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what net savings have been made in the Strategic Reform Program (SRP) ‘Provisional Savings and Costs – SRP Stream Costs’ for: (a) information and communications technology; (b) inventory; (c) smart maintenance; (d) logistic; (e) non-equipment procurement; (f) preparedness and personnel and operating cost; (g) reserves; (h) shared services; (i) workforce; and (j) Mortimer implementation.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
(1) The ‘SRP Stream Costs’ do not have net savings as they reflect the stream costs rather than savings.
Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2527)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what net savings have been made in the Strategic Reform Program (SRP) ‘Provisional Savings and Costs – SRP Stream Net Savings’ for: (a) information and communications technology; (b) inventory; (c) smart maintenance; (d) logistic; (e) non-equipment procurement; (f) preparedness and personnel and operating cost; (g) reserves; (h) shared services; and (i) workforce.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
(1) Savings relating to the SRP were provisionally allocated across the decade in the 2009-10 Budget context. The savings to the Defence budget have been attributed annually and will be reported on this basis. Total SRP Stream Net Savings from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010 will be:
(a) Information and Communications Technology -$50m
(b) Inventory $63m
(c) Smart Maintenance $159m
(d) Logistics -$21m
(e) Non-Equipment Procurement $124m
(f) Preparedness and Personnel and Operating Cost -$7m
(g) Reserves $14m
(h) Shared Services Nil
(i) Workforce $41m

Note:
1. Negative figure represents a net cost.

Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2528)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what net savings have been made in the Strategic Reform Program ‘Other Savings’ for the following areas: (a) zero based budgeting review; (b) minor capital program; (c) facilities program; (d) administrative; and (e) productivity.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
(1) The ‘Other Savings’ relating to the Strategic Reform Program were provisionally allocated across the decade in the 2009-10 Budget context. The savings to the Defence budget have been attributed annually and will be reported accordingly. The Strategic Reform Program will achieve $241m of ‘Other Savings’ from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010 and are as follows:
(a) Zero based budgeting review - $189m;
(b) Minor capital program - $21m;
(c) Facilities program - $22m;
(d) Administrative - $9m; and
(e) Productivity - $0m as these are targeted as future savings to be achieved around the middle of the decade.
Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2529)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
With reference to the White Paper and the Strategic Reform Program ‘Indicative Workforce Implications’: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many full-time equivalent uniformed personnel were employed in the military workforce.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
56,672.

Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2530)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2009:
With reference to the White Paper and the Strategic Reform Program ‘Indicative Workforce Implications – Civilian Workforce’: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many full-time equivalent civilian personnel were employed in implementing the White Paper initiatives.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
The Government provisioned an additional 999 civilian personnel (including full-time equivalent Australian Public Service staff and contractors) for 2009-10 under the White Paper, as reflected in The Strategic Reform Program: Delivering Force 2030.
Because of the breadth and depth of the White Paper initiatives, the number of personnel varied throughout the specified period and it is not possible to provide a specific total referenced to each White Paper initiative.

Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2531)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
With reference to the White Paper and the Strategic Reform Program ‘Indicative Workforce Implications – Military Workforce’: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many full-time equivalent uniformed personnel were employed in implementing the White Paper initiatives.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
The Government provisioned an additional 679 full-time equivalent uniformed personnel for 2009-10 under the White Paper, as reflected in The Strategic Reform Program: Delivering Force 2030.
The breakdown by Service is: Navy 268, Army 211 and Air Force 200.
Because of the breadth and depth of the White Paper initiatives, the number of personnel varied throughout the specified period and it is not possible to provide a specific total referenced to each White Paper initiative.

Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2532)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
With reference to the White Paper and the Strategic Reform Program ‘Indicative Workforce Implications – Military Workforce’: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what reduction has there been in the number of full-time equivalent personnel employed in implementing: (a) efficiency improvements; (b) civilianisation; and (c) support productivity improvements.
Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, Military personnel reductions related to components of the Strategic Reform program have been:
(a) There have been no reductions in the number of full-time equivalent personnel employed. The Defence Budget Audit recommended a three to nine month bottom-up diagnostic period to translate the potential opportunity to specific targets, as part of an implementation planning effort to determine the level of savings. The diagnostic work was completed in December 2009 and implementation is due to commence in the first quarter of 2010.
(b) There have been no reductions in the number of full-time equivalent personnel employed. The civilianisation component of the Strategic Reform Program is not due to commence until the 2010-11 financial year.
(c) There have been no reductions in the number of full-time equivalent personnel employed. The support productivity improvements component of the Strategic Reform Program is a continuous improvement plan scheduled to commence in financial year 2014-15, following on from the completed implementation of the other Workforce and Shared Services components of the Strategic Reform Program.

Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2533)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
With reference to the White Paper and the Strategic Reform Program ‘Indicative Workforce Implications – Military Workforce’: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what increase or reduction has there been in full-time equivalent personnel employed from the 2008 to 2009 base.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
The workforce data detailed in the White Paper and the Strategic Reform Program ‘Indicative Workforce Implications’ are based on approved allocations at the time of publication and reflect full-time equivalent average numbers.
Over the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, Defence was employing 56,672 full-time equivalent-average uniformed personnel which is 1,924 (3.5%) higher than the 2008-09 base as detailed in the ‘Indicative Workforce Implications – Military Workforce’ table.

Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2534)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
With reference to the White Paper and the Strategic Reform Program ‘Indicative Workforce Implications – Civilian Workforce’: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many full-time equivalent personnel were employed as Australian Public Service staff or contractors.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
20,829.

Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2535)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
With reference to the White Paper and the Strategic Reform Program (SRP) ‘Indicative Workforce Implications – Civilian Workforce’: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many full-time equivalent Australian Public Service staff or contractors were employed on White Paper/SRP initiatives.
Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
The Government provisioned an additional net White Paper/SRP civilian personnel workforce of 448 (including full-time equivalent Australian Public Service staff and contractors) for 2009-10 under the White Paper, as reflected in The Strategic Reform Program: Delivering Force 2030.
Because of the breadth and depth of the White Paper/SRP initiatives, the number of personnel varied throughout the specified period and it is not possible to provide a specific total referenced to each White Paper/SRP initiative.

Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2536)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
With reference to the White Paper and the Strategic Reform Program ‘Indicative Workforce Implications – Civilian Workforce’: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what reduction has there been in the number of full-time equivalent Australian Public Service staff or contractors employed in implementing: (a) efficiency improvements; (b) civilianisation; (c) support productivity improvements; (d) contractor conversion (reduction to contractors); and (e) support productivity improvements.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, Australian Public Service staff and contractors reductions related to components of the Strategic Reform Program:
(a) There have been no reductions in the number of full-time equivalent personnel employed. The Defence Budget Audit recommended a three to nine month bottom-up diagnostic period to translate the potential opportunity to specific targets, as part of an implementation planning effort to determine the level of savings. The diagnostic work was completed in December 2009 and implementation is due to commence in the first quarter of 2010.
(b) There have been no reductions in the number of full-time equivalent personnel employed. The civilianisation component of the Strategic Reform Program is not due to commence until the 2010-11 financial year. On commencement of this program the effect of civilianisation will see growth to the Australian Public Service to equalise the reductions to Military personnel.
(c) There have been no reductions in the number of full-time equivalent personnel employed. The support productivity improvements component of the Strategic Reform Program is a continuous improvement plan scheduled to commence in financial year 2014-15, following on from the completed implementation of the other Workforce and Shared Services components of the Strategic Reform Program.
(d) There have been 15 conversions (10 in the Chief Information Officer Group and 5 in the Intelligence and Security Group) undertaken in the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, resulting in 15 contractor positions being reduced and 15 Australian Public Service staff being recruited.

Defence: Strategic Reform Program
(Question No. 2537)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
With reference to the White Paper and the Strategic Reform Program ‘Indicative Workforce Implications – Civilian Workforce’: For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what increase or reduction has there been in full-time equivalent Australian Public Service staff and contractors from the 2008 to 2009 base.
Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
The workforce data detailed in the White Paper and the Strategic Reform Program ‘Indicative Workforce Implications’ are based on approved allocations at the time of publication and reflect full-time equivalent average numbers. The information in the following paragraphs provides actual workforce achievement against allocation.

Over the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, Defence was employing 20,829 full-time equivalent-average civilian personnel which is 812 (-3.7%) below the allocation for 2008-09 as detailed in the ‘Indicative Workforce Implications – Civilian Workforce’ table.

**Defence: Staffing**

(Question No. 2538)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009: which submarines in the Royal Australian Navy fleet were fully operational with a full crew complement and capable of completing Unit Ready Days.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
HMA Submarine Farncomb.

**Defence: Submarines**

(Question No. 2539)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
(1) For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009: (a) which submarines in the Royal Australian Navy fleet were non-operational; and (b) for each submarine that was non-operational, what was the reason for its non-operational status.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
(1) (a) HMA Submarines Collins, Dechaineux, Rankin, Sheean and Waller. (b) HMA Submarine Collins was in Adelaide conducting defect rectification. HMA Submarine Waller was alongside Fleet Base West conducting a planned maintenance period and defect rectification. HMA Submarines Dechaineux and Sheean were undergoing Full Cycle Docking in Adelaide as part of the planned maintenance and upgrade cycle. HMA Submarine Rankin was in Adelaide awaiting start of its Full Cycle Docking.

**Defence: Staffing**

(Question No. 2540)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many Royal Australian Navy (RAN) personnel were fully ‘Dolphin Qualified’ and permanently employed to operate submarines.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
442 personnel as at 1 July 2009, increasing to 453 personnel at 30 September 2009. Not all of these officers and sailors are posted to submarine positions; some are working in other parts of the Navy or Defence.

**Defence: Staffing**

(Question No. 2541)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many Royal Australian Navy (RAN) personnel fully completed training courses and became ‘Dolphin Qualified’ and eligible to serve on submarines.
Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

16.  

*Defence: Staffing*  
(Question No. 2542)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
As at 30 September 2009, how many Royal Australian Navy (RAN) personnel were ‘Dolphin Qualified’ and eligible to serve on submarines.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
453 personnel were qualified.

*Defence: Staffing*  
(Question No. 2543)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, how many Royal Australian Navy (RAN) personnel completed training courses and became ‘Perisher Qualified’ and eligible to command a submarine.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
None. The ‘Perisher’ course is run by the Royal Netherlands Navy and is conducted once a year running for 17 weeks, starting in the first half of January.

*Defence: Staffing*  
(Question No. 2544)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
As at 30 September 2009, how many Royal Australian Navy (RAN) personnel were ‘Perisher Qualified’ and eligible to command a submarine.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
15 personnel were qualified.

*Defence: Submarines*  
(Question No. 2545)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, which submarines in the Royal Australian Navy were undergoing maintenance/refit programs and for what length of time.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:
(1) The HMA Submarines *DECHAINEUX, RANKIN* and *SHEEAN* were conducting Full Cycle Dockings for the entire period. HMAS *COLLINS* was undergoing repairs to an engine for the entire period. HMAS *WALLER* was undergoing an Intermediate Docking for the entire period.

*Defence: Frigates*  
(Question No. 2546)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:
For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009:
(1) Which frigates were fully operational with a full crew complement.
(2) For each frigate that was non-operational, what was the reason for its non-operational status.
(3) What were the operational strengths on the frigates of the: (a) engineering officers and sailors; and (b) non-engineering officers and sailors.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) HMAS Ships Toowoomba and Stuart were fully operational with a full complement.

HMA Ships Anzac, Arunta, Ballart, Parramatta and Warramunga were fully operational with managed manning gaps and conducting lower levels of operational readiness activities such as scheduled maintenance, trials activities, training exercises and assessments, and regional engagement activities.

HMAS Ships Sydney, Darwin and Newcastle were at a lower level of operational readiness with managed crewing gaps conducting the Northern Trident deployment (Sydney), and FFG Upgrade trials and training activities (Darwin, Newcastle).

(2) HMAS Perth was non-operational for the period as the ship was conducting pre-Anti Ship Missile Defence (ASMD) Upgrade preparations.

HMAS Melbourne was non-operational for the majority of the period as it was undergoing a scheduled deep-level maintenance.

(3) (a) Average operational strength of engineering officers over the period was 95 per cent and operational strength of engineering sailors was 97 per cent.

(b) Average operational strength of non-engineering officers was 97 per cent and operational strength of non-engineering sailors was 97 per cent.

In regard to both engineering and non-engineering officers on the HMAS Perth, it should be noted that crewing data has not been included as the Frigate was not operational during this period. HMAS Perth was crewed to the minimum number necessary to progress the ASMD upgrade preparations.

———

1 Managed Crewing Gaps. Navy’s current personnel shortages preclude 100% crewing of every ship at all times, and some tasks do not require all personnel onboard. Individual ships’ crews are therefore actively managed to ensure ships are able to carry out their assigned tasks without overworking individuals.

Defence: Ships
(Question No. 2547)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:

For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009:

(1) Which ships were fully operational with a full crew complement.

(2) For each ship that was non-operational, what was the reason for its non-operational status.

(3) What were the operational strengths on the ships of the: (a) engineering officers and sailors; and (b) non-engineering officers and sailors.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) Frigates. In regards to the operational readiness and crewing of Frigates, please refer to Senate Question on Notice 2546.

Amphibious & Afloat Support Ships. HMA Ships Success, Kanimbla and Tobruk were fully operational with managed crewing gaps corresponding with their scheduled activities. HMA Ships Balikpapan, Betano, Brunei, Labuan and Wewak were fully operational with managed crewing gaps throughout; conducting their regular maintenance and operational cycle including deployments to the South Pacific.
**Minehunting Ships.** HMA Ships Diamantina, Yarra, Gascoyne and Huon were fully operational throughout the period, albeit HMAS Huon was configured and crewed as a general purpose patrol vessel until 4 September, rather than as a minehunter. HMAS Norman was fully operational until 4 September.

**Hydrographic Ships.** HMA Ships Leeuwin, Mermaid and Shepparton were fully operational and fully crewed for the period. HMAS Melville although fully crewed was only fully operational until 27 September. HMAS Benalla was fully crewed and operational until 15 August. HMAS Paluma became operational and was fully crewed from 14 September, on completion of the ship’s survey system upgrade.

**Patrol Boats.** HMA Ships Armidale, Bathurst, Larrakia, Albany, Pirie, Ararat, Maitland, Broome, Bundaberg, Childers, Wollongong, Launceston, Maryborough and Glenelg. Patrol Boats operate a multi crewing concept in order to achieve maximum operational effectiveness while maintaining a stable program for personnel. 21 complete crews operate the 14 patrol boats.

(2) **Amphibious and Afloat Support Ships.** HMAS Sirius was fully crewed and in maintenance until late August when the ship became fully operational again. HMAS Manoora was fully operational with managed crew gaps until entering refit mid August. HMAS Tarakan was fully crewed and in refit throughout the period.

**Minehunting Ships.** HMAS Norman became non-operational on 4 September when the ship commenced preparations for extended readiness. HMAS Hawkesbury was non operational for the whole period due to preparations for extended readiness.

**Hydrographic Ships.** HMAS Melville was non operational for the period 28 to 30 September due to a defect on the ship’s propulsion plant. HMAS Paluma conducted an upgrade of the ships survey system which included the fitting of new survey sensors and processors. HMAS Paluma completed this process and returned to operations 14 September. HMAS Benalla entered the upgrade process 15 August and will not return to operations until April 2010.

**Patrol Boats.** HMAS Maryborough was non-operational from the period 3-15 September due to fuel particulate contamination due to gasket material, and HMAS Armidale was non-operational from 12-21 September due to a port main engine defect. However, all units were replaced by another boat resulting in nil impact on operations.

(3) (a) **Amphibious & Afloat Support Ships.** Amphibious & Afloat Support Group major fleet units were on average 92 per cent crewed with engineering officers and 85 per cent crewed with engineering sailors. Amphibious & Afloat Support Group minor war vessels do not have engineering officers and were crewed with 100 per cent engineering sailors.

**Minehunting Ships.** Mine Hunters were 100 per cent crewed with engineering officers (roles are performed by Chief Petty Officer Marine Technicians borne as Senior Technical Officers) and 96 per cent crewed with engineering sailors. Mine Sweeper Auxiliaries were 100 per cent crewed with engineering officers (roles are performed by Petty Officer Marine Technicians borne as Senior Technical Officers) and 100 per cent crewed with engineering sailors.

**Hydrographic Ships.** Hydrographic units were 100 per cent crewed with engineering officers and 94 per cent crewed with engineering sailors.

**Patrol Boats.** All Patrol Boats were 100 per cent crewed with engineering officers (roles are performed by Chief Petty Officer Marine Technicians borne as Senior Technical Officers) and 100 per cent crewed with engineering sailors by managing shortfalls through multi-crewing Personnel Deficiency Management system.

(b) **Amphibious & Afloat Support Ships.** AASGRP major fleet units were 100 per cent crewed with non-engineering officers and 90 per cent crewed with non-engineering sailors. AASGRP
minor war vessels were crewed 100 per cent with non-engineering officers and 100 per cent crewed with non-engineering sailors.

Minehunting Ships. Mine Hunters were 100 per cent crewed with non-engineering officers and 98 per cent crewed with non-engineering sailors. Mine Sweeper Auxiliaries were 100 per cent crewed with non-engineering officers (roles are performed by Senior Sailors) and 100 per cent crewed with non-engineering sailors.

Hydrographic Ships. Hydrographic units were 97 per cent crewed with non-engineering officers and 95 per cent crewed with non-engineering sailors.

Patrol Boats. All Patrol Boats were 100 per cent crewed with non-engineering officers and 98 per cent crewed with non-engineering sailors.

Defence: Communications

(Question No. 2548)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2009:

(1) Given that video communications are integrated into robots, soldiers and unmanned aerial vehicles, network-centric warfare is becoming the organising principle of war fighting, and frontline demands for bandwidth are rising at a rapid rate, for the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, what did the Australian Defence Force do and how much did it spend on:

(a) establishing a network centric-warfare capability; and

(b) addressing the issue of increased bandwidth.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(a) As agreed by the honourable senator 19 January 2010, this response is for the period 1 July to 31 December 2009. The Australian Defence Force’s Network Centric Warfare Capability is being delivered primarily through the Defence Capability Plan. Defence was engaged in the following network centric warfare activities from 1 July to 31 December 2009:

(i) The Network Centric Warfare Roadmap 2009 was released in October 2009. This Roadmap builds upon the Network Centric Warfare Roadmap 2007 with an emphasis on the actions required to continue the Australian Defence Force’s transition to a networked force, and is aligned with the Defence White Paper 2009 and the Defence Capability Plan 2009.

(ii) Over the period there have been a number of developments supporting network centric warfare milestones in the Network Centric Warfare Roadmap 2009:

a. Defence has increased wide band satellite communications bandwidth to Major Fleet Units using Wideband Global Satellites and installing Australian ground station equipment into a United States of America satellite ground station at Honolulu, Hawaii and into a United States of America satellite ground station at Landstuhl, Germany;

b. Defence has completed the installation and testing of the Link 11 and Link 16 hardware fitted to the four Adelaide class frigates;

c. Defence has completed the installation and testing of a limited Link 16 capability embedded into the Eastern Regional Operations Centre at Royal Australian Air Force Base Williamtown, New South Wales to assist in the airborne situational awareness of F/A-18 aircraft; and

d. Government approved Defence Project LAND 75 Phase 3.4, LAND 125 Phase 3A and Joint Project 2072 Phase 1 to provide land forces with advanced command and control systems through a new battle management system and new digital communications bearers. This capability will enable the digitisation of the Army’s 7th Brigade.

(iii) A networked Australian Defence Force capability also requires the preparation of personnel to operate in a networked battlespace. This is being progressed through changes to doctrine, or-
organisation, training and education with an emphasis on ‘learn by doing’. As part of this process the Services’ New Generation Navy, the Adaptive Army and the Air Force Adaptive Culture programs continue to prepare personnel to operate in a networked battlespace.

(iv) The Rapid Prototyping, Development and Evaluation organisation, under Capability Development Group, has facilitated 10 Defence and industry activities to increase networked capability. $7.2 million has been directly attributed to developing and implementing network centric warfare through the Rapid Prototyping, Development and Evaluation organisation and the Network Centric Warfare Development Directorate in Capability Development Group. Expenditure on projects within the Defence Capability Plan is not included in the summation of expenditure attributed to the establishment of a networked Australian Defence Force capability.

(b) The requirement to meet frontline demands for increased bandwidth is being addressed through various projects to acquire satellite capabilities and enhanced tactical networks, including data link communications for Australian Defence Force elements and weapon systems. On the specific matter of increasing satellite bandwidth, Defence was engaged in the following activities from 1 July to 31 December 2009:

(i) Defence continued the contracted acquisition and certification of interim ground station capabilities on the Australian west and east coasts to provide access to the Wideband Global SATCOM (WGS) system.

(ii) Defence continued milestone payments for the sixth Wideband Global SATCOM satellite.

(iii) Defence began the development of a long term ground station capability on the Australian west coast.

(iv) Defence expanded the fleet of wideband SATCOM terminals in Major Fleet Units, completing installation work on HMAS Melbourne.

(v) Defence continued the acquisition of an Ultra High Frequency payload on a OS-22 commercial satellite over the Indian Ocean Region, which will become operational in 2012.

(vi) Defence explored opportunities to work with the United States of America to extend the Australian Defence Force’s access to Ultra High Frequency coverage throughout the Pacific Ocean region.

(viii) The total cost of increasing satellite bandwidth within the period was $100.2 million.

Defence: Media Monitoring

(Question No. 2549)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:

For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009:

(1) For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, for each agency within the responsibility of the Minister/Parliamentary Secretary, how much was spent on media monitoring;

(2) As at 30 September 2009: (a) how many staff were employed in public relations and/or the media in the department or each agency within the responsibility of the Minister/Parliamentary Secretary; (b) what were the position levels of these staff; and (c) how many of these staff were: (i) permanent, (ii) temporary, and (iii) contractors.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(1) Department of Defence $104,401.21 (GST inclusive), Defence Housing Australia $15,024.22 (GST exclusive)

(2) (a), (b) and (c) The Defence Public Affairs Branch employs 67 civilians some of whom work on a part-time or job share basis while others may be on extended leave which equated to a full time
employee count of 63. In addition four contractors and 53 military staff performed roles within the Branch. Please refer to the table below for a detailed breakdown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Staffing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>1 x permanent BRIG, 1 x permanent COL, 1 x permanent EL, 1 x permanent APS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Service Newspapers</td>
<td>1 x permanent WO, 1 x permanent SGT, 3 x permanent CPL, 1 x permanent LS, 1 x permanent CPL, 1 x permanent EL, 4 x permanent EL1, 3 x permanent APS6, 1 x temporary APS6, 1 x permanent APS4-5, 1 x permanent/part-time APS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Advisors</td>
<td>1 x permanent EL, 8 x permanent EL1, 1 x permanent APS6, 1 x permanent LT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Engagement</td>
<td>1 x permanent EL, 1 x permanent EL1, 1 x permanent APS6, 6 x permanent APS4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Internet</td>
<td>1 x permanent EL1, 2 x contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video and Imagery Library</td>
<td>1 x permanent EL1, 1 x permanent APS6, 1 x permanent APS4, 2 x contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Communications</td>
<td>1 x permanent EL, 2 x permanent EL1, 1 x permanent/part-time EL1, 2 x permanent APS6, 2 x permanent/part-time APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Public Affairs</td>
<td>1 x permanent LT, 1 x permanent MAJ, 1 x permanent APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness, Plans and Training</td>
<td>1 x permanent LT, 1 x permanent APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, Policy and Entertainment</td>
<td>1 x permanent EL, 1 x permanent APS6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Public Affairs</td>
<td>5 x permanent EL1, 1 x permanent/part-time EL1 (job-share), 1 x temporary/part-time EL1 (job-share), 2 x permanent APS6, 3 x permanent APS2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Headquarters</td>
<td>1 x permanent LT, 6 x permanent MAJ, 1 x permanent SQNLDR, 3 x permanent CAPT, 1 x permanent LEUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Public Affairs Unit</td>
<td>1 x permanent MAJ, 5 x permanent CAPT, 2 x permanent LEUT, 2 x permanent FLTLT, 3 x permanent WO, 5 x permanent SGT, 1 x permanent PO, 6 x permanent CPL, 1 x permanent LS, 1 x permanent AB, 1 x permanent AC, 1 x permanent APS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration Support</td>
<td>1 x permanent APS6, 1 x permanent APS5, 1 x permanent APS4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended leave/Maternity leave</td>
<td>2 x permanent EL1, 1 x permanent APS6, 1 x permanent APS4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Outside of the Branch there were a further 38 Defence employees who provided public affairs support as a part of their duties.
Tuesday, 23 February 2010

SENATE

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Service/Group Staffing

Vice Chief of the Defence Force

4 x permanent EL1, 1 x permanent APS6

Army

1 x temporary EL1, 1 x permanent APS6

Navy

1 x permanent CMDR, 1 x permanent LCDR, 1 x part-time LCDR, 3 x permanent LEUT, 2 x permanent EL1, 1 x permanent APS6

Air Force

1 x permanent SQNLDR, 2 x temporary FLTLT, 1 x permanent FLGOFF, 1 x permanent FLTLT, 2 x permanent EL1, 1 x temporary FLGOFF.

People Strategies and Policy Group

1 x permanent EL1, 1 x permanent APS6

Chief Information Office

1 x permanent EL2

Intelligence and Security

1 x permanent EL1

Defence Science and Technology Organisation

1 x EL2, 4 x permanent EL1, 3 x permanent APS6

Defence Materiel Organisation

1 x permanent EL1, 1 x permanent APS6


Defence Housing Australia (DHA) had no specific staff members responsible for the stated functions. DHA has a Marketing Communication Team, comprised of four staff members. The team is responsible for marketing communication and media campaigns to provide product and service information. There is relatively little day to day media interest in DHA’s activities, so an incidental proportion of the team’s time is involved in responding to media requests.

Defence: Communications

(Question No. 2550)

Senator Johnston asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice, on 11 January 2010:

For the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, for each agency within the responsibility of the Minister/Parliamentary Secretary: (a) what communications programs were undertaken or were planned to be undertaken; and (b) what has been the total spend in each communications program.

Senator Faulkner—The answer to the honourable senator’s question is as follows:

(a) and (b) During the period 1 July to 30 September 2009, Defence Force Recruiting spent $8,030,447 on a single advertising program broken into the following streams:

Navy – $1,895,053 covering Navy brand and job specific advertising for Navy Officer and General Entry priority roles.

Army (ARA and Army Reserve) – $3,627,571 covering Army brand and job specific advertising for Army Officer and General Entry priority roles.

Air Force – $1,762,937 covering Air Force brand and job specific advertising for Air Force Officer and General Entry priority roles.

Education – $260,501 covering advertising for Tri-Service Education opportunities (ADF Gap Year, ADFA, Sponsored Undergraduate positions and Professional Graduate Health and Engineering positions).

Sporting properties – $484,385 covering advertising bought during major sports broadcasts to increase the reach of campaigns running at those times, including promotion of the AFL Army Award.