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SITTING DAYS—2014

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- BRISBANE 936AM
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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

Governor-General
Her Excellency the Hon. Quentin Bryce AC, CVO

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

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

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

Printed by authority of the Senate
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senator</th>
<th>State or Territory</th>
<th>Term expires</th>
<th>Party</th>
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Pursuant to section 42 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, the terms of service of the following senators representing the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory expire at the close of the day immediately before the polling day for the next general election of members of the House of Representatives:

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</table>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**


**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

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

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<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Tony Abbott MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon Jamie Briggs MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Brett Mason</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>The Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
<td>The Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
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<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michael Ronaldson</td>
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### MONDAY, 17 MARCH 2014

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The PRESIDENT (Senator the Hon. John Hogg) took the chair at 10:00, read prayers and made an acknowledgement of country.

BILLS

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Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013
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Customs Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013
Excise Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013
Clean Energy (Income Tax Rates and Other Amendments) Bill 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That these bills be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:
At the end of the motion, add:

but the Senate:

(a) rejects this bill and the related bills;
(b) recognises that:
   (i) the world is on track for 4 degrees of warming; and
   (ii) warming of less than 1 degree is already intensifying extreme weather events in Australia and around the world with enormous costs to life and property;
(c) calls on the government to:
   (i) protect the Australian people and environment from climate change by approving no new coal mines or extensions of existing mines, or new coal export terminals; and
   (ii) adopt a trajectory of 40-60% below 2000 levels by 2030 and net carbon zero by 2050 emissions reduction target in global negotiations for a 2015 treaty.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (10:01): I am in continuation. I think it is very important to acknowledge that one of the key elements of the RET has been its bipartisan support to date, which has helped to drive investment in the sector. This goes to the importance of certainty in energy policy, so any modifications ought to be bipartisan. We also need to consider whether the National Electricity Market rules should be reformed as part of an overhaul of our energy policies, and they must be.
The political debate over the past few years has been narrow and simplistic. To suggest or imply that the carbon tax is the primary cause of electricity price increases ignores the fact that charges for the use of electricity transmission and distribution account for about half of electricity bills. Currently these charges are paid by retailers, who then pass them on to consumers. The doubling of retail tariffs over the past few years can be directly related to the rise in network tariffs. Network tariffs are regulated by the Australian Energy Regulator, which is part of the ACCC. The rules governing how networks are regulated oblige the AER to provide network businesses with a guaranteed return on their investment regardless of whether the investment was necessary or worthwhile and regardless of whether the investment is later found to be unnecessary or premature. We need to reform that so that we can take into account the fact that these networks have been gold-plating their assets, to the detriment of consumers.

Currently, at subsequent five-year regulatory resets, the code allows the regulator considerable discretion in how it implements economic regulation. We need to reform the system of having these ex post reviews of transmission investments to determine whether all capital expenditure incurred was efficient or ought to be recoverable through regulator charges. That is what used to occur, but in 2003, influenced by strong lobbying from the network businesses, the ACCC, looking for an easier life for itself, moved away from ex post reviews in favour of a 'lock in and roll forward' approach, which has been bad for consumers. That must be reformed.

Last but not least, state governments contributed significantly to rising network costs by raising network reliability standards in the early to mid-2000s without undertaking any cost-benefit analysis of whether such increases were worthwhile. So we need reform. For the government to say it is all about the carbon tax is narrow and superficial. We need to actually look at the way the National Electricity Market operates. That is where the reforms need to take place.

There are some changes to the Australian Energy Regulator in terms of network spending proposals, but these changes do not go far enough. The AER, the regulator, needs the ability to conduct detailed optimisation analyses of electricity networks' asset bases to uncover instances of excessive or premature spending. That is what we need as a matter of priority. Networks are currently rewarded handsomely for their investments, despite facing virtually no risk. It is time to make sure that they earn their pay packets. There is no other business model where you can make a lousy decision, gouge consumers and still get a guaranteed return on your investment.

I see direct relevance to reforming these rules under the National Electricity Market, the code and the Australian Energy Regulator. It must be considered at the time that carbon policy is being revisited. This is because any downward pressure on network and transmission charges passed on to consumers will ultimately give greater flexibility to offsetting the direct or indirect costs of emissions reduction policies.

I have been disappointed by the polarised, narrow nature of the debate on carbon policy over the past few years. We now have an opportunity to consider carbon policy in a broader context that has the potential to deliver a robust environmental outcome at a responsible economic cost. I challenge all sides of politics to take this opportunity to engage in a mature debate about energy and environment policies that will deliver meaningful environmental
outcomes and more sustainable energy prices rather than continuing to use energy policy as a political football.

Finally, I want to make a point that I think is sometimes left out of this debate, and that relates to public health. Even if people do not believe in climate change—and I am not one of them—they cannot deny the benefits of cleaner air in Australia. The OECD Environmental Outlook found that most ambient pollution in Australia comes from motor vehicle emissions, electricity generation from fossil fuels, heavy industry and home heating using wood and coal. Further, the former government's State of the environment report in 2011 found that there are approximately 3,000 deaths in Australia each year due to urban air pollution. That is more than the annual road toll. These are the sorts of issues we need to consider in the context of this. Here is an opportunity to do something good for the environment and good for our public health, but we also need to have a responsible economic framework. We need to reform the electricity market rules in this country in addition to having a better carbon policy.

Senator LUDWIG (Queensland) (10:06): I too rise to speak on the legislation before us, the Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 and related bills. It gives me an opportunity to provide further scrutiny to the carbon price repeal bills introduced by the government. One of the opportunities, of course, is to dissect the government's view about clean energy. The government does not enjoy this process. It would, I suspect, prefer that the process be shunted through as quickly as possible. The Prime Minister wanted, I suspect, to jam the bills through this parliament without a moment to spare. The Prime Minister would have liked these bills to pass in bulk, rushed through without any scrutiny or debate, just as the government wants to shut down transparency and accountability on border security, to hide its plans of backflipping on Gonski and to hide its plans to pull the rug out from under Australian jobs. This is a government that is wedded to ensuring there is no scrutiny, so it wanted to ensure that these bills also passed without such scrutiny. We on this side are here to ensure that they do have scrutiny and that the government's actions are laid transparently out for the public to see.

I am pleased that the Senate has been able to provide some much-needed scrutiny of this government. We are holding this government to account for their actions. One of the things we cannot do, of course, is to hold them to account for their Direct Action Plan, because, as we know, either they are deciding to keep it secret or they do not have one and are scrambling to make one up. More and more, the Australian people are finding out that this is not the government they voted for or the government they were promised. Can I also just place something on the record to establish the type of work that they are doing—the type of obstruction we are seeing every single day in this parliament. The government are ensuring both secrecy and a lack of accountability for their actions.

In examining the Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 in detail, I note that this is a Prime Minister who is obsessed with slogans. I can honestly say I have never met someone who has has to repeat himself so often to get his message through. I suspect he must be trying to convince himself for one of two reasons: either he is uncertain or he believes he is not quite convincing the Australian people as yet. I think it might be the latter. The Prime Minister's cheap throwaway slogans, such as 'scrap the carbon tax', are the type of language the Prime Minister repeats over and over again until it becomes not only boring but, I suspect, a little tedious.
So let us examine the bill in detail. It is about removing the cap on pollution. So it is about letting big polluters run amok. And later—we do not know when—it will introduce a series of cash handouts through a government 'pick the winner' scheme. They may not tell you that, but that will be the final result. It also removes market incentives to limit pollution into our environment, acting contrary to what the once principled Liberal Party would have stood for. It seems odd, doesn't it, that you on the other side are going to remove market mechanisms? Both this side and the government believe in market based incentives, but in this instance your bill is going to remove them. That is quite an odd position for the Liberal Party to be in.

It also creates a massive policy void. One of the strong arguments originally put forward by the new government against the emissions trading scheme was business uncertainty. In this instance, the emissions trading scheme does give certainty. As for the direct action policy, which the government are going to put in in place of the emissions trading scheme, only the fairies at the bottom of the garden know what it actually means. Of itself it will create and drive market uncertainty. It will cast a shadow over Australian businesses until they are provided with the detail as to how the scheme will operate, who will benefit and what the costs to the scheme will be. All of that we will find out about sometime off into the future.

The position on climate change and increased climate volatility is clear. There is a need for action today—not tomorrow, not in the next week, not in the next year. The science is in: climate change is real and man-made, and no amount of posturing or yelling by the National Party rump—as I used to say, the old doormats—can change that fact. Even the Prime Minister, who once called climate change 'complete crap', has accepted as much—notwithstanding the launch of his misguided direct action scheme. Those on the other side now say comprehensively that they do believe in climate change and they want to address it through the direct action scheme. So you must then ask this question: if the Prime Minister believes climate change is real and man-made, then why not have the most efficient and effective scheme to address climate change? We currently have a fixed price carbon period which leads into an emissions trading scheme. In short, it would be far more efficient and far more certain for business to continue an emissions trading scheme than to remove it for an unknown period of uncertainty while the government forms a view as to what direct action would look like. Of course, the current scheme would tackle climate change today, not tomorrow. I suspect that direct action is simply a slogan the government is using to undermine the emissions trading scheme.

When I say the carbon pricing scheme has worked, I am backed up by the facts—something I know this government does not like to deal with. Under Labor, employment in the renewable energy industry more than doubled. We added more than 150,000 jobs to the national economy after the carbon price came in. What is more, the sky did not fall in. Pollution in the National Electricity Market decreased by seven per cent. We showed that you can have a cleaner, smarter economy and jobs growth. Pollution went down; jobs went up. I have to add, having seen this government's record to date, that under Mr Tony Abbott the exact opposite will happen.

I would like to quote from a meat processor, AJ Bush and Sons from Beaudesert in Queensland. Mr Bush said on 20 March 2013, referring to the carbon price: 'I think it's a net positive. I think it will serve to make our businesses stronger.' He was quoted as saying the price would help his company become 'clean and mean', cutting costs and allowing them to
grow even further against tough competition overseas. Quite frankly, it is hardly a doom and
gloom story. Many of these stories have been reiterated in the press over the last 12 months.
Businesses have embraced the opportunities that cutting pollution brings about. It brings
about changes in technology and improved efficiencies within organisations.

All of that is now at risk with this government's design not only to remove the carbon price
and the emissions trading scheme through this legislation but also to have us all on a tether as
to what their Direct Action scheme will be like. Last year the OECD released a report
confirming that countries could achieve higher levels of emissions reductions at much lower
cost if they relied on this type of scheme. Emissions trading schemes have already been
adopted in many countries around the world, including the United Kingdom, France,
Germany, South Korea, Canada and parts of the US and China. I think the world will view us
as backtracking on climate policy, being regressive in the extreme and not wanting to
maintain a vigilant look on this policy.

We know that those opposite do not accept the science of climate change, notwithstanding
what they say. I think that is one of the reasons why the Prime Minister repeats himself often,
because ultimately he is trying to convince himself that climate change is real. I do not think
he has changed. I think the Prime Minister has not changed his spots. He continues to be a
doubter in this area.

Looking more broadly at the policy itself, you would have to come to the conclusion that
Direct Action is an area where this government should in this debate make plain what it will
be. The coalition's approach to carbon pollution is focused on the creation of a $2.9 billion
fund, an Emissions Reduction Fund. The fund will pay Australian companies to reduce
pollution. The business uncertainty is already starting to be heard: 'What does that mean?
Who will get the money? How will it be paid? How will people measure the pollution?' I
suspect we will have an array of red tape around the ERF, the Emissions Reduction Fund.
Whilst on the one hand this government is heading down the path of suggesting to the world
and to Australia that it is going to have a huge red tape reduction day, on the other hand it is
already developing its own swathe of red tape with the future Emissions Reduction Fund and
the Direct Action policy. Whereas Labor is focused on capping the amount of pollution that
can enter the atmosphere and having a system for businesses to find the cheapest way to
reduce their pollution, the coalition will resort to the favoured old mechanism of using the
taxpayers' money to fund their Emissions Reduction Fund or, as I prefer to call it, big business
slush fund.

Independent research and modelling undertaken by SKM and Monash University's Centre
of Policy Studies shows that the ERF will see pollution increase by eight to 10 per cent over
2000 levels by 2020. It will not work. That is the final submission about their emissions
reduction fund. It will bog down in detail. Businesses will find it impossible to meet it. They
will simply take the money and attempt to reduce their pollution. It will require
additional investment to achieve 2020 targets, and that will not be met out of the taxpayers' fund.

We will fall short, whereas, if we allowed a market based mechanism to work, it is possible
to achieve it at a lot less cost. What we will end up doing is subsidising with public moneys
the pollution of businesses that do not make the changes, and that could amount to, as Monash
University's Centre of Policy Studies estimated, about $50 billion to 2020. Despite the
posturing by the coalition over the last couple of years, they still do not have a credible
alternative policy to the one they are currently trying to get rid of. Labor’s approach has provided unprecedented support for renewable energy through the Renewable Energy Target, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. Support for businesses to become more efficient and productive came from the Clean Technology program and jobs in competitive programs, and there was support to reduce land sector emissions through the Carbon Farming Initiative.

One of the ironies in this is that, as you travel around the bush, you find that farmers do want to embrace the ability to reduce their pollution. They do see the benefits in reducing their emissions and being part of the Carbon Farming Initiative, while this government is hell-bent on removing it. In the various farming communities that I have talked to over the years they understand the need to maintain a good environment. They are good land managers, they do provide good results and they do want to participate in things like the Carbon Farming Initiative. They understand the need to reduce their emissions, whereas this government is going to remove that. I think it is a sad day for the bush to find that the government is not only removing the emissions trading scheme but also ensuring that the Carbon Farming Initiative will no longer be available for rural areas. More importantly, that overall drive to reduce emissions will peter out under this government.

The purpose and structure of these three bills repeal the Clean Energy Act and associated legislation. The main repeal bill, the Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013, repeals or amends acts that legislate a price on carbon to remove that function, removes the power of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission—the ACCC—to monitor the exploitation in relation to the carbon price and removes a 15 per cent tax offset for conservation tillage.

Again I want to concentrate on the last two in the time available. First, farmers have been able to use the 15 per cent tax offset to improve their outcomes. This is being removed. I am not sure Mr Joyce has been out there telling farmers that the 15 per cent is also being removed as part of the carbon price repeal. The second area, of course, is how they will utilise the ACCC to monitor for price exploitation. I suspect the truth is that the government does not care one jot about the result other than to remove the carbon price and these pieces of legislation from the statute books.

The government has taken a view—be it political or otherwise—that this scheme should end. The difficulties will be passed through price and monitoring powers of the ACCC. I think the government needs to clarify how it will ensure that there will not be price exploitation during this process. I think it will create business uncertainty. Businesses will be subject to costs and imposts whilst the ACCC continues to do its work—and without any clear benefit. And, under the CFI, farmers and landholders could voluntarily undertake projects to reduce or store greenhouse gas emissions. All of this will be lost under this legislation, should it pass. What that means is that many landholders who have embraced the 21-odd methodologies—in the categories of agriculture, vegetation and landfill, and alternative waste treatment—will be stuck. The government has no plans in place to follow through with what happens next. The government is solely centred on this one point, without any plans as to how it will manage to meet our 2020 target for emissions reduction. Shame on this government!
Senator DASTYARI (New South Wales) (10:26): Let me reiterate from the start that, once an appropriate alternative is presented, Labor will support the repeal of the carbon tax. The former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd stated this clearly ahead of the last election. The Australian Labor Party has long argued for a fully flexible cap-and-trade emissions scheme such as the mechanism currently contained in the Clean Energy Act 2011 and associated legislation. We will continue to support the market based mechanism for pricing carbon that is contained in the existing legislation and scheduled to begin next year. We would also support bringing the starting date forward so an emissions trading scheme can commence this year. There may even be opportunities to improve the current model. But, as long as an effective market model for pricing carbon emissions remains in place, Labor is willing to work through the amendments that may be required with the Abbott government.

What we do not support is a shift away from taking action against pollution—doing nothing in the face of overwhelming evidence. What we do not support is a shift from evidence based policy to ideology and ignorance. Unfortunately, that is what the Abbott government has offered to the Australian people. Let us touch on what the coalition’s approach has been. The Abbott government does not have an effective plan to replace an emissions trading scheme in the short term. And, beyond that, its policy of direct action contains serious and fundamental flaws. It is a policy that cannot even guarantee emissions trading reductions will ever be met.

The Emissions Reduction Fund, which the coalition describes as the centrepiece of its direct action policy, is still in development. Important questions in the government's green paper remain unanswered and the policy lacks both substance and detail. There current proposal amounts to nothing more than a slush fund for major polluters. It is an unnecessary gamble based on picking winners instead of guaranteeing our bipartisan emissions trading reduction target of five per cent below 2000 levels by the year 2020. It is an unnecessary gamble on our environment and on our future. A scheme that does not legislate to cap emissions really means the potential for future carbon pollution under their proposal is unlimited.

Despite these shortcomings, a budget has already been allocated. It is no wonder one coalition MP has linked Direct Action to ‘a school project’ and former Treasury secretary Ken Henry describes it as nothing less than ‘bizarre’. It uses a command and control model that would involve ministers and public servants making these important choices, with significant bureaucratic overheads to evaluate and analyse bids for funding. It will cost the Australian taxpayer much more than if we allowed these decisions to be made by businesses themselves.

The science on climate change is clear. Over 97 per cent of published climate scientists agree that climate change is a real phenomenon driven by man-made greenhouse gas emissions. In a Fairfax survey of 35 economists, 86 per cent supported an emissions trading scheme, with only two favouring Direct Action. Rob Henderson, a senior economist at the National Australia Bank, has said:

If I had to make a choice between pricing carbon and having bureaucrats allocating permits, then I’m going to go for the market mechanism every time.

Treasury’s blue book, prepared in the lead-up to the 2010 federal election, observed:

… a market-based mechanism can achieve the necessary abatement at a cost per tonne of emissions, far lower than other alternative direct action policies.
Even the darling of British Conservative ideology, the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher—and I cannot believe I will be quoting her today—told the United Nations in 1989 that action on climate change should be based on assessment of fact:

We must use science to cast a light ahead, so that we can move step by step in the right direction … But as well as the science, we need to get the economics right … On the basis then of sound science and sound economics, we need to build a strong framework for international action.

It will be the height of arrogance for a government that thinks it knows better than 97 per cent of scientists and 86 per cent of economists to go down this path, a path that not even Margaret Thatcher would approve of.

I suspect that Malcolm Turnbull, the honourable member for Wentworth, does not approve either. Let us not forget that in 2012 he said:

You won't find an economist anywhere that will tell you anything other than that the most efficient and effective way to cut emissions is by putting a price on carbon.

Action through a market based mechanism to reduce carbon emissions is supported overwhelmingly by scientists and by economists. I believe that the government can do better, as I am sure the member for Wentworth does. I would welcome a chance to work with coalition MPs on a proper emissions trading scheme that can be accorded bipartisan support in this chamber. Australia should not repeal a system that is reducing emissions and reversing the disastrous impact of climate change without having a strong alternative in place, and we should not be considering the coalition's ineffective alternative as being substantial enough.

As I have previously discussed, the Howard government was responsible for commissioning the Shergold report, chaired by former Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Peter Shergold. The report recommended the establishment of an emissions trading scheme, a policy that John Howard supported during the 2007 election campaign. Releasing the report, Dr Shergold said:

Australia should commit to an emissions target … ahead of any comprehensive global response, and it should do that with an emissions trading scheme based upon cap and trade.

An emissions trading scheme provides incentives for business to innovate as the market will determine how they address the costs of lowering carbon emissions as opposed to a command-and-control model. The only way we are going to reduce carbon emissions is if all polluters change their behaviour. Picking the winners to receive government subsidies is obviously only incentive to the lucky company involved and only reduces emissions to the extent that the subsidised project allows. It will not change behaviour across the entire economy.

The Shergold report also concluded that not choosing an emissions trading scheme would impose a far heavier burden on economic activity and, as a result, picking winners 'will increase the costs we impose on ourselves'. It then goes on to describe the potential cost of measures such as direct action as 'nothing less than enormous'. John Howard's initial response to the Shergold report led to carbon pricing being a bipartisan issue in the lead-up to the 2007 election. Both Labor and the coalition were committed to act through an emissions trading scheme. Unfortunately, in recent years that spirit of bipartisanship has been lost for reasons that are nothing more than politically opportunistic rather than in the national interest. The coalition's current approach involves higher costs for outcomes that are much worse, and the
absence of an alternative policy which has been barely drafted creates an environment of uncertainty as to what any emissions framework might look like decades from now.

To outline the basis of this debate we must look at what the Clean Energy (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 will achieve. It will abolish the current legislative framework for an emissions trading scheme, but it will not replace this system with an alternative method of addressing climate change. When factoring in the bipartisan commitment to ending the carbon tax, the most important mechanism contained in the Clean Energy Act 2011 is the cap-and-trade emissions trading scheme. Labor supports bringing this market mechanism forward to commence this year. Friends, let's put a cap on emissions and let the market determine what the price on pollution should be. Capping carbon pollution is essential to this model. This is the way in which the current legislation can guarantee we achieve our emissions reduction targets.

Pollution caps are determined on the basis of advice given by the Climate Change Authority, an independent expert agency that this government has attempted to abolish in other legislation. If the government does not have objective, factual, accurate, rigorous information available when making a decision, what are they going to be basing their decisions on? As I have said previously in this chamber, ignoring the evidence on climate change and abolishing independent advice to government is an attack on good science, on good public policy and on the truth. Pretending this expert evidence does not exist and preventing future scientific inquiry is grossly negligent.

We in the Australian Labor Party cannot allow ideology to undermine the evidence on climate science. The Clean Energy Act 2011 provides for Australia's carbon pricing scheme to coexist with credible international initiatives to reduce carbon pollution. The Australian Labor Party also recognises the bold progress that many other countries are making to address climate change. Thirty-five countries currently have a national emissions trading scheme, and it is expected that by 2015 this number will rise to 38. Almost a billion people currently live in a jurisdiction with an emissions trading scheme. By 2015 this number could rise to two billion people as China, Korea and other countries are planning to introduce their own models. Australia remains the largest per capita polluter in the developed world and one of the world's top-20 polluters in absolute terms. We have a significant opportunity to be a global leader on emissions reduction efforts.

Instead the Abbott government has taken a great leap backwards. Under Direct Action the coalition's policy successes will be dependent on three things: firstly, the quality of emissions reductions proposals offered by polluters; secondly, how much they will cost; and, thirdly, how much cash the government is prepared to stump up. The outcomes are variable, there is no guarantee the proposals will be good enough or cheap enough to meet our emissions reduction targets, and there is huge potential for the budget to blow out. The current legislation, on the other hand, gives certainty of outcomes, encourages innovation in the market to achieve emissions reductions rather than bidding for a pool of government funding, and is more measurable in terms of costs and benefits.

This brings me to the next significant part of the current suite of laws, household assistance. It is undeniable that pricing carbon will result in some consumer prices increasing. That is why an essential part of the carbon pricing legislation was to fund tax cuts, pension increases and higher family payments. The coalition promised to keep these, regardless of
repealing carbon pricing. But, with the secret Commission of Audit report expected to recommend expenditure cuts, the government is not ruling anything in or out.

For industry the Clean Energy Future package recognised that moving to a low-emissions economy will take time. Emphasis was placed on ensuring energy security while working towards a transition in the energy market away from emissions-intensive forms of electricity generation. By retiring high-polluting generating capacity and fostering investment in new sources of energy and infrastructure, the package was designed to permanently reduce the environmental impact while maintaining a reliable energy base. The jobs and competitiveness program provided additional support, and the independent Productivity Commission was given the ability to review the impacts of carbon pricing policy. There was also a tremendous opportunity to invest in low-emission and clean-energy technologies. These helped prepare Australia for future jobs and future opportunities in emerging industries.

Abolishing the Clean Energy Finance Corporation has removed one of the very effective means of mobilising significant private sector capital. It will damage government revenue and cut jobs in the low-emission sectors. John Howard was right when he said in 2007 that 'being amongst the first movers on carbon trading in this region will bring new opportunities and we intend to grasp them'. Those opportunities still exist and Australia cannot afford to miss out.

The bills before the Senate will destroy the entire framework for delivering a cap and trade mechanism and, with it, any incentive to meaningfully reduce carbon emissions in Australia. It is one thing to support improving and refining the current approach—there have been a lot of criticisms of the fixed price component on this side of the chamber as well; and that is why we want to abolish the carbon tax, as it currently stands, and move to a market mechanism sooner—but we do not want to stick our heads in the sand, deny climate change exists and remove any way or mechanism for research and independent advice that might dare to tell us otherwise. That is the effect of this trove of bills and that is why these bills should not be supported by the Australian Senate. The bills will limit Australia's ability to respond to climate change for years to come.

I call on the government to show leadership in this area and work across the chamber on a bipartisan approach to climate change that stands up on the basis of both scientific and economic evidence rather than, in the words of Malcolm Turnbull, producing something that is 'a con, an environmental fig leaf to cover a determination to do nothing'.

In introducing the clean energy future package into the parliament in 2011, the then Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, noted:

Nothing hard ever gets easier by putting it off.

And if you do not do what is right for the nation then you should not be in this parliament.

I know that from time to time politics is one thing and good public policy is another, and sometimes there is a great temptation to capitalise on that. But this issue is far too important. It should not fall victim to opportunistic partisan politics. I believe that acting on the evidence of climate science and following the economic advice which points to an emissions trading scheme is the best way to respond to the real and current phenomenon of climate change. I would not judge the coalition if they were willing to work with me and my colleagues on this basis. In fact, I would be the first to welcome it as a sign that they do, after all, support policy based on fact and evidence. To me, this is the right policy for the nation—an approach based
on evidence rather than on cheap politics or crude ideology. I am proud to stand here today advocating that as the way forward.

How we vote on the Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 will be remembered in decades to come. Prime Minister Julia Gillard also made this observation about votes in this place when first introducing the carbon pricing legislation:

There is a reason these matters are decided in an open vote.

It is so every member in this place can be judged.

Judged on the decisions they make here … judged on where they stand on the great issues of our national debate.

… … …

Because the final test is not: are you on the right side of the politics of the week or the polls of the year?

The final test—

on this issue and other issues—

is: are you on the right side of history?

Senator TILLEM (Victoria) (10:46): Transitioning Australia's economy from one that is carbon intensive to one built around clean energy and the technologies and industries that stem from it is one of the important issues that we face today. Those opposite have dragged the debate and this issue down to a trivial level. Their ignorance and political expediency are rewarded at the expense of national interest. Those opposite claim a commitment to emissions reduction and creating a cleaner economy. Their policies to this end reveal a complete lack of regard for the future of this nation, which hinges so heavily on successfully transitioning Australia from its current status as the highest per capita polluter in the world to one of the lowest.

The environmental effects of climate change, the economic effects of climate change and the social effects of climate change are the issues I would like to speak about today. Direct action is the sort of policy that a government implements when it does not believe in having a policy at all. It has been said that it is a fig leaf being used to cover its philosophical rejection of climate change and is a shameful expedient on this issue. It is the sort of policy motivated by scepticism of climate science—motivated by sentiments such as those possessed by Mr John Howard, who described those who believe in climate change as a bunch of 'religious zealots'. He said that he believed in his instincts rather than the more accurate and immense body of work that has been done by our scientists. Sad though it is, even I had to laugh when I heard coalition members talking about how such climate scientists were 'junior', as though the body of evidence relating to climate change meant nothing. A recent study of peer reviewed papers has found that only one out of 9,136 of these reject global warming. When you cannot play the ball, you play the man.

Indeed, how the coalition can argue with a straight face that their direct action policy will deliver the same level of emissions reduction promised by Labor at a lower cost to the economy is beyond me and, I think, beyond most people and other senators in this chamber. What has come home to roost is that the slogans used during the election campaign are bereft of any policy substance. We have even had an announcement of an army—which I can only presume will be led by the coalition's own Sergeant Schultz, 'I know nothing' Hunt. The
coalition wish to implement this scheme while at the same time slashing the level of advice they are able to receive about the issue by abolishing both the Climate Change Authority and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. How can the coalition credibly argue that they will be able to pick and choose winners and effectively fund clean energy and carbon abatement schemes when they are planning to abolish the institutions which could possibly provide advice about both which schemes to fund and how to fund them?

Let us be clear about the coalition's policies. They are more extreme on an economic level than those of postwar Europe and even the heady days of the eighties. At best the policy will have no positive effect. Direct action is a policy that will waste money. It is a policy that is vulnerable to rorting and the creation of vast trails of money that lead nowhere. Indeed, it is ironic that the coalition, who pontificate in this house about the virtues of fiscal prudence and frugality, are set to create a scheme which almost appears designed to waste taxpayers' money. They have promised to set aside vast sums of money to set up what they call an Emissions Reduction Fund, which, in their own words, will 'allocate money in response to emission reduction tenders to projects designed to reduce carbon emissions'. I am not sure what process will be used to evaluate these tenders. What expertise will the government call upon to rigorously evaluate the validity and veracity of these tenders? I presume the minister will not be personally sifting through a stack of funding requests one by one.

This government inherited a wealth of expertise that was built around the Climate Change Authority and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, organisations the government had at its disposal to provide frank, realistic and evidence based advice in relation to climate change and the types of investment that can be made to aid its abatement and transition our economy. The implementation of their advice regarding investment in carbon abatement and clean energy research in industry was enabled through funds raised from carbon pricing. Both of these organisations have been dynamited. We have a government that has jettisoned all useful advice and all real funding for clean energy investment yet still purports to want to make these investments. This time around, the taxpayer is going to directly foot the bill for the coalition's direct action policy, which is going to be implemented on a wing and a prayer, without adequate advice or resources to efficiently administer such a policy.

However, perhaps the greatest indictment of the coalition's proposed substitute for a comprehensive carbon pricing scheme is that it will fail to deliver on the environmental outcomes it promises to. We are the highest per-capita emitter in the world. We have experienced our own fair share of extreme weather events in recent times, a tangible testament to the increasing evidence of climate change. From an environmental perspective, we stand to lose much from the adverse effects of climate change. It is for these reasons that it is incumbent on us both to act on climate change and to be global leaders.

In my home state of Victoria, bushfires have been more and more severe and have been made so by unprecedented heatwaves. In other states we have endured storms and floods caused by cyclonic activity that has been unprecedented in its frequency. We have seen firsthand both human and economic devastation caused by extreme weather events. We know that these events are becoming more and more frequent, to the extent that they have almost become normalised. Yet it is important that we remember that these types of climatic patterns are not the norm. They are historically anomalous, and the evidence points to a greater trend in the earth's climate. Frighteningly, we are gathering pace towards a critical mass where
abatement attempts will become futile. In other words, the damage will already have been done and will be permanent. The damage has the potential to vastly reduce our ability to export food to the world, crippling our agricultural sector, and could even possibly jeopardise our own food security. Rising sea levels will affect salinity levels in our soil, reducing its fertility, while other changes in weather patterns have the potential to stunt crops through drought and severely raise the cost of raising livestock.

These are but a few of the key reasons why the coalition's position on this issue is so damning. Time is quite literally of the essence when it comes to mitigating the effects of climate change, yet the urgency of mitigating climate change is not realised purely from the extreme weather events. We see climate change all too often in the effect it is having on the natural wonders that we have so enjoyed and, hopefully, will continue to enjoy.

The Great Barrier Reef outlook report conducted in 2009 found that climate change will increase ocean acidity levels, increase the sea's temperature and cause a rise in sea levels. Each of these effects has the potential to irreparably damage the Great Barrier Reef by disrupting its delicately balanced ecosystem. Changes in sea levels will affect the balance between salt and fresh water in our estuaries. This will unavoidably impact on our native flora and fauna. Considering all of this, how is it the government can sit idly by while our own natural wonders are trashed by the effects of climate change?

Those in this place who do not believe that we are doing damage to our planet might be long gone when the generations that follow look back and ask why we did nothing. To those opposite: what would you say to them when this question is asked of you? I would suggest that your Direct Action policy will not be anywhere near enough to satisfy such a question. Obviously, we can sit here and list the terrible environmental consequences of climate change not only for Australia but also for the rest of the world. It is also vital that we consider the economic implications of climate change and the economic opportunities heralded by restructuring our economy to one centred on a clean economy necessary to abate climate change.

Under this government Australia is to be left behind the rest of the world when it comes to reducing emissions and restructuring our economy. The effects of climate change are real and caused by humans. The end consequences of the climate's current trajectory are inevitable. What does this tell us? It tells us that, whether we like it or not, sooner or later we as a nation will be forced to confront climate change and the emissions intensity of our economy just as every other nation around the globe will inevitably have to do. This should serve as a warning and an opportunity for this country. Either we can act now and position ourselves to take advantage of the economic change which will ultimately occur globally or we can wait behind and have this change foisted on us with dreadful economic consequences.

It is not in our national interest to shrink away from this challenge. Others around the world are moving on this issue. China, as we are aware, is a rising global power whose industrialisation is gathering pace year after year. China, though a heavy polluter, is also a heavy investor in clean energy research. It has invested $60 billion in the last financial year alone. China has also implemented emissions trading schemes in several of its provinces whose combined populations equate to 10 times our own. The Chinese have immediate environmental concerns with the negative effects of heavy pollution on population health abundantly clear to all of us.
But China would also see the restructuring of the global economy to one founded on clean energy and low emissions as a massive opportunity for their already resurgent economy. The Chinese seem to understand that there is money to be made and jobs to be created from clean energy research and the industries that stem from it. It is this opportunity that the coalition government ignorantly and stubbornly refuse to acknowledge, and they fail to act time and time again.

Other nations are also acting on climate change or at the very least beginning to act. The European Union has established an emissions trading scheme. Though those opposite like to criticise the scheme, the fact remains that the EU has already laid a key foundation stone upon which a clean energy economy can be built into the future. South Korea and New Zealand have established emissions trading schemes, as have several states within the US whose populations far outstrip our own. Add to this that the US and the EU are the second- and third-highest investors in clean energy research and technology around the world.

It is those nations that are investing that, when the crunch comes to act universally and address the drastic effects of climate change, will be at the forefront, and it is those nations that will benefit. Conversely, it will be nations such as ours, which at critical moments have been led by timid and intellectually bereft governments such as the one we currently have in this country, that in economic terms will be severely affected by the changes that will inevitably occur on a global scale. It is much better to shape our own economic destiny as much as we can than to have it foisted upon us when we are in a state of unpreparedness.

In a time when we are seeing more and more of our traditional industrial bases disappear, it is clear that it makes economic sense to foster a new wave of Australian entrepreneurialism revolving around clean energy research and industry. This is where the jobs of the future are likely to be found. It is important to remember that this is where the benefits of acting now on climate change can clearly be seen. These job opportunities most likely will not be there in five let alone 10 or 20 years time.

Finally, I would like to discuss the social impact of climate change as a way of explaining why genuine and substantive action is required now to abate its effects. Climate change is a phenomenon that will affect those most vulnerable the hardest. Any price impacts resulting from food scarcity caused by climate change will be felt the most by those who can least afford it.

Added to this are the various public health implications of climate change. Changes to our climate have the potential to increase the rates of infectious diseases, waterborne diseases, food borne diseases, vector borne diseases and respiratory illnesses. Such public health problems will inevitably affect the most vulnerable in our community. This is without mentioning the added cost that will be faced by our health system as it is forced to deal with increasing rates of these types of infections, often in remote parts of Australia. It is on this basis that climate change and its abatement are inextricably a moral issue, and not just within an Australian context.

Internationally it is worth looking at countries such as Bangladesh, which has a population of over 150 million, over 30 million of whom live below the nation's poverty line. Bangladesh is also a low-lying country. As we know, climate change will have the effect of raising the earth's sea levels. When many people think about rising sea levels they think about land becoming submerged. This is obviously a consequence of this phenomenon. In Bangladesh's
case, however, rising sea levels will have the effect of raising the water table, which for low-lying countries such as theirs could be potentially catastrophic. Alteration to the water table could render vast tracts of arable land in Bangladesh infertile by raising salinity levels. For a country where starvation is tragically prolific, such a turn of events would be utterly devastating. We can only imagine the millions more in Bangladesh who would be pushed below the poverty line because of climate change's adverse effects.

We might say that Australia is small and that any of our efforts to abate climate change will be futile. To this I would say that, for every country such as ours that finally acts on climate change, it potentially makes the next country a bit more willing to do the same. This is without acknowledging the massive economic opportunities available to us if we act now.

To conclude, it is with sadness that this parliament has had to witness the government's legacy of climate change denial printed in the words of these repeal bills currently before the Senate. Spelt out in these pages is the way in which the Australian government is going to deny Australians an economic opportunity while at the same time leaving us completely vulnerable to the economic upheaval climate change will herald. These bills are the permanent testament to how this government has failed to address the pressing environmental impact climate change is having on our own land right here in Australia. They are also testament to the social problems that this government will permit in the future. We had in place a blueprint to transition this economy, preserve our environmental heritage and shield our most vulnerable from disaster. It has been ripped out, and in its place is a policy that is not worth the paper it is printed on.

Senator MARSHALL (Victoria) (11:03): I commend that excellent contribution from Senator Tillem on these bills. I have been listening to this debate quite closely. It has been going on for some time. I think that reflects the concern that all senators in the chamber have around this particular issue. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

It is interesting to hear some of the arguments put by different senators. One of the first arguments I heard, which is quite common across the government, is that some countries—China is often mentioned—are increasing their emissions and that any action that we take will be futile and insignificant, and therefore we should not take it. It is true that China has a rapidly growing economy. Over the last two decades it has started to industrialise. The Chinese have started to grow their economy. They are pulling their people out of poverty. As the standard of living in China is increasing, people want more goods that consume electricity. That is something we are not in a position to deny them, given that over the last 100 years Australia has gone through that industrialisation process and freely polluted the world. Part of that pollution was the industrialisation process which has taken us to the standard of living which we now enjoy, and we should not be taking the attitude that we should deprive other people of it.

China are increasing their energy needs, but they want to do so in the most efficient manner. I know that China are taking a lot of action on climate change and reducing their emissions, even though their electricity generation is increasing at this point in time. Coal fired power stations are being built through more efficient means than was previously the case. They are also investing significantly in solar, wind and other renewable energies. They will get to the point where electricity demand peaks and they start to decrease it using
technology and becoming part of the world system of cap and trade which will be inevitable because we must act on climate change.

I think the argument that while some countries are increasing their emissions we should do nothing simply does not bear scrutiny. It is not a position that I am prepared to support. I think a country that is rich, has gone through industrialisation, has a high standard of living and can in the time frame take the actions we should be taking for our children has an obligation as a country. By no means are we are leading the way. In fact, most other countries—certainly all developed countries—are taking at least as much action on climate change as us and, in most cases, more.

There is also the argument that, given we are a relatively small country in the scheme of things, any action we take will have no significant impact on the overall world climate change process. Again, I think that is an argument which should be just totally rejected.

It is arithmetic, really. If every country does what it needs to do regardless of its size—and the smaller the country, the less impact it will have—if every country does the right thing, then it will add up. That is what arithmetic does. Every bit helps, whether it is a small bit or whether it is a large bit. To suggest that just because our contribution will be relatively small on the worldwide scale as an excuse not to do anything, again, is just a ridiculous argument. If we took that position, we would do nothing internationally. We should be in a position where we can be leaders. I wish we were leaders, but we are not actually leaders. We should be leaders and we should be up there leading with the rest of the developed world in the overall approach. I do not think we are..

One of the other arguments that is being put forward is this mandate argument. It is true; I heard Tony Abbott a number of times in the election say, 'This election is a referendum on climate change.' If that were true, then they do not have a mandate for any other issue. You cannot have a referendum and run multiple referendums, so their argument then about having a mandate for the mining tax and having a mandate for everything else they claim to have a mandate for simply cannot be true if the last election was a referendum on climate change.

But, of course, the facts speak for themselves: it was a general election; it was not a referendum. So it was not a referendum and it was not a referendum on climate change. I was elected at the last election. I had a very clear position that I wanted do something on climate change. I wanted an emissions trading scheme that is effective. I absolutely supported the removal of the carbon tax and moving to an emissions trading scheme to ensure that there was a price on carbon. That is what I am happy to support. But I am not happy to support just the repeal of all these bills and to have this nonsense of direct action, where you simply pay big polluters to try to pollute less as a way forward. It is just something that I cannot accept.

So I have a mandate to take the position I take. Government senators believe that they have a mandate to take the position they take. The numbers will fall as they will; the Senate will decide. We all have mandates here and we are all elected here. If the government gathers enough numbers in this place to pass these bills, then that will happen. If not, it will not happen. We all have our individual mandates. We were all elected into this place by the people. So I reject that argument too.

One of other areas I have found a little bit concerning, again, is the Greens' attitude and their outrage about these bills being put forward. I say that the Greens political party is as
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responsible as the government for these bills that are before us right now. They are as responsible as the government is. In 2009, they stood shoulder to shoulder with the climate change sceptics—who are on the other side of the chamber now—and voted down the ETS as proposed by the government. They voted it down. They stood shoulder to shoulder with the climate change sceptics and voted down the ETS.

They did so through rank political opportunism, because they wanted to have their name and their brand on the bill. They wanted to shape that bill the way they wanted and it was either their way or the highway. Therefore, they voted against those bills. If they had voted for those bills at the time, the ETS would have been in place in 2009 and it would have been in operation for four or five years. It would have then demonstrated to the Australian people that the ETS was actually working. We would have seen the demonstrable outcomes of reducing emissions. The markets would by then have well and truly accepted it; it would have been operating and it would have been a normal element of doing business.

It would have then shown the way—that this is the best way to deal with climate change—through a market-based mechanism. But they opposed it, standing shoulder to shoulder with the climate change sceptics at the time. As I said, it also then allowed those people on the other side to run a scare campaign for two to three years against taking action on climate change. That would not have been able to happen either. So when they come into this place and propose their outrage at these bills I say to them that they ought have a good look at themselves and their actions in 2009, which I absolutely believe have led us to this point here today.

These bills seek to dismantle Australia’s response to the challenge of climate change. Australia has committed to reduce emissions by at least five per cent by 2020, compared to 2000 levels. This is part of the international coordinated effort to limit human impact on our climate. The first action of the Labor government back in 2007 was to ratify the Kyoto protocol, after years of opposition by the Howard government. This action showed that as a nation we were ready to stand up and help the world deal with the dangers of climate change. Australia is the largest per capita polluter in the developed world and is one of the world's top 20 polluters in absolute terms. It is critical that we work with the world community and do our part.

Ninety-nine countries worldwide, covering 80 per cent of global emissions and 90 per cent of the global economy, have made formal pledges to the United Nations to reduce carbon pollution. As part of the Kyoto protocol, the international community has committed to limiting global warming to below two degrees. Above two degrees, many regions—including Australia, which is the world's driest continent—will face potentially catastrophic shifts in climate. If emissions continue to grow at current rates warming is projected to increase rapidly over the 21st century, exceeding two degrees within the next few decades and foreseeably reaching four degrees or more by the end of the century.

The 2012 World Bank report called Turn down the heat: why a 4°C world must be avoided warns us of the dangers of inaction. A four-degree world is likely to be one in which communities, cities and countries would experience severe disruption, damage and dislocation, with many of these risks spread unequally. It is likely that the poor will suffer most, and the global community could become more fractured and unequal than it even is today.
The effects of four degrees of warming will not be evenly distributed around the world. The largest warming will occur over land and will range from four degrees to 10 degrees. Increases of six degrees or more in average monthly summer temperatures would be expected. A four-degree warming would significantly exacerbate existing water scarcity in many regions, particularly North and East Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. The regional extinction of entire coral reef ecosystems could occur well before a four degree-warming.

As global warming approaches and exceeds two degrees, the risk of crossing thresholds of non-linear tipping elements in the earth's system will see abrupt climate change impacts and unprecedented high-temperature climate regimes increase. Examples include the disintegration of the West Antarctic ice sheet, leading to more rapid sea-level rise than projected in this analysis; and large-scale Amazon dieback, drastically affecting ecosystems, rivers, agriculture, energy production and livelihoods on almost continual scale in the region and potentially adding substantially to 21st century global warming. As the World Bank has identified, if we are unable to limit global warming to two degrees, the impact on humanity will be catastrophic.

The facts are clear: the world is warming. Since 1750 and the beginning of the industrial revolution, human activities have dramatically increased the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by 40 per cent, methane by 150 per cent, and nitrous oxide by 20 per cent. Temperatures have been rising. Between 1880 and 2012, average global surface temperatures over land and the oceans have warmed by 0.85 degrees. In Australia the average temperature has increased by 0.9 degrees since 1910, and there have been significant increases in the numbers of hot days and hot nights. The 2012-13 Australian summer was the hottest since records began. One hundred and twenty-three weather records were broken over a 90-day period, including the hottest day ever recorded for Australia as a whole, the hottest January on record, the hottest summer average on record, and a record seven days in a row where the whole continent averaged above 39 degrees. And this year's summer has been another very hot summer with more records falling, including a record hot spell for Melbourne with four days over 40 degrees in a row—a spell not seen since 1908. Adelaide set a record with 13 days over 40 degrees, smashing the previous record that had stood for 117 years. Seventy per cent of Queensland is now drought-declared. Towns such as Cloncurry have now moved to level 6 water restrictions. With two failed wet seasons, much of Queensland is facing catastrophic dry conditions. The costs of dealing with climate-induced crises are massive—from significant drought relief packages to the costs of damage from cyclones and their impact on our neighbours.

It is clearly in our nation's interest that we act to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide to limit the impact of a warming climate. Yet this bill will dismantle the world's best practice now in place to reduce our emissions. Market mechanisms are the most efficient in reducing carbon emissions; polluters are forced to reduce their emissions or pay a price. It is the price on pollution that will drive the market. The proceeds of the price on carbon are then distributed to help industry adopt modern efficient processes and to help the consumer defray their costs. The OECD in its 2009 paper *The economics of climate change mitigation* clearly identifies putting a price on carbon as world's best practice. Putting a price on emissions through price mechanisms such as carbon taxes, emission trading schemes or a hybrid system
combining features of both can go a long way towards building up a cost-effective climate policy framework.

Although taxes and ETS schemes differ in a number of respects, both are intrinsically cost effective and give emitters continuing incentives to search for cheaper abatement options through both existing and new technologies. Internationally, many nations have a price on carbon and they include some of our biggest trading partners. According to the Climate Commission, 33 countries and 18 subnational jurisdictions have carbon prices in place. Europe has had a price on carbon since 2005, Japan since 2012, New Zealand since 2008, South Africa since 2013 and South Korea will have one from 2015. China—the world's biggest polluter—has started seven pilot ETS schemes in regions covering more than 200 million people, with the aim of having a national trading scheme in place by the end of this decade. A price on carbon is a common-sense way to reduce our carbon emissions and to encourage efficient and cost-effective industry and consumer behaviour.

The introduction of a price on carbon here in Australia has been a success. Since the introduction of the carbon price, emissions in the electricity sector—the biggest component of carbon emissions—have fallen 14 per cent over the last two spring seasons. In total, spring emissions are down almost 20 per cent since the peak just five years ago in the spring of 2008. In 2012-13, renewables increased their share of the national electricity market by 25 per cent—that is, in just one year. More than one million households have been fitted with solar panels, and over 2,400 megawatts of power are now produced by solar panels—a leap from the 100 megawatts produced in 2008. Employment in the renewable energy industry more than doubled to over 24,000 people, and wind power has trebled, now producing over 3,000 megawatts.

As an example of the success of our policies, in April last year the energy company AGL opened its Macarthur Wind Farm near Warrnambool. This is the largest wind farm in the southern hemisphere with 140 3MW turbines, generating 420 megawatts. This project has created over 2,700 jobs in construction. It has the capacity to generate enough clean energy to power 220,000 average Victorian households per year, and to save approximately 1.5 million tonnes of greenhouse gases per year. This is the future. When you compare the clean energy to the problems we were having with brown coal in Hazelwood, I think the community would prefer to have clean energy generated by strong winds off Bass Strait.

The price on carbon had its intended impact on industry—the largest consumers of power and producers of carbon. In July 2013, ClimateWorks published a report on the impact of the price of carbon on industry. This research involved in-depth interviews with 47 large industrial companies that account for 70 per cent of Australia's industrial energy use. Eight-one per cent of respondents reported that the carbon price had a relatively small financial impact, but it focused their attention on energy and carbon management. The presence of the carbon price appears to have had a greater impact than its financial value, as most respondents reported that becoming liable under the carbon price scheme has forced their attention on energy and carbon management. Across our nation industry has been focused on reducing energy intensity. This has the added benefit of saving money for industry and creating a modern and efficient industry.

These bills are a backward step for our nation. While the rest of the world is implementing a price on carbon or has been pricing carbon for years, we will be dismantling a successful
scheme. The coalition will replace world's best practice with a plan to subsidise Australia's polluters with their direct action policy. Under the coalition's direct action policy the government will establish a fund—a slush fund—to give Australia's biggest polluters $3 billion over four years. Frank Jotzo, the head of the Centre for Climate Economics and Policy at the ANU's Crawford School of Public Policy, and Paul Burke, an economist with the Crawford School of Public Policy at the ANU, investigated the coalition's scheme and found that any discretionary subsidy approach is in danger of fostering a culture of rent seeking with its adverse impacts on the overall economic policy-making framework. Companies were likely to seek funds that they would have spent even without government support—  (Time expired)

Senator PERIS (Northern Territory) (11:23): I rise today to encourage my fellow members of the 44th Parliament of Australia to continue to address the matter of climate change. Scientists and members of the Australian public know and understand that carbon pollution is real and changing our weather, our landscapes and our future. Tony Abbott's policy removes the legal cap on pollution and allows the big polluters open slather. Instead of polluters paying, Tony Abbott is setting up a slush fund of billions of taxpayers' dollars to hand out to polluters. Experts agree that this will cost households more while failing to cut pollution.

I believe climate change is real. I believe in a carbon emissions trading scheme. I believe we owe it to our children, our current and future generations. I believe that the big polluters should pay for their emissions. Unlike the coalition's Direct Action Plan, which directly slugs taxpayers to pay the big polluters, Labor's plan makes the polluters pay for their carbon emissions. In a minute I will talk about the current and future impacts on the Northern Territory as a result of climate change, but first I quickly want to address the cost-of-living impacts in the Northern Territory as a result of pricing carbon.

In the Northern Territory the government owned Power and Water is the sole provider of power and water. There is no reticulated gas to the home, and Power and Water provides consumers with a single quarterly bill for their electricity, water and sewerage usages. When the carbon price came into effect in the Northern Territory on 1 July 2012 the average power bill increased by $2.61 a week or $135 a year. Since then, the incoming Country Liberal Party government in the Northern Territory—who, incidentally, promised to cut the cost of living—have has announced increases to household power bills of $2,000 a year. That is $135 versus $2,000 a year. Let's be very clear: the increases to power and water costs to families in the Northern Territory since the introduction of the price on carbon are insignificant compared to the impact of the Northern Territory government's increases. Only around six per cent of the increase in people's power bills in the last 18 months is the result of the price on carbon. The other 94 per cent of the increase is due to the CLP.

The CLP has increased the price of power 15 times more than the carbon price did, and with the carbon tax the average Territorian received around $10 a week in compensation from the Commonwealth. No such compensation came with the CLP's $2,000 a year increase. The CLP ran election TV commercials campaigning against the cost of power—even going so far as to say that they dreaded their own Power and Water bills arriving in the mail. Then, less than three months after being elected to office, they put them up by $2,000 a year. It seems that saying one thing before an election and then doing the complete opposite afterwards is
becoming a trend for incoming conservative governments. Since then, the Northern Territory government has announced even more increases are to come and any drop as a result of the removal of the price on carbon will be more than offset by the CLP's increases. Anyone in the Northern Territory who thinks their power bill will come down as a result of the removal of the carbon tax is in for a rude shock.

But what we are really talking about today is the future of the planet. Many other speakers have spoken in great detail about the science of climate change and the impact on the planet. I will confine my comments to the threats facing the Northern Territory. Like the rest of the planet, the Northern Territory is exposed to the threats of climate change and rising sea levels. Many of the coastal areas of the Territory are low-lying and some of Australia's most iconic wilderness areas are exposed. This includes some of the most intact coastal and marine habitats in the world. Kakadu is extremely exposed to the infiltration of salt water into Australia's greatest freshwater wetlands. A sea level rise of only a few centimetres has the potential to increase the intrusion of salt water into a large fraction of the flood plains. This will completely alter and degrade the biodiversity of Kakadu. It is also expected to increase the growth of weeds and invasive grasses, which will dramatically increase the prevalence of bush fires both in Kakadu and throughout the Northern Territory.

From droughts in the south to cyclones in the north, the Territory is very prone to natural disasters. Darwin and all the Territory's coastal communities are in cyclone zones. Any rise in the sea level substantially increases the threat of flooding as a result of cyclones. While cyclones used to be the major threat, improvements to the building code in places like Darwin mean that floods now loom as the biggest danger. Anyone who doubts that the sea levels are rising needs only to go for a walk along the scenic Darwin foreshore. The bike track along the famous East Point is constantly being rebuilt and redirected, as parts of it fall into the sea due to coastal erosion.

Most Australians would appreciate the incredibly important connection to the land, the sea and the environment that Indigenous Australians have. Of course, I do not pretend to speak for every single Indigenous Australian but I know I speak for most when I say that Indigenous Australians want their country protected from the threat of climate change. Many Indigenous organisations are working towards their own endeavours to reduce carbon emissions.

In August last year Darwin hosted an international forum where the importance of traditional land management practices being used to combat the effects of climate change was discussed. Organisations such as the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance have long been advocating for policies to address climate change and to protect the environment. In fact, they have a carbon program that targets the reduction of emissions from wildfires. I am aware that the second Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report says, ‘There is high agreement among scientists that Indigenous people will face significant challenges from heat stress, extreme weather events and heightened rates of disease by 2100.’

This is not just confined to Indigenous Australians; all Australians will certainly be affected. The Territory, like the rest of the world, is extremely exposed to the threat of climate change. We need to take action; we need to reduce emissions. And a price on carbon is the best way to go. We want to tackle climate change in the most cost-effective way. That is why we support an emissions trading scheme that puts a legal cap on carbon pollution and lets business work out the best way for them to cut emissions.
The economic future of the Northern Territory is linked to gas. There are abundant reserves in the seas to our north and some of the biggest projects in Australia are occurring right now, bringing this gas onshore to Darwin. Gas is a relatively clean source of energy, and a price on carbon increases the relative economic returns of gas versus those of dirtier energy resources, such as brown coal. A price on carbon makes gas relatively cheap and making gas relatively cheap is a great economic opportunity on a global scale for the Northern Territory.

This bill reduces the relative value of gas which, again, reduces the relative economic opportunity for the Northern Territory. As I mentioned earlier, the fundamental difference between Labor's approach of putting a price on carbon and the coalition's so-called Direct Action Plan is that Labor's approach will work to cut carbon emissions and the coalition's will not. This is the accepted view of the vast majority of scientists, economists and business leaders who have assessed two models. Aside from the science, there is also a fundamental ideological difference between the two models. Labor's model makes the polluters pay; the coalition's model makes the taxpayers pay the big polluters. The coalition's model gets taxpayers to pay the big polluters, even if they do not cut their emissions. Most taxpayers do not realise that the coalition's plan involves directly hitting the hip pocket. Their Direct Action Plan involves subsidising the big polluters from government revenue, which could be used for health and education.

At the recent election, Labor promised to fast-track the move towards an emissions trading scheme. Our position on the repeal of the carbon tax was clear then and remains clear. We support removing the tax but do not support doing nothing. An emissions trading scheme has always been the preferred approach and Labor has been advocating for it for over a decade. We are far from being alone. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development confirmed that countries can achieve higher levels of emissions cuts at a much lower cost if they use an emissions trading scheme. Emissions trading schemes are already being adopted in many countries around the world, including the UK, France, Germany, South Korea, Canada, and parts of the US and China. The Liberals in Australia, at one stage, also supported it. They went into the 2007 election campaign supporting an emissions trading scheme. That was their official policy during the election campaign.

Of course, once they got into government, they backflipped and voted against the legislation in the Senate. John Howard recently admitted that his support of a trading scheme was purely motivated by short-term political opportunism. Saying one thing before an election and doing the opposite after is not new ground for the coalition. If anything, it is par for the course.

Tony Abbott's rise to the prime ministership was built on his climate change scepticism—not just scepticism but denial. No Australian really believes the Prime Minister when he mouths the words that he accepts the science of climate change. And I do not believe that Tony Abbott truly believes in his own direct action policy. It is a policy of convenience, a policy that pretends to care about climate change and a holding policy, if you will.

If this bill gets through, then I would not be surprised if the coalition were to turn their attention to how to wriggle out of their direct action policy. It would certainly conform with the underlying belief of their leader, Tony Abbott, that we should not be doing anything to address climate change. You can almost picture it now: the day that they have legislation to remove a price on carbon, to remove any more progress towards an emissions trading scheme.
they will start working out how they can come up with an excuse to scrap their direct action policy.

Beyond climate change I am extremely concerned about the approach that this Abbott government takes to science. We no longer have a minister for science, and organisations such as CSIRO are being targeted for massive budget and staffing cuts. Organisations such as CSIRO are key to contributing to an informed and independent discussion and analysis of, among other areas, climate change. Surely, in this day and age, organisations such as CSIRO should not only retain their funding but should receive increased resources to move Australia into a responsible age when dealing with the environment. This Abbott government has a fundamental opposition to science. We now hear that instinct is more reliable than science.

Let us make it clear: we on this side of the House are opposed to this obvious, deliberate shift away from responsible action on protecting both our environment and Australians. Recently, a groundbreaking memorandum of understanding to create the world's first tropical environment focused tidal energy research centre in Darwin has been signed by Tenax Energy and Charles Darwin University. The testing centre and associated pilot plant is the first step towards delivering affordable tidal energy to Darwin by the end of the decade. The establishment of a world-class, commercially oriented research and testing facility aims to stimulate collaboration in tropical tidal energy generation globally across research institutions and device manufacturers.

The world’s biggest test site, the European Marine Energy Centre, in Scotland, is already at capacity and we see significant opportunity in taking what we learn about the tropical environment in Darwin to supporting growth in the Asian sector.

This initiative, which involves Charles Darwin University, will pioneer research into the interaction of these technologies with the tropical environment. It is hoping to attract a range of people with professional and trade qualifications in marine, electrical and structural engineering disciplines across the renewable energy spectrum. This initiative offers associated research opportunities in environmental science and economies. Initiatives such as this have the potential to redefine Darwin's relationship with Asia for the better. What sort of message does the coalition's approach to climate change and the environment send to other countries? It is certainly seen as a backward step.

The Territory is the perfect place for investment in climate change and the safeguarding of the environment for future generations. This is an industry that will create green jobs—jobs which will only increase in the future. If the rest of the world is any indication, this is an area that will continue to grow. We should be investing in green jobs today. Alice Springs is another success story when it comes to the research and development of renewable energy. The Alice has some of the highest solar radiation rates in Australia and is a key international tourist destination. The residents of Alice Springs are behind renewable energy and continued support for our environment. Approximately half of the households in the Alice already use solar hot-water systems. This is mainly due to Alice Springs investing in the development of a potent solar industry, and it has received strong community support for this project. Alice Solar City's large-scale iconic projects, which maximise the potential of natural and economic benefits, are centrepieces of the trial. As the Northern Territory government's own website on the topic reads:

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Alice Solar City also provides a comprehensive range of energy-efficiency incentives to residential customers via a voucher system. It is the only Solar City consortium led by a local government body, making it a truly grassroots community project.

Under a Territory Labor government, the Territory's ability to generate clean, green energy received a significant boost with the launch of its first renewable energy research facility. It was said at the time that this new centre would be the backbone of renewable energy development in the NT. Our current minister for the environment, the Country Liberals' Peter Chandler, is on the record as saying that Australia's scientists were 'playing the climate change game' to make money. Mr Chandler went on to say:

They are the ones that are making a dollar out of governments and businesses around the world ...

He later admitted that he was not a scientist but that the belief that man-made carbon dioxide was driving the world towards a natural disaster was 'a load of crap'.

The CLP's Deputy Chief Minister, Dave Tollner, is also a climate change sceptic—even though the majority of the world's leading scientists believe that man-made carbon emissions are causing the planet to heat up dangerously. These are the people who represent us and who choose to ignore the rich potential for climate change and the critical environmental research underway in the Northern Territory. Their sentiment is, I believe, strongly echoed by the federal government's new approach. The Territory has many potential sources of renewable energy and is already attracting significant investment interest in its solar, tidal and geothermal energy possibilities. It would appear that those projects and the organisations that believe in climate change, that believe in the science, are being targeted at both a Territory and a national level.

In conclusion, this bill does not accept the science of climate change. This bill does not accept the economics of climate change. This bill will not address the threat of climate change. This bill will help big polluters, not taxpayers. This bill will not result in a reduction to power bills in the Northern Territory. I oppose the bill.

Senator GALLACHER (South Australia) (11:41): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 and related bills. I am with Senator Marshall: I do believe that we have a mandate to vote according to the people who sent us here. The South Australian election was on the weekend. I and, presumably, coalition, Labor and Greens senators and members of the House of Representatives met with hundreds of voters. I think 1,793 people come through the booth that I was on. The interesting thing was that not one of them raised the carbon tax. Not one of them said: 'Repeal it. Back the Abbott government's position.' In fact, to my recollection, it was never mentioned in the campaign. It is an invisible issue, if you like, in the electorate.

But what is not invisible is the fact that a lot of Australians travel. A lot of Australians have been to Mexico City, Los Angeles, Beijing, New Delhi and Rome—cities where lots of people live and where the effect of climate change and pollution are all too apparent to them as they go about their daily tasks and business or as they enjoy their holiday. What is not invisible is the impact of the economy on society and the places in which we live. I come from a background where coal was burnt every day. It went up through the chimney, obviously, and fell back down on the surroundings. If you visit those places now, you will find them incredibly clean and incredibly vibrant. They are a lot better off now compared to when they were basically remnants of the Industrial Revolution.
As Senator Marshall said, we cannot deny people to our north, in Asia, the right to advance their societies, to improve the lot of their people, to bring themselves out of poverty and to have good, useful opportunities in life. They will take that opportunity. We know that China leads the world in everything. It leads the world in nuclear power and in wind power. In some cases it is now leading the world in a lot of the science. It also has coal fired and gas fired generators. If they are to take 200 million people out of rural poverty and give them a chance in life, they will continue to do what is necessary to achieve that. If that means they put in a coal fired generator, they will do that. If they could put in nuclear, they would do that. Very clearly, we live in a place where the demographics are hugely challenging for all governments in this part of the world.

We have lots of young people who have aspirations. They have access to the internet. They want good jobs and they want the same things that we now enjoy. What I think is really disappointing is that Australia is not taking the lead on the climate change argument. And I understand all the arguments. I was chair of an investment committee long before the legislation passed this parliament, and there were people there supporting a carbon price mechanism—not a carbon tax; a carbon price mechanism—because it is abundantly clear, and this government, of all governments, should know that if you want to change something in the economy you price it. If you want to change anything in the economy, you put a price on it; you put it up or down. That is a proven economic way of changing behaviour.

To me, the Direct Action Plan, which I will refer to a little bit later, is counterintuitive for the Abbott government's market-driven economic rationale. How do you change things? You change things by pricing them. You price them up, you price them down and behaviour changes. You do it with road safety: you price speeding and behaviour changes. With drink-driving, you go to jail or you pay a fine, so behaviour changes. In the economy, if you price carbon, it will change behaviour. And behaviour has changed—maybe not as much as everybody hoped, maybe not as much as everybody wants, but it will change. Over time, it is the only proven mechanism for a successful economic strategy.

The background here is that the government are repealing the carbon price legislation on the grounds that it places an unfair cost burden on Australian businesses and households; it is allegedly inefficient and wasteful; it has not led to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions; it is not matched by comparable action internationally; and the electorate gave the coalition a mandate to repeal the CPM. Essentially, the government have said that the election was a referendum on the carbon tax, but that does not really stack up.

The cost to Australian businesses and householders is one point I want to address. The carbon price directly applies to around 350 businesses. Clearly, costs incurred by those liable businesses in complying with the CPM may be passed on downstream to businesses and final consumers. But the expectation was that the CPM would only add 0.07 per cent to the CPI, or around $9.90 a week; and, in the context of significant expected increases in electricity, 10 per cent. So, for some, the cost of the CPM includes not only these direct costs but also maybe forgone production because they are changing. We have an example that in South Australia, where we have a brown-coal fired generator that basically only kicks in when there is a peak load in South Australia or Victoria and, through the National Grid, they can make some dollars.
As for households, the impact of rising prices on most households was largely offset by the compensation package that we paid, which consists of increasing the tax-free threshold to $18,000 and making additional transfer payments to eligible persons and households. Our government claimed that households would receive a combination of payments or tax cuts worth an average of $10.10 a week, and that nine out of 10 Australian families would receive assistance.

There you have it, Mr Acting Deputy President Sterle. It is a price on carbon for 350 businesses—sure, that changes their behaviour, the way they do things, but they are allowed to pass it on downstream—and we paid a compensation package to households.

This has all been wrapped up in an entirely cynical political argument led by Tony Abbott. Let us not forget he only got in by one vote. Let us not forget it was carbon pricing that delivered the leadership to the opposition and, ultimately, the prime ministership. Carbon pricing is in his blood because it has actually put him where he is. In is ruthless pursuit of power, he has essentially put up a position which does not stack up when you take into account what scientists are saying, it does not stack up when you take into account how you change behaviour in the economy and it does not stack up against the behaviour of the voting public.

The coalition have been very clear: 'We have a mandate. We have a mandate.' Well, let us have a look at some of the polling that was done on 5 September 2013. Essential Research polling asked voters on 5 September, 'Which of the following are the main reasons you will vote for that party?' For the totality of respondents, the three top answers chosen were: 'They are better at handling Australia's economy', 'There are more likely to represent the interests of all Australians' and 'They are better at looking after the interests of people like me'—well, that would probably apply to most Liberal voters; that is why they vote Liberal. Out of the 13 options, 'having better policies on things like the environment and climate change' ranked 10th when all respondents were included. For coalition voters, 'better policies on things like the environment and climate change' ranked last, after 'Don't know' and 'No reason'. Only one per cent of coalition voters ranked climate change policies within the three top reasons for voting for that party. However, it could be argued that many respondents might not consider the repeal of carbon pricing a real issue.

Clearly, carbon pricing is a political football. This was the 'great big new tax on everything'—which clearly it was not. It was a tax on 350 businesses and it was adequately compensated for in nine out of 10 Australian households. We all know that the only ones who have ever put a great big new tax on business are the coalition, with the GST—because that does go on just about everything. The carbon pricing mechanism is not a great big new tax on everything; it is an attempt in a proper, well-thought-out way to change behaviour to ensure that our children and our grandchildren have the same quality of air and the same quality of life wherever they live in this great country of ours. It is to ensure that we are a beacon of leadership in this part of the world. As I said earlier, we do not have the pressure of 200 million people coming out of rural poverty into our cities but we can see on our TVs that people in Beijing and other major cities in China virtually cannot breathe, and doing hard physical or manual labour in that sort of climate is problematic. The human cost of all of that must be enormous. The human cost of people living and choking to death in a polluted
environment must be absolutely enormous. Surely no-one can argue that nothing is happening.

In a previous contribution on this matter, I pointed to the reinsurers of the world. The reinsurers of the world are the people who pick up the tab. We all pay our insurance and, when things happen, they pay the bill. We get paid by our insurer and our insurer then claims back from a global reinsurer. The global reinsurance market is worth trillions of dollars. Since 1977, the big reinsurers have been saying that natural disasters are happening a little bit more frequently and impacting a little bit more severely. The planet is becoming more heavily populated, so you could argue that a storm 30 years ago might cause less damage than a storm today. But it is difficult to argue with the frequency change—the fact that these things are happening more often.

Ultimately, we pick up the tab for climate change. You cannot hide from it. We insure our dwellings, our businesses and all those sorts of things. If we are afflicted more often by severe natural disasters then, ultimately, insurance premiums go up. People in Queensland know all about that, as do people in places where there have been extreme bushfire events. As Australians, we band together and get people through those events. In the Queensland floods, the then Premier and the then Prime Minister did a fantastic job. Eventually, however, insurance premiums will go up—so we are going to pay. One way or the other, we are going to pay. When we introduced the carbon pricing mechanism, we included a package to compensate people for any price effects. In the absence of a carbon pricing mechanism, however, consumers will be paying—because that is the way the system we all live in and enjoy works.

Doing nothing—taking the low road on carbon pricing—is not really a sensible option for this country. Given our pre-eminent status in this part of the world, we should be showing leadership. Western society has had its industrial revolution. We have been through the stage of having coal fires in every household, with all the pollution that entailed. In our little city of Adelaide, a nice big country town, there used to be incinerators in everybody's backyard. We just burned the rubbish. It went up, hit the hills and dropped back down on us again. We know these things are wrong and we can take action to change them.

The government's position on this is entirely political. The Hon. Tony Abbott, the Prime Minister of this country, got into the job of opposition leader by just one vote. One of the most divisive issues in the Liberal Party was climate change. People like Malcolm Turnbull were on one side of the debate, but others took the opposite position.

We know the Prime Minister is wedded to abolishing carbon pricing. But this is a really bad look internationally, a bad economic decision and bad for our children and grandchildren. We do not want Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart and Perth to become like the cities a few hours flight to the north of us. We want Australia to be, as it is now, clean and pristine. We want all Australians to have the opportunity to enjoy a reasonable economy whilst making advances—making the place cleaner and greener.

Part of the coalition's strategy is a large range of initiatives to boost renewable energy. They have missed the boat. South Australia under Mike Rann led the renewable energy debate in this country. We have wind power. We have made significant changes. We have the most solar panel systems per capita in Australia—a huge investment. The scheme has been oversubscribed. I am not a great fan of solar power because I do not understand how we can
avoid passing the cost of the input credit onto more vulnerable consumers—pensioners on $250 a week, for example. So I have that one concern about solar power. But South Australia has made great progress in renewable energy. If the Hon. Tony Abbott is going to pick up South Australia's mantle and charge away with it, good luck to him. I doubt if he will write to Mike Rann to thank him for having been prescient in pushing renewable energy so vigorously and so successfully.

The Direct Action Plan says we are going to plant another 20 million trees. On the weekend, though, I think I heard something about more trees being pulled down in a place called Tasmania. That is fine—I am not anti-forestry. But apparently we are going to plant an additional 20 million trees. If the Prime Minister comes to Adelaide and wants a hand to plant a few trees, I am up for that—because I like trees and I think we should have plenty of them. The history in South Australia is that we cut them all down for things like the copper mines at Burra and other places. I agree that we should plant more trees—great. But is that a genuine, internationally recognised, well-thought-out economic strategy for dealing with carbon pollution? I am not sure that it is not just intended to be a vote winner rather than a clear and prescient mechanism for dealing with what is a very important 21st century issue.

This issue goes to the heart of why a lot of people are in politics. As Senator Cameron pointed out the other day, even Robert Menzies said that occasionally you come across an issue you have to advocate for. If you believe in it and people are against you, you have to advocate for it. If you still face opposition, you have to advocate for it again. You have to do what is right. At the end of the day, it is incumbent on every senator in this place to do what is right. It appears to me that there is overwhelming evidence that a carbon-pricing mechanism affecting 350 businesses, with appropriate compensation to nine out of 10 households, is capable of changing behaviour for the better.

It is not a great big tax on everything. It has been portrayed as that quite deceitfully and quite erroneously. The reality is that most of the increase in electricity prices is out of poles and wires. It is out of the privatisation of those poles and wires, which have now been gold plated. In South Australia, we probably have a minimum number of days where our peak of electricity is used; we have three to 10 days where we need the gold plating of our electricity. I accept that, politically, that has got to be copped; I do accept that. I saw in the Northern Territory the other day that that government has done nothing about electricity, and they shut down schools, hospitals and the Public Service. My daughter said that, at 1.30 in the morning, she was finding new friends—the ones in the street that had generators.

That is the result of not investing in electricity. But that was never articulated. It was all bagged up as ‘carbon price: a great big new tax on everything’, avoiding the fact that most of the increase in electricity prices has been driven out of the investment in poles, wires and generators, and that most of our state governments sold those things off. It is natural that the person who bought them wants to maximise their investment, and they have done very well. The Australian consumer may also benefit in the long term. But in the short term they got whacked severely, with an increase in electricity prices of up to 50 per cent in some states, which this government said was due to the carbon tax. That is absolutely wrong.

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (12:01): I, too, wish to contribute to the debate on the Abbott government's Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 and the other bills in this package. These bills are intended to
deny Australians the very best chance we have ever had of doing something about damaging climate change that is caused by human activity. These bills could have been the opportunity to move Australia to an emissions trading scheme. But all that these bills do is prevent any chance of that. Instead, if successful, these bills would bring to a complete halt Australia’s good work so far in addressing climate change.

The bills are a deliberate attempt by the government to stop Australia reaching our internationally agreed carbon emission targets. They are a deliberate attempt by the government to cruel future investment in renewable energy technologies and a signal from this government to all the big polluters in Australia that it is okay to continue belching harmful pollution into the atmosphere with no fear of rebuke or intervention from the government. It is also an embarrassing signal to the rest of the world that Australia has gone from being a world leader and an innovator in the fight against climate change to being a weak, reluctant country, hostage to big polluters and, even more embarrassingly, in denial about the science that tells us that climate change is real and we are causing it.

We have already seen the Senate defeat two previous bills that the government had put forward in its war against the science that tells us that humans are causing damaging climate change that is both dangerous and escalating. Both the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, which works with other financiers and project proponents to secure finance for renewable energy initiatives and low-emission technologies, and the Climate Change Authority, which provides independent factual evidence based scientific advice to government, have been targeted for demolition by this government in previous bills—which, thankfully, were defeated. We can all only hope that this package of bills will also be defeated, although we know that the government will continue to pursue its dismantling of Labor's excellent climate change initiatives regardless. That is a very disturbing thing to have to confront.

But this government enjoys undoing great reform initiatives—the kinds of initiatives that only Labor governments ever have the courage to introduce and to prosecute. We have seen the Abbott government backtracking on education reform. We have observed their lust for dismantling our precious universal healthcare system, Medicare, and their absolutely perverse delight in trying to use this term of office to bring back an industrial relations free-for-all—despite the Prime Minister promising before the election that WorkChoices was dead, buried and cremated. We did not believe him then when he said that, and we will never trust the coalition when it comes to protections for working Australians. We will never trust them to do what is right for the majority of Australians, and we certainly cannot trust them when it comes to action to protect our environment.

But there was a time when the coalition shared Labor's view that international targets for reducing carbon emissions were a good thing and that Australia should do its bit by implementing a domestic emissions trading scheme, which was universally agreed—even by most people in their own party—as the most effective, economically sustainable method of reducing pollution. Even former Prime Minister John Howard said that was the way to go and went to the 2007 election saying so. Australia, with one of the world's highest per capita carbon emissions outputs, was, under Labor, seen internationally as a leader: an ethical, progressive country prepared to do its bit to reduce its own emissions and, importantly, to help developing nations reduce theirs. We know that, of the $650 million to be slashed from Australia's overseas development aid projects, $250 million of it will be taken from countries...
in our own region. Many of the projects Australia has been funding in those countries—our near neighbours—were helping those nations to tackle the problem of climate change. We used to be a leader in that field too, but we are not anymore.

Sadly, Australia is gaining international notoriety for all the wrong reasons. For example, the legislation before us today was highlighted by the GLOBE Climate Legislation Study last month and subsequently made international headlines. That study examined legislative action in 66 countries, with the European Union considered as one entity, and included major nations such as the US, China, India and Brazil—countries that account for almost 90 per cent of global greenhouse emissions.

The study found that Australia is the only country currently pursuing negative legislative action in the area of climate-change policy. While demonstrating that the rest of the world knows meaningful progressive action on climate change is required immediately, the GLOBE study categorically shows that Australia is the one nation that has engaged the reverse gear and is heading backwards. Of the 587 climate laws across those nations the study examined, Australia is the only one that is back-peddling on its legislation. This led the GLOBE chairman and former Conservative Thatcher government minister Lord Deben to criticise Australia's actions. He said:

'Australia is very disappointing …'

He described the actions of the Abbott government as a reversal, adding that, for Australia to begin to repeal climate measures following its hottest year on record was:

'… so unintellectual as to be unacceptable; I mean it is just amazing.'

Unintellectual and unacceptable pretty much sums up the Abbott government's attitude towards climate policy. I am not altogether sure it is amazing; I think it is more predictable—just as it is predictable and stupid that this government continues to blame the carbon tax for every one of its own failures to protect the future of Australians. It has become a farce. It is the stuff of comedy now on our televisions and it is embarrassing. I am waiting for the carbon tax, Mr Acting Deputy President Gallacher, to be blamed for Carlton's loss to Port Adelaide last night!

When it comes to blaming the carbon tax, and the mantra that the carbon tax is to blame for everything, it is not funny when it comes to jobs. Every time there is a job loss—and tragically there have been plenty under this government—the carbon tax gets the blame. Even when companies themselves deny the fact, even when it is patently untrue that the carbon tax is the sole or major contributing factor, there is no attempt by the government to apply intellectual rigour to understand the underlying economic considerations that are causing companies in Australia to fail or to shed jobs. There is no coherent government plan to work out how to save jobs or, more importantly, to create new jobs. Indeed, as we can see from the various repeal bills being considered by the Senate, instead of supporting companies and projects that could create modern, new jobs in the clean-technology sector the government is undoing the mechanisms that could do that.

As I have said before in this place, while hell-bent on undoing Labor's progressive, efficient and internationally regarded transition to an emissions trading scheme, the Abbott government maintains a policy fig leaf to cover its embarrassing and indefensible exposure on climate policy. That fig leaf is the government's so-called Direct Action Plan, which has at its
core a $1.55 billion emissions reduction fund. It is currently subject to a green paper but it is also subject to some entertaining and disturbing examination by the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee, which is currently undertaking an inquiry into the Direct Action Plan.

The fact that the government still has not settled the details of the Direct Action Plan indicates that this is a policy in trouble. It was announced before the election, and here we are a good six months after the election and we still do not know what the cuts are of the Direct Action Plan. That is because it was in trouble the day it was cobbled together by a desperate then shadow environment minister, Mr Greg Hunt, and it is still in trouble—and the now environment minister is still in trouble.

The mad haste with which this repeal legislation we are debating was introduced into the parliament, before their Direct Action Plan was finalised, has created great uncertainty and the potential for a policy void. Indeed, last year, as part of the inquiry into these bills, the Waste Management Association of Australia made the point:
Seeking to repeal the existing carbon legislation prior to Direct Action being implemented, or known with greater certainty, risks a period of great uncertainty between repeal and Direct Action.
That uncertainty continues, as evidenced in the Senate inquiry currently afoot. That evidence also points to the huge problems and flaws in a scheme like Direct Action that operates on the basis of paying companies for abatement—abatement that is both hard to measure and hard to prove as being caused by the initiative for which the company is being rewarded and for which the taxpayer is paying.

For example, the Energy Supply Association of Australia—hardly a fan of the ETS—indicated, in its submission to the Senate inquiry, that it is worried about the measurement of abatement and the detail of what happens after 2020 when, apparently, funding to the Emissions Reduction Fund ceases. The association said in its submission to the Senate inquiry:
It is crucial that the design of the ERF ensures that payments are only made for genuine incremental abatement that has been measured, reported and verified.
The association also said:
The development of the ERF requires clarity of the management of longer term proposals where benefits and payments would be required beyond 2020 to be viable.
Other disturbing evidence from the Senate inquiry comes from the investment community, which pointed out that the government's rejection of the ETS and proposal of a half-baked, poorly formed Direct Action Plan is causing clean-energy investors to look elsewhere than Australia. Everyone knows that businesses need certainty about government legislation and regulation if they are going to invest. That is why, while they may not have liked it, at least industry accepted that an ETS was a long-term economically responsible way to change polluting behaviour.

The Senate inquiry heard from Mr Tim Buckley, from the US Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, who advised the Senate that Australia's clean-energy industry was regressing because of a lack of clarity on policy and that Australia is now missing out on hundreds of billions of dollars of investment in renewable and energy-efficiency technologies as well as missing out on the hundreds of thousands of new jobs being
created in this sector in China, Germany and America—jobs being created anywhere but Australia, which, as we know, urgently needs new jobs in new industries.

Again from the Senate inquiry into the Direct Action Plan, Professor Ross Garnaut, who is a real economist, made the point that many economists have made: the Direct Action Plan is potentially an economic disaster for Australia. The government has promised $1.55 billion to pay companies for abatement over three years. But, if Australia is to continue to strive to achieve the more ambitious emissions reduction targets that we should be committed to, that will cost a lot more—up to $4 billion or $5 billion per annum, according to Professor Garnaut. So where would that money come from, or is this government not serious about achieving emissions reductions and signing up to more comprehensive targets? Anyway, you have to ask, where is the initial $1.55 billion going to come from? This is not clear to us. It can only come from cuts to government spending in other areas.

Finally from the Senate inquiry, the Climate Institute noted in an answer to a question on notice:

FUNDAMENTAL, as it currently stands the ERF will not be an enduring climate policy for a number of reasons. It does not include broad-based limits on emissions, links to international markets and an explicit price on emissions, all of which are necessary to achieve emissions reductions at the required scale in the short and longer term.

With the Direct Action Plan's Emissions Reduction Fund scheduled to be established from 1 July 2014, businesses need to know exactly what is on the table and how much it will cost them to be part of it. The renewable energy industry needs to know what is going on so it can plan for the long term and attract investment before it all goes overseas to China and to other countries which are taking over from Australia's leading role in the renewable energy sector.

People, presumably those with land, need to know where the 20 million trees are to be planted, and communities need to know which towns and which schools under the Direct Action Plan are going to go solar? Australians want to know: will the Direct Action Plan really work or are we going to be forking out money to companies without knowing if the abatement they claim is real, ongoing and not the effect of some unrelated cause? What is going to happen in 2020 when the Emissions Reduction Fund winds up? Where is the green army going to be marching to, who is going to be dragooned into it and what are they going to be doing? Where are the answers to these questions? What is Australia's position going to be in the 2015 international negotiations to set new emissions reduction targets for 2030? Are we still really committed to achieving our existing emissions targets or not? Presumably these questions will be answered in the government's white paper, which is due any minute now, I understand, but somehow I doubt that any satisfactory answers will be provided in that paper.

Unlike the Direct Action Plan, emissions trading schemes have been trialled and implemented in a number of other countries around the world. Australia is one of 35 countries that already have national emissions trading schemes covering a total population of more than 560 million. There is no other country in the world that relies on a grants tendering scheme like the coalition's Emissions Reduction Fund as its primary policy to reduce emissions. It is not surprising that no other country is relying on a policy thought bubble like the Direct Action Plan to achieve emissions reduction targets.

Australia is a large emitter of carbon dioxide and one of the largest polluters per capita globally. We really need a scheme that will absolutely and conclusively reduce our levels of
pollution. Instead, the government's alternative will rely on a fundamentally flawed methodology, because it is impossible to know whether emissions reductions are truly additional or if they would have happened anyway. No amount of rigorous policy design can fix that problem. We need an effective and efficient way of dealing with climate change, and the only way to do that is through an emissions trading scheme. The ETS does have widespread support. As has been mentioned in other contributions in this place, many other countries are already proceeding well down the path of an emissions trading scheme, and Australia should be doing the same thing.

In conclusion, I share the views of my opposition leader, Bill Shorten, who in his speech about why these bills should be defeated said:

We can look our children in the face and say, 'When we had the chance to do something, we did.'

I want to look at my grandchildren and say that too because, if we do not do something now to stop this damaging climate change, the task will be all that much harder for them, and the damage that they have to cope with will be all that much worse.

Senator FURNER (Queensland) (12:20): I rise this afternoon to make a contribution in opposition to the Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 and related bills. Reflecting on my involvement with this subject in my term in the Senate—over 5½ years now—it is a matter I have been involved in with several committee inquiries, one being the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme inquiry, the climate change inquiry and other related examinations of this subject.

It is a fact that Labor have always been clear on our position on climate change. We accept the science. We accept the fact that climate change is real and we need to do something about it. Conversely, Mr Tony Abbott believes the contrary. Mr Tony Abbott's policy removes the legal cap on pollution and allows the big polluters open slather. Instead of polluters paying, Mr Abbott is setting up a fund of billions of taxpayer dollars to hand to polluters. Experts agree that this will cost householders, with more failing to cut pollution. We want to tackle climate change in the most cost-effective way possible. That is why we support terminating the carbon tax if it is replaced by an emissions trading scheme that puts a legal cap on carbon pollution and lets business work out the cheapest and most effective way to operate within that cap.

Last year the OECD released a report confirming that countries could achieve higher levels of emissions reductions at much lower cost if they relied on this type of scheme. Emissions trading schemes have already been adopted in many countries, as we have heard in contributions from many senators here, including the UK, France, Germany, South Korea, Canada, China, the US and so on.

Australia's backtracking on climate change progression was highlighted by the release of a global climatic study in February 2013. The study of 66 countries across the globe found Australia is the only country taking negative legislative action on climate change. The study covers major nations, including the US, China, India, Brazil and more. In fact, I noticed that Lord Deben, head of the UK Committee on Climate Change—a Tory politician as well—slammed the Abbott government's push to pull back climate change policy. He said:

It lets down the whole British tradition that a country should have become so selfish about this issue that it's prepared to spoil the efforts of others and to foil what very much less rich countries are doing...
We know that is a matter that needs to be resolved. It is interesting that that sort of comment is coming from the Tory government in the UK.

We know that the Liberals and the National Party do not accept the science on climate change. In fact, last year we heard the previous Prime Minister, John Howard, telling a London audience that those who accept climate change is real are a bunch of religious zealots and that he would trust his instinct rather than the overwhelming evidence of 97 per cent of the world's climate scientists. Mr Abbott accused the United Nations climate chief of talking through her hat, while Greg Hunt used Wikipedia to contradict her opinion in a BBC interview.

Mr Tony Abbott and the coalition have not been able to come up with one credible scientist or economist who is willing to stand up and back their climate change policy. I refer to one of the committees in which I was involved in 2009 which reported on the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. There are a number of concluding parts in that report that demonstrate the need to act on climate change. I will touch on a couple of those. Firstly, in the conclusion of that report, in chapter 6, on the global challenge for climate change, the committee believed that the world should act to limit the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and indicated that it is not an article of faith; it is a matter of prudent risk management. The earth is warming and, if no action is taken, the overwhelming majority of expert scientific opinion holds that average temperatures will rise further, almost certainly leading to further changes in the global climate, with severe consequences for humanity and terminal consequences for many other species.

I have been fortunate enough along the passage of my term to meet with many people from the Pacific rim on concerns about the rise in sea levels around some of the micro-islands that they reside on in the Pacific. They spoke about sea level rises already having an impact on their communities, and no doubt there is concern about humanitarian aid and refugees coming from those particular areas of the Pacific as a result of climate change and rising sea levels. Furthermore, in this report the committee saw no reason to question the judgement of scientists from the world's leading countries on this matter. It notes that none of the witnesses who appeared before the committee, even those most critical of the CPRS, argued that the science was wrong. Here you see relevant and credible scientists appearing before a parliamentary committee providing evidence that is real, justifiable and easily demonstrated.

The Stern review—one of the interesting pieces of evidence that the committee dealt with—dealt with the economy. Earlier senators spoke about this particular area. The report indicated:

Using the results from formal economic models, the Review estimates that if we don’t act, the overall costs and risks of climate change will be equivalent to losing at least 5% of global … (GDP) each year, now and forever. If a wider range of risks and impacts is taken into account, the estimates of damage could rise to 20% of GDP or more.

In contrast, the costs of action—reducing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change—can be limited to around 1% of global GDP each year.

Not only did we have scientists but we had economists appearing before that inquiry demonstrating real concerns about inaction on climate change. On the implications of not passing the CPRS, the report indicated:
Delaying action is not economically responsible. Rather, delaying action will have a range of negative effects on the Australian economy, including deterring investment decisions and delaying business planning decisions where the price of carbon is a feature of those decisions.

If my memory serves me correctly, a whole range of renewable energy people appeared before the committee on that inquiry—speaking on wave technology, wind technology and solar technology—and indicated that we were at the cusp of being at the forefront of introducing those sorts of technologies in our economy and communities to make sure that this country is the leading force in making renewable energy possible. However, we are going to lose it overseas to the likes of China, India and all the other developing countries if we do not act on it.

The dangers of uncertainty for business were clearly identified in the report. The submission to the committee from the Australian Bankers Association indicated:

Climate change has considerable economic, social, environmental and business risks. Continuing uncertainty is disrupting the efficiency of existing markets as well as creating difficulties with regards to financing terms and investment decisions. Australia needs leadership and early action to provide business, investment, operational and market certainty. It is important for Australia to take action now and minimise the impacts of uncertainty …

That was clearly highlighted throughout the inquiry and, essentially, that is why the committee made the decision to recommend the Senate pass those bills. History can demonstrate this, and it is in the *Hansard* on the third reading of those bills. It was an unfortunate circumstance. I was in the Senate during that term in government and saw firsthand the coalition and the Greens voting against the introduction of climate change legislation.

I should not reflect on all the coalition, because Senator Troeth, a Liberal senator from Victoria at the time, and Senator Boyce, a Liberal senator from Queensland, crossed the floor to vote with the Labor government, hoping to achieve the introduction of those bills. But—lo and behold—the Greens teamed up with the rest of the coalition, opposing the introduction of those particular bills. We would be in a better position today if we had an ETS in place and a scheme dealing with climate change.

I will also reflect on the recent position of economists. A recent survey showed that 86 per cent of economists back an emissions trading scheme as the cheapest and most effective way to tackle carbon pollution. Even the former Secretary of Treasury, Ken Henry, called the coalition's policy a 'bizarre' strategy which involves the government paying big polluters in a scheme that will cost more and will reduce productivity.

The Bureau of Meteorology has confirmed in 2013 Australia recorded its hottest year on record. The CSIRO and BOM have released their biennial climate report. It confirms Australia's hottest temperature has risen by one degree Celsius since 1910. I want to go to that report for a little while. It certainly maps a concerning future for our climate as a result of inaction if we do not tackle this issue. It says:

- Australia's mean surface air temperature has warmed by 0.9°C since 1910.
- Seven of the ten warmest years on record have occurred since 1998.
- Over the past 15 years, the frequency of very warm months has increased five-fold and the frequency of very cool months has declined by around a third, compared to 1951-1980.
Sea-surface temperatures in the Australian region have warmed by 0.9°C since 1900. There are concerns in respect of increases in temperature and identified increases in extreme weather patterns, such as fire.

I want to get to this point as it regards the ocean. The report also indicates that:

- The Earth is gaining heat, most of which is going into the oceans.
- Global-mean sea level … increased throughout the 20th century and in 2012 was 225 mm higher than in 1880.

Rates of sea-level rise vary around the Australian region, with higher sea-level rise observed in the north and rates similar to the global average observed in the south and east.

Coming from Queensland myself, I recently had the opportunity to go north and have a look around Cairns, as I do on a regular basis, and up the eastern seaboard to see the manner in which the Great Barrier Reef is dealing with these particular challenges. It is not just about climate change; it is also about extreme weather events, declining water quality, coastal development, overfishing and depletion of marine species. The Great Barrier Reef is one of the seven wonders of the world. It is a main attraction not just for other Australians but also for people from around the world. You only need to travel up there to see the number of tourists in this day and age. We are seeing a lot of Chinese come into the country to go out on the reef.

In fact, over 12 months ago I had the fortune to spend a little bit of time in the Whitsundays and go out on the outer reef to do a bit of snorkelling. It is great to see the situation as it stands out there on that amazing structure. While the Great Barrier Reef has shown some resilience in the past, the coastal zone is a highly contested landscape which is shared by many industries, including tourism, fishing, recreation, ports and shipping. The increase in all these activities combined with more extreme weather events, declining water quality, outbreaks of the crown-of-thorns starfish on the back of that, the potential for increased shipping accidents and port expansions means the GBR has at no stage been in a more vulnerable position. Not only Queenslanders but fellow Australians need to be mindful of that to make sure that we do not deplete and destroy a world phenomenon such as the GBR and make sure that it is viable. I do not want to see a situation like I have seen in other parts of the world where I have snorkelled on barren reefs that have been raped and pillaged as a result of climate change and other factors. There is nothing worse than snorkelling over a barren white block of coral as opposed to having a look at the beauty of the GBR and its environment as it stands up there at present.

Climate change is the most serious threat facing the reef. According to the GBR Marine Park Authority's Great Barrier Reef regional strategic assessment, climate change is likely to have far-reaching consequences for the region's environment. The report also highlights future climate change predictions which indicate: sea level rise; sea temperature increases; that the oceans will become more acidic; and severe extreme weather events. Effects of climate change also include coral bleaching, coral diseases, ocean acidification and more severe storms. Just last week there was the threat of three possible cyclones verging on the cape and its surrounds. Every time we have a cyclone rolling through it damages the reef. The more we
have these extreme weather patterns coming through the more we face problems associated with damage to the reef and the surrounding environment.

There has been a lot of debate from the coalition on how they will deal with this area. We have heard today about this green army that is coming through. I am sure, Acting Deputy President Gallacher, that you would be aware that just the other day there were some media reports about the green army being paid half the ordinary wage. That has to be a concern in itself, given that it is clearly a demonstration of what the coalition has in place for these people who are prepared to come out and protect the environment. Their wages and conditions are another example of what the coalition does when it comes around to industrial relations. It attacks those people who are less vulnerable and more marginal, wishing to pay them half the ordinary wage rate. That would equate to somewhere around about $8.50 an hour. Can you imagine people going out into our environment and planting trees and being paid that sort of amount of pay?

But notwithstanding that particular issue, if history demonstrates itself, some of the coalition people—not necessarily in this chamber, but the other one—have indicated a proposal such as Dr Jensen's for some sort of shade cloth to be shot into orbit in outer space as a way to fight global warming.

Senator Sterle: No, you are making it up!

Senator FURNER: No, this is true! He went on further to say that as a plan he had to be convinced about it, but this is his belief. When I heard about this, I thought this could not be the Dr Jensen that I know—and certainly not George Jetson or his boy, Elroy—but it is certainly Dr Jensen claiming that the best way to tackle climate change and protect the reef is to shoot these sunshades into orbit.

The US did some estimates based on how much this would cost, if it were possible, and the estimates have come back that it would cost $200 trillion dollars to make that come about. It is just another example of how those sceptics and the climate sceptics opposite us would deal with this particular issue of climate change. Something that we would watch on The Jetsons is the way they deal with those particular matters!

Returning to what is the future: it alarms me, as a grandfather—particularly as my granddaughter lives up there in Cairns and, hopefully, within a week I will be the proud grandfather of a new grandson.

Senator Mason: Hear, hear!

Senator FURNER: Thanks, Senator Mason. It concerns me that my granddaughter, Xavia, and my grandson, who will be named Marley, will be the beneficiaries of something that we do not know about currently. It is something that we take for granted at times when we travel to Northern Queensland and have the opportunity to go out on the Great Barrier Reef and do a bit of snorkelling, or spend some time up in the hinterland and see the dynamics and the environment as it stands. It is such a beautiful place to travel, and it will not be left to our next generations—whether it be our children or whether it be our grandchildren. They will be the ones to miss out on having the opportunity to have a clean environment. That is one of the main reasons why I oppose these bills before the chamber today.

Senator STERLE (Western Australia) (12:40): I too rise to speak in opposition to the Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 and related bills in front of us.
Before I do; I have listened intently to a number of speeches, but I reckon Senator Furner made that bit up about Dr Jensen from WA wanting to shoot shadecloth out into the atmosphere! Anyway, it got our attention. But then again, knowing Dr Jensen, anything is possible!

I just think I am simply at a loss to understand as to why on that side there is absolutely no consensus on the science behind climate change and a path forward for the future of our environment and our planet. Each speech that has been given by an opposition senator has quoted fact, has used scientific commentary and opinion, and has made reference to raw data that has been produced to show how much impact organisations like the Clean Energy Finance Corporation have had on the environment and the economy. I think that is great.

I am sure that government senators have been listening to what we on this side have been saying. Despite this and despite the information that many of us have used—which is readily available to them, as they only have to click on the internet—the coalition blatantly refuses to acknowledge, or even try to understand—or pretend to understand—that the systems that we put in place in government help the environment. They are working. The Clean Energy Finance Corporation is in the black. It is on track to cover all of its operational costs and it is reducing emissions by co-investing with businesses and industry groups to harness the use of renewable technologies, all while making a significant return to the government.

Now, the coalition and Mr Abbott talk about how they have a plan for direct action. Well, guys, I do not think you can could have action much more direct than this if you tried. This is the problem that we now have with this government. We have an organisation that is not only achieving great results for the renewable energy community but is also putting Australia in a strong position for a low-carbon world. What did the government want to do? They wanted to get rid of it. We ask, 'Why?' It is because they refuse to acknowledge that climate change exists and they refuse to see that the CEFC is achieving results that mitigate the effects of climate change through investing in renewable energy technology.

There is one government senator, however, who has seen the light. After the Senate committee hearing where the chair of the CEFC—Ms Broadbent—appealed to the government to keep the CEFC, Senator Sinodinos said that he was, and I quote:

…happy to go through the CEFC's annual report and have another look.

That was recorded in the Sydney Morning Herald on 5 December 2013. Why would this be? It would not perhaps be because Senator Sinodinos has acknowledged that it would be in the country's best interest to keep the CEFC, would it? Rather than denying truth and fact like the coalition normally does when it comes to all things climate change, has Senator Sinodinos acknowledged that it would cause more harm than good to abolish the CEFC?

Senator Sinodinos' admission is a clear indicator that proves he did not know enough about the CEFC to make a legitimate comment on the matter. This highlights, unfortunately, the sheer arrogance of the coalition, in that they will stand and vote against something that they have not even made the effort of trying to understand. At the end of the day, they will completely ignore industry advice, science advice and opinion, and raw data on the environment to suit their own ideological goals.

Mr Abbott, just because you choose to remove a price on carbon and try to axe organisations like the CEFC and the Climate Change Authority does not mean that the issues
of global warming and climate change are going to go away. The *Illawarra Mercury* reported on 30 October that the belief of hundreds of scientists from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has been reaffirmed, and that they are confident that greenhouse gas emissions have the potential to be extremely damaging and long-lasting. Yet under Prime Minister Abbott, Australia will become the first country to repeal legislation that requires big business to pay for the pollution that they emit. As Australians we should be ashamed of the behaviour of our representatives in government. They have taken Australia from being a leading global innovator in emissions trading to being an international pariah. Mr Abbott will be known as the Prime Minister who denied the science—and in doing so, he is at risk of denying our children, and their children, a safe and secure future. This is the legacy that he will leave behind for future generations; unfortunately, it will be for them to clean up.

I have quite enjoyed listening to some of the government senators during this debate. First up, I would like to make mention of the contribution to this debate—

*Senator Mason interjecting—*

**Senator STERLE:** No; there is a hook in the tail—through you, Mr Acting Deputy President, I was waiting for someone to pop up: congratulations, Senator Mason! No, I was in fact talking about Senator Abetz.

Senator Abetz could not understand why we wanted to separate the bills. My response to Senator Abetz would be: it is so that we could debate the need to keep important organisations like the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Climate Change Authority. If the government had its way, legislation would be rammed through the Senate without considering or debating the costs of abolishing the organisations established by the original legislation, namely the CEFC and the Climate Change Authority. This was deliberate on the government's part. They did not want the Australian people to know that the abolition of this tax will also mean the unnecessary removal of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Climate Change Authority.

Senator Abetz went on to say that if we get rid of the carbon tax then there is no need for the Climate Change Authority. Now that is a stupid thing to say; to think that just because you get rid of the carbon tax, the advice provided by the Climate Change Authority—especially on emissions targets and carbon budgets—will not be needed. It says a lot about the coalition's commitment to the future of our environment. To say that Senator Abetz was misleading during his contribution would be an understatement. He said, 'The principal role of the authority is to provide advice concerning the ongoing operation of the carbon tax.' That was recorded in the Senate *Hansard* of Monday 2 December. Therefore, he suggests, if the tax goes, so should the Climate Change Authority. Senator Abetz obviously shares Mr Abbott's belief that once they—that mob over there—get rid of the carbon tax, the issues of global warming and climate change will just go with it. I think that those on that side are in for a very rude awakening. If Senator Abetz was honest with the Australian people, he would tell them that the Climate Change Authority does more than just advise on carbon pricing. According to its website, the Climate Change Authority is responsible for much, much more, including: reporting on and providing advice on Australia's emissions, reduction targets, carbon budgets and progress towards meeting Australia's medium- and long-term emissions reduction targets; the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System; the Carbon Farming Initiative; and the Renewable Energy Target. If the authority is abolished, where
does the government expect to get this advice from? Well, I suppose if Wikipedia has worked for them in the past, it will work them in the future!

Senator Macdonald—another senator from the government side—actually gave me a bit of a laugh during his contribution—and it was not a funny laugh; it was a pretty sad laugh—when he likened the whole climate change debate to the Y2K phenomenon. For someone who has said that he believes that the climate is changing—and thank you for that revelation, Senator Macdonald—to then label this whole debate on the environment as being similar to the hysteria caused by the theory that a global computer crash would lead to the end of the world is childish, immature and completely counterproductive; his words, not mine. I had to scratch my head at several intervals during Senator Macdonald's speech, all the more so when he said this:

I have always said the climate is changing. Clearly it is. Australia used to be covered in ice once. The centre of Australia used to be a rainforest. Clearly the climate is changing. Is it man's emissions that have done it? I do not know; I am not a scientist. But I say again that there are a great number of reputable scientists who doubt it. I acknowledge there are a great number of reputable scientists who are absolutely passionate about the argument, but I might say I am not convinced. But I do accept the climate is changing.

That was recorded in the Senate Hansard of Monday, 9 December 2013. So what does that mean? Senator Macdonald believes that the climate is changing. He chooses to listen to the great number of scientists who doubt that climate change is man-made, but he acknowledges that there is an equally large number of scientists who believe that it is man-made. How hard is it to make the connection? Maybe I can make it easier for the senator: if we look at scientific papers published between 1991 and 2001, no less than 97 per cent of them argued that humans contribute to global warming. If that is not conclusive evidence, I do not know what is. He also admits that he is not a scientist. Well hello, Captain Obvious. This is why we on this side of the House listen to the science. That is why we do not listen to people like Senator Macdonald. As none of those opposite are scientists, and as none of them accept the science, how can they have a legitimate opinion on the science behind climate change? In stark contrast to the government, we listen to the people who have spent years studying the climate and the science behind how it works, so that our policies relating to the environment are the absolute best that they can be.

Senator Macdonald then goes on to say that no-one has ever explained to him why Australia should lead the way when it comes to cutting emissions. Senator Macdonald must not have been listening to his former colleague and Prime Minister, Mr Howard, when before the 2007 election at the National Press Club, he had this to say:

Being among the first movers on carbon trading in this region will bring new opportunities and we intend to grasp them. The Government will examine how to ensure that Australia becomes a carbon trading hub in the Asia-Pacific region. Of course, an emissions trading scheme is only one part of a comprehensive long-term climate change policy framework. Low-carbon technologies remain the key to an effective response that minimises the costs of limiting emissions.

That was Mr John Howard and it was an address at National Press Club on 17 July 2007.

We obviously found out later that Mr Howard had no belief in climate change whatsoever and only acted on this because he believed that it was in the best interests of getting himself re-elected. Similarly to Mr Howard, the Labor government recognised that we needed to act on climate change and, in doing so, could open ourselves to overseas engagement, especially
with regard to exchanges in the renewable energy sector. Just because the senator and the
majority of the coalition think that no-one else is, or was, doing anything towards climate
change does not mean that we should sit back on our backsides and wait for it all to blow
over—which is how the coalition would have it.

On the contrary, while we are abandoning our emissions reductions efforts, our partners in
the region, namely, the United States and China, are increasing their efforts to cut their
emissions. This month, the OECD released a report confirming that countries could achieve
higher levels of emissions reductions at much lower cost if they relied on an emissions trading
scheme. Emissions trading schemes are already being adopted in many countries around the
world, including the UK, France, Germany, South Korea, Canada and, of course, parts of the
US and China. This discounts Senator Macdonald's comments about Australia going at
climate change alone and, if anything, the removal of a price on carbon without having an
emissions trading scheme, that Australia not acting on climate change will make a difference
on a global scale.

When he was Prime Minister, John Howard outlined as Liberal Party policy that he wanted
Australia to be seen as instrumental in creating and participating in a carbon-trading hub in
the Asia Pacific to work together as a region to reduce carbon emissions. Now we have a
Prime Minister who is reducing our efforts completely by shutting down organisations that
are making positive differences to our economy and, most importantly, to our environment.
The government is making a mockery of the Australian people here. The coalition does not
care. They think they can say anything in this debate and about climate change and that it will
go unnoticed. They think that giving grants to businesses who sign up to their emissions
reduction fund to encourage the use of renewable technology and the planting of trees at the
cost of the CEFC will meet the emissions reduction target of five per cent by 2020. The
government is yet to provide any information on what assistance will be provided to those
businesses and industry groups who have gone into co-financing relationships with the CEFC.
What will happen to these workers, their families and their projects once these measures have
been removed? The government is going to make the people of Australia wait until the end of
the year before they release their green paper on their policy.

Now I never thought that I would quote Senator Bernardi, but—and I must apologise—I
am going to quote Senator Bernardi. I came across a paper that he wrote in April of 2007,
titled 'Cool Heads Needed on Climate Change'. Despite the fact that he is openly a climate
change denier, he had some pretty interesting things to say which I think should be included
in the debate. He said:
The public needs to know where the propaganda ends and the reality begins.

I would suggest that Senator Bernardi and the coalition take a leaf out of his book. The
Australian people deserve more than the spin and the scare tactics from the government on
this issue and, more importantly, they should be informed of the reality of the government's
environmental policy platform and how it will affect them. He continues:
In reality, a genuine concern for mankind and the environment demands the inquiry, accuracy and
scepticism that are intrinsic to authentic science. A public that is unaware of this is vulnerable to abuse.
So one minute the coalition do not believe in the science behind climate change, then we see
that Senator Bernardi more or less labels the science that we on this side have accepted as not
authentic. From this statement we clearly see that the coalition know that there is science there, but they choose to ignore it. He said that a public which does not know about the information and the science behind climate change is vulnerable to abuse. By not accepting the science and trying to shut down organisations that provide people with information about combating climate change, the coalition is doing exactly that to the public, which he warned against.

The coalition would much rather no-one be informed about the issues which stem from not acting on climate change in the hope that if no-one talks about it, perhaps the issue will go away. The only thing that we do know for sure is that rather than listening to scientists, economists and leading business people about the importance of carbon pricing, that mob over there choose to develop a plan that would see an area the size of Tasmania planted with trees—hello, that was good timing, Senator Urquhart from Tasmania! That is their idea of direct action.

And of course we cannot let the actions of those concrete gnomes in the rockery over there, the Greens, go unnoticed in this whole debate. They carry the issue of climate change and global warming like it is their Holy Grail—like they are the only ones who can handle it or shape its path. If they really, truly, honestly believed that, they would have backed us in the debate about the emissions trading scheme in 2009 and not sided with their mates on the other side in trying to outdo each other for the political headline. That is exactly what they did. They can thank themselves for the position that we now find ourselves in. It is all well and good for the Greens to get up and talk about how much time has been wasted on these debates, but they are as guilty as anyone. In conclusion, Mr Acting Deputy President, I think that you can take it that there is no way that I will be supporting this bill or the related bills.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (12:59): That was an outstanding contribution from my colleague Senator Sterle to the debate on the Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 and associated bills.

Today I rise as a senator from South Australia and, as such, I represent a state already bearing the brunt of climate change. South Australia's heatwaves this past summer made national and international headlines. In January, Adelaide experienced five days in a row with temperatures above 42 degrees Celsius. During that particular heatwave the mercury peaked at 45.1 degrees, just over 113 degrees on the old Fahrenheit scale.

Climatic conditions such as temperature are subject to natural variability. But beneath the natural variability there has clearly been a rising incidence of heatwaves in my home state. Between 1950 and 1980 Adelaide recorded an average of five days a year with heatwave conditions. By contrast, between 1981 and 2011, the number of heatwave days, on average, rose to nine days a year. That is almost double the number in the previous three decades.

There are those who argue that extreme weather like this is all due to normal variations in weather conditions. It is not. It is part of—

Senator Back interjecting—

Senator WONG: I will take the interjection from Senator Back—yes, it is. He knows more than all the scientists at the Bureau of Meteorology and the CSIRO. Scientists around the world should bow at the feet of Senator Back, because he knows better! That is the problem with the government. They simply want to disregard the scientific findings, the
findings of fact by good scientists, who have no political barrow to push but who want politicians to make the right decisions based on scientific facts.

There are those, like those opposite, who argue that extreme weather is all due to normal variations in weather conditions and part of a trend which cannot be explained by natural variability. I refer to the *State of the climate 2014* report, produced by the CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology, released earlier this month:

Air and ocean temperatures across Australia are now, on average, almost a degree … warmer than they were in 1910, with most of the warming occurring since 1950. This warming has seen Australia experiencing more warm weather and extreme heat, and fewer cool extremes. There has been an increase in extreme fire weather, and a longer fire season, across large parts of Australia.

I have also heard some of those opposite suggest that the extreme cold weather experienced in this year’s northern winter shows that climate change is not occurring. On the one hand, they argue that it is all natural variability and then, on the other hand, they try to argue that natural variability itself demonstrates something different to the long-term trend. The reality is this: scientists tell us that in recent decades near-record high temperatures have been occurring twice as often as near-record lows.

New records will be set for cold weather and will continue to be set. We will still have cold weather, but the trend of global warming will make record high temperatures increasingly common and record low temperatures increasingly rare. Of course, what is glossed over in all of this is the cost—the cost to our community, economy, health and us personally. People in South Australia are already being adversely affected by climate change and, if this challenge is not tackled, these impacts will become more severe. In particular, vulnerable elderly people will face health risks from heatwaves; farmers will experience declining rainfall and more frequent droughts; our wine industry will face more challenging conditions for grape growing; and of course the state’s water supply infrastructure will come under great pressure.

Like all parents—and, I hope, all of us in this place—I think we should try to leave this world a better place for future generations. What is so upsetting about the approach taken by those opposite is that they are determined to ensure that our children and our grandchildren be the ones who will bear the consequences of climate change, because it is future generations who will bear the consequences of our decisions. The scientific evidence is clear: the world is on a path which will see substantial increases in temperatures by the middle of this century. Those higher temperatures will have significant environmental, economic, social and human impacts. To reduce these risks, the world needs to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases being emitted into the atmosphere from activities such as burning coal, oil and gas; industrial processes; and deforestation. It is a big challenge. But it is not a challenge which can continue to be kicked down the road for someone else to deal with.

This is an issue of fairness across generations. Interestingly, those opposite want to talk about intergenerational equity when it comes to public finance and national debt. Instead of invoking intergenerational equity to justify cuts for those who can least afford it, perhaps they should instead recognise that time is running out for tackling climate change for future generations. If we continue to refuse to take action what we will bequeath to our children is a world of rising temperatures; higher sea levels; acidified oceans; salinity and land degradation; and more frequent extreme weather events.
Our nation faces acute risks, including the loss of natural icons, such as the Great Barrier Reef; inundation of coastal property and infrastructure; and curtailment of agricultural production. It is not too late to manage these risks, but it requires urgent global action.

Governments around the world have set the goal of limiting the average global temperature rise to less than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The science indicates that stabilising the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases at 450 parts per million gives us about a fifty-fifty chance of achieving that goal. To achieve just that requires substantial change across all countries, especially economies such as ours which rely heavily on burning fossil fuels to generate energy.

Those opposite will often argue that Australia cannot make a difference. It is a strange position for them to take because, in fact, the coalition have accepted the bipartisan target of reducing Australia's emissions by at least five per cent below 2000 levels by 2020. Australia is not going it alone in reducing emissions, and to say otherwise is a lie and should be called as such. Australia is one of 99 countries covering over 80 per cent of global emissions which have made formal pledges to the United Nations to reduce carbon pollution. We are also one of the largest per capita polluters in the world and one of the world's top 20 polluters in absolute terms. Our actions are globally significant and are watched closely by others. Free-riding is not an option.

The Abbott government's backtracking on climate change has been highlighted by the GLOBE Climate Legislation Study released in February—a study of 66 countries across the globe, including major emitters like the United States, the European Union, China, India and Brazil—and it found that we are the only country taking negative legislative action in climate policy. We need to play our part. We are a responsible global citizen. We are one of the world's largest emitters and we need to participate in the response.

As a member of the Labor Party, I am proud to have served in both the Rudd and Gillard governments, which acted on climate change. We are a party which has consistently placed long-term national interest ahead of short-term political interest on this difficult issue. In 1988, our commitment to tackle climate change was first included in our party platform. It was the Keating Labor government that ratified the United Nation's Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992, and it was the Rudd Labor government that ratified the Kyoto protocol in 2007. It was Labor which introduced legislation for the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme—legislation blocked in this chamber by an unfortunate alliance between the coalition and the Greens. It was Labor which adopted an enhanced renewable energy target to ensure 20 per cent of Australia's energy comes from renewable sources by 2020. It was Labor which introduced a carbon price into the Australian economy from 1 July 2012, together with important other measures, to drive the transformation of our economy.

The fact is that a carbon price is the most environmentally effective and most economically efficient way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It harnesses the power of market forces to ensure emissions are reduced at the lowest cost to our economy, the lowest cost to taxpayers and the lowest cost to Australian consumers. That is why carbon pricing is supported by so many, the vast majority of economists and by every living former Liberal Party leader—whether by Malcolm Fraser; by John Hewson; by John Howard; even at one point by the Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, before he performed a disgraceful about-face on the issue; and of course by Mr Turnbull.

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CHAMBER
The carbon price has been in place for more than 18 months and it has had none of the dire consequences that the Prime Minister predicted in his deceitful scare campaign. Who can forget Senator Barnaby Joyce telling everybody in this nation that they would have $100 roasts? Who can forget the Prime Minister suggesting that Whyalla would be wiped off the map? None of this has come to pass. These were all lies told by those opposite in an attempt to drum up a fear campaign and a scare campaign.

The carbon price is working to reduce emissions. Emissions from our national electricity market fell by almost 12 million tonnes in the first year of carbon pricing and are continuing to fall. Emissions from electricity generation are continuing to fall. Households and businesses are using electricity more efficiently, and the electricity being supplied from the national grid is cleaner, with a larger share coming from natural gas, hydro-electricity and wind power. The carbon price, the RET, and the clean energy reforms are working to drive investment. We have seen wind power capacity treble and more than a million households have installed solar panels. As I have spoken about previously, we have seen the work of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation leveraging some $2.2 billion worth of investment in the clean energy sector.

We oppose these bills because they take a major step backwards on climate change. They are a message to the future saying, 'Too bad, it's your problem now and we don't care.' The bills will scrap important reforms which were working to reduce our emissions and transform our economy. Can I say this: politics at its best is a noble calling, but I believe these bills are the example of the worst of politics. They are the end point in a sorry story of cynical opportunism and irresponsible extremism.

It is worth recalling that in 2006 there was bipartisan support in this country for putting a price on carbon. There was support from both Labor and coalition for an emissions trading scheme as the cheapest, most efficient, most effective way of reducing our pollution. Eight years on and look where we are. We have a coalition government which has executed a backflip on its support for carbon pricing. We have a government which is ignoring advice—in fact, dismissing advice—from scientists, misleading the public, rejecting market mechanisms and embracing economic irrationalism. During the debate on these bills, we have heard those on the government benches attack Labor for introducing carbon pricing. What they have never explained is how it is they went to an election in 2007 promising to introduce it. When I served as minister for climate change in the Rudd government, I sought agreement on the CPRS, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, from the then opposition. I did so because I believed that such an important and long-term, whole-of-economy reform should have bipartisan support, and that should have been achievable, given the Liberal Party went into the 2007 election promising an emissions trading scheme.

I pay tribute to the then opposition leader, Mr Turnbull, because he played a constructive role. We negotiated sensible compromises which secured bipartisan support for the scheme. But then came the 'wrecker from Warringah'. Mr Abbott supported carbon pricing as a member of the Howard government. All through 2009 he supported Mr Turnbull's efforts to reach agreement on the CPRS. In November 2009 he said, 'You can't have a climate change policy without supporting this emissions trading scheme at this time.' But just four days later, he dumped his support for carbon pricing in return for the backing of the Liberal Party's hard Right to take over as Liberal leader. If there were an Australian Tea Party, the hardliners...
which took down Mr Turnbull over climate change would be its leading figures—and many of them are in this chamber. Mr Abbott's acolytes claim he is a conviction politician. Well, he is such a man of conviction that the instant he saw the opportunity to take power he performed an about-face on carbon pricing, not for any reason of principle, not for any reason of policy, not for any reason—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Fawcett): Order! Senator Wong, I remind you that under standing order 193, imputation of improper motives is unparliamentary.

Senator WONG: I am happy to argue that the Leader of the Opposition, as he then was, performed an about-face on principle and on policy in order to secure votes inside the Liberal Party room. If you want to pull me up on that, Mr Acting Deputy President, please do, because it is the truth. It was one of the most cynical manoeuvres in Australian political history—a senior frontbencher betrayed his leader, reneged on a bipartisan agreement, reversed his party's longstanding policy on a critical issue and then conducted a deceitful scare campaign because he was after the country's top—

Government senators interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Wong, resume your seat. Order, senators on my right! Whilst you may disagree with Senator Wong, she has the right to be heard, under standing order 197.

Senator WONG: I was actually concluding on that point, but thank you for emphasising it, Mr Acting Deputy President, because I think history will demonstrate what occurred. Mr Abbott's position changed because he understood the numbers inside the coalition party room. Others in the Liberal Party have commented many times on Mr Abbott's changeable position on this issue.

I would also reflect on the role of the Australians Greens. The reason the Senate did not pass the CPRS in 2009 was that the Greens voted with the coalition to block the legislation. We saw two coalition senators cross the floor to vote with the Australian Labor Party. I believe this was an instance of the perfect being the enemy of the good, because, if we had passed the legislation on that occasion, carbon pricing would have started in 2011; it would have been, by now, entrenched. This did not happen, because those in the Australian Greens refused to support a sensible carbon pricing scheme which got the balance right. Two years later, they did vote in favour of the Labor government's Clean Energy Future package, but I would make this point: there were substantial similarities between the Clean Energy Future package and the CPRS. One of the reasons given by the Australian Greens for voting against the CPRS in 2009 was that it provided free permits to the emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries and to coal fired electricity generation; so too did the Clean Energy Future package. They voted against the CPRS in 2009 because they wanted larger emissions reduction targets, but in 2011 they voted in favour of the Clean Energy Future package, which did not meet their demands on targets. What was lost was the opportunity for Australia to build a consensus on climate change, to make carbon pricing a lasting reform and to give community and business the certainty which is needed in this area of policy.

I think the result of the decisions of many people in this chamber—and, in most part, the decision of the opposition to go down the path of a disgraceful scare campaign—has been
damage to community support for the principle of carbon pricing at key times. I think carbon pricing is an occasion where politicians should do the right thing not for short-term politics, not for political opportunism, but for the future generations of Australians.

In the time remaining for me to speak, I make two points. The government want to repeal carbon pricing before providing any details on how Direct Action will work. The reason they want to do that is that they know Direct Action will not work. It will not work. The repeal bills before the chamber will remove the caps on Australia's emissions, which are legislated under the Clean Energy Act, and what that will mean is that Direct Action has no way of ensuring Australia's emissions reduction targets are met and it will be less environmentally effective; and, rather than using the market to drive the cheapest cuts to emissions, the lowest cost to the economy, Direct Action will instead pay massive subsidies—taxpayer subsidies—to polluters. The age of entitlement has not ended when it comes to Australia's polluting industries. They are onto a whole new gravy train when it comes to entitlement, and that will cost taxpayers billions and billions of dollars. I refer to what former Treasury secretary Dr Ken Henry said last week:

If we are … going to commit to reducing Australia's carbon emissions below some business-as-usual baseline level … then tackling that issue through any mechanism other than an emissions trading scheme will necessarily be more damaging on the Australian economy—will necessarily be more damaging on the Australian economy. So those opposite, who claim they are the party of economic management, are introducing a policy that a well-respected former head of Treasury has said will necessarily inflict more damage on our economy, and they are doing so entirely for political reasons.

Labor are committed to tackling climate change in the most cost-effective way. We support moving from the fixed price on carbon to an emissions trading scheme from July this year—an emissions trading scheme that puts a cap on carbon pollution and lets business work out the cheapest way to reduce emissions. This is an important environmental reform, at the lowest cost to the economy, and is the policy we took to the last election. It is consistent with Labor policies on climate change for the last two decades and it reflects the fundamental values of the Australian Labor Party: our determination to protect the natural environment; our commitment to creating jobs and securing economic growth; and our pursuit of a fair society, including fairness across generations. For these reasons, Labor will seek to amend these bills in the committee stages and, if those amendments are not supported, we will oppose these bills.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS (Victoria) (13:20): In speaking on these 'clean energy' bills today, I commence with the stark contrast in the way Labor, as opposed to this government, is treating Australia's environment—a very stark contrast indeed. I want to put on record Labor's position on climate change, which, although it is well-known and will not come as a surprise to senators to hear, is that we accept, unlike many of those opposite—I will not say all—that the science surrounding climate change is compelling.

Let us just look at that basic issue for a moment. We accept the overwhelming view from the scientific community that climate change is happening. Over 97 per cent of published climate scientists agree that we need to do something about it, and the very difficult situation the Senate is in at the moment, as Senator Wong just highlighted, is that we have no idea what that something is. Indeed, we are progressing with these bills now, ahead of the Senate
inquiry into this vacant Direct Action policy. The point about climate science is lost as we have this debate in the Senate and the wider community. Many people, because of the scare campaign highlighted by Senator Wong and for other reasons, believe there is an equally divided position among the experts out there, and there is not.

Labor took action, while in government, to address climate change. We put together a suite of climate change policies specifically to address how we manage Australia's emissions. That is what this government is dismantling. We created the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, which is doing a remarkable job in financing clean energy projects around the country. During estimates, we heard that the Clean Energy Finance Corporation's projects would account for 50 per cent of the target of reducing emissions by five per cent by 2020—at no cost.

I note that the Climate Change Authority, headed by Bernie Fraser, a former governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, recently released the final version of its report, *Reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions*, which recommended that Australia increase its commitment to emission reductions—from five per cent to 15 per cent of 2000 levels by 2020. This makes the Clean Energy Finance Corporation's role in tackling climate change more important than ever. The government needs to provide a formal response to the Climate Change Authority's recommendations by May. It should make for interesting reading—how they intend to reach the target set out by the authority given the policy vacuum that currently exists.

Speaking of the Climate Change Authority, the government wanted to abolish this important independent authority too. The authority provides independent advice on climate change policies and by speaking with stakeholders and undertaking extensive research. There has been a concerted effort in recent times to present alternative arguments on climate change and sell them in the media as credible by claiming them to be from a significant number of experts. But this could not be further from the truth. The Climate Change Authority's approach is evidence based and fact based. It does not play the politics of fear and it does not play the politics of opportunism. Instead, it looks at the scientific and economic evidence available in order to come to conclusions and it makes recommendations to government and the parliament accordingly.

It is funny how the Conservative government in the UK are more in tune with climate change than their sister party in Australia, the Liberal Party. UK Prime Minister David Cameron said about climate change:

... I’m not a scientist but it’s always seemed to me one of the strongest arguments about climate change is, even if you’re only 90 per cent certain or 80 per cent certain or 70 per cent certain, if I said to you ‘There’s a 60 per cent chance your house might burn down; do you want to take out some insurance?’ You take out some insurance.

Boy, do we need insurance! But Prime Minister David Cameron and Prime Minister Tony Abbott are decades apart in their views on climate change.

Just last month, we saw the head of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, enter Australia's climate change debate. She said:

Australia was—
I stress 'was'—

very much at the forefront, Australia was pioneering in this field and I would hope that it continues to
be a pioneer. I do think that climate change issues and progress in that regard are critical and are not just
fantasies, they are real issues.

What is extraordinary about this statement is that it comes from the International Monetary
Fund, not generally regarded as progressing fantasies or radical views, and indeed from its
head, Christine Lagarde, who is known to be a conservative politician.

What we are seeing around the world is conservative governments and organisations
looking at the available climate change science and seeing for themselves that to do nothing
significant is no longer an option. I use the word 'significant' because there is a difference
between paying lip-service to the environment and the health of our environment, as this
coalition government has done, and actually implementing policies which change the
behaviour of polluters in the long run.

Under Labor, Australia's wind power capacity tripled and more than a million households
had solar panels installed. Do you know how many solar panels were installed under the
Howard government? Less than 7,500. Over 24,000 people are now employed in the
renewable energy sector. Labor more than doubled the size of the renewable energy industry
from what it was at the end of the Howard government. Let us hope this does not go
backwards—that these jobs do not follow the same path as jobs in some other major sectors.
As I said, Labor more than doubled the size of the renewable energy industry, a great example
of how Labor creates jobs and will fight for existing jobs. What we have so far seen from this
government is a lack of willingness to even save the jobs we have, let alone look at creating
new renewable energy sector jobs. There is no doubting that Labor takes climate change and
wider environmental concerns extremely seriously.

Another point we should remember is that Australia is surrounded by low-lying islands.
Pacific islands are at risk of being obliterated if we do not do something to save them. How
neighbourly are we as a country if we send the message to these countries that we just do not
care? The total amount of pollution Australia emits puts us in the top 20 and we are the largest
per capita polluter in the developed world. We cannot let the rest of the world continue to pass
us. China has already started emissions-trading schemes in regions covering 200 million
people.

Major world monetary organisations, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary
Fund and the OECD, have all stated their preference for a carbon-pricing system in countries
around the world. We are not talking about radical left-wing organisations here. These are
conservative organisations which organise the world's finances—and they have taken note
that to do nothing is not an option.

That brings me to the vacuous Direct Action Plan of the current government. It can be
described as a number of thought bubbles—from the Emissions Reduction Fund to the Green
Army—which have been thrown together. The Emissions Reduction Fund is using taxpayers'
money to pay Australian companies to reduce pollution. The problem is that independent
research has shown that the Emissions Reduction Fund will increase emissions by eight per
cent to 10 per cent above 2000 levels by 2020. I will repeat that: it will increase emissions by
eight per cent to 10 per cent. Many reports confirm that it simply will not achieve the
minimum targets for pollution reduction by 2020 and is likely to cost many billions of dollars
more than Tony Abbott has said. The Direct Action Plan has failed to attract any support from credible climate scientists or economists. The Direct Action Plan is inefficient and unfair. Labor is right to defend the climate change policies we introduced while in government or, if these bills are to proceed, to ask for a viable alternative.

In recent times, the coalition's views on climate change have publicly surfaced. We saw former Prime Minister John Howard tell an audience in London that those who accept that climate change is real are a bunch of religious zealots, and that he will trust his instinct rather than trust climate scientists. We saw Prime Minister Tony Abbott accuse the United Nations climate chief of 'talking through her hat'. And we saw Greg Hunt contradict the UN's climate chief's views using Wikipedia as his source—queried, indeed, as plagiarism. Let us remember that in a level of hypocrisy not seen for a long while the member for Sturt, Christopher Pyne, said the following in 2009 about an emissions trading scheme:

Let's not forget it was the Opposition that first proposed an emissions trading scheme when we were in government. The idea that somehow the Liberal Party is opposed to an emissions trading scheme is quite frankly ludicrous.

'Ludicrous,' said Christopher. Well, who looks ludicrous now! Now, I do not mind people changing their positions on issues where there is good cause, but the member for Sturt was so firm about his views. I wonder if he even voted for Tony Abbott when he challenged Malcolm Turnbull for the leadership back in December 2009. Was the change in leadership the reason for his monumental backflip?

At the 2007 election, both major political parties committed to an emissions trading scheme. It was accepted that something needed to be done and that the environment would not be used as a political football. But, my, how times have changed! The consensus that Senator Wong was referring to has been trashed, and it has been trashed by many—not all, but many—of those opposite. The old adage that prevention is better than cure is appropriate in this debate, I think. It will be cheaper in the long run to act now rather than later. The previous Labor government showed strong leadership by introducing climate change policies, and they were—and, indeed, are still—working. We will not rubber stamp this government, and we will hold them to account.

In concluding, I would like to foreshadow that, after Senator Di Natale's second reading amendment has been dealt with, I will move a second reading amendment to add to the end of the motion that the Senate calls on the government to recognise the scientific expert consensus regarding climate change and that the repeal of the carbon tax must be accompanied by the introduction of serious and comprehensive policies to address climate change.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (13:32): I would like to thank all those senators who have contributed to this extensive debate, which has been going for some months. Some people would even say that there has been a bit of a filibuster going on by people who still cannot accept that there was an election last year and that the Labor Party and the Greens lost and the coalition won. We have these election deniers over there who cannot get used to the fact that the Australian people have already debated the carbon tax imposed on them by the previous Labor government quite extensively over a very long time and that people decided on 7 September that they do not want Labor's carbon tax, they do not
want higher electricity prices which come with Labor's carbon tax. The government is delivering on the commitments that we made to the Australian people at the last election.

Passing this carbon tax repeal legislation will help reduce the cost of electricity. It will help reduce the cost of gas. It will help reduce the cost of living. It will help reduce the cost of doing business in Australia. It will help to boost economic growth. And it will help create jobs, because not only is Labor's carbon tax bad for the economy but it does nothing whatsoever to help reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. All it does is shift emissions from Australia to other parts of the world, because Labor's carbon tax is helping overseas emitters take market share away from environmentally more efficient businesses here in Australia.

It is a bad tax. It is a tax which is bad for the economy. It is bad for families. It is bad for business, and it does nothing to help the environment. It does nothing to help reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. It is a terrible hoax that the Australian Labor Party has played on the Australian people. The Labor Party wants to force people to make a sacrifice for something that they think will make a difference when the Labor Party well knows that the carbon tax does not make any difference at all, and it is low-income earners who are hit particularly hard by the carbon tax.

This bill and the associated bills will boost Australia's economic growth, increase jobs and enhance Australia's international competitiveness by removing an unnecessary tax which hurts businesses and families. We have to remember: Labor imposed this carbon tax on Australian families and business at the worst possible time. As a nation we were already facing some challenges which came from tougher global economic conditions. Instead of making sure that Australian business could be as competitive as possible, instead of making sure that Australian businesses were able to employ more people, what did the Labor Party do? The Labor Party imposed additional costs, making it harder for business to employ people while not doing anything to help the environment.

A US congressman quite aptly described Labor's carbon tax as an act of unilateral economic self-harm. If at least it made a difference, you could have an argument. But it does not make a difference. Arguably, it actually makes the situation worse. For example, if the intent truly were to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, we would have a conversation in Australia about how Australia can best help the world reduce those emissions. And guess what? It might well be that the best way we can help the world reduce emissions is by increasing emissions in Australia—for example, by producing more LNG which, when exported to China where it can displace coal as an energy source, would lead to significant net reductions in emissions. For every tonne of additional emissions from LNG production in Australia, we can save five to nine tonnes of emissions—that is, by displacing a high-emissions-intensive energy source with LNG.

The Labor Party completely ignored these realities. The Labor Party's carbon tax is making it harder for Australia to help the world reduce global greenhouse-gas emissions. The magnetite industry in the great state of Western Australia is emissions intensive, but it helps reduce emissions by so much through manufacturing in China. Magnetite as an input into steel production—if you look at the whole process, from the beginning to the end—helps reduce emissions by more than the additional emissions intensity here in Australia.
Of the top 20 carbon tax bills 16 have been sent to electricity companies, which shows that what we said all along was right: this is only an electricity tax. This is a tax paid by everyone. It is pushing up the cost of electricity for everyone. These electricity companies, which are being slugged by a total carbon tax bill of more than $3.5 billion, are passing those increased costs onto households and businesses. In New South Wales, Macquarie Generation and Delta Electricity are being slugged around $900 million. Victoria's power stations are being slugged over $1.3 billion. In Queensland, power stations are being slugged over $800 billion and in Western Australia the Electricity Generation Corporation is being slugged around $200 million. And it is increasing. Labor's electricity tax is then passed onto families, businesses, hospitals, schools, aged care facilities, local councils and sports and community organisations.

The government is committed to repealing the carbon tax and removing these costs from every Australian household's electricity bill. Treasury has estimated that repealing the carbon tax will lower retail electricity prices by around nine per cent and retail gas prices by around seven per cent compared to what they would have been with the carbon tax. Repealing the carbon tax will also help streamline business and administration costs. Repealing the carbon tax will reduce annual ongoing compliance costs for around 350 liable entities by around $90 million per annum. It will remove over 1,000 pages of primary and subordinate legislation. Lower costs of compliance will mean lower prices for businesses, which will mean lower prices for consumers.

The government is also abolishing the carbon tax because it does not actually work. It does not work because, at its heart, the carbon tax is an electricity tax. It relies upon the assumption that people will change their demand for electricity. The problem is that the demand for electricity is largely inelastic because it is an essential service. This means the carbon tax pushes up the cost of electricity without actually reducing emissions and, at best, it shifts emissions overseas. Production in Australia is now less competitive than in places like China that have not placed the same impost as the Labor Party's carbon tax. Competitors in other countries take market share away from us and take economic activity away from us. Jobs and emissions go overseas, where those emissions are arguably higher for the same amount of economic output than they are Australia. It just does not make sense.

Mindful of the time, these bills have been debated long enough. It would be good to put them to a vote before question time and, as such, I commend these bills to the Senate.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Ruston): The question is that the amendment moved by Senator Di Natale be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [13:46]

(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes .................... 9
Noes .................... 51
Majority ............... 42

AYES

Di Natale, R             Hanson-Young, SC
Ludlam, S               Milne, C
Rhiannon, L             Siewert, R (teller)
Waters, LJ              Whish-Wilson, PS
Wright, PL
I move the second reading amendment that I foreshadowed in my speech in the second reading debate:

At the end of the motion, add:

"but the Senate calls on the Government to recognise the scientific expert consensus regarding climate change and that the repeal of the carbon tax must be accompanied by the introduction of serious and comprehensive policies to address climate change."

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (13:50): I seek leave to make a short statement.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator MILNE: Of course everybody wants the scientific evidence base to be taken into account when dealing with climate policy. In the event that carbon pricing is repealed then of course there should be serious and comprehensive policy to address climate change. That is why this amendment is a bit of a nonsense. Everybody agrees with it.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the amendment moved by Senator Collins be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [13:54]

(The President—Senator Hogg)
Ayes ....................36
Noes ....................30
Majority .................6

AYES

Bilyk, CL  Bishop, TM
Cameron, DN  Carr, KJ
Collins, JMA  Conroy, SM
Dastyari, S  Di Natale, R
Farrell, D  Faulkner, J
Furner, ML  Gallagher, AM
Hanson-Young, SC  Hogg, JJ
Lines, S  Ladlam, S
Ludwig, JW  Lundy, KA
Marshall, GM  McEwen, A
Milne, C  Moore, CM
O’Neill, DM  Peris, N
Polley, H  Rhiannon, L
Siewert, R  Singh, LM
Sterle, G  Tillem, M
Urquhart, AE (teller)  Waters, LJ
Whish-Wilson, PS  Wong, P
Wright, PL  Xenophon, N

NOES

Abetz, E  Back, CJ (teller)
Bernardi, C  Boswell, RLD
Brandis, GH  Bushby, DC
Cash, MC  Colbeck, R
Cormann, M  Edwards, S
Eggleston, A  Fawcett, DJ
Fifield, MP  Johnston, D
Kroger, H  Macdonald, ID
Madigan, JJ  Mason, B
McKenzie, B  Nash, F
O’Sullivan, B  Payne, MA
Ronaldson, M  Ruston, A
Ryan, SM  Scullion, NG
Seselja, Z  Sinodinos, A
Smith, D  Williams, JR

PAIRS

Brown, CL  Boyce, SK
McLucas, J  Birmingham, SJ
Pratt, LC  Parry, S
Stephens, U  Fierravanti-Wells, C
Thorpe, LE  Heffernan, W

Question agreed to.

The PRESIDENT (13:57): The question now is that the bills be read a second time.

[The Senate divided. [13:59]
(The President—Senator Hogg)

Ayes ...................... 53
Noes ...................... 9
Majority ............... 44

AYES

Abetz, E
Bernardi, C
Boswell, RLD
Bushby, DC
Carr, KJ
Colbeck, R
Conroy, SM
Dastyari, S
Eggleston, A
Fawcett, DJ
Furner, ML
Hogg, JJ
Kroger, H
Ludwig, JW
Macdonald, ID
Marshall, GM
McKenzie, B
O’Neill, DM
Payne, MA
Polley, H
Ruston, A
Scullion, NG
Singh, LM
Smith, D
Tillem, M
Williams, JR
Xenophon, N

Back, CJ (teller)
Bilyk, CL
Brandis, GH
Cameron, DN
Cash, MC
Collins, JMA
Cormann, M
Edwards, S
Farrell, D
Fifield, MP
Gallacher, AM
Johnston, D
Lines, S
Lundy, KA
Madigan, JJ
Mason, B
Moore, CM
O’Sullivan, B
Peris, N
Ronaldson, M
Ryan, SM
Seselja, Z
Sinodinos, A
Sterle, G
Urquhart, AE
Wong, P

NOES

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

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

Original question, as amended, agreed to.
Bills read a second time.

COMMITTEES

Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Meeting
Senator MOORE (Queensland) (14:02): by leave—I move:
That the Community Affairs Legislation Committee be authorised to hold a private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sitting of the Senate today, from 3 pm.

Question agreed to.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Science

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (14:03): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Industry, and that is Senator Ronaldson. Minister, with 200 of the nation's top scientists gathered in Canberra today for Science meets Parliament, I ask: after six months in office, why does this government still not have a science policy or a science minister?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:03): I thank the honourable senator for his question. I think it is the first time he has asked me a question since the middle of December—and the colleague sitting beside him, Senator Farrell, has not asked me one since the middle of November, which rather begs the question as well. This government is committed to CSIRO. This government, through Senate estimates, has watched Senator Carr try and try to raise a whole range of issues. He started off with job losses. He has now given up on that, clearly. He then started talking about the head of CSIRO. He has obviously given up on that. He has not asked about that today. Instead, we get a lame question in relation to where we are heading with this.

I can assure Senator Carr of this: when we put policies together we keep them. When we make promises, we keep them. When I look back and reflect on what Senator Carr—the doomsayer who was caught out in The Australian about a week ago; it showed Senator Carr for what he is—has said over the last six months, he just wants to talk down the Australian economy. He wants to talk down Australian jobs. If this is the best Senator Carr can do, I hope that—

Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The question was quite specific about a ministry and a policy, and we are waiting for an answer to that specific question.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The minister has indicated that he has completed his answer.

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (14:06): That really was pathetic, even for this minister.

The PRESIDENT: No comments, please.

Senator KIM CARR: Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. What cuts to science programs are recommended in the secret Commission of Audit report which has been sitting on the Prime Minister's desk for over a month? Will the minister now commit to ruling out cuts to science programs in the future?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:06): I thank the shadow minister very much for his question. I look at him and Senator Farrell—who has not asked me a question now for about three months—sitting beside him. They remind me of
Foghorn Leghorn and Henery Hawk over there. They cannot stand each other. They are having a nibble and one has the axe out—

**Senator Moore:** Mr President, I rise on a point of order going to relevance, in terms of answering the specific question rather than the comic routine we have just heard.

**The PRESIDENT:** I do remind the minister of the question. The minister has 42 seconds remaining to address the question.

**Senator RONALDSON:** This government, as I have said before, is committed to a world-class education research sector as one of the five pillars required for a productive and prosperous Australia. The contribution of scientists and researchers is essential as we work to lift productivity and build on our competitive advantage in key sectors. That is why the government will support science to the fullest extent possible. There are now six election commitments on science being implemented across government. My colleague, Minister Macfarlane, is working closely with the Minister for Education, the Chief Scientist and other ministers to ensure Australian scientists— *(Time expired)*

**Senator KIM CARR** (Victoria) (14:08): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I note that the minister has failed to rule out cuts to science programs. I asked him specifically about the Commission of Audit and he has not addressed that. I would ask him this: why will this government not back the people who are in fact building Australia's future?

**Senator RONALDSON** (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:08): I can assure Senator Carr that we are backing them. And I can assure Senator Carr that when we tell them we are going to do something, that is what we will do. When we say we are going to do something, we will actually deliver it.

I look back at Senator Carr's record: he was in, he was out, he was in and he was out as the industry minister. His legacy is one of extraordinary failure. We are great supporters of the science community and the science community knows that it has a friend in the coalition. It knows what occurred under the Labor Party. For someone opposite to be talking about funding arrangements, when Senator Carr and those opposite took this nation from $40,000 million in the black to $653 billion in the red, I think is a bit rich; I think it is a bit rich for Senator Carr to be making any comments about any funding matters at all.

**Mining**

**Senator BACK** (Western Australia—Second Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:09): My question is to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and the minister representing the Minister for Industry, Senator Ronaldson. I refer the minister to the flawed design of the minerals resource rent tax, or the mining tax. Can the minister update the Senate on the mining tax's negative effect on resource investment? Is he aware of any opposing views and, if so, what is the government's response to those views?

**Senator RONALDSON** (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:10): I thank Senator Back for his question. I have gone from the sublimely ridiculous today, so I hope there might be a question now from Senator Farrell to finish off a really good day!

The mineral resource rent tax substantially adds to Australia's sovereign risk profile as a business investment destination. This government, as we know, is committed to repealing the
carbon tax and to repealing the mining tax. If you look at what those opposite say and if you
look at what Mr Shorten, the Leader of the Opposition, has said in the last week, then it
actually puts this all into perspective. On no less than five occasions last week in the same
interview, Mr Shorten avoided giving a direct answer as to what his position is in relation to
the mining tax. There were five occasions and no answers at all.

Instead, we had weasel words from Mr Shorten. He said that the principle of the tax was a
good principle, rather than giving an outright commitment. He then went onto Sky News
Agenda and said:

In terms of what we do in our policies affecting the resources sector for the next election, we will
engage in a dialogue with the resources sector…

Well, he does not need to engage in a dialogue with the resources sector. I can tell you what
the resources sector says and that is, 'Get rid of this mining tax and get rid of this carbon tax.'

Indeed, if you would look at what AMEC, the Association of Mining and Exploration
Companies, said:

Since the Resources Super Profits Tax (RSPT) and the Minerals Resource Rent Tax (MRRT) were
first announced in 2010

... ...

Australia's reputation as a safe place in which to invest has been tarnished. Industry confidence has
floundered ...

The repeal of the MRRT will go a long way to restoring some confidence and much needed investment
back into the mining industry.

Mr Shorten does not need to spend the next two years consulting with the mining industry. He
needs to do what he should have done some time ago: he should be committing to the repeal
of the mining tax and the repeal of the carbon tax.

Senator BACK (Western Australia—Second Deputy Government Whip in the Senate)
(14:12): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister update the Senate as
to how much revenue the mining tax has raised from the resources sector, and on its
budgetary impact?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the
Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:12): I thank
Senator Back for the supplementary question. The former government locked in $16.7 billion
of spending—that is on an underlying cash basis—against a tax that has raised barely $400
million, and it has cost the ATO $50 million to collect that $400 million. This tax goes against
everything our country must do to be an attractive investment destination and a competitive
supplier of minerals.

Mining directly employs 270,000 Australians, with another 800,000 or more relying on the
mining sector for their work and income. Mining is a hugely important sector for the economy
and it represents about 55 per cent of merchandising exports from Australia. I will finish in
the 10 seconds left open in this supplementary question to say that Mr Shorten can do
something prior to the Senate election in Western Australia and that is tell the people of
Western Australia what his real view is on the mining— (Time expired)

Senator BACK (Western Australia—Second Deputy Government Whip in the Senate)
(14:13): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister advise the
Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:14): I thank Senator Back for his question. As a Western Australian, of course, he has a great deal of interest in these matters.

Now, one program that cannot be delivered is an income support bonus payment of $211 per annum, which was made available in March 2013 to 1,240 clients receiving DVA educational allowances. This, like so many promises, was premised on mining tax receipts. They are promises that no longer can be delivered on the basis of unrealised mining tax receipts. But this government is committed to supporting the children of veterans and, despite media speculation, the VCES and the MRCAETS schemes are continuing. These allowances will continue, and this decision does not affect eligibility under these schemes.

The mining tax has raised less than $20 per Australian but has over $700 per person of linked expenditure. Mr Shorten has to make up his mind in relation to this tax and, quite frankly, the ALP is using veterans and their families as pawns in its web of deceit in relation to this mining tax—(Time expired)

Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia

Senator DASTYARI (New South Wales) (14:15): Mr President, my question is to the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Nash. Can the minister confirm that her decision to axe the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia has cost taxpayers almost $1 million? Can the minister confirm that the cost of axing the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council was almost equal to its annual running cost?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:15): I thank the senator for his question. Unfortunately the senator has done nothing more than read what has been put forward in the media. The facts of the case—and this has been clearly put on the record by me previously through the estimates process—are these: I did indeed approve funding of up to $750,000 for the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia. I can inform the senator that that was to cover costs already incurred by ADCA. It was not $1 million incurred because of the ceasing of funding for future ADCA provision; it was to cover the costs already incurred.

Let us just have a look at why those costs were incurred. It was because the previous Labor government had left ADCA unfunded. It was because the previous Labor government had not completed a funding agreement, which ran for several months. The previous Labor government had months to complete their funding agreement with ADCA. They had committed funding, but it was the previous government—the previous Labor government—that left ADCA unfunded. So indeed, Senator, there was funding provided by me to ensure that the costs already incurred by the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia were met.

Senator DASTYARI (New South Wales) (14:17): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister outline to the Senate the role played by her former chief of staff in the axing of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council? Can the minister confirm that her former chief of staff and not the minister conveyed the news of the axing to the council?

Honourable senators interjecting—
The President: Order! To answer the question, Senator Nash needs to be heard in silence.

Senator Nash (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:18): Thank you, Mr President. As I have previously stated on the record: yes, that is the case.

Senator Dastyari (New South Wales) (14:18): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Does the minister agree with her former parliamentary colleague and chair of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council, Dr Mal Washer, who describes her decision to wield the axe as the result of: ‘dumb advising dumber, and dumb won’?

Senator Nash (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:19): I thank the senator for his question. No.

Carbon Pricing

Senator Eggleston (Western Australia) (14:19): My question is to the Minister for Finance representing the Minister for the Environment, Senator Cormann. I refer the minister to the carbon tax's negligible impact on the environment but severe impact on Australian industry and jobs. Can the minister inform the Senate as to how the carbon tax impacts on businesses and families in my home state of Western Australia?

Senator Cormann (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:19): I thank Senator Eggleston for that question. He is a passionate advocate for stronger growth and more jobs in our home state of Western Australia. Mr President, the carbon tax hurts families in Western Australia. It hurts business in Western Australia. It is an anti-Western Australian tax. It is a tax which pushes up the cost of electricity, pushes up the cost of gas, pushes up the cost of living for families and pensioners, and pushes up the cost of doing business—and all of that without doing anything to help reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. All it does is shift emissions from Australia to other parts of the world. People in Australia and, in particular, in Western Australia are being asked to make a sacrifice for something that does not make a difference. It is a shame.

I see that Senator Pratt is not in the chamber today. I wonder what Senator Pratt would be doing right now. I wonder whether Senator Pratt is out in Western Australia campaigning against the carbon tax. We know that, in the lead-up to the last election, Senator Pratt inaccurately and dishonestly told the Western Australian people that Kevin Rudd and Labor had already removed the carbon tax. This is what Senator Pratt told people in Western Australia before the last election: Kevin Rudd and Labor have removed the carbon tax, saving the average family $380. But, of course, the Labor Party in this chamber continues to vote to keep it. Maybe that is why Senator Pratt is in Western Australia—because she does not want to be associated with what Labor is doing in this chamber. Or is she going to tell the truth to the good people of Western Australia in the lead-up to this election—and that is that she is telling people in WA one thing, and doing the exact opposite here in the Senate? The carbon tax must go—(Time expired)

Senator Eggleston (Western Australia) (14:22): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister inform the Senate what impact the carbon tax is having on business performance and, therefore, employment in Western Australia?
Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:22): When Labor was elected to government in November 2007, the unemployment rate in Western Australia was 3.3 per cent. After six years of Labor, the carbon tax, the mining tax, additional red and green tape, guess what it is now? It is now 5.9 per cent. Because we have had this anti-Western Australian Labor Party in government for six years, businesses and families in Western Australia were hurt with massive additional taxes and massive additional red tape. The effects are now there for all to see.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cormann, just resume your seat. On my left, Senator Cormann is entitled to be heard in silence. I want silence on my left. On my right!

Senator CORMANN: On this side of the parliament we stand for stronger growth and more jobs. We stand for helping Western Australia to be more successful. Instead of burdening business and families in Western Australia with all these additional taxes, we want to help Western Australia to be more successful. (Time expired)

Senator EGGLESTON (Western Australia) (14:23): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. What is the minister's response to recent comments by business leaders about the difficulty of passing on carbon related costs at a time when conditions are getting more difficult for business?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (14:24): Senator Eggleston is absolutely right. Business finds it very difficult in current economic conditions to pass on the additional cost that has been imposed on them by the Labor Party through the carbon tax that they negotiated with the Greens. If you cannot pass on the costs to consumers, you have to cut jobs. That is why the unemployment rate across Australia is going up. It is going up on the back of a Labor-Greens anti-jobs tax. We might not have Senator Pratt here, because she is campaigning in Western Australia, but we do have Senator Mark Bishop here in the chamber. He is not campaigning in Western Australia. It is a shame that he is not recontesting because, of course, he knows exactly what Labor must do. He made the point: he said that the strong public position of the ALP on the carbon tax was completely rebuffed by the electorate. He further said that the debate is lost for the next decade at least and that it is not possible to persuade the Australian people that their views were incorrect. (Time expired)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cormann, resume your seat. Order!

Media Ownership

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (14:25): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Senator Fifield. I refer to reports that the government is in negotiations behind closed doors with media proprietors to abolish the rules protecting media diversity. In one of the most highly-concentrated media markets of any democracy, why is the government even contemplating removing the last protections that exist for media diversity?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (14:25): The government is, as the senator would be aware, closely examining the media ownership rules as part of its deregulation agenda, which is aimed at boosting productivity and reducing unnecessary red tape. Digital technologies are forcing rapid structural change in the media landscape. I think we all know the internet has significantly lowered barriers to entry for new media outlets providing more and more
avenues for competition. However, the media industry remains subject to extensive regulation, much of which was developed in the pre-digital age. This includes a number of ownership rules that only apply to the traditional media platforms of commercial television, commercial radio and newspapers.

While no decisions on media ownership reform have been made, the government is sympathetic to arguments being made by industry leaders that this regulation is increasingly outdated and unnecessary. This includes the 75 per cent audience reach rule which operates to prevent a person from controlling commercial television broadcasting licences that reach more than 75 per cent of the Australian population. The 75 per cent reach rule is one element of the current ownership rules. The repeal of the reach rule was one of the recommendations made last year by members of the Joint Select Committee on Broadcasting Legislation. Of late, some commentators have suggested that repeal of this rule would threaten local content on television in regional areas. I would like to make it clear that this is not the case. The reach rule does not protect local content. In fact this rule is completely separate to local content obligations that require minimum levels of local content to be broadcast in the major regional licence areas. These local content obligations would not be affected by any changes to the media ownership rules. A report was recently released into local content conducted by the ACMA which shows that the existing these existing rules operate effectively. *(Time expired)*

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (14:27): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. If this government does succeed in abolishing the laws protecting media diversity, will you guarantee now to the Senate that free-to-air broadcasting of sports, including AFL games, will not simply disappear on to pay television?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (14:28): I have outlined for the senator the government's general approach to the issue of media ownership laws and, if there is anything additional that I can provide to the senator, I will certainly do that.

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (14:28): That is a bit of a worry. Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Does the minister recognise that if the so-called reach rule protecting broadcasting diversity is lifted at the same time as the government attacks funding to the ABC that the big losers in this so-called reform process will be regional Australians as regional broadcasters are absorbed into the big metropolitan media companies?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (14:29): I am not surprised at all that Senator Ludlam is endeavouring to scaremonger at this point in time. It is something that the Australian Greens sought to do over the full term of the previous Tasmanian parliament and it did not stand them in terribly good stead, as the results of the weekend would testify. So I simply urge the senator not to engage in such scaremongering activities.

**Tasmania State Election**

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:29): My question is to the Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator Abetz. Can the minister advise the Senate of the implication of events in our home state of Tasmania on Saturday for the future of Tasmania's forest industry and its economy?
Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:29): As a very active senator and a very passionate campaigner for the forest industry in Tasmania, Senator Bushby would be aware that the overwhelming state election result for the state Liberals builds on the emphatic federal election result in Tasmania only six months earlier. Those results were based very clearly on dysfunctional Green-Labor governments in Canberra and Hobart, and their policies of job destruction, especially in the forestry sector.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Abetz, you are entitled to be heard in silence. To those senators interjecting across the chamber from both sides: it is disorderly. Senator Abetz needs to be heard.

Senator ABETZ: Despite a very expensive green campaign, promoting the deeply flawed and dishonest so-called Tasmanian Forests Agreement, the people spoke and they spoke very loudly, especially those living in the relevant areas. They rejected the dishonest campaign and supported the policy on which we as a federal party went to the election on, namely, to rip up the Tasmanian Forests Agreement. What is more, the Tasmanian people have now delivered a similar result.

The reason is that we as a government here want to rebuild those communities that have been so badly damaged by this forests agreement. We do want to support the small sawmillers, the Tasmanian special species timber users, the farm enterprises and the small businesses, all of whom have relied on the forest sector, a sector which plays to Tasmania’s natural advantages—plenty of rainfall, good soil and plenty of sunshine. That is what you need to grow trees. It is the only genuinely renewable industry that we have in this country and the Labor and Green parties sought to close it down. However, the people have overwhelmingly voted to give it a new future and that is what we intend to do.

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:32): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Will the minister inform the Senate of any further support for the coalition’s forests policy?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:32): The coalition policy at the federal election was overwhelmingly endorsed, especially in the seat of Lyons, where Eric Hutchinson got the biggest swing to the Liberal Party in any state. We thought that was as good as it gets, until last Saturday when the people of Lyons voted even more overwhelmingly in support of the state Liberals because they wanted to do that which Eric Hutchinson had promised. But beyond the vote of the people—and, ultimately, the most important factor here is the will of the people and the vote of the people—I was delighted to read the front page of the Australian Financial Review this morning, which said:
The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union national forestry division national president Jane Calvert said it was clear the electorate had validated Mr Hodgman’s pledge to remove the agreement.

And further:
"They have a mandate for change …

I invite those opposite to acknowledge that which Ms Calvert—(Time expired)
Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:33): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Is the minister able to inform the Senate of the government’s response to threatened impediments to this policy?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:33): It was a matter of great regret that, on election night, as the results were coming in the Greens were already promoting the fact that there would be ‘war in the forests if the mandate of the Tasmanian people was implemented by the democratically elected government’. What that tells us—and, regrettably, the Labor Party are on the same page—is that the Labor Party and the Greens have not learnt from the result of the 7 September federal election, nor have they learnt the lesson of the Tasmanian state election. We trust that the people of Western Australia, in the upcoming Senate election over there, will recognise that the Labor-Green senators in this place are voting to deny Western Australians and Tasmanians the opportunity to grow jobs in genuinely good industries, playing to the strengths of Australia—something that we should all be encouraging. I encourage senators in this place to recognise the mandate given to the Tasmanian—(Time expired)

Medicare Locals

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (14:34): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Nash. Does the government stand by the Prime Minister’s pre-election promise that no Medicare Locals will close?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:35): I can indicate to the chamber that on this side of the chamber we take health delivery seriously. I can indicate to the chamber that we are going to concentrate on the delivery of services to the front line, ensuring that our health delivery goes to the front line.

As the Senate would know, Medicare Locals are currently part of a review being conducted at the instigation of Minister Dutton. We will indeed be looking to the results of that review to ensure that there is delivery of services to the front line.

Senator Wong interjecting—

Senator Ian Macdonald interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! On both my right and my left: I need to hear the minister. Continue, Minister.

Senator NASH: Thank you, Mr President. The Prime Minister has made it very, very clear that health delivery across Australia, particularly for Indigenous Australians, is a key priority for this government. Unlike those opposite we are going to take an absolutely focused, deliberate and thoughtful approach to the delivery of health services across this nation, which is why the review is occurring into Medicare Locals, and we will be informed by that review.

Senator Moore: Mr President, my point of order goes to relevance. The specific question was about the Prime Minister’s original promise. Could you draw that to the minister’s notice.
The PRESIDENT: I gathered from the action of the minister that the minister had finished answering the question and had resumed the minister's seat. In those circumstances, there is no point of order.

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (14:37): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question, and perhaps we can get an actual number this time. How many Medicare Locals in my home state of Western Australia are on the chopping block?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:37): As senators would realise, there are 61 Medicare Locals and all are subject to the review that is currently taking place. In terms of the senator's home state of Tasmania, it is completely erroneous—

Senator Lines: Mr President, if I could just draw Senator Nash's attention to the fact that my home state is Western Australia and I asked about Western Australia.

The PRESIDENT: That is not a point of order. That is a debating point.

Senator NASH: I do apologise to the senator. It is of course Western Australia, and perhaps she could indicate to her leader that Western Australia is not South Australia. As I was saying, it is erroneous for the senator to use the phrase 'the chopping block'. That is indeed incorrect. Senators know there is a review taking place at this point in time, which is the appropriate way forward to determine the efficacy of the Medicare Locals and steps forward.

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (14:39): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Why won't the government reveal its plans to close Medicare Locals before the Western Australian Senate election?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:39): What a stunt from the senator on the other side relating to the potential Western Australian election. This government has been very clear about how we are going to approach health delivery across this nation. It is going to be about ensuring that we have the delivery to the front-line services that we need. This was so clearly lacking from the previous Labor government, which was caught in bureaucracy and a lack of attention to what we needed in terms of front-line services and getting services out on the ground where they were needed, to the people who needed them.

Veterans: Mental Health

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Ronaldson. Can the minister advise the Senate of what steps the government is taking to address the mental health challenges facing veterans and their families and of any alternative policies?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:40): I thank Senator Seselja for his question about this very, very important issue. Tackling the mental health challenges faced by veterans and their families is a key policy priority for this government. Each year the Department of Veterans' Affairs spends some $166 million on veterans' mental health. This is demand driven; it is not capped. This is part of a $12.5 billion budget—
Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator RONALDSON: I would have thought that this matter probably had the support of all honourable senators. If it hasn't then that is a reflection on them, not on me. That is part of a $12.5 billion budget—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator RONALDSON: that is an extraordinary interjection—including income support compensation and health care. Consultation formed part of the approach of this government when in opposition over the three years prior to the election. That consultation—and I did 110 veterans forums around the country—formed part of our veterans policy—a policy which was not matched by the Australian Labor Party, because they had no policy at all. They had done no consultation at all. As a result of that consultation, last Thursday I announced a new way forward for consultation with veterans and the wider community about veterans' mental health, and that will be in the form of PMAC, the Prime Minister's Advisory Council on Veterans' Mental Health.

This reconstituted PMAC will be dedicated to considering the needs of veterans and the mental health challenges they face. The PMAC will consider high-level and strategic issues and look to identify gaps in available services and innovative approaches to address them. It will provide advice to the Prime Minister and me about future directions for veterans mental health policy. Until recently—(Time expired)

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (14:43): Can the minister advise the Senate of the task ahead for the Prime Minister's Advisory Council on Veterans' Mental Health? How does the new Prime Minister's Advisory Council elevate and focus this government's commitment to addressing the mental health challenges facing veterans?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:43): I again thank the senator very much for his question. I know his longstanding interest in this matter. I just want to say that the new PMAC will be chaired by a former Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Russ Crane. Vice Admiral Russ Crane shares my passion about the need to ensure that mental health assistance for veterans and their families is contemporary, relevant and achieving the right outcome. The deputy chair of the new PMAC will be Ben Roberts-Smith VC, MG. As a former serving soldier, Ben brings the unique perspective of a younger veteran, with a young family, to the PMAC. They will be joined by Mr Ryan Stokes, who is of course a member of the business community. I would like today to pay tribute to the enormous contribution that the Stokes family makes towards veterans. The other members of the PMAC will include representatives of the Partners of Veterans Association, the Ex-Service Organisations Round Table, the Mental Health Commission and the departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs.

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (14:44): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister inform the Senate of any other measures the government is taking to support the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:44): Again, I thank the senator very much for his question. As minister I have streamlined four committees into two which are providing internal advice to me. The first forum deals with the needs of
our recently returned veterans, and that will be the Younger Veterans—Contemporary Needs Forum, which has combined the old Emerging Issues Forum and the Operational Working Party to focus specifically on the needs of younger and returned veterans. The other forum is the National Aged and Community Care Forum, which specifically addresses the challenges facing older veterans, and their health issues, and those faced by their families. I am confident this new approach will ensure the government receives the very best targeted advice about how we can tackle mental health challenges. As I said in my earlier answer to the senator, we spend $166 million on mental health services. We are doing more, but there is always more that can be done. We might need to recognise that in the last 20 years some 72,000 young—

(Time expired)

Liberal Party: Political Advertising

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:45): My question is to Senator Johnston, the Minister for Defence. Who authorised the use of a South Australian Liberal Party banner as a backdrop at RAAF Base Edinburgh in Adelaide for a joint press conference held by the Prime Minister and the South Australian opposition Liberal leader, Steven Marshall, on Thursday, 13 March, just two days before the South Australian election; and does the minister approve of the Prime Minister standing in front of a Liberal Party banner—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Order, Senator Conroy! Holding up pictures is disorderly—

Senator CONROY: which included the Liberal Party logo, Liberal Party slogans and the South Australian Liberal leader's Twitter handle, while on a Defence Force base?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:46): I would assume it was the same person who authorised two FA18s, several helicopters and a couple of heavy lift aircraft in the Labor Party's launch of the ill-fated 2013 white paper, at a cost to taxpayers of several hundred thousand dollars! The shadow minister wants to take issue with this in the face of the profligacy of the Labor Party, with planes and helicopters and ships that we observed—all while there was not one red cent in the white paper of 2013. The chapter dealing with budget finance and funding did not have one single dollar figure in it. This Defence portfolio—

Senator Moore: On a point of order—

Senator JOHNSTON: Oh, I'm not being relevant!

The PRESIDENT: Order, Senator Johnston!

Senator Moore: Mr President, my point of order is on relevance. The specific question is about a Liberal Party logo and defining information about the Liberal Party as a backdrop to this particular event.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order at this stage. The minister still has 57 seconds remaining to address the question.

Senator JOHNSTON: This question is from the party that now want to know what we are doing about the 'valley of death'. The only reason that is a relevant question is that in six years they did absolutely zero about the jobs—the welders, the workers, the plumbers, the electricians—involved in shipbuilding. They did nothing—
Senator Moore: Mr President, my point of order is again on relevance. The question was specifically about the Liberal Party banner and logo. Could that be drawn to the attention of the minister?

The PRESIDENT: Minister, I draw your attention to the question. You have 32 seconds remaining.

Senator JOHNSTON: It is important to realise that in the last election there was one party that actually went to the electorate with a defence policy—a funded defence policy. What does the Labor Party bring to defence? Nothing more than an attitude to treat the portfolio as an ATM.

Senator Moore: Mr President, again a point of order on relevance: it is specifically about the logo and the banner.

The PRESIDENT: I have drawn the minister's attention to the question already. The minister has six seconds remaining to address the question.

Senator JOHNSTON: I have no doubt it was the same person who authorised the Labor Party's use of all their props! (Time expired)

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:50): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Will the minister commit to taking steps to ensure that party political banners like those used by the Prime Minister at RAAF Base Edinburgh are never used again on Defence Force bases? Will the minister inform the Prime Minister that the use of party political banners on Defence Force bases is completely inappropriate?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:50): I find this question quite curious, given that during my time as shadow spokesman, in opposition, I asked for briefings on a whole host of matters and received virtually none. The portfolio was hideously politicised by the previous, Labor government—

Senator Moore: Mr President, on a point of order: again, it is specifically a question about a Liberal Party banner being used on a base—if we could have that drawn to the attention of the minister.

The PRESIDENT: The minister needs to address the question. The minister has 33 seconds remaining.

Senator JOHNSTON: And so it was that, in travelling around bases when in opposition, it was very apparent to me that there was a clear need for some semblance of a defence policy. Now, the fact is that whether or not—

Senator Wong: On a point of order, Mr President: on a number of occasions now we have drawn your attention to direct relevance. The minister has been asked about the use of a Liberal Party banner on a Defence base. He has been asked for detail about who authorised it and for detail about whether or not he will take action, as minister, to ensure it will not happen again. He has not once come close to the question on this important issue. You should draw his attention to the question and he should be directly relevant.

The PRESIDENT: As I have said, I cannot tell the minister how to answer the question. I did draw the minister's attention to the question at the 33-second mark. The minister still has nine seconds remaining and I remind him of the question.

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CHAMBER
Senator JOHNSTON: All I want to say in completion of my answer to that supplementary question is that there is one party in this chamber committed to the Department of Defence and the defence of Australia.

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:53): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. To prevent this ever happening again, will the minister ensure that ADF personnel are authorised to take down these party political banners if they are ever put up at future events held on Defence Force bases?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:53): I happened to be away in the United Kingdom all of last week. I do not know the circumstances. I am not aware of the circumstances of any of these matters—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Conroy, holding up pictures is completely out of order.

Senator JOHNSTON: In those circumstances, I would have thought that the shadow minister had many more important things in the Defence portfolio to raise with me.

Australia-United Kingdom Ministerial Consultations

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:55): My question is also to the Minister for Defence, Senator Johnston. I know the Australian people are—and I certainly am—interested in the Australia-United Kingdom Ministerial Consultations the minister participated in last week. Can the minister please update the Senate on those meetings?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:55): I thank the senator for his question. Last week I attended AUKMIN with my friend and colleague Foreign Minister Bishop. We place a high value on these annual discussions and we certainly value the United Kingdom highly as a partner of Australia. The two countries have closely aligned interests and perspectives, including on international security challenges. Our close and longstanding defence and intelligence partnership has evolved to meet contemporary threats, such as terrorism, piracy and cybersecurity. The UK is also an important economic partner, being the second largest direct foreign investor in Australia—ahead of all Asian nations and second only to the United States.

These annual talks commenced in 2006 under the auspices of the Howard and Blair governments. They quickly became recognised as being in the national interest of both Australia and the United Kingdom and have, since 2010, become an annual event. Australia is the only nation with whom the United Kingdom has what are termed two-plus-two talks.

In 2013, AUKMIN talks resulted in Australia and the United Kingdom signing the Australia-United Kingdom Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty. This treaty will enter into force following consideration by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties. It is being similarly considered by the UK parliament. I point out that, for the first time in history, Foreign Minister Bishop and I attended the national security committee of the UK parliament. It was indeed an honour and a privilege to discuss issues of national security of vital importance to both nations. One issue worth noting is that of foreign nationals in wars, particularly in Syria. This is a major security threat to both countries. We discussed our respective dispositions to that ever-growing problem.
Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:57): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate whether the government intends to strengthen its bilateral defence arrangements with the United Kingdom?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:57): Australia and the United Kingdom share a strong bilateral defence relationship, a relationship that has been enduring since even before Australia became a sovereign nation. Our cooperation is based upon a strong degree of like-mindedness, historical connections and shared values, as well as extensive cultural and political links. We also have longstanding intelligence and science and technology links and have together moved to modernise the Five Power Defence Arrangements.

In recent years, our engagement has been chiefly in the operational space, through the ISAF operations in Afghanistan. I made it clear to my UK colleagues that Australia remains committed to the post-2014, NATO-led 'train, advise and assist' mission in Afghanistan, subject to the necessary legal arrangements being agreed and put in place pursuant to the status-of-forces agreement. Without a status-of-forces agreement in place, there is very little likelihood of Australian forces remaining in Afghanistan. We also welcome the UK's interest in the Indo-Pacific region. (Time expired)

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (14:59): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate whether Australia will be committing to the United Kingdom's forthcoming summit on preventing sexual violence in conflict?

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia—Minister for Defence) (14:59): This is an extremely important subject. This is a highly regarded issue for all nations, as was demonstrated with the adoption of UN Security Council resolutions 2106 and 2122, which support women, peace and security issues being strengthened. Foreign Secretary Hague and Minister Bishop were as one on this issue and were strongly supported by both Secretary Hammond and me. Australia is committed to supporting global efforts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender based violence in situations of conflict and armed violence. We came to the unanimous position that sexual and gender based violence is a serious human rights violation that can also amount to genocide, crimes against humanity and, particularly, war crimes. Minister Bishop and I both gave our strongest possible support to the summit that Foreign Secretary Hague will be hosting in the United Kingdom in June. This summit will focus on engaging with women's organisations and the importance of United Nations Security Council resolution 2122. (Time expired)

Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Special Broadcasting Service

Senator LUNDY (Australian Capital Territory) (15:00): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Communications, Senator Fifield. I refer to the Prime Minister's pre-election promise that there will be 'no cuts to the ABC'. Will the government keep its pre-election promise?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:00): The Australian government has no current plans to reduce funding for the ABC, or for SBS for that matter, or—and I am sure the senator
will find great reassurance from this—to review their editorial policies or programming. We all know that the ABC is a generously funded organisation, courtesy of the Australian taxpayer. But all Australian government agencies and departments should make sure that they are making the best possible use of every single taxpayer dollar, and that is the intent behind the efficiency review that Minister Turnbull has announced. But I can assure the chamber that this government intends to keep all its election commitments.

Senator LUNDY (Australian Capital Territory) (15:01): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer to the Prime Minister's pre-election promise that there will be 'no cuts to SBS'. Will the government keep its pre-election promise to not cut Australia's Special Broadcasting Service?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:02): The same goes for SBS as well. The government do not have any plans to reduce funding. But, again, for SBS as for the ABC, it is important that every taxpayer dollar is used to its optimum benefit, and that is why the efficiency review that Minister Turnbull announced also applies to the ABC. I think it is just good and prudent government to make sure that government agencies, government departments, SBS and the ABC are being as efficient as they possibly can be. What is the opposite of being as efficient as you can be? It is being as inefficient as you can be. I do not think anyone for a moment is suggesting that that is a good approach. So the government makes no apology for the fact that we are trying to ensure that taxpayers get optimal value for every one of their dollars.

Senator LUNDY (Australian Capital Territory) (15:03): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I note the minister says in his answer 'have no plans'. So I ask: what cuts to the ABC and SBS are recommended in the secret Commission of Audit report which has been sitting on the Prime Minister's desk for over a month?

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (15:03): I know those opposite get quite excited at any mention of the Commission of Audit. But I can assure the chamber that the Commission of Audit and the audit commissioners are here to help. The purpose of the audit commission is to advise government how each taxpayer dollar can be spent to ensure that taxpayers get optimal value from the expenditure of that particular dollar. The Commission of Audit report will be released. A decision has not been taken yet as to when that will be. But I know that those on this side of the chamber will join with those on the opposite side of the chamber in looking forward to reading the contents of the Commission of Audit report and the contribution it can make to good public policy.

Senator Abetz: Mr President, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Science

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (15:05): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs (Senator Ronaldson) to a question without notice asked by Senator Carr today relating to science policy.

It is appropriate that the Senate get a few facts on the table when it comes to the discussion of science policy, given that this is Science meets Parliament week. I ask a simple question: does
the coalition government have a science minister? The answer is that it does not. Does this government actually have a science policy? The answer is that, no, it does not. Have they promised not to cut science in the budget? The answer is that, no, they have not. When Labor was in government, there was, clearly, a very strong emphasis on science and research. There was a science minister and there was a very, very strong science policy. What we have seen is that the government opposite is maintaining its position of running from the enlightenment. It is a government that essentially is working on the assumption that they do not need a champion for science. Senior members of the government are going out of their way to boast about being knuckle draggers, taking credit for any action the government takes against the scientific community.

I remind the Senate of the record of contrast. When Labor was in office, investment in science, research and innovation increased by 35 per cent. That took the figure to an annual total of $8.9 billion. We invested a record of over $3 billion in the CSIRO. For the first time, we took the CSIRO's revenue past $1 billion per annum.

In the 2013-14 portfolio budget statement, the CSIRO was allocated staffing for 5,550 people at the time of the election. In fact, the CSIRO was overstaffed by about 200, on these figures. Now we discover that about 16 per cent of the CSIRO's workforce is under threat because of the government's decision—not management's decision—to freeze recruitment and renewal of staff on temporary contracts. That is why we are seeing media reports of over 1,500 people's jobs under threat. It is no coincidence that the CSIRO's climate adaption and preventative health flagships are the ones being cut in the current restructure that has been announced.

Senator Ronaldson made the claim that the government is a great supporter of science and the science community 'knows it has a friend in us'. I am afraid they do not know that. They do not believe that. They know, in fact, it is the contrary. He goes on to suggest that the government will keep its promises. But what have they promised? What we have seen from this government is a continuing list of policy positions that are actually hostile to science. What we know is that the report of the Commission of Audit—or the commission of cuts, as it has been referred to—has been sitting on the Prime Minister's desk for over a month, and we understand that is precisely where you will see these cuts being argued.

From the behaviour exhibited by this government, we know that we already have cause for very deep concern. We know that $103 million has been ripped from the Australian Research Council, particularly in the abuse of humanities. We know that the Treasurer has described the research grants from this particular area as 'ridiculous research projects'. We have seen threats to the future of industry innovation partnerships, some $500 million in investment. We know there have been cuts from the global centre for excellence in oil and gas technologies research, in Perth, which is a $10 million program. We know there has been the scrapping of the quarterly credits for the R&D tax incentive—a very important measure, if you want to commercialise scientific discovery.

In a recent statement the Prime Minister said:

The difference between us and our ancestors dwelling in caves is that we understand science and do our best to apply the fruits of that understanding to the way we live.

What we have in reality is a government approach to science which essentially takes us back to a caveman approach. We know this is a government that has no science minister, no
science policy and no commitment to securing the benefits of science and research to ensure that we are able to sustain the modernisation that this country needs. We know that the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia— *(Time expired)*

**Senator BACK** (Western Australia—Second Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) *(15:10)*: It is amazing the hypocrisy we see from Senator Carr now that he is on the other side of the chamber. On 22 May 2008 the then chief executive of the CSIRO, Geoff Garrett, warned about the organisation's research effort suffering—as it shuts laboratories and loses 100 staff as a result of a reduction in its budget funding of $63 million a year—in a Labor government over which Senator Carr had responsibility for science. The funding cuts were $23 million to meet the Rudd government's one-off efficiency dividend, plus an extra $40 million to extend the efficiency dividend to a research component of the CSIRO's appropriation. It is a bit stiff to come in here and listen to this sort of argument from Senator Carr. The *Canberra Times*, on 5 December 2008, said:

The Rudd Government's one-off 2pc efficiency dividend for this financial year imposed an "arbitrary and unfair" burden on the CSIRO, a new government report says.

This was the Labor government's own report, talking about the imposition of $24 million in cuts in addition to the federal budget cut of $40 million, forcing the CSIRO to merge divisions and shed jobs in a bid to find annual savings.

It was interesting that Senator Carr referred to aspects associated with the oil and gas industry R&D, because Senator Smith, who will contribute to this debate, and I, from Western Australia, are only too aware of the sovereign risk being imposed on the multinationals, the oil and gas industries and the mining industry as a result of the actions of the previous Labor government—supported by the Greens, as it became apparent—with regard to the carbon and mining taxes.

As happened in Tasmania last Saturday, so in September last year did the people of Australia give a mandate to the government, led by the Hon. Tony Abbott, to repeal the mining and carbon dioxide taxes. The actions of the Labor Party and the Greens, in this chamber, to frustrate the democratic statement of the people of Australia is reprehensible. I earnestly hope this will be shown in the rerun of the Senate election on 5 April.

Our state of Western Australia is the one most hurt by the mining and carbon taxes. It is essential the taxes be repealed. Mr Shorten knows that. He keeps changing his position. He wants to engage with the mining industry. Well, I can save him the cost of a flight to Western Australia—the cost increased as a result of the carbon tax. As we know, Qantas quoted more than $100 million of added costs due to the carbon tax.

**Senator Lines interjecting**—

**Senator BACK**: Mr Shorten, as Senator Lines knows, does not have to go to WA to ask the citizens of that state, or ask industry, what they want to happen to the mining tax. I give you this one statistic, as evidence of the cost of mining and carbon taxes and of the sovereign risk to Western Australia as a result of the last Labor government's activities. It goes to ASX listed mining exploration companies and their mining exploration activities in Western Australia. In 2012, 65 per cent of mining exploration's time, effort and money was spent in Western Australia. By 2013 that figure had reduced from 65 per cent spent in Australia to 35
per cent. That was the impact of the threat of the carbon tax, the mining tax and the other risks imposed by the then Labor government.

And where was the two-thirds being expended? Of ASX listed companies it was in Africa, in Canada, in markets that are welcoming Western Australian and Australian investment. It is essential that on 5 April the Labor Party and the Greens Party accept the mandate of the Australian people to return senators who will come into this place and do what the will of the Australian people in September last year indicated—and that was to remove them. Senator Carr spoke about R&D incentives. All that happened under his watch was that small R&D based companies shifted offshore and the Labor government saved money in unexpended—

(Time expired)

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (15:15): I rise to take note of answers given by Senator Ronaldson in response to questions we asked him today in the science area. I am absolutely gobsmacked that the government continues to hide what it is doing in the science area and in particular to the CSIRO when we hear the government today refer to events that happened in 2008! They like to tell us that they are the government. Well, let us hear their plans for the CSIRO. Let us hear their plans. Let us see what the Commission of Audit has to say about CSIRO.

We heard the government today go on about how important the mining industry is to Western Australia. It is important to Western Australia. It is vital to Australia's economy. Yesterday I drove past the CSIRO's really fabulous facility next to Curtin University, and yet I find out today that the government has ticked off on six redundancies taking place at that facility in Waterford—as I speak, during Science Week!

You might say, six redundancies—so what? Guess what they are. Three are scientists. This is what the government is doing in the midst of Science Week, getting rid of three science positions. In addition to that, it is getting rid of six project scientists who all hold Bachelor of Science degrees—in Science Week—and yet they are trying to tell us that they are the friend of science.

We heard today that apparently the government has some commitment to the CSIRO. I think that is a commitment to downsize it, to dumb it down. What we know about the government is that they are not interested in facts. They do not like facts. They do not believe in carbon. They do not believe in upskilling the workforce. This is a government that is about dumb and dumber. I find it extraordinary that in my home state of Western Australia with the fabulous facility at Waterford—which is absolutely about the development of minerals and at looking at smart ways to continue to develop and extract; that is what the Waterford CSIRO facility focuses on—that this government sees fit in Science Week to just tick off on nine science positions going out of that establishment.

That will impact on Western Australia. There is no doubt about that. The CSIRO is a premier organisation, a leader in scientific development, and yet the government continues to go along in absolute silence about its plans for CSIRO. To sit here today and be told by the government that they are some kind of friend of the scientific community is ludicrous. All I can say is that every time I hear the government utter the word 'friend' and 'industry' that means that industry had better watch out. Whenever they say that, there are cuts and they cut deep and they cut savagely.
So it is time that the government came clean on the Commission of Audit and what it has planned for science. The problem we have got with this government is that it does not even have a minister for science. That is how little value it promotes in looking at scientific breakthroughs and promoting the best possible science in the land. They just want to be a dumb and dumber government. They just want to dumb down Australian industry. They do not believe in facts. They do not believe in science. They just believe in the cheapest possible way of dumbing down our sector.

Particularly in Western Australia with our links to South-East Asia, one of the other important roles the CSIRO does is undertake research specific to South-East Asia. But, gee, the government would not know that because guess what: they do not have a science minister! You cannot keep your finger on the pulse if you are too busy doing a million other jobs. The fact that it does not have a science minister was one of the things that Senator Johnston led an attack on. He could not believe it. He said, 'For God's sake, we have got a sports minister and no science minister!' So one of your own, a Western Australian senator, thinks that you are not doing the right thing. So come clean on CSIRO. Put a cross against the nine positions in WA, because we value science on our side. (Time expired)

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (15:20): It is important to pay close attention to what we have heard from the Labor Party opposition this afternoon. We have heard two things. The first thing we have heard is that the National Commission of Audit cannot be trusted, that somehow it has a secret plan to reduce waste in our economy. The second thing we have heard is that somehow the coalition government cannot be trusted when it comes to cuts to science and specifically when it comes to the CSIRO.

Let me just take Labor opposition senators back in time a little bit to May 2008. Senator Dastyari was not in the Senate in May 2008, so I might just read for Senator Dastyari some comments that were reported in the *Australian Financial Review* about the former government's cuts to science, cuts to the CSIRO. The *Australian Financial Review* on 22 May 2008 report starts by saying, 'CSIRO's chief executive, Geoff Garrett, has warned that the organisation's research effort will suffer as it shuts laboratories and loses a hundred staff as a result of a reduction in its budget funding of $63 million over four years.' Let us think about that. In May 2008, who was the government? You might want to forget that it was former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd—

*Senator Dastyari interjecting—*

*Senator SMITH:* I think, Senator Dastyari, you might have been the national secretary of the New South Wales Labor Party at the time. That is a debate for another time.

This is a lonely moment for members of the Australian Labor Party, and this brings me back to the National Commission of Audit. You will hear Labor senators and others say that the National Commission of Audit is a bad thing. But in January this year who was it who came out and said that the National Commission of Audit was necessary to correct the budget crisis that we find ourselves in? It was none other than former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating, and his comments were endorsed by former Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke. It is a very, very lonely time for people in the Australian Labor Party at the moment.
Let me just add to that: this is probably an excellent opportunity for Labor senators to familiarise themselves with the important work that you must start to do to rebuild credibility in the electorate.

*Senator Bilyk interjecting—*

**Senator SMITH:** Senator Bilyk, I do not want to reflect on the results in Tasmania here at the moment—

**Senator Kroger:** Why not?

**Senator SMITH:** Because they would be embarrassing. It would be embarrassing, Senator Kroger, for me to spend my limited time talking about the Tasmanian election result. But I do want to go back to talk about the 7 September federal election result. Let us talk about that. What do we know? Labor recorded its lowest primary vote in 100 years. Labor in my home state of Western Australia received just 28.7 per cent of the vote, and across our country they won just seven seats on primary votes.

So what is the lesson? What is the exercise that federal Labor should be engaging in? It is one of establishing relevance again with the electorate. When we come to the National Commission of Audit there is no more important piece of work that this government is doing at the moment than the National Commission of Audit because, as people know, our spending is increasing at a much faster rate than we are raising revenue. People like me think that we should decrease the tax burden on taxpayers and decrease the size of government, and I do not believe for one moment that that necessarily means that the sorts of services government provides to people need to be compromised; nor do I believe it needs to have a dampening effect on economic growth.

So the National Commission of Audit is a very important piece of work for this government. It is one on which Labor senators today should heed the advice of your former Labor leaders—our former Prime Ministers, no less—Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, and you should embrace the work of the National Commission of Audit and the work it will do to improve our budget position. *(Time expired)*

**Senator DASTYARI** (New South Wales) *(15:25)*: I rise to take note of answers provided by Senator Ronaldson earlier today. The coalition has pandered to a small but vocal antiscience chorus for more than a decade. The Abbott government did not release a science policy. They have not appointed a minister for science. We have a Prime Minister who has declared that he believes that climate change is ‘crap’, a view that is shared by many other people on the other side of the chamber. And, since the election, this government has ruthlessly slashed funding for the sciences, threatened the independence of our research institutions and worked actively to undermine the integrity of Australian scientists.

There are more cuts around the corner, and the Commission of Audit is sitting there, as a previous senator pointed out, in secret, deciding which programs are going to be recommended for axing. These are cuts to our future prosperity, and the scientific community, like the rest of Australia, have been left in the dark, hoping that this budget will not be the blackest in our history. Which of our great scientific research centres, which of our great technological research projects and which of our leading centres of innovation are going to face the axe? Joe Hockey has confirmed that the government will adopt the great majority of
the commission's recommendations. We are asking for transparency to find out which science and research funding is on the chopping block.

The Prime Minister's proposal to not commit to releasing the Commission of Audit's report until just before the budget is astonishing. When the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, was the opposition leader he argued for the release of the Henry tax review, and I quote him here: 'Issues of great moment for Australia's economic future and for the welfare of Australia's families should not be hidden.' I will say that again: 'should not be hidden'. Yet we do not know which of our scientific research programs the Commission of Audit will recommend cutting because the report is being kept secret.

The Abbott government has already shown a willingness to slash funding for science research. Australia's national ICT research centres have had $42 million slashed in the last budget MYEFO. Up to 1,400 scientists at the CSIRO will not have their contracts renewed. A centre of excellence for oil and gas technologies in Perth has had its funding of $10 million cut already. The government refuses to confirm their commitment to a global hub for oil and gas innovation in Western Australia that Shell, Woodside, Santos and many other companies have supported along with the CSIRO and a number of universities—an alliance that would have given a much needed boost to Western Australia's efforts to face the future after the mining boom and cement itself as a global technology leader and employment hub.

But I want to draw the Senate's attention to one of the most truly astonishing collaborative science projects in history which will require significant funding to reach its unique potential. The Square Kilometre Array radio telescope will be built in Western Australia in cooperation with partners in New Zealand and South Africa. The SKA will be 50 times more sensitive than any other radio instrument and will be able to survey the sky more than 10,000 times faster than ever before. The Labor government supported the project through a $289-million investment in Western Australia on infrastructure to support the SKA. We provided $80 million of funding for the Pawsey high-performance community centre. We provided another $118 million in funding for the latest astronomical technology to be built by the CSIRO in Murchison.

We also committed to funding and properly building the NBN. Labor were a staunch defender of science when it was under threat from deniers and sceptics. Labor oversaw the growth of a network of national research institutions. Labor guaranteed academic freedom at universities— *(Time expired)*

Question agreed to.

**Media Ownership**

**Senator LUDLAM** (Western Australia) (15:30): by leave—I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Assistant Minister for Social Services (Senator Fifield) to a question without notice asked by Senator Ludlam today relating to diversity in the Australian media market.

As we well know, Australia has one of the most concentrated media markets of any democracy in the world. And Senator Fifield took the time to stand up and read three or four minutes of verbal tranquiliser onto the record, as he is wont to do. Whether it is the Commission of Audit, whether it is what is going on behind the scenes in environment policy, whether it is what is going on with the efficiency review or whether it is cuts into the ABC,
those opposite just tell people: 'Don't worry. Everything will be fine. Trust us.' I can tell Senator Fifield, through you, Mr Acting Deputy President, that trust is in very short supply.

Why would this government even consider reducing those rules that do remain in protecting media diversity in Australia? We know that media companies have been circling and jostling for position on the understanding that maybe this government would be a pushover and withdraw those rules that protect what media diversity remains here. And now the fix is well and truly in. Senator Fifield could not provide us with a single fact or a single piece of intelligence as to what it is that the government would use to justify further reducing diversity. He mumbled something about the internet. And yet when you look at the top news and current affairs sites in this country, they are owned by the very same incumbents that run the biggest broadcasters and the biggest newspapers.

Senator Fifield: The ABC—the biggest internet presence going!

Senator LUDLAM: I will get to the ABC, Senator Fifield; don't worry about it. We know that the incumbents are using their market power to develop an entrenched position online—and good on them; that is what companies do to further their business models. But then just waving your hands and saying, 'Well, because of the internet,' as a reason to reduce or eliminate those laws that protect media diversity is, I think, completely deceptive.

We know as well that the companies are jostling to take those most lucrative properties off each other. For example, Channel 10 is a strong contender to the rights of the AFL. If there is a News Ltd-Foxtel merger with Ten, that would then potentially pass those assets behind the Foxtel paywall and take AFL, which was the example that I raised in my question, behind the Foxtel paywall as well. In response to that fairly serious question, Senator Fifield mumbled something incomprehensible and sat back down again. We are used to being treated with that kind of contempt in question time; I am not sure how people in WA will feel if they know that this government is orchestrating to remove those protections to media diversity, or those that remain.

I also put a question to the minister on the so-called reach rule, which I would be the first to acknowledge is being overrun by broadcasting over IP networks, and that it does not make a lot of sense within the next 10 or 20 years to restrict our radio broadcasters in regional areas to broadcast licence areas when, if you want, you can listen to digital radio in Afghanistan, you can listen to radio well outside licence areas. But as this so-called reach rule is overrun by the internet, what are we going to do to create legally enforceable undertakings to protect local broadcasting? Again, Senator Fifield stood up and went off on a wild tangent into the Tasmanian election, which was actually no help at all. It was of no assistance to people who are following this in regional areas who want to know that even as, on the one hand, you are attacking the independence and the funding base of the ABC, which is entirely likely to impact on regional ABC broadcasting, on the other hand you are removing one of the few protections that remain—or one of the few requirements that remain—for regional licence broadcasters to maintain a local presence, a local newsroom, local reporters. What we are seeing in Australian radio markets is the increasing prevalence of so-called rip and read, where people in Sydney or Melbourne just read the local newspaper headlines from a very long way away.

The Greens will protect media diversity. We are not beholden, as I would suggest those on the other side might feel they are, to particular media proprietors or organisations that might
think they owe them favours. And we will do everything we can to protect media diversity, and indeed enhance it. We have seen that this government and Senator Fifield have just given us a wonderful demonstration of complete disinterest in protecting media diversity across Australia.

Question agreed to.

CONDOLENCES
Parer, Hon. Warwick Raymond, AM

The PRESIDENT (15:36): It is with deep regret that I inform the Senate of the death on 14 March 2014, of the Hon. Warwick Raymond Parer, AM, a senator for the state of Queensland from 1984 to 2000.

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (15:36): by leave—I move:

That the Senate records its deep regret at the death, on 14 March 2014, of the Honourable Warwick Raymond Parer, AM, former senator for Queensland, places on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service and tenders its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Warwick Parer was genuinely a man for all seasons. He was a man that did it tough in his early life, made a substantial commercial contribution, made a substantial public contribution and, most importantly to him, made a very important family contribution.

Warwick Parer was born in Papua New Guinea in 1936, his family being involved in the timber industry. With the emergence of World War II and the theatre of war coming to Papua New Guinea, he was repatriated to Queensland. Regrettably, his father was one of the first casualties of the Japanese attack on Papua New Guinea, so most of his life he lived without his father. Nevertheless, he did well in his education at Brisbane's St Joseph's Nudgee College and at the University of Melbourne, where he obtained a bachelor of commerce degree.

The name 'Parer' may be known to some people on the basis that one Damien Parer was the uncle of Warwick Parer, Damien Parer being the renowned World War II photographer. For those of us from Tasmania, the name Parer is well known, as there is a hotel establishment on King Island that rejoices in the name of Parer's Hotel. That started off in Crotty on the west coast and was pulled down and reassembled on King Island. When it was burned down and later rebuilt, Senator Parer was invited across to do the official opening.

I know that two of my former Tasmanian colleagues, senators Paul Calvert and Brian Gibson, would also wish to be associated, as they were close friends of former Senator Warwick Parer. I know that Senator Harradine would also want to be associated with these comments. It is indicative of the breadth of friendships that Senator Parer was able to gain in his place here that there were many fine tributes to him when he retired and left this place of his own volition.

Warwick Parer became a member of the Senate in 1984 and, from March 1996 to October 1998, he was the Minister for Resources and Energy, in Mr Howard's first government. That ministry was a natural fit for the man who had a long history in resources and energy and who played a pivotal role in the Queensland coal industry. He was a man with genuine real-life experience. Despite his very strong business credentials, he was not one to seek a handout for
business; nor did he ever seek favourable treatment for business. Indeed, way back in his maiden speech in 1985 he said:

… examples of unwarranted and harmful intrusions by government into the economy are legion. I need only mention the distortion effects of featherbedding inefficient industries at the expense of more productive enterprises, of tariff walls and of subsidies to favoured groups. Yet the vested interests which enslave governments, when engaging in their special pleading, can always point in their defence to some other groups in receipt of similar artificial advantages. Such interests need to be exposed to the disciplines as well as the advantages of free markets.

He was a man of great principle who talked straight in his first speech, and that is how he stayed throughout his parliamentary stay. He retired from the Senate at a time of his choosing, having served 16 years. His commitment to public life was motivated by his desire to be of service to his community. Anybody who bothered to have a look at his register of interests would know that there was no need for him to come into this place for any financial benefits.

Warwick's interest in being of service to the community continued following his retirement from the Senate. He undertook the role of President of the Queensland Liberal Party from 2006 to 2008. I know that during that time he continued to be a great source of advice and wisdom to the then Prime Minister, Mr Howard, with whom he enjoyed a very close friendship—another friendship that Warwick Parer gained during his time in this place. After his retirement from the Senate, he was also Chairman of the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Foundation. His public service continued, and he was the Chair of the Stanwell Corporation Board until his untimely death.

But Warwick Parer will be remembered for more than just his dedication to serving his country in both the public and the private domain and his tireless commitment to many community organisations. He will also be remembered as a man who was compassionate and grounded. Possibly that compassion and grounding was a result of the loss of his father in that Japanese strife on Papua New Guinea.

Around Parliament House, he was known as a man who did not let partisanship get in the way of friendship. His life experiences—growing up without a father, carving out his own path as an executive with Utah and Australian coal exporters and, above all, experiencing the joy of his own family—meant that he had a deep sense of what was truly important. His friendly, fatherly demeanour would impress all in the coalition as he would enthuse about political issues while sucking his trusty pipe. Those were the days when you were still allowed to smoke in this place. That reminds me of an occasion when an ample lump of ash that he knocked off a cigar and put into some facility or container led to a fire in that certain container and to fire alarms going off. I am not sure if he ever admitted to being responsible, but some of us on this side believed that he may have been. He was part of a generation that had a deep and abiding belief in service and living for others. That is why his service to his party and country continued long after he left office.

Above all those achievements I know that Warwick Parer grew the greatest strength and purpose in life from his family, and he considered them to be his greatest achievement. He indeed credited his calm and affable nature to the stability that comes from a loving wife and family. Today our thoughts are with Warwick's charming wife, Kathi; their four daughters and three sons, Carol, Martine, Helen, Sonia, Warwick, Justin and Rowan; and now the many, many grandchildren. On behalf of the government I place on record our acknowledgement
and thanks for Warwick Raymond Parer's lifetime of outstanding service to the people of Queensland and Australia, and we express our deep regret at his passing.

**Senator Wong** (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (15:46): I rise to speak today on behalf of the opposition on this condolence motion for Warwick Parer, a former member of our chamber who recently passed away at the age of 77. Warwick Parer served in this chamber for over 15 years, from 1984 until his departure in 2000, as a senator for Queensland representing the Liberal Party. He was a member of Prime Minister Howard's cabinet, serving as Minister for Resources and Energy from 1996 to 1998, and in that role he was a great champion of the industry. It was an industry in which he had extensive personal experience before entering politics. That passion for the mining industry may in part explain why the title of his memoirs was simply *Mine*.

That book includes a fascinating description of his early childhood in Papua New Guinea in the years before World War II. His father was a pilot who owned an airline company which served remote goldmines in PNG and, when the Japanese Army invaded, Warwick, then just six years old, was evacuated with his mother and siblings to Darling Downs in Queensland. As the Leader of the Government in the Senate has outlined, regrettably, his father was killed in action in New Guinea, which left his mother to single-handedly raise Warwick and his three siblings. Warwick Parer grew up in regional Queensland and graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Commerce.

Warwick Parer was proud of his family and his heritage. He married a fellow Queenslander, Kathi Martin, and moved to Melbourne to begin his career in business. Certainly he had an impressive business career prior to entering the Senate. He founded the Non-Destructive Testing Laboratories, an industrial X-ray company, in 1962; moved on to become the Victorian manager for Philips-Stanford Pty Ltd in 1966; and then became the commercial manager and assistant secretary of Utah Development Company in 1973, a position which saw him return to Queensland. Senators will recall that Utah was a company which was deeply involved in the expansion of the Australian coalmining industry in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition to being a senior executive of Utah, Warwick Parer took a role advocating on behalf of the industry, becoming chairman of Australian Coal Exporters in 1976.

He did come to politics later in life and his reputation was as a practical man. He was known for being a straight talker and, as Senator Abetz has mentioned, a prolific smoker. The version I heard was that he managed to set his parliamentary office alight after tipping ashes into his wastepaper bin. But then that may have been augmented with the effluxion of time. His political career culminated as Minister for Resources and Energy, where he oversaw the abolition of the three-mines policy for the uranium industry.

Senator Parer nominated his most significant achievements as minister as including the abolition of the export controls of minerals as well as chairing the first APEC ministers conference in Sydney. He was a keen fishermen, enjoying this pastime with his grandchildren. As his ministerial portfolio also included responsibility for fisheries, he was also able to make important decisions for the sector, including protecting Australia's bluefin tuna stock and ensuring the Navy upheld regulations against illegal fishing in Australia's Antarctic waters.

It is the case that Senator Parer's time as minister was cut short after a controversy over conflict of interest. Subsequently, he decided not to seek to return to the Howard
government's ministry after the 1998 federal election. He served on the backbench for a further two years and then resigned in 2000.

After politics he fulfilled a number of important positions in both the public and private sectors, and he chaired, of course, that important review for the Council of Australian Governments of the international energy market which resulted in the 2002 Parer report on energy market reform. He was also chairman of the Stanwell Corporation, one of Queensland's major electricity generators. He was honoured in 2005 by being made a Member of the Order of Australia for service to the parliament and for his contribution to expanding export opportunities for the mining industry as well as for energy market reform.

Warwick Parer's passing was sudden and, as always, our thoughts go on this day to his family: his wife, Kathi; their children, Carol, Martine, Helen, Sonia, Warwick, Justin and Rowan; and their many grandchildren.

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (15:50): I rise to support the motion. I also rise to speak as not only a fellow senator of Senator Parer but, more importantly, as a friend. Like many, Warwick Parer's death has come as a huge shock and even more of a shock to his family and those closest to him. I offer them my deepest condolences. May the knowledge that he is remembered by so many of us as a colleague and a great friend be of some comfort to them.

Warwick Parer was a true entrepreneur who fiercely believed in the Liberal essence of what it means to be a Liberal—enterprise, strong national growth. It was to the community's benefit, therefore, that he was also interested in public life and had a strong sense of wanting to contribute his vast experience wrought in the commercial world. That is what drew me to him as a friend, because it was this sense of responsibility for community that informed his goals and his actions in this place.

Warwick Parer was a great asset to the Senate and was in a unique position to hold the resources and energy portfolio as minister from March 1996 to October 1998. He had a distinguished career in the mining industry and could easily have continued to be an industrialist without putting himself through the rigour of public life. Even after he had asked to go to the backbench and he did not want to be considered for a ministry, he continued his work in public life as chairman of the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee and as a member of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee before ultimately retiring from the Senate. And he left the Senate, as I think we would all like to, at a time of his own choosing.

Warwick Parer's ministerial role was preceded, however, by shadow portfolios and committee work during 12 long years in opposition. Again, Warwick's commitment to public life during this darker period politically shone through; it is always easier—and my colleagues will agree—to find motivation to strive when in government and everything is on your side. But when you are plugging away day in day out, without acknowledgement, that is a true test of commitment and character—and Warwick Parer had both in spades. He certainly never shied away from the hard stuff. In my former life in the fishing industry, when Warwick was Minister for Resources and Energy, I got to know him well. He understood the issues faced by the industry, particularly the needlessly complex regulatory processes at that stage that had nothing to do with the management of the resources and the protection of the environment.
Warwick was a tough man. I remember being involved with him over the convention for the conservation of southern bluefin tuna. At the time, in my view—and it is a shared view—Japan had a very recalcitrant position; they wanted to have an additional quota of scientific take, so we continued to take southern bluefin tuna. There were plenty in government who I tried to persuade at the time to try to persuade Warwick to move our position just a bit because it seemed to all of us at the time that the world was all about compromise. He said: 'Enough is enough; we're not moving on this. They can't do it. We ain't shifting.' As a consequence, a pretty tough decision at that time in that environment led to the CCSBT being a really meaningful document. Warwick prevented other parties from bringing their own quotas to the table—and it went on and on. They were all really tough decisions, and I admired him very much for that.

I also admired him for his very strong commitment to ocean policy—and I guess that is where we found an affinity. There is much about Warwick's public life that has left a rich legacy—for example, his commitment to the conservation of the Patagonian toothfish in the Southern Ocean. Much of the work that was done there was about everyone visibly seeing the effect. But Warwick said to me, 'Nigel, if we're going to have a sustainable fishery, this is a greenfield site in a real sense and we can get this right.' At the time, I represented a whole spectrum of people for whom, in a commercial sense, that was not everything they needed to hear. People always say bilge comes out and there is this and that happening and there is bycatch. He said, 'We need a fishery that prohibits all of those things.' I said, 'Mate, it's pretty tough to have a boat that does not leak. We've got seals on our propellers'—and all that sort of technical stuff. He said, 'You'll be able to fix that, Nige'—and we did. If you are in the Patagonian toothfish fishery, there is not a hole that runs outside of your boat. There is no bilge; there is no bycatch; everything has to be retained. Because of his toughness and his capacity to negotiate technical matters and state his ground we knew that we would find technical solutions to the problems.

Whether it was forestry policy, fishing, mining or some of the regional forest agreements, Warwick brought common sense to the issue as well as what I would consider to be a very intellectual approach. I certainly admired how, in the most difficult of circumstances, he was able to use those values. He understood the importance of jobs and exports and he was certainly a warrior for working Australians. I can vouch for his absolutely abiding devotion to his spouse, his children and now his grandchildren. He was a champion for Queensland, and a champion for his fellow country men and women in Australia from all walks of life. This was recognised when he was appointed as a member of the Order of Australia in 2005. We have lost a truly gentle man. I can say with a degree of certainty that both sides of politics will mourn the loss of his capacity for friendship across the political divide. He will be missed. Vale dear friend, Warwick Parer.

**Senator BRANDIS** (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (15:57): It was with tremendous sadness that I learnt of the death early on Saturday morning of my friend Warwick Parer. There is a sense in which both metaphorically and literally I followed in Warwick Parer's footsteps: metaphorically because when Warwick left the Senate at the beginning of 2000 I succeeded him by filling his parliamentary vacancy, and he kept a watchful eye on my parliamentary career in the years since; and literally as well because as it
happens I occupy the same premises in Canberra as Warwick used to occupy—which he
shared with, among others, John Howard, Richard Alston, Peter Costello and other notables
down the years. So as I trudge back to my place of abode each evening after a weary
parliamentary day I am literally following in the footsteps of the former Senator Warwick
Parer.

We have heard from our leader, Senator Abetz, of Warwick's early life and how he lost his
father in New Guinea in the war and was a nephew of the famous war photographer Damien
Parer. He went to Nudgee, that very noble Queensland institution which has been the alma
mater of so many prominent Queensland business figures and leaders in other walks of life,
and then to the University of Melbourne. He had most of his career, though, as a figure in the
mining industry in Brisbane. He was active in the Liberal Party in Brisbane in the 1970s and
early 1980s. He was the chairman of the relevant Liberal Party policy committee. He was one
of the relatively few senior business people who were active in Liberal Party politics in
Queensland in those days. That is where I first met him.

But my first close involvement with Warwick Parer was in fact not in the political world
but professionally. In 1991 I was briefed as junior to Cedric Hampson to act for the late Ken
Talbot in a most vicious dispute over the control of Macarthur Coal, one of the big
Queensland coal companies. It was an enormously bitter dispute. There were hundreds of
millions of dollars at stake and a deeply divided board of directors.

The two factions on this board of directors had settled upon Warwick Parer to be the
independent chairman and try and bring some stability to the board. I think it tells you
everything that you need to know about the kind of man Warwick Parer was that, such was
his experience in the industry but such was his reputation for fairness and integrity, both sides
of this bitterly and factionally divided board of directors were prepared to trust Warwick to
try and bring some stability to that company.

Warwick, by that time, was a giant in the coalmining industry in Queensland. He was, for
many years, one of the senior executives of Utah Construction and Mining Company. He was
their principal negotiator. It was at a time in the 1970s—as a Queensland senator you will
remember, Mr President—that the Bowen Basin and the other coal interests were being
established. Warwick was the lead negotiator for Utah in the contracts with that company's
Japanese customers. I remember he told me once that, over a period of years, he made at least
20 return trips to Japan a year for several years. He became the leading Australian
representative of the industry, and, for that reason, between 1976 and 1979 he was chosen to
be the chairman of the Australian Coal Exporters Association.

Mr President, as you know, coal is to Queensland what iron ore is to Western Australia. It
is one of the principal economic backbones of the state. In those days, the principal export
market was not China; it was Japan. So it gives you an idea of the substance of this person
and his importance to the economy of Queensland—and, by extension, of Australia—that he
was the leader of that industry who established those contracts and carved out that market.

In 1984, a backbench senator from Queensland resigned from the Senate. An opportunity
arose for Warwick to go into public life. I know that he was a very reluctant starter, but the
then state president of the Liberal Party, John Moore, put a lot of pressure of Warwick. He
eventually, to his enormous credit, agreed that he would go into the Senate. He served in this
chamber with distinction for some 16 years.
At the time he joined the Senate he was, I would say, the most significant business person to join the Australian parliament. I would say that, from the industry of which he was a leader—that is, the coalmining and coal exporting industry—this parliament has never had a more experienced or a more authoritative figure. Naturally, therefore, Warwick made that his chosen field. It was the most natural thing in the world that in 1996, with the election of the Howard government, Prime Minister Howard would make Warwick the Minister for Resources and Energy. He served in that portfolio for two years and brought to it all of the shrewdness, sophistication, knowledge and skill that you would expect from somebody of his background.

There was a controversy in 1998—which in no way whatsoever, in my view, reflected on Warwick's integrity—and he stood aside. After the 1998 election he was not included in the ministry. As we all know, when you lose your foot in this business sometimes it is hard to regain it. I think that not including Warwick in the ministry after 1998 was a mistake. I am sure it is a mistake that Mr Howard regrets. By the beginning of 2000, I think Warwick had decided that he had had enough, and, as others have observed, he left this place on his own terms.

In the years since, he made a very significant contribution both to politics and to the community. In the political world, that contribution was most particularly to be seen in his period of service as the state president of the Liberal Party between 2005 and 2008. He succeeded, in that role, Michael Caltabiano, his protegee, who, I am pleased to say, joins us in the public gallery today, and whose presence I would like to acknowledge. It is entirely fitting that Michael Caltabiano, who was so close to Warwick, should be in the Senate chamber today to hear these valedictory words.

It was while Warwick was the president of the Liberal Party that he and his friend Bruce Scott, the member for Maranoa, who was also, as it happened, at the time the state president of the National Party, put their heads together and mapped out the amalgamation of the Liberal and National parties, which occurred subsequently in 2008. Senator Abetz has recited the several other community and public service appointments that Warwick Parer occupied in the years since his retirement from parliament. Indeed, at the time of his death he was the chairman of the Stanwell Corporation.

Warwick was a gentleman of the old school. He was decent. He was avuncular. He had common sense. He was very practical. Although he would have regarded himself as being on the more conservative side of the Liberal Party, he was by no means an ideologue. He was a decent and gentle man who contributed to the parliament from the wealth of experience that he had earned as a significant business figure. All too seldom does this parliament attract to it people who, at the prime of their careers in commerce or the professions, are prepared to come into parliament and give of themselves, and give to the parliament the benefit of the wisdom and experience they have earned in their first careers. So we are indebted to him.

It would not be right for me to sit down without making mention of Maureen Nagle. Maureen Nagle was Warwick's secretary for all the years he was a senator. A lot of coalition senators fondly remember Maureen well. I hope she is listening to the broadcast now. When I succeeded him, she became my secretary. She, with occasional exasperation, helped me through the early steps of my career as a senator as well until her retirement after the 2007 election.
Warwick was very happily married to Kathi. They were a great Catholic family. They had seven children, one of whom, Justin, I knew particularly well. He was a president of the Young Liberals. There were many, many grandchildren, one of whom was a friend of my daughter, in fact. They were one of the great Brisbane families. He was one of the great figures of his time, in his industry, and was a very, very well-liked figure in the Senate and in the Queensland Liberal Party.

In closing, let me extend my condolences to Kathi, to his children and to his grandchildren, and I associate myself with the remarks of my leader.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (16:08): In supporting the condolence motion of Senator Abetz, I extend my condolences to Kathi and the children. Kathi, of course, will be feeling the loss enormously. She was always a very strong supporter of Warwick through all of his life in the parliamentary sphere that I can speak of, and certainly a lot of what Warwick achieved was achieved with the support of Kathi.

I remember, in thinking about their children, that when I joined the Senate with Warwick, former Senator MacGibbon and former Senator Herron, there were in the Queensland Liberal Senate team 22 children and I did not have any. It meant that, amongst the other three, there was a great breeding line! Senator Parer's seven children certainly contributed to that 22. I had the pleasure and honour of serving with Warwick in this chamber for 10 years, from 1990 to 2000 when Warwick left.

I associate myself without repeating all the very fine words of both Senator Abetz and Senator Brandis about our friend Warwick Parer. I learnt a hell of a lot about the Senate from Warwick in my early days here. I also learnt a lot about Queensland, because Warwick was one who travelled extensively. As has been mentioned, he played a very significant role in the expansion and significance of the Bowen Basin coalfields. That was very important to the north of our state and very important to the Queensland and Australian economies. Warwick certainly played a major role in the significance that the coal industry had to our state and our nation.

Senator Brandis mentioned that Warwick was also an expert on Japanese and Japanese business ethics and procedures at a time when Japan was a very important part of Australia's export economy. Again as has been mentioned, as chairman of Stanwell Corporation he assisted in recent times with progress, attending to some of the difficulties experienced with electricity production and distribution in my state.

Warwick served some time as President of the Liberal Party. As I recall, he was specifically asked by John Howard to come to Queensland and sort out some differences of opinion which were occurring at that time. We do not have factions in the Liberal Party, but at the time there were various people with different views on how the party in Queensland should be going. I am not sure this is official, but I do know, and those of us involved know, that it was John Howard's choice and desire that Warwick might come in as a stabilising influence on the party. He was, again as Senator Brandis mentioned, instrumental in the amalgamation of the Liberal and National parties. I sat on a very small committee that first started looking at the amalgamation issues. Whilst Warwick was a very proud Liberal, he and most of us understood that if we were ever going to achieve anything in the state arena in Queensland there had to be an amalgamation of the Liberal and National parties. It was the work done by him and, as Senator Brandis mentioned, Bruce Scott, who started that process.
that led to the amalgamation and, in effect, led to the remarkable victory that the Liberal-National Party of Queensland achieved at the last state election.

I had quite a lot to do with Warwick during our mutual years in the Senate. I was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and in charge of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean when the Patagonian toothfish issue started, as Senator Scullion mentioned. Almost on different sides of the fence in those times, we worked to eventually protect the fishery and remove the pirates that were then rife in the Southern Ocean from our radar. I certainly congratulate Warwick on his role there.

My leader and deputy leader have said all of the things that I think need to be said, and I certainly want to associate myself with the fine words of my two colleague senators. In concluding, I simply indicate that, although I have not checked this, I can say without fear of contradiction that the Queensland Liberal senators who served with Senator Parer during my time in the Senate—that is, former Senator MacGibbon and former Senator Herron—would also want to be associated with this motion of condolence.

Senator BOSWELL (Queensland) (16:14): I rise today with a great deal of sadness to support this condolence motion. We are mourning the very untimely death of Warwick Parer. I was not aware that he was sick. I saw his death notice in the Sunday paper and I was shocked and saddened. He made a tremendous mark in business, politics, mining and public affairs. He was a good friend of mine. I wish I had listened to his stock exchange tips more often. I remember one of the best pieces of advice I ever ignored—if I had taken it, I think I would now be a very wealthy man. He was a man who would not play the stock exchange because he did not want conflicted interests. It did not happen. He kept away from it.

Warwick played a significant role. When the National Party was at its strongest, its zenith, it attracted a lot of people—but Warwick stayed true to the Liberal Party. I think it was Senator Brandis who said it was quite fashionable for people to come over and join the National Party, but Warwick did not. He stayed true to his convictions. He was a stayer, and he stuck to what he believed in.

Warwick was capable. He made a huge contribution to parliament and country. He did not need to come down here. He did not need to get on a plane every Sunday night, forsaking the seven kids and the grandchildren that he loved. He had a lot of money. He was very, very successful. He did it because he believed in it. He believed that he could make a contribution. This is what is needed in this place—people who have been successful, who have had successful careers and built up industries, to bring their experience down here as he did. It was at a great cost to him because the salary certainly would not have attracted him. He did not need the money. He had a fantastic job. He was prepared to walk away from all that, a successful business career, to serve in this parliament.

Warwick came to this parliament after a very successful career in the mining industry. He joined in 1984, a year after me. I came in 1983. Together we served in those long, dark years. It was 12 years before Warwick became Minister for Resources and Energy in the Howard government when it first came to power. He was a capable minister because he was successful. He knew what to do. He knew what success was all about. He knew how to achieve success.
Warwick began his life in New Guinea in a place called Wau. He was a qualified and certified practising accountant. He became a fellow of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. In 1970 he became associated with the Utah Development Company. I think we should make more of that, because Australia's prosperity depended on the success of the coalmining industry in Queensland and the iron ore mining industry in Western Australia. What prosperity that has brought this nation. It is due to pioneers like Warwick Parer who got in, rolled their sleeves up and went out and opened up the markets firstly in Japan and then China.

Warwick achieved great prosperity for a lot of Queenslanders. My son-in-law works in the coal industry. I know many, many people who work in the coal industry who probably would not have a job in the coal industry if it were not for pioneers like Warwick Parer. He became chairman of the coal exporters association and, again, used that position to open mines right up through the Bowen Basin. For anyone who has not been there, it is phenomenal to go into the mining towns around the Bowen Basin. Mining is a bit off at the moment. It is coming off in price. But it still provides thousands and thousands of jobs to Australians.

Warwick was a member of the Liberal Party. He was President of the Liberal Party. He was asked to take that position by then Prime Minister John Howard. He brought a very pragmatic and successful approach to the Liberal Party and the National Party. His knowledge of the mining industry, the stock exchange, the resources industry and the fishing industry was huge. It was huge because it was based on knowing how to be successful. He brought that success into this place. He worked tirelessly so that the prosperity of the mining industry and the coal industry was shared with many, many people, including, I might say to senators on the other side, many who work in the mining industry and do not support the coalition cause. But they get their daily bread and their wealth from the mining industry.

Warwick continued to serve outside parliament. He brought about the amalgamation of the Liberal Party and the National Party. He served as president of the Queensland Liberal Party from 2006 to 2008. He served as chairman of the energy and transport advisory sector of CSIRO from 2002 to 2004.

For all the benefit that he gave to Australia and all the service that he gave, he was honoured by receiving the Order of Australia in 2005 for his services to the mining industry. He took on the role of chairman of Stanwell Corporation, one of the energy producers in Queensland. His dedication to community service continued in his post-political life. He was appointed chairman of the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Foundation.

Warwick was one of those people who I do not think anyone could ever find a bad word to say against. His family meant everything to him: his wife Kathi, his seven children and, at last count, 18 grandchildren—many of them go to All Hallows' School with my granddaughter, where the Parer name is highly respected. I say vale to Warwick Parer. I know how his wife and family must be hurting, and we genuinely share with them our prayers today. I know Warwick would appreciate that.

Senator MASON (Queensland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs) (16:23): In politics, as in life, you never forget those who showed you kindness or, indeed, forbearance when you were young or when you were vulnerable. That is why I will never forget Warwick Parer. Warwick helped me when I was vulnerable: when I first came into the Liberal Party, before my first preselection, when we went campaigning in 1998 and
when I first had the great privilege of entering this place. He even had to perform that noble but embarrassing role of ringing me up before my first party room meeting and saying, 'Now, Brett, I better walk down with you, because you might sit on the wrong seat.' He even performed that for me.

Warwick Parer was a gentleman. He was calm, he was loyal, he was decent and he was a man of quiet but significant faith. Yes, he was pretty conservative. That is true. But he did not believe the world was flat either. He had seven children; I suspect that changed his perspective.

He was also something of a straight arrow. I remember campaigning with him in 1998, driving all around Queensland, and he was talking to me about establishing Liberal Party branches on the coast of Queensland. He went into some detail about it and said, 'Of course, Cairns was a bit of a disappointment.' I said, 'Why was that, Warwick?' He said, 'Brett, I started the Cairns branch up but then the swingers got involved.' I went, 'What do you mean, Warwick, "the swingers got involved?"' He said, 'You know, Brett, the throw-the-keys-in-the-fruit-bowl-type of swingers. It wrecked the whole branch.' Anyway, it sparked my interest a little bit. He looked at me and said, 'It's disgraceful.' I have to say, he changed the subject and never spoke about the swingers in Cairns ever again. He was a straight arrow and a man who believed very much in commitment. He was a man whose conservative values I always respected.

He was unusual. He would be quiet and he would puff on his pipe. He often did not say much. To me he often seemed more like a gentleman farmer than a politician. I used to say to him, 'Warwick, I think Kathi, your wife, is a more natural politician than you are.' Of course, Warwick agreed. He said that politics did not come easy to him, but he believed he had to do it. It was more—as Senator Boswell, Senator Brandis and Senator Macdonald said—a matter of duty than of performance for him.

Just last year, Warwick published a memoir called _Mine_. He said, 'All of my life experiences have been interesting and they have been rewarding. But undoubtedly the greatest achievement of my life has been to have a family of confident and talented children, who have each found their own unique strengths and worked to develop those attributes in their own life journeys—seven great Australians.' He later on said, 'If a person does not strive to make this world a better place than when he or she entered it, then that person need not have lived.'

Warwick Parer strove to make a better country. He did that. And I will always be grateful because he helped me when I needed it.

**Senator IAN MACDONALD** (Queensland) (16:28): by leave—I associate Senator Sue Boyce with those comments as well. Senator Boyce is overseas on parliamentary business. I know Senator Boyce would want to be associated with them were she she in Australia.

**Senator EGGLESTON** (Western Australia) (16:28): Can I just make some very brief remarks? I am not a Queenslander, I am a Western Australian, but I found that I had common views with Warwick Parer in various areas when I first came here. He was someone who assisted me and who explained Senate procedures to me. He was an individual who I greatly respected because of his great record in business and his great success in business, as well as his political views, which I found very sensible and very much in keeping with my own
views. In addition, I found his knowledge of the mining industry very interesting; of course, I came here from the Pilbara, where the great West Australian iron ore industry is based. We discussed mining issues on many occasions. I found that he was a person who had an outlook very similar to that of people in Western Australia.

I must say I enjoyed knowing Warwick Parer; admittedly at a much more superficial level than the Queensland members. The last time I saw him was at the Liberal Party campaign launch in 2010 in Brisbane, and we had a very friendly conversation there. I simply want to add my tribute to those already on the record: Warwick Parer was somebody who made a significant contribution to the Senate and, in his own way, he was very much a great man, and a great supporter of Liberal Party and its values.

The PRESIDENT: I ask honourable senators to stand in silence to signify their assent to the motion.

Question agreed to, honourable senators standing in their places.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senators Fifield, Boyce, Moore and Siewert to move:

That, on the first anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions on 21 March 2014, the Senate:

(a) acknowledges the ongoing pain and suffering of the mothers, children and fathers affected by the unethical, dishonest and sometimes illegal practices of the past;
(b) commends the National Archives of Australia, the Institute of Family Studies, the Department of Social Services and members of the Forced Adoptions Implementation Working Group for their work in the past 12 months to realise the recommendations of the Community Affairs References Committee report; and
(c) resolves to continue to do all in its power to make sure these practices are never repeated.

Senators McEwen and Moore to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) the importance of the Australian aid program to sustainable economic and social development and poverty alleviation for Pacific nations,
(ii) the contribution of the Australian aid program to Australia’s national interests through support for regional stability, security and prosperity,
(iii) the verbal commitment by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to not cut Australian development assistance to Pacific nations, and
(iv) the announcement by the Minister on 18 January 2014 that $650 million will be cut from Australia’s development assistance in 2013-14, including $61.4 million to the following Pacific country and regional programs:

Papua New Guinea—$5.3 million,
Solomon Islands—$14.2 million,
Vanuatu—$6.2 million,
Samoa—$3.6 million,
Fiji—$2.8 million,
Tonga—$2.7 million,
Kiribati—$3 million,
Other small Pacific islands—$3.6 million, and
Pacific regional—$20 million;
(b) calls on the Minister to meet her commitment to not cut Australian development assistance to Pacific nations; and
(c) calls on the Government to reverse its $4.5 billion in cuts to Australia’s aid program and work to reinstate funding to levels published in the 2013-14 Budget.

Senator Williams to move:
That the time for the presentation of the report of the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee on Australia Post be extended to 14 April 2014.

Senator Milne to move:
That the Senate—
(a) expresses concern:
(i) at the arrest and subsequent detention of Ms Balendra Jeyakumari, an advocate for families of the disappeared, and the arrest of her 13 year old daughter Vidushika, by the Sri Lankan police on Thursday, 13 March 2014, and
(ii) that these arrests followed both Balendra and Vidushika Jeyakumari being featured in media photographs and videos when British Prime Minister Mr David Cameron visited northern Sri Lanka during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2013;
(b) notes, with concern, reports that Australia is working to actively undermine the United States (US) resolution, entitled ‘Promoting reconciliation, accountability, and human rights in Sri Lanka’, to be voted on at the upcoming meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC); and
(c) calls on the Australian Government to:
(i) intervene and call for the release of Ms Balendra Jeyakumari and for her to be reunited with her daughter, and
(ii) desist from watering down the resolution proposed by the US at the upcoming meeting of the UNHRC.

Senator McEwen to move:
That the Environment and Communications References Committee be authorised to hold a public meeting during the sitting of the Senate on Tuesday, 18 March 2014, from 5 pm to 6 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into the Direct Action Plan.

Senator McEwen to move:
That the time for the presentation of the report of the Environment and Communications References Committee on the Direct Action Plan be extended to 26 March 2014.

Senator Fifield to move:
That consideration of the business before the Senate on Wednesday, 19 March 2014, be interrupted at approximately 5 pm, but not so as to interrupt a senator speaking, to enable Senator O’Sullivan to make his first speech without any question before the chair.

Senators Carr, Milne and Madigan to move:
That the following matter be referred to the Economics References Committee for inquiry and report by the first sitting day of July 2015:
The challenges to Australian industries and jobs posed by increasing global competition in innovation, science, engineering, research and education, with particular reference to:

(a) the need to attract new investment in innovation to secure high skill, high wage jobs and industries in Australia, as well as the role of public policy in nurturing a culture of innovation and a healthy innovation ecosystem;

(b) the Australian Government’s approach to innovation, especially with respect to the funding of education and research, the allocation of investment in industries, and the maintenance of capabilities across the economy;

(c) the importance of translating research output into social and economic benefits for Australians, and mechanisms by which it can be promoted;

(d) the relationship between advanced manufacturing and a dynamic innovation culture;

(e) current policies, funding and procedures of Australia’s publicly-funded research agencies, universities, and other actors in the innovation system;

(f) potential governance and funding models for Australia’s research infrastructure and agencies, and policy options to diversify science and research financing;

(g) the effectiveness of mechanisms within Australian universities and industry for developing research pathways, particularly in regards to early and mid-career researchers;

(h) policy actions to attract, train and retain a healthy research and innovation workforce;

(i) policy actions to ensure strategic international engagement in science, research and innovation; and

(j) policy options to create a seamless innovation pipeline, including support for emerging industries, with a view to identifying key areas of future competitive advantage.

Senator Dastyari to move:
That the time for the presentation of the report of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee on overseas aid be extended to 27 March 2014.

Senator Siewert to move:
That the Senate—

(a) acknowledges:
(i) Ms Rose Anne Fulton has been held in custody in Kalgoorlie for 18 months without a trial or conviction, and
(ii) that it is unacceptable for people to be held in custody indefinitely without conviction;

(b) notes:
(i) the failure of the Northern Territory Government to provide suitable accommodation and treatment options in order for the Western Australian Government to safely and securely transfer Ms Fulton back to her home in Alice Springs, and
(ii) that Ms Fulton is directly under the guardianship of the Northern Territory Minister for Health, Ms Lambley, as she remains an adult guardian client of the Northern Territory Minister and Mr Ian McKinlay; and

(c) calls on the Federal Government to take leadership and negotiate a transfer of Ms Fulton to Alice Springs to enable her to be close to her family.

Senator Waters to move:
That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, no later than noon on 14 April 2014, the following departmental documents relating to, or addressing, the internal concerns of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) exhibited in documents
released under the Freedom of Information Act 1982, including the file note dated 14 June 2013 (file number 17/2248(3)) and the draft GBRMPA Permit Assessment (undated), with the following applications by North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation:

(a) application for an approval under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 for proposed capital dredging at Abbot Point (EPBC 2011/6213);
(b) application for a permit under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1983 to dump Abbot Point dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (ref 34897, dated 6 January 2012); and
(c) application dated 4 March 2013 for a permit under the Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981 to dump Abbot Point dredge spoil at sea;

and, in doing so:

(i) the documents sought to be laid on the table:

(A) include any departmental or ministerial briefings, including those on or around June 2013, and any document that establishes whether the Minister knew of the GBRMPA’s internal concerns,
(b) are for the period 1 June 2013 to 17 March 2014, and
(c) include any drafts; however
(ii) the following are not required:

(A) documents that relate only to the determination of alternative dredge spoil disposal sites to the site approved by the above permits and approval (although documents that relate to both an alternative site, and to GBRMPA’s concerns, are sought),
(b) documents that are publically available, and
(c) personal details within documents (names of staff are sought, but other personal details are not).

**Senator Waters** to move:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment, no later than noon on 20 March 2014, the following documents:

(a) the independent review of offsets for the Maules Creek coal project submitted to the Minister in accordance with Condition 10 of the approval of the project (Ref: EPBC 2010/5566);
(b) any correspondence between the department and the following parties between 1 December 2013 and 17 March 2014:

(i) Whitehaven Coal,
(ii) Hansen Bailey,
(iii) Cumberland Ecology, and
(iv) Alison Martin;
(c) any ministerial briefing notes concerning any matters related to the Maules Creek coal project prepared between 1 December 2013 and 17 March 2014; and
(d) any internal departmental emails and memos regarding the independent review of the offset arrangements of the Maules Creek project between 1 December 2013 and 17 March 2014.

**Senator Cash** to move:

That, for the purposes of paragraph 48(1)(a) of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003, the Senate rescinds its resolution of 2 December 2013 disallowing the Migration Amendment (Temporary Protection Visas) Regulation 2013, as contained in Select Legislative Instrument 2013 No. 234 and made under the Migration Act 1958.
Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (16:32): 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 following bills, allowing them to be considered during this period of sittings:
Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014
Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014
Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2013-2014.
I seek leave to 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 document read as follows—

STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR INTRODUCTION AND PASSAGE IN THE 2014 AUTUMN SITTINGS

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 3) 2013-2014
APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 4) 2013-2014
APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS) BILL (NO. 2) 2013 2014

Purpose of the Bills
The bills request legislative authority for additional appropriations for expenditure to be incurred during 2013-2014.

Reasons for Urgency
The bills will propose additional appropriations to implement decisions for expenditure in 2013 2014, including decisions from the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook and finalising the transfers of appropriations pursuant to the September and October Machinery of Government changes.
Passage of the bills before the last day of the 2014 Autumn sittings will ensure continuity of the Government’s programmes and the Commonwealth’s ability to meet its obligations as they fall due. Should passage not be granted in the 2014 Autumn sittings, activities to be funded by the bills may be deferred or significantly delayed.

BUSINESS

Leave of Absence

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (16:32): by leave—I move:
That leave of absence be granted to the following senators:
(a) Senators Boyce and Parry from 17 March to 20 March 2014, on account of parliamentary business;
(b) Senator Johnston for 19 March and 20 March 2014, on account of ministerial business; and
(c) Senator Williams for 20 March 2014, for personal reasons.
Question agreed to.

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (16:33): by leave—I move:
That leave of absence be granted to the following senators from 17 to 21 March 2014:
(a) Senator McLucas, for personal reasons;
(b) Senator Pratt, on account of electorate business; and
(c) Senators Stephens and Thorp, on account of parliamentary business.
Question agreed to.

Consideration of Legislation

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (16:33): I move:
That the following general business orders of the day be considered on Thursday, 20 March 2014 under the temporary order relating to the consideration of private senators’ bills:
No. 17 Defence Legislation Amendment (Woomera Prohibited Area) Bill 2013
No. 24 National Broadband Network Companies Amendment (Tasmania) Bill 2014.
Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Meeting

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (16:34): by leave—At the request of Senator Williams, I move:
That the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee be authorised to hold a private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sitting of the Senate on Tuesday, 18 March 2014 from 1.50pm.
Question agreed to.

Senator KROGER (Victoria—Chief Government Whip) (16:35): by leave—At the request of Senator Williams, I move:
That the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee be authorised to meet during the sitting of the Senate today, as follows:
(a) to hold a private briefing from 5.45 pm to 6.15 pm; and
(b) to hold a public meeting from 6.15 pm to 8 pm, to take evidence for the committee’s inquiry into Australia Post.
Question agreed to.

Education and Employment References Committee

Meeting

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (16:36): by leave—At the request of Senator Lines, I move:
That the Education and Employment References Committee be authorised to meet during the sitting of the Senate today, from 7.30 pm, to take evidence for the committee's inquiry into the Australian Building and Construction Commission.
Question agreed to.
NOTICES
Postponement

The following item of business was postponed:
General business notice of motion no. 167 standing in the name of Senator Rhiannon for today, relating to the introduction of the Industrial Chemicals (Notifications and Assessment) Amendment (Ban on Cruel Cosmetics) Bill 2014, postponed till the next day of sitting.

MOTIONS

Montara Oil Spill
Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (16:37): I move:
That the Senate—
(a) notes that:
(i) on 21 August 2009, the Montara wellhead platform drill rig owned by PTTEP Australasia suffered a wellhead accident, resulting in the uncontrolled discharge of oil and gas until 3 November 2009, a total of 74 days,
(ii) the resultant oil spill flowed into Indonesian waters to a 'significant degree', a fact acknowledged by the Montara Commission of Inquiry in 2010,
(iii) the impact of the spill outside of Australian waters was not assessed and no comprehensive study has been carried out to date,
(iv) there is a great deal of concern in communities in the Indonesian province of East Nusa Tenggara, particularly among fishers and seaweed farmers, That the spill has adversely affected fisheries and seaweed farms – there are credible preliminary reports available validating communities' concerns,
(v) communities affected have yet to receive any compensation for their loss of livelihood, and
(vi) East Nusa Tenggara is already ranked among the top five priority provinces of the Australian aid program in Indonesia; and
(b) calls on the Government to:
(i) review the need for an independent study into reported damage in East Nusa Tenggara, and
(ii) liaise with the victims represented by East Nusa Tenggara provincial governments and their agents, the Indonesian Government and PTTEP, with the objective of setting up an effective working group to progress the matter, and to include representatives of these parties and the Commonwealth.

Question negatived.

Human Rights
Senator MOORE (Queensland) (16:37): I, and also on behalf of Senator Pratt and Senator Boyce, move:
That the Senate—
(a) notes that:
(i) today, 81 countries worldwide have legislation criminalising consensual same sex activities between adults, with over half of these countries being members of the Commonwealth (43 of 53 Commonwealth nations), and furthermore, 17 of these countries (of which 14 are members of the Commonwealth) are our near neighbours in the Asia Pacific region,
(ii) even in cases where discriminatory laws criminalising consensual same sex relations are no longer enforced, the decriminalisation of homosexuality is essential if lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people are to live lives of dignity and equality,

(iii) even where homosexuality is not a crime, LGBTI people still face violence, eviction from their homes, dismissal from their jobs and estrangement from their families – the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation would help to combat this,

(iv) international human rights law requires states to respect the freedom and dignity of all people regardless of their sexual orientation, intersex status, gender identity and gender expression, and

(v) the Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013 (a bill introduced by Labor in 2013) contains measures to extend protection from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status;

(b) recognises the efforts of activists and advocates internationally seeking to advance the human rights of LGBTI people, including the work of the Australian Kaleidoscope Human Rights Foundation in advancing the human rights of LGBTI people in the Asia Pacific region;

(c) calls on the Australian Government to take all available steps to:

(i) support the universal decriminalisation of homosexuality in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

(ii) support and defend the human rights of LGBTI people around the world, and

(iii) support a Commonwealth charter which defends LGBTI rights in accordance with international law in all Commonwealth countries; and

(d) calls on the Attorney General to refer to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights a future inquiry on issues affecting the human rights of LGBTI people.

Question agreed to.

DOCUMENTS

Education

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (16:38): I move:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Education, no later than Friday, 21 March 2014, a copy of the Heads of Agreement on National Education Reform, and associated bilateral agreements, between the Commonwealth and New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, including all schedules and attachments, letters, implementation plans submitted, whether or not agreed by the Commonwealth, along with other documents that outline Commonwealth state/territory funding commitments, agreements with or letters to any state or territory outlining future Commonwealth school funding and related requirements, including letters the Minister has sent to Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Question agreed to.

Free Trade Agreements

Order for the Production of Documents

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (16:38): I move:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Trade and Investment, no later than noon on 18 March 2014, the modelling and associated reports referred to by the Prime
Minister and the Minister for Trade and Investment in a media release of 5 December 2013 titled 'Australia concludes FTA negotiations with the Republic of Korea'.

Question agreed to.

NOTICES
Withdrawal

Senator WRIGHT (South Australia) (16:39): I ask that general business notice of motion No. 158 standing in my name for today relating to Adelaide airport be withdrawn.

MOTIONS

Regulation of Lobbyists

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (16:39): I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) the public has a right to know who may benefit from the work of lobbyists,

(ii) the current regulation that covers lobbyists is deficient as it does not cover in-house lobbyists and lobbying of non-government and backbench members of Parliament (MPs),

(iii) in its submission to the inquiry into the operation of the Lobbying Code of Conduct, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet estimated that around 5,000 lobbyists would be required to register if in-house lobbyists were covered by the scheme, compared to 934 entities and individuals currently on the register, and

(iv) the recent controversy about links between lobbying company Australian Public Affairs and the office of the Assistant Minister for Health (Senator Nash); and

(b) calls on the government to:

(i) establish an Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying,

(ii) provide a legislative framework for the regulation of lobbying,

(iii) expand the scope of who is the subject of lobbying to include all MPs and senators, including cross benchers and opposition MPs,

(iv) expand the scope of lobbying to include corporations and organisations employing in-house lobbyists, and

(v) ban the payment of success fees to lobbyists.

Senator RYAN (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (16:40): Mr Acting Deputy President, I seek leave to make a short statement.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi): Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator RYAN: I hasten to begin this by saying that the terms of this motion would have captured me in a past life, but Senator Rhiannon's motion is a little rich coming from a person who opposed my notice of motion of 14 August 2012 concerning former senator Bob Carr's interest in his former lobbying business, RJ Carr Pty Ltd, while Minister for Foreign Affairs. My motion noted that Prime Minister Gillard's standard of ministerial ethics required ministers to divest interests in any public company and called on Senator Carr to table advice he had received or relied on regarding compliance with these standards. Further, documents from the Prime Minister's office on this issue went missing after Ms Gillard was deposed as
Prime Minister despite Prime Minister Rudd being advised to secure them. Yet today we have Senator Rhiannon purporting to want to tighten regulations on lobbying when she personally, as the Greens' spokesperson in this area, allowed Senator Carr to continue this breach. On 5 March the Greens' leader, Senator Milne, proclaimed during a censure motion debate that this was the first she had heard of Senator Carr retaining his shareholding. This is untrue. In 2012, together with Senator Rhiannon, Senator Milne voted down my motion seeking clarification— *(Time expired)*

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi):** The question is that the motion moved by Senator Rhiannon be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [16:45]

*(The Acting Deputy President—Senator Bernardi)*

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<th>Ayes</th>
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<td>Noes</td>
<td>41</td>
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**AYES**

- Di Natale, R
- Ludlam, S
- Rhiannon, L
- Waters, LJ
- Wright, PI
- Hanson-Young, SC
- Milne, C
- Siewert, R (teller)
- Whish-Wilson, PS

**NOES**

- Back, CJ
- Bilyk, CL
- Bishop, TM
- Bushby, DC
- Carr, KJ
- Dastyari, S
- Eggleston, A
- Fawcett, DJ
- Furner, ML
- Johnston, D
- Lines, S
- Lundy, KA
- Marshall, GM
- Moore, CM
- O'Sullivan, B
- Polley, H
- Ruston, A
- Seselja, Z
- Smith, D
- Tillem, M
- Wong, P
- Bernardi, C
- Birmingham, SJ
- Brown, CL
- Cameron, DN
- Colbeck, R
- Edwards, S
- Farrell, D
- Fifield, MP
- Gallacher, AM
- Kroger, H
- Ludwig, JW
- Madigan, JJ
- McKenzie, B
- O'Neill, DM
- Peris, N
- Ronaldson, M
- Ryan, SM
- Singh, LM
- Sterle, G
- Urquhart, AE (teller)

Question negatived.
The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Bernardi) (16:48): The President has received the following letter from Senator Moore:

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

"The failure of the Abbott Government to release the interim report of the Commission of Audit."

Is the proposal supported?

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

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

Senator LUNDY (Australian Capital Territory) (16:49): At 12 noon today the government defied a Senate order to table the first report of the Commission of Audit. They did so because this is a secret report. We know that the last time a coalition government prepared a commission of audit, in 1996, it laid out a blueprint of cuts to the public sector in such a way that it permanently changed the nature of public service in Australia. We are at risk of them wreaking such damage again. And, whilst this report remains secret, the Australian people are uninformed of its contents. The threat of cuts has hung over the Australian people since the election.

I would just like to go through a chronology of events leading up to this day. On 6 September last year, Mr Abbott suggested that there would in fact be no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS. Then, on 22 October, the National Commission of Audit was announced by the Treasurer, Mr Joe Hockey, and the Minister for Finance, Senator Cormann. At the time, the government said this:

The Commission has been established by the Australian Government as an independent body to review and report on the performance, functions and roles of the Commonwealth government.

Then, at the end of January, the commission reported on the first phase of the review to the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance. Yet, on 14 February, we know that phase 1 of this report was provided to senior ministers, according to the letter tabled by Senator Cormann. Then, on 5 March, an order for the production of documents was put forward by Senator Di Natale. On 11 March, Mr Abbott changed his tune, asserting that the only areas quarantined from savings pre the election were defence, health and medical research.

We are now heading towards the end of March, when we know that the Commission of Audit is to provide the second phase of its review. The government have so far refused to put a date on when the Commission of Audit's report will be released publicly, although Mr Hockey has said that they hope to release it before the budget. But today we find that not only have they defied a Senate order but they have claimed public interest immunity for doing so, and we are still left in the dark. We do not know where the government plans to make cuts.
We asked questions about this today in question time and we got back words that I believe show that this government is keeping some room to move. I asked a question specifically about cuts to the ABC and SBS. I did not get a definitive response of 'No cuts'—reflecting on its previous commitment—'We have no plans to do that.'

But what we know about the behaviour of coalition governments from previous reports is that they had no plans to do a whole heap of stuff that was subsequently outlined and recommended in their commission of audit report—and I think they are going to do it again. Labor has been meticulous in expressing its concern about what this Commission of Audit will mean, not only for the Australian Public Service but for so many of the essential services that it provides the people of Australia.

One of the big issues that has emerged since we have been debating this issue is the timing of the report. We know that the government have said that they are using this information in the lead-up to the budget and we know that the commissioners themselves have been told no area is off limits. We know that Mr Hockey, the Treasurer, has said that they are looking forward to adopting—and I am paraphrasing—pretty much all or most of the Commission of Audit's recommendations. This government cannot have it both ways. They are going either to use the Commission of Audit report as a basis to progress cuts or ask these commissioners to do a whole heap of work that will mean absolutely nothing.

What I defer to is what I know about the coalition's previous behaviour. What we know about the pattern of behaviour of coalition governments is that they go into elections, as they did in 1996, saying: 'We're not going to do anything much. We're not going to cut much. We're going to do a few things here and a few things there; but don't worry, it is business as usual.' Nothing could be further from the truth. The Australian people endured a similar response this time from the coalition as they did from them when they went into the last election: 'Don't worry. We're not going to make cuts.' The Prime Minister said then, 'No, there are not going to be any changes to health, no changes to pensions, no change to the GST, no cuts to the ABC or SBS, no cuts to education.' We have already seen a very different story emerge.

The secrecy surrounding the Commission of Audit means that, in going into this budget, we are fearful of the sort of havoc that the coalition government will wreak. We have established a Senate select committee, which has already tabled an interim report. In its very first chapter is a recommendation for a series of measures of accountability and scrutiny to be applied to the commission of audit process. Several recommendations were prepared and expressed in such a way that even things like the schedule of meetings should be laid out, the evidence collected should be expressed and, of course, the report—its outcomes and recommendations, which we know are sitting on ministers' desks right now—should be open to the public. This report should be open to scrutiny. If it is an input to budget, it should be scrutinised.

I would like to use my final couple of minutes to talk about some of the important evidence we have gathered. I am a senator for the ACT, as my colleagues are aware, and I remember the experience of the last time a coalition government came to power and had a national commission of audit. Its report back to the government was that the cuts to the public sector were both arbitrary and harsh—so much so that many people did lose their jobs in the ACT and our economy took a dive for a substantial period of time. This time the coalition
government has relied on similar rhetoric, saying things like 'The Public Service has expanded significantly over the last 20 years'. That is not true. Over the last 20 years the Public Service has gone from 160,000 to 167,000, whereas the population has increased from 17.8 million to 23 million. So the population has grown by nearly 30 per cent but the public sector workforce has grown by just four per cent. There is no explosion in the Public Service. Further, Commonwealth Public Service expenditure is a mere 0.2 per cent more as a share of GDP than the last commission of audit back in 1996.

Evidence was taken from a number of people who appeared before the committee, and here I refer in particular to the evidence provided by Ms Nadine Flood, the National Secretary of the Community and Public Sector Union. She very clearly laid out the credentials of the Australian Public Service: it was rated by the World Bank in 2012 as being in the top six in the world as far as government effectiveness was concerned and in the top three per cent for regulatory quality. At the same time, Australia was the lowest-taxing country. Some of the most compelling evidence that we have received during this inquiry is starting to unpick some of the assumptions and assertions that have been made in the terms of reference of the Commission of Audit and the work that it is doing. If you analyse closely how the terms of reference are expressed in the brief that has been given, they are misleading in the very first instance. We do not have an exploding Public Service. We do not have an inefficient Public Service. We do not have a high-taxing government that somehow needs to find those savings, and we do not have a commission of audit process that is even addressing the revenue issues, which can start to look at some of the structural challenges of the budget going forward. As all of this piles up, it looks like a very political exercise put in place by a government committed to cutting government, not committed to good public policy or good governance.

This is a great shame for the Australian people. If we see anything like the contrivance that has been conducted in the past, if we see this coalition government using their Commission of Audit report to justify a series of cuts, then that will be the evidence we need to say to the people of Australia: you cannot trust a government that keeps secrets, you cannot trust a government that is unprepared to share its processes and allow the light of day to be shone upon them as it considers its budget contributions. I certainly commend my colleagues to support this matter of public importance and to watch this space as the mystery of the secret of the Commission of Audit continues to unfold.

Senator MASON (Queensland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs) (16:59): This morning, when I read the matter of public importance proposed by Senator Moore for today, I smiled. It reads:

The failure of the Abbott government to release the interim report of the Commission of Audit.

As you know, Mr Acting Deputy President Bishop, I am an admirer of Senator Moore. She is always eloquent, often elegant, always interesting, extremely polite—and you cannot say that about all my colleagues! But always—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator MASON: Some of them, but not all! But I thought that Senator Moore might have injected this MPI into the Senate for debate this afternoon as some sort of ironic flourish, perhaps with a smile upon her face. One only has to go back six months, to the parting gift of the former, Labor government to the people of this country, to think Senator Moore’s MPI must be ironic. As their parting gift, Labor left us—I just checked before—$123 billion worth
of cumulative deficits over the forward estimates, gross debt headed towards $667 billion within a decade and our current net debt at something over $185 billion.

Now the Labor Party have come into the Senate with seemingly straight faces, arguing—let me get this right—that the Abbott government should release the Commission of Audit's report so that we can straightaway determine how pathetic, how hopeless, how unruly, how shambolic the Labor Party were in government! That is clever. I do not quite get the game. Obviously, it is a more sophisticated political game than I am aware of! I find it strange that the government should be forced to quickly tell how dismal, how wasteful and chaotic Labor were at governing. The Labor Party are saying, 'How dare the government keep the voters from knowing the extent of Labor's mismanagement; how dare they!' I do not like giving advice in this place—far be it from me to give advice—but if I were in the opposition I would not want the Commission of Audit's report ever to be released, because all it will say is what a shambles the last government was, what a fiasco that government was and what a failure it was.

The report will come out, no doubt, when the government have fully considered all the detail and when we have had the time to carefully and deliberately examine all the issues raised. I hate to score a political point—because I never do that!—but let me remind the opposition that it took Labor about 130 days to release its taxation review, undertaken by the former Treasury Secretary, Dr Henry. It was 130 days before that was released. I can promise you this: at least when the Commission of Audit report does come out, when it finally comes out, we will not do what the Labor Party did to the Henry report—that is, completely ignore it. We will be listening, we will be learning and we will be acting.

The root problem with the Australian Labor Party at the moment, and I think I have touched on this before along the way, is that the social democratic framework they are working from, that their counterparts in Western Europe are working from, has been exposed as a great con, like a pyramid scheme or a Ponzi scheme, not only sanctioned by the Labor Party but also eulogised by them.

The Labor Party, from the beginning, have assumed that the number of taxpayers as well as national productivity will continue to grow at a sufficient rate to support growing social welfare. The assumption always by the Labor Party and, no doubt, the Greens is that there will be more taxpayers and greater productivity to continue to fund greater and greater expenditure on health, education and welfare. But it breaks down if either of two things happen: (1) if the number of taxpayers or the productive output of a nation is insufficient to meet the obligations made by government; or (2) if the obligations keep increasing because of, for example, increasing life expectancy. What has happened in the West for least the past 20 years is that both scenarios are now appearing. There are not enough taxpayers and we are not sufficiently productive to meet the ever-expanding welfare demands. That, in effect, is the problem. We have neither the taxpayers nor the productivity to continue to fund health, education and welfare. Before anyone says, 'It's all about infrastructure,' it is not. What is killing the West and killing Australia, in fact, is recurrent expenditure. We cannot afford the health, education and welfare expenditure that we are currently committed to. That is the problem.

So how have Western nations met these increasing welfare demands? By going into debt. They have borrowed money to pay for them. Because we do not raise enough money through
taxation to pay for health, education and welfare, we have borrowed from our kids and from our grandchildren—so we can live better at their expense. That is what the Labor Party believe. That is what the Greens believe. They think it is okay to borrow from our children and our grandchildren so we can have more welfare, so we can have more superannuation; of course, it is bad luck for them, because they will be paying the bill. That is okay, to the Labor Party and the Greens. It is all right to borrow money from our kids and our grandkids to pay for the high life for us! That is what they say.

The report of the Commission of Audit will say that. It will talk about the economic failures of the Labor Party. Of course it will. They were economically illiterate. But there is something far worse than that about the Left in this country—far worse. It is not just the economic failure; it is the moral failure of the Left in Australian politics and in the Western world. Anyone who believes that it is okay to borrow from our children and our grandchildren to pay for recurrent expenditure is absolutely disgraceful. That is the problem with the Left in the Western world. Why do you think the United States, Great Britain and Western Europe are falling? Why is their power, relatively, starting to fade? I will tell you why. It is because they have lived beyond their means. That is the truth.

Australia, just six or seven years ago, did not have any debt, but now we are stuck with it. What is worse is that it is becoming structural, which of course the Labor Party and the Greens do not mind. They do not mind if there is constant debt, because governments then become the centre of the economy. When all the spivs, the speculators and the rent seekers come along, they can decide who gets the money. That is what the Left in this country believe. They stand up here, as they will in a minute, and say, 'We should not cut X, Y or Z.' That is what they will argue. They never come in here and say, 'We should cut A, B and C.' They never come in here and tell us how they are going to solve the problem—a problem that they created. They created this huge structural debt, the fastest growing debt in the Western world. They created it. Have they ever come in here and said, 'We could solve it by doing A, B and C?' Never. All they do is run a scare campaign saying that the ABC is going to be cut or that the Public Service is going to be cut.

The fact is that someone in this country is going to have to make some tough decisions—not, frankly, for my welfare, the welfare of the government or the welfare of the Labor Party or the Greens but for the welfare of our children and our grandchildren. Either we start to live within our means—either we cut expenditure or raise taxation, one or both of those things—or our children and our grandchildren will be paying our debt. If you do not believe me, go and speak to a teenager in Greece. Quite frankly, if I were a teenager in Greece, I would want to shoot every baby boomer and every politician in the damn country. We should not ever let that happen in this country. Under our watch, it will not.

Senator Di Natale (Victoria) (17:09): I am reminded of the words that the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, uttered during the election campaign. He made this promise to the Australian people. He said that he would lead an open, honest and transparent government. He made that promise to the Australian people and those are very noble sentiments. They are sentiments that, regardless of what side of politics you are on, ought to be acknowledged and agreed with—because transparency is the lubricant through which governments function properly.
That is why so many people have become alarmed at what has emerged from this government since the election. This concern does not come from just the usual suspects; it comes from right across the political spectrum. It comes from commentators and from people right across the media. They are concerned about the culture of secrecy that has emerged and that has infected everything this government does. We are now seeing information tightly controlled by the Prime Minister. We have seen leaked newspaper reports that state that all media coordination and requests need to go through the Prime Minister's office—centralised control.

During the election campaign, you could not shut the Prime Minister or Minister Morrison up on the issue of refugees and asylum seekers. You could not shut them up. They were photographed next to banners with tallies of boat arrivals, we heard them talking about towing back boats and we even heard them talking about buying boats from Indonesian fishermen. What has happened now? They were elected into government and Minister Morrison and the Prime Minister have gone missing in action on this issue. 'No comment—that is an operational matter.' 'No comment—that is an on-water matter.'

Remarkably, in response to a request for information from this Senate—an order for the production of documents relating to Operation Sovereign Borders—we got a public interest immunity claim: 'Sorry, we cannot provide you with that information. All we can do is provide you with private briefings on matters that have been discussed in press conferences.' We are not interested in that. We are not interested in a few short paragraphs that tell us that something is an operational matter or an on-water matter.

It goes further. Freedom of information requests have been made more difficult. The media is no longer able to access ministers on critical issues. We get told that things are cabinet-in-confidence, that they are protected by public interest immunity or that they are operational matters. These terms are thrown around like confetti. It is an old ploy. It is a ploy you use when you want to bury information. The promise of open, honest and transparent government has not been delivered.

I refer this government that is so intent on maximising freedom to a passage from a 1966 work, *Freedom in Australia*, by Campbell and Whitmore. It says:

The most pernicious of official attitudes is secrecy. Ministers and officials have developed a firm attitude that the general public are not entitled to know anything about what they are doing—even if their actions vitally affect the rights of citizens both individually and collectively. Yet here we are—with the government that promised to maximise individual freedoms missing in action.

In 2010, Senator Cormann, now the Minister for Finance, who was then intent on getting information from the then government, made the following accusation about that government:

… this is an arrogant, secretive government which has repeatedly refused to answer questions and which has not taken seriously orders of the Senate. This is hypocrisy writ large.

We have senators who have sought access to information in relation to a specific matter for months now and the government has declined to provide that information. We think the release of that information is critical. I do not understand why the government is treating this as if it is a national security related state secret, given the words from Mr...
Cormann, the very person who has made the public interest immunity claim that is the subject of today's debate.

The Commission of Audit is a critical piece of information. It is the most important piece of work done in many years. It will inform the federal budget, and we already know from the commissioners themselves that everything is on the table. The issue of Medicare co-payments has already been floated, so that now there will be a six-dollar fee when someone goes to see their GP. It will be the end of bulk-billing. We have seen huge cuts to the public sector being floated. We have seen cuts to the Disability Support Pension. We have heard that the privatisation of Australia Post is on the table, and so on, and so on. These are significant changes, and they are worthy of public debate.

We do not shy away from the idea of a debate on these matters, and a Commission of Audit may, indeed, be a good idea. An honest debate—one that Senator Mason wants to have—about spending and revenue is a good thing, because we have some major challenges and we need to start planning for the future. But, instead, the process we have is a black box. We have the commissioners being hand-picked. We have the terms of reference biased to get a particular outcome. Submissions are not being made public. That is why we have had to set up an inquiry into this process, so that we at least inject some transparency into what is going to be one of the most important documents considered by a federal government in decades.

What has emerged through that inquiry is that contrary to Senator Mason's assertions we have a very efficient public sector. Public spending is not out of control; it has been stable for two decades and, compared with most other countries, we do very well when it comes to the spend of public monies. Of course we can do better. But we do much, much better than most other countries on that measure. When it comes to our health system, far from being unsustainable, we have one of the most efficient and one of the fairest health systems anywhere in the world. We get value for money because of the fact that we have a single public insurer that allows us to drive down costs through the delivery of health care services. Far from being unsustainable, our health system delivers value for money.

We know that this is a country that is a low-taxing country, and we are taxing at a much lower rate, as a proportion of GDP, than we taxed during the Howard era, for example. They are some facts that need to be ventilated through this debate. Our tax take, as a proportion of GDP, has decreased significantly since the Howard era and is much lower than that of most other OECD countries. We have a revenue problem, not a spending problem. We have heard a lot about corporate welfare through the inquiry that we have run, and we have heard Joe Hockey talk about the age of entitlement. Well, let's start talking about the huge corporate welfare that flows to the mining sector. Let's talk about the huge subsidies and tax concessions that are given to other sectors of the economy, like the private health insurance industry. And let's start talking about some sacred cows like negative gearing and the huge concessions that are given through superannuation.

You see, what we have at the moment is an ideological debate. We have a government that believes that we should tax at a lower rate. Well, if you are going to tax at a lower rate than the one at which we are currently taxing, then what are we going to cut? What sort of society do we want to live in? Do we want a health system like in the US, where there are 50 million people uninsured and where the biggest cause of personal bankruptcy is people not being able to pay their health insurance bills? That is the recipe from this government, and it is not one
that the Australian people want. We are heading towards a dog-eat-dog world under this government—a less caring society where it is everyone for themselves. If we are going to have a debate, we should have it. We should do it publicly. The government should release the findings of the Commission of Audit, instead of providing this as political cover for a government that wants to implement their agenda.

Senator BILYK (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (17:19): I rise today to speak on this matter of public importance: the failure of the Abbott government to release the interim report of the Commission of Audit. Labor said, prior to the 2013 federal election, that the coalition had a secret cuts agenda, and that has been proven to be true. It is an agenda that was hidden to avoid a backlash against the Liberals and Nationals at the Tasmanian and South Australian elections held last weekend. It is an agenda that remains hidden to avoid a backlash at the Western Australian Senate election. The Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, did his utmost before the election to reassure Australians. He promised a government of no surprises.

Yet, since the election of an Abbott coalition government, there have been nasty surprises at every turn, and the Australian people are coming to realise that the government we have now is not the government they thought they were voting for.

You see, Mr Abbott is one of Australia's most talented magicians. I do not often have very nice things to say about Mr Abbott, but I will give him this: he is one of Australia's most talented magicians. If you speak to a professional magician, they will tell you that the art of magic is distraction. It is encouraging your audience to focus on some colour and movement elsewhere while the trick is performed away from the gaze. Mr Abbott's magic trick was to announce a few cuts here and there—the Schoolkids Bonus, foreign aid, tax concessions for small business—while hoping his audience would be distracted from the deeper cuts that were to follow. The initial cuts were the distraction; the Commission of Audit was the sleight of hand. The commission was Mr Abbott's way of hiding the more severe cuts until after the election. It is a trick we have seen practised before with great skill.

Premier Campbell Newman, in Queensland, also announced a Commission of Audit, but he did not reveal his plans to sack 20,000 public servants until after the Queensland election. If you think the Newman government's cuts are savage, they are just the warm-up act, whereas the Abbott government's cuts are the main show. But the Abbott government are not ready to reveal their plans just yet, and that is why they are refusing to release the Commission of Audit's interim report. They were worried about how revealing their secret cuts agenda would affect their performance in last year's federal election. They were worried about how their secret-cuts agenda might impact on their state colleagues in the Tasmanian and South Australia elections. Now they are worried about how their secret-cuts agenda will impact on the Senate election in Western Australia.

It has been revealed time and again that the modus operandi of this Abbott coalition government is to wait until people have voted before they reveal their true plans. Here is a case in point. On SBS news, the day before the election, Mr Abbott promised no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS. Yet at a doorstep in Perth, only six days ago, he said that—apart from Defence—health and medical research was the only area of government funding quarantined from savings pre-election. After ruling out cuts to education, pensions and Australia's public broadcaster, Mr Abbott has backflipped spectacularly on all these areas. We know that a
belated attempt was made by the Abbott government to walk away from its commitment to
the first four years of Better Schools or Gonski funding, and now that Mr Abbott has let slip
that cuts to education are on the cards I have no doubt that this issue will rear its ugly head
again.

We know this government backed away from the full fibre-to-the-premises rollout of the
National Broadband Network in Tasmania, despite promising before the election to honour all
existing contracts. We also see the government announcing an efficiency review of the
ABC—suspiciously the day after Mr Abbott accused the public broadcaster of being un-
Australian—and they have not ruled out cuts to the ABC’s funding, following that review.
While the government did reveal, prior to the election, plans to scrap the instant asset write-
off for small business, they did not publicise the limited time businesses have to claim the
concession. I suppose they were hoping they could pinch a few more pennies by having
business make as few claims as possible. This is from a government that claims to care about
and support small business.

Those opposite also scrapped the climate change commission and attempted to close down
the Climate Change Authority and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. They made the
pathetic excuse that these moves would lead to the removal of the carbon price. I and other
senators who spoke previously in this place outlined very clearly why these bodies play such
an important role in climate change advice and clean energy development, with or without a
carbon price. The Abbott government's list of casualties from its cuts so far includes the
Home Energy Saver Scheme, which provides energy savings to low-income households—
quite hypocritical, given what the government has had to say about electricity prices; the
AusAID graduate program, at a cost of 38 jobs; Indigenous legal services and domestic-
violence support services; the 46-year-old Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia; and
600 jobs at the CSIRO, including some of Australia’s best scientists.

The recent change of name of the National Disability Insurance Scheme’s ‘launch’ site to a
‘trial’ site has led to the disability sector wondering whether the axe might fall on disability
support. When those opposite try to justify their harsh cuts, we will hear them wax lyrical—
they will put on theatre, like Senator Mason did earlier. They will yell, as life is so stressful
on that side, and get all uptight and have to take their blood pressure tablets. They will talk
about debt and deficit and the government having to live within its means, and they will try to
tell Australians that savage cuts are necessary because the previous government was wasteful
and inefficient.

Senator Smith: In the previous six years; I agree. There's more debt now.

Senator BILYK: This is absolutely predictable rhetoric from government senators who
stick their fingers in their ears and sing ‘la, la, la’ or try to interject whenever someone
mentions the biggest global economic downturn since the Great Depression. It is not only
predictable but also the height of hypocrisy from a government that sought permission from
the parliament for a 67 per cent increase in government debt—and then sought permission for
unlimited debt. It is hypocritical coming from a government that has, this financial year,
added $17 billion to the budget deficit. And it is hypocritical coming from a government that
is telling pensioners, school children and families they will have to make sacrifices so that
millionaires can get paid $75,000 to have children, so the same millionaires can get a tax
break on their superannuation; so the government can hand over $8 billion to the Reserve
Bank, against the advice of Treasury; so the government can subsidise polluters through its inefficient and expensive Direct Action Plan; so the government can tell polluters they do not have to pay for their pollution; and so the government can cut taxes for billionaire miners who make superprofits.

Those pensioners, families and school children who are now making sacrifices will have to wait to find out the worst of these cuts. The commission's report is kept hidden, because the government does not want Australians to know what it has in store. They refuse to reveal how much funding they will cut to schools, how much they will cut pensions and how much they will slash the budget of the ABC—all to fund tax breaks and parental leave for millionaires and billionaires. This government has its priorities very wrong. Schools, pensions and disability care are not waste. Tax breaks and subsidies for millionaires are.

It is time for those opposite to come clean and reveal to the Australian public where the axe will fall. They did not tell Australians before the weekend's state elections. They should at least tell Western Australians before they go to the polls to elect six senators. Western Australians have the right to know—before they vote—whether the Abbott axe will fall on their pensions, schools or essential public services. If they do not know the Liberal-National coalition's secret-cuts agenda, if they do not know how it will affect them, then they should not vote for them. It is time for voters in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania, and across the country, to be treated with honesty and with some integrity by this government. Honesty is in short supply when it comes to those opposite and their coalition colleagues in the House.

Despite the deficit of honesty on the other side, I will give Mr Abbott credit for telling the truth about one thing. He said before the election that he wanted to lead a government that will 'under promise, and over deliver'. When it comes to Mr Abbott's agenda of savage cuts, he has achieved exactly that. He has delivered far more cuts than he promised. And there are more to come.

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (17:29): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak today on this matter of public importance. It is indeed a matter of very significant public importance. By listening to the contribution of other senators many might think that there was not a problem facing the Australian public and that there was not a problem facing the budget position of the new, coalition government.

It was interesting to read, last week, that prominent Australian chief executives of some of our leading corporations had travelled all the way to London to talk about the Australian economic experience and some of the challenges facing the new government. I was surprised that they travelled all the way to London to talk about some of the challenges, because if they had stayed in Melbourne last week they would have seen the work of the National Commission of Audit and they would have understood my concern that, unfortunately, Labor and Greens senators have been too quick to abandon or to criticise the work of the National Commission of Audit. They have been too quick to ignore the very serious budget problem that faces our country.

I want to reflect on that problem for a moment, because I do not think I have yet heard other senators in this debate talk about the serious economic challenges facing our country—and, more importantly, the government—as we proceed towards the budget in May. Let me just give you a sense of the enormity of the challenge. Eight billion dollars a year is being
spent on interest payments alone to meet the debt of the former government. That is $8 billion that could be used for education or to support regional communities like those that Senator Back represents. That $8 billion could be used to support more efficient health delivery. In addition to that, I have not heard Labor senators—or Greens senators, for that matter—talk about the increasing rate at which government expenditure is occurring. I am happy to stand corrected but, if my recollection serves me correctly, 3.5 per cent is the rate at which government spending has been increasing over the last five years. Into the medium term that is expected to increase to 3.7 per cent, at a time when our nation's revenue base is diminishing.

If we looked specifically at expenditure in health, we would know that health expenditure has been increasing at a rate of almost 4.5 per cent. Clearly, we have a challenge. What is different about this government's approach from the previous government's approach—the challenge was there prior to 7 September last year—is that this government has decided that it will tackle, address, amend and correct the budget emergency that the former government has left us with.

We hear a lot about Senate obstructionism and about the games that Labor and Greens senators play. Often senators on this side—government senators—are keen to draw the community's attention to the delay and obfuscation of senators opposite but it was interesting to note what Dr Chris Roberts said last week in London. Chris Roberts is the CEO of Cochlear. He said to an English audience that the Greens, who are economically and scientifically illiterate, were a great concern. He said that it was as if they wanted us all to be subsistence farmers and that they fundamentally do not understand how the world works. What Dr Roberts was saying was that it is very important that senators in this place understand and come to appreciate the enormity of the budget challenge that this government has inherited and has decided to address.

In addition to that it is important to note that we have had, I think, four hearings of the Senate inquiry into the National Commission of Audit so far. It is fair to say that they started with great gusto. I think that Labor and Greens senators were hoping to find a mass of information that they could use to go to the community to scare the community into believing that the government might adopt some ill-conceived or ill-thought-out recommendations. But we know that the National Commission of Audit is conducting its work to provide advice to government about the sorts of things that the government may choose to include in its budget in May next year.

We know that the government may decide to accept some of those recommendations. We know that the government may decide to reject some of those recommendations. Indeed, the government might decide to amend some of those recommendations. So, what we have here, in my humble assessment, is a very astute way in which to address the budget crisis or the budget emergency.

So, when Labor senators try to tell you, 'This is terrible; expect cuts. This is terrible; we are all doomed,' perhaps we should reflect on what former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said when he came to office. What words did he use when he was talking about addressing some of the budget issues that he thought were worthy of addressing? In the Rudd government's first 100 days it bragged that it had set up a razor gang 'to comprehensively review each
Commonwealth government department and cut wasteful spending'. Those were Kevin Rudd's words.

What changed? Why was it okay for the former Prime Minister, on coming to government, to conduct a review of government expenditure but, lo and behold, it is not appropriate now? What changed? All that changed was the narrow perspective of Labor senators, aided and abetted by their Greens partners. I could go on and talk about the IMF and other contributions but I will leave it for another time. (Time expired)

**Senator LINES (Western Australia) (17:36):** I rise to speak on today's matter of public importance. I speak from the perspective of being one of the many hundreds of thousands of Australians who took to the streets of our cities and communities, yesterday, to protest about the Abbott government. For the government simply to ignore all of us—families, young and old, students, young people, pensioners—who took to the streets to voice our concerns about a government that has only been a government for six months is extraordinary. Our Prime Minister has said that the only rally he noticed yesterday was in relation to St Patrick's Day, yet we had protests by tens of thousands of people in our major cities, and similar numbers throughout the regional areas of Australia

This was not a small group; this was not a particular part of the Australian community; this was Australians of all walks of life saying to the Abbott government, 'We've had enough already.'

From day 1, the government started with an agenda of secrecy. The Commission of Audit fits into that agenda. It is a secret, so it did not prepare a paper for discussion. It has held hearings, but they have been in secret. So the Australian public know absolutely nothing about what the Commission of Audit is undertaking. What we know about the Commission of Audit is that it is largely comprised of members of the business community, and we do know what is on the business community's agenda. It is in our newspapers every day. They want to be taxed less. They want to be able to make profits, which, foolishly, the government seems to think will turn into jobs, and yet they have not been able to demonstrate any time in our history where, when you free business up, it invests in jobs. Business invests in profits for its shareholders. That is what business does. Business wants to see less corporate tax. Certainly the business community, the AiG and others have talked about broadening the GST and increasing the GST, and all of that hurts ordinary Australians and makes it much more difficult for ordinary working Australians to balance their budgets. Nevertheless, the Commission of Audit continues along in secret.

The only hint we have had is when the Senate set up a committee, which I sit on. Mr Shepherd, the chair of the Commission of Audit, told us that nothing was ruled in and nothing was ruled out. That runs contrary to the promises that the Prime Minister was giving us in the lead-up to the election and post the election, although now many of those promises have gone, as we have seen, and we are now going to get some kind of tax—a big, fat tax, as the government likes to call these taxes—on Medicare. When you visit a doctor, you will be charged an additional fee. That seems to be widely supported by the government. It again shows how out of touch the government is with ordinary working Australians who already pay when they go to a doctor, and the government wants to slug them again with a big, new fat tax on Medicare.
In addition to that, Mr Abbott has been forced by the opposition to say he will at some point release the Commission of Audit document, but all of the political commentators in this country say that it will not be released before the WA half-Senate election because the government knows it has bad news and it is not in its interests to do that. So it will not be before April. That gives us about four weeks to look at the document when all of the deals, all of the argy-bargy and all of the cutting will have already taken place for the May budget.

This is a dishonest government. It is a government that is hell-bent on trying to say that we live in an economic community and not a community made up of families and individuals. It is a government that, quite frankly, does not care what happens to ordinary Australians. It does not care and it demonstrates that by ignoring the hundreds of thousands of people who took to the streets yesterday, along with myself and my grandchildren, to protest about what the Abbott government is doing. You cannot say that those people are not concerned. We have a government absolutely committed to silence. It is time to come clean and put the Commission of Audit document out there.

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (17:41): There is a lot of material to work with. I must say that I am deeply appreciative that this is not being broadcast, because Senator Lines has vilified business as the villains of everything that is bad and evil in this country when the reality is that they are the employers of all the people that she represented in her former life as a trade unionist. It would be a great day when we come into this place and see those former trade unionists in their majority on the other side take off their hats and start to be objective, because in the circle of life they represent only about 40 per cent.

We have had a number of contentions put, but let's reframe this motion because the Greens and the Labor Party have sought to politicise what is a very credible and responsible instrument of government. They have sought to politicise it for their own gain prior to two state elections, to seek the champion of fearmongering, bringing it out into the electorate, and still try to claim this position for the Perth Senate election on 5 April. So we have all this bleating. Let's reframe it, shall we, and just say that it is a political stunt from the other side.

It is absolutely and thoroughly reasonable for a government, having assumed government, to have an audit of the books. I see Senator Polley over there shaking her head. I guess she would agree with me that you need to do an audit after such an incompetent reign of Treasury by the frontbenchers of the previous Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments. Let me talk about why this is credible. Those on the other side might want to know that, in January this year, former prime ministers Hawke and Keating drew comparisons between the budget challenges faced by the current government—that is, your period in government, your reign—and equivalent fiscal challenges they had faced in office. Mr Hawke, who was one of the most progressive, reformist Labor prime ministers and arguably had one of the more successful reigns of Labor prime ministers in this country, said:

You've got to have a prime minister and treasurer, and a competent ministry which understands the issue and is prepared to make hard decisions.

So it is the same challenge. That is what Mr Hawke said.

Mr Keating was more pointed about the need to make tough choices. He said:

We had to cut spending across the board—social welfare, business welfare, everywhere.

He also said:
Sleazy, underhand politics and policies—of not offending anybody—was what got the country into trouble in the first place.

There you have it. You sit here and try to politicise this for your electoral gain. You want the opportunity to come out and beat this ideological position of cutting things. The reality was that, after the 7 September election, this government inherited a legacy of $123 billion in accumulated budget deficits from the Labor-Greens alliance in their reign and $667 billion in accumulated debt. Well done! That is why we have a Commission of Audit.

While you are out there vilifying the business people, I note with interest that the people who have been chosen to conduct the Commission of Audit have been vilified as well. It just does not make sense to me in any way, shape or form because those people have been brought together because of their business acumen and because they are good Australians who understand that there was a budget emergency which we needed to pull back from to take stock and have a look at every sector.

I recently joined this folly—the Greens-Labor sponsored inquiry into the Commission of Audit. The reality is that, when I first went there and heard from a number of government departments, it became very clear that some of those departmental officials felt that there were areas in their departments where they could reclaim and better utilise some resources. That was the feeling throughout. They said there may be some duplication across departments. Why wouldn't a responsible government have a look at these things?

While I am referring to those hearings, I point out that some of the witnesses who appeared highlighted the importance of the work of the commission. For example, Dr Peter Burn, the Director of Public Policy at the Australian Industry Group, said the work of the commission:

… is a very important task, and it is worth emphasising that it would be important regardless of the current position of the budget. It is perhaps most important in the context of longer term public finances in view of the accumulated impacts that demographic forces and rising health expenditures could have on Australia’s public finances over coming decades.

That is not an emotional statement. That is from somebody out there who understands the drivers of this economy. He says that it is thoroughly appropriate to have a Commission of Audit. Yet we see those on the other side, in their usual form, wanting to rush these things out there. They want to beat their drum. That is not the way good governments run themselves. They have a look at the effects of these things. They do not put them in silos. They cannot put health in a silo, education in a silo and industry in a silo. They cannot do that. You have to embrace all aspects of the economy and ensure that they are represented properly if there is going to be some proven fiscal management. You must try to understand that.

This whole debate was further politicised when Senator Di Natale spoke with confected outrage about Senator Cormann calling for the release of information from the former government. That was in 2010. At that stage our economy had spiralled into a complete abyss and there was no way out. I know that Senator Cormann is now working with other coalition members. I will try to continue to expose this motion for the sham that it is.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Ruston): Order! The time for the discussion has expired.
AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS

Report No. 23 of 2013-14

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Ruston) (17:49): In accordance with the provisions of the Auditor-General Act 1997, I present the following report of the Auditor-General:

Report No. 23 of 2013-14: Performance audit—Policing at Australian international airports: Australian Federal Police

DOCUMENTS

Responses to Senate Resolutions

Tabling

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Ruston) (17:50): I present the following responses to resolutions of the Senate:

- Minister for Education (Mr Pyne) – Australian Curriculum (agreed to 12 February 2014)
- Minister for Foreign Affairs (Ms Bishop) – Syria (agreed to 12 February 2014)
- Minister for the Environment (Mr Hunt) – Gunns Limited pulp mill (agreed to 13 February 2014)

COMMITTEES

Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Report


Ordered that the report be printed.

Senator BACK: I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the report.

Leave granted.

Senator BACK: I move:

That the Senate adopt the recommendations contained in the report to refer the provisions of the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Green Army Programme Bill) 2014 to the Education and Employment Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 13 May 2014.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Report

Senator BACK (Western Australia—Second Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (17:51): Pursuant to order, and at the request of the chairs of the respective committees, I present reports on legislation as listed at item 15 on today's Order of Business, together with the Hansard record of proceedings and documents presented to the committees.

Ordered that the reports be printed.
DOCUMENTS
Tabling
The Clerk: Documents are tabled pursuant to statute. Details will be recorded in the Journals of the Senate and on the Dynamic Red.
Details of the documents also appear at the end of today’s Hansard.

COMMITTEES
Education and Employment Legislation Committee
Environment and Communications References Committee
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

Membership
The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Ruston) (17:52): Order! The President has received letters from parties requesting changes in the membership of various committees.

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (17:52): by leave—I move:
That senators be discharged from and appointed to committees as follows:
Education and Employment Legislation Committee—
Appointed—
Substitute member: Senator Carr to replace Senator Tillem for the committee’s inquiry into the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment Bill 2014
Participating member: Senator Tillem
Environment and Communications References Committee—
Appointed—
Substitute members:
Senators Brown, Collins and Urquhart to replace Senators Pratt, Stephens and Thorp from 17 to 21 March 2014
Senator Milne to replace Senator Waters for the committee’s inquiry into the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area
Participating members: Senators Pratt, Stephens, Thorp and Waters
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee—
Appointed—
Substitute member: Senator Hanson-Young to replace Senator Whish-Wilson for the committee’s inquiry into Operation Sovereign Borders
Participating member: Senator Whish-Wilson.
Question agreed to.
I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the response to a Senate resolution agreed to on 13 February 2014 by the Minister for the Environment, Mr Hunt, about the Gunns Ltd pulp mill.

Leave granted.

I move:

That the Senate take not of the document.

On 13 February the Senate passed a motion calling on this government to maintain the environmental safeguards in the approval of the Gunns Tamar Valley pulp mill proposal, which excludes wood sourced from native forest being used as wood stocks. This was part of the process for the pulp mill touted for the Tamar Valley by ex-company Gunns Limited, which has now gone into receivership. That approval at both a state and a federal level included many aspects that were controversial. The most recent form—before the company went into liquidation—was to use only timber from plantations and not native forests, as was the original proposal. That was up to 1.5 million air-dried tonnes year, which is approximately four to five million tonnes of high-conservation forests from Tasmania.

Since we have seen a Liberal Party sweep to power in Tasmania over the weekend, we thought it was very important to ask the question of the federal environment minister whether he would continue to support the existing legislation around the Gunns pulp mill—or what we now could call the Tamar Valley pulp mill, for clarification—and ask whether there would be no native forest feedstock put through any future pulp mill.

I would like to say very clearly on record that both myself and the majority of Tasmanians are opposed to a pulp mill in the Tamar Valley. I am opposed to a pulp mill in Tasmania because I do not believe it is the best use of the wood in our state in terms of getting value in the value chain and what is necessary for the competitiveness of the industry to underpin jobs.

I ask this question because it is very important. That is because the Liberal Party this weekend in Tasmania swept to power—particularly in the northern electorates of Bass, Braddon and Lyons—on the promise that somehow they were going to wave a magic wand and create the 5,000 jobs that have been lost in forestry in the last decade. That was with no plan and with no details provided to anyone on how they are going to create employment in these hard-hit areas of the state. There is absolutely no doubt that they are hard-hit. These are agricultural and rural areas. Tasmania is essentially a large rural electorate and—like other rural areas in this country—it is under significant pressure, particularly in the industries that are subject to a high Australian dollar. In Tasmania, of course, we have special issues around freight and freight costs that impact on our primary industries.

But the forestry industry was under pressure for a long time. The reason that I am up here speaking on this right now is because I am concerned—with the new government in Tasmania and with a federal government that has been making very, very high-profile comments on the forestry industry in the last few weeks—that perhaps they have a home and perhaps they have some demand created for these high-conservation forests. If they rip up these world heritage forests—which I understand Senator Milne is going to be talking on in a moment—what are they going to do with them?
We know that industry has said very clearly that there is no market for contested forests from these high-conservation areas. We know that the buyers of timber and investors in the timber industry have said they will only take certified wood under a FSC certification. That is part of the Tasmanian Forestry Agreement: they do not want to buy high-conservation forest anymore. It really puzzles me how a party can sweep to power, or claim to sweep to power, on a mandate to rip up world heritage forests if they have no market, no solution and no plan for how they are suddenly going to get the industry back on its feet.

The Liberal Party has conned the Tasmanian people into the belief that somehow the collapse in the forestry industry in my state is because of a forest peace deal, when in fact Senator Colbeck sat next to me in the Senate inquiry—which Senator Milne also attended—when the head of the Forest Contractors Association gave evidence and said, 'I want to make it really clear that it is the other way around. The Tasmanian Forestry Agreement or peace deal is a response to the collapse in the forestry industry, because we have to find a new way forward for this industry; a way forward that gets high-value products and gets acceptance for Tasmanian products.'

So if suddenly we have millions of potential tonnes of high-conservation forest becoming available—let us call it wood supply—because the Liberal government at a state and federal level has ripped up some of the most magnificent and high-value conservation forest left in this country, in fact in the world, then where are they going to go? Well, unfortunately, to me it looks like they may go to a future pulp mill. All it is going to require a legislative change. If you do not think that the federal or state government has the ticker to go back and change the legislation to allow a future pulp mill to include high-conservation forest, then just look at what happened in the first week into the Tasmanian state election, where parliament was recalled to pass special legislation for the receivers—KordaMentha—of the sale of Gunns Limited assets. Special legislation was passed for special interests—again. This is the history of Tasmania.

I have no doubt that this is an area where the Liberal government in Tasmania, or federally, is planning to sell and funnel high-conservation forests into a totally unacceptable, divisive, zombie pulp mill project in the Tamar Valley in Tasmania—which is where my family lives. It is a project that I have been opposing for the last decade, as have thousands of my community members, my friends and, in fact, people right across the state. During the campaign, we have had an alliance not just of those people one might call greenies; we have also had the fishing industry, the Australian Medical Association, and a broad array of businesses opposing it. We have had people opposing it on the grounds of corruption and corrupted process. These are very deeply felt issues in my state.

Unfortunately, the jigsaw puzzle looks to me very much like ripping up the World Heritage listed forest goes hand-in-hand with building the world's most unpopular and most unloved pulp mill project in the Tamar Valley—a project that has never been economic, that has been flogged to death by Gunns Limited for a decade, and that has had every obstacle to it removed by the government. Everything has been bulldozed in its path—and yet it still cannot find an investor, because the economics of an undifferentiated, price-taking pulp mill at the bottom of the world are that it is not competitive in terms of growth rates for timber and is not competitive on any basis of costs. It cannot find an investor and it cannot find a market.
It was very important to me to see Minister Hunt—and this was supported by the Labor Party here in the Senate—make a strong statement that he would not consider any changes to the legislation. But unfortunately, the letter that I received from Mr Hunt, and which I am now talking to, used weasel words, danced around the issues and refused to acknowledge that high-conservation forests, whether they are contested forests, from forest peace deals or World Heritage listed forests, could be used in a future pulp mill. This is totally unacceptable. I and Senator Milne and others will continue to raise this issue until we get clarity on it.

It is easy to claim that you have a mandate to rip up some of the world's most beautiful forests—something that we know from recent surveys most Australians are totally opposed to. And the outrage will continue to build as this issue gets more of a profile. The mandate that the Tasmanian Liberals and their federal Liberal counterparts have to think about is not just the mandate of the people but also that of the markets. Those investors and those businesses, such as Norske Skog, who spoke very publicly and openly on election night and on 7.30 said that ripping up the World Heritage agreement and the Tasmanian Forests Agreement would be very bad for business confidence in Tasmania, because the industry has got behind this deal and it wants to see it done—for the future of jobs and prosperity in the timber industry. This is the timber industry talking. But because of a few disgruntled landowners, most of whom have been shafted by Liberal Party managed investment scheme policy over the years, and a few disgruntled Liberal voters in this state, and because of the politics of division which has worked so well in Tasmania—beat up the greenies, focus on destroying the Greens rather than creating value and employment for Tasmanians—we have a situation in front of us where we have a zombie pulp mill and a zombie government now in Tasmania with no plan on delivering employment. (Time expired)

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (18:03): I rise today to take note of the honourable Greg Hunt's letter relating to the Gunns pulp mill and, most particularly, the call that the Senate made to commit to maintaining the environmental requirement that excludes wood sourced from native forests from being used as feedstock for any pulp mill.

As my colleague Senator Whish-Wilson has pointed out, the whole point of the Tasmanian forest peace agreement was that the logging industry actually came to the conservation movement and asked the conservation movement to come to some agreement, because there was no future in native forest logging. There has not been a future in native forest logging for decades. In the mid-1990s I said—endlessly—in the Tasmanian parliament that the market for native forest woodchips would be over by the end of the 1990s, and indeed it was. It has only been propped up, by subsidy after subsidy, ever since—millions and millions have been poured into the Tasmanian native forest industry to keep destroying forests, at huge cost to the Tasmanian taxpayer and to the Australian taxpayer.

Now we have a situation where, for a pure ideological attack on forests and environmental protection, Prime Minister Tony Abbott has said that he will delist 74,000 hectares from the Wilderness World Heritage Area in order to log them. But the global market does not want—and has made it clear it does not want—timber from primary forests, and there is no way the timber will be bought internationally. That market is destroyed. Everyone acknowledges that, from the CFMEU through to Evan Rolley from Ta Ann—notorious in his days in Forestry
Tasmania, he has come out and admitted that Ta Ann will not be able to sell any timber product overseas from these highly contentious forests.

So what is the government's plan for these forests, if it is going to rip them out of World Heritage and if it wants to log them but there is no global market? One option is to put them into a pulp mill, as my colleague Senator Whish-Wilson has said. The other, however, is to do as the IPA wants—that is where you have to go to see where the Prime Minister is taking most of his direction from. The Institute of Public Affairs is saying that we should just privatise Tasmania's forests—and no wonder you have Will Hodgman, the new Premier of Tasmania, saying there will be no subsidies to Forestry Tasmania. What we are clearly seeing here is a strategy to flog off Tasmania's forests. As Aaron Lane from the IPA has said, the easiest way of taking the politics out of forestry is to privatise Tasmania's forests and let individuals determine the best use of the land. He says at the end that only a free market for forests will deliver a lasting peace deal. Well, he is wrong, because there is no market for that timber.

What are they going to do with that timber, if there is no market? One of the things that I think they will do is to subsidise the construction of a forest furnace—a biomass furnace in Tasmania. They will cut down the forests and feed them into a furnace. One of the terms of reference of the review of the Renewable Energy Target is to enable native forests to be used to generate renewable energy certificates under the Renewable Energy Target. Wouldn't the coalition just love to do that—allow people to cut down World Heritage forests of outstanding universal value—cut them down and feed them into a forest furnace, generate electricity and use renewable energy certificates and then sell it into mainland electricity consumers so they could be cooking their toast with electricity that has been generated from burning the high-conservation value forests of Tasmania? If that is not a recipe for conflict and for disaster, I do not know what is.

What is more, you will have an undermining of the renewable energy market and target, because consumers are not going to want to buy energy from a source that is destroying high-conservation-value forests; they understand that ecological systems are incredibly important for maintaining biodiversity. These are the tallest plants in the Southern Hemisphere. These trees are magnificent and it is absolutely wrong for the government to be suggesting that these are areas of degraded forest. The overwhelming areas that are being pulled out of World Heritage protection are the forests of the eastern boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area. These have been protected after 30 years of conflict.

I note today that the CFMEU is out saying, 'Oh, well, Will Hodgman, the new Premier, has a mandate.' They still want Forest Stewardship Council certification. I do not think so. There is no way that FSC certification will be going anywhere near any of these operations. There will be no market; there will be no certification; and there will be massive conflict. I think the weasel words in the minister's note responding to this Senate motion make that perfectly clear.

This is a government that is determined to destroy native forests and take forests out of their protected area status for the sole purpose of destroying them. As to the contention that this is going to create jobs, that is a joke in itself. If you have seen the collapse in the forest industry over the last couple of decades, you will see that it is far from being an employer of thousands, as the IPA like to suggest. It provides tens of thousands of jobs, according to the
IPA's Aaron Lane. I challenge Aaron Lane to put down on paper where these tens of thousands directly employed by the forest industry are, because they are not in Tasmania.

The tragedy is, of course, that Tasmania is going to be plunged back into conflict just at a time when we are about to move to an economy based on knowledge, information and innovation—one that recognises Tasmania's competitive advantage in its proximity to Antarctica, in the development of the university throughout the state, and in the development of our high-quality food and beverage sector and our Antarctic science hub. We have the fantastic potential in Tasmania of doing all that innovation with 100 per cent renewable energy. Tasmania could become the home to some of the world's data centres. They are energy hungry facilities that need the reputational value of being fed by renewable energy. Imagine the boost for Tasmania when we see the end of some of our energy-guzzling industries being replaced by energy-guzzling data centres of the 21st century which would rely on renewable energy. These are some of the ideas for Tasmania, but they will not happen by undermining renewable energy, by taking away carbon pricing, by destroying the Renewable Energy Target, by trying to get renewable energy target certificates from burning native forests or by ending so-called subsidies by flogging off the forests.

If you want to know where the Abbott government is going, just ask the IPA. They are taking their instructions from Gina Rinehart, Rupert Murdoch and everyone over at the IPA. Western Australia's new Treasurer was the director of the IPA from 2005 through to 2012. The IPA agenda is to privatise, ignore the environment, undermine any social justice or nets to help people, and maximise the profits of the few. With the IPA wanting to privatise Tasmania's forests at the same time as the Liberals are saying no more subsidies, we have a recipe for flogging the forests and changing the law to enable the cutting and burning of forests and subsidising the construction of a massive forest burning furnace in Tasmania. That is the direction we are going. The alternative is to change the regulations to allow native forests to be fed into a pulp mill. One thing is for sure: there is no global market; there will be no FSC certification for a policy which ravages high-conservation-value forests. The industry knows there will be no market; we know there will be no market; and, what is more, the government knows there will be no market. It is about time that they can clean with exactly what they are going to do in destroying Tasmania's forests.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (18:14): It is probably clear that this is not a matter for which I have any direct responsibility these days, but I sit in my office listening to more and more misrepresentations and, generally, lies of the political party represented by Greens senators in this chamber.

Senator Milne: Mr Acting Deputy President, I rise on a point of order. It is unparliamentary to be describing the contributions of senators as lies. Let us have a specific example of a lie, if you are going to make such allegations.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: You might note, Mr Acting Deputy President, that I chose my words carefully. I said 'lies of the political party represented by Greens senators in this chamber'. I am not accusing any particular senator of lying; I am saying it is typical of the lies of the Greens political party.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Whish-Wilson): There is no point of order.
Senator IAN MACDONALD: I wish to relate a little story. When I was the parliamentary secretary to the then Minister for the Environment, I employed a very good staffer, who had, at one stage, worked for Greenpeace. She left Greenpeace because she said she could not stand the lies of Greenpeace and, in particular, the environment movement, because they worked on the basis that the ends justified the means. In other words, you would tell any lie, create any diversion or misrepresentation you liked, as long as you got to achieve the ends. For years the Greens political party, Greenpeace and the Wilderness Society in Tasmania have tried to destroy this industry.

I was not involved in the recent Tasmanian election but I can read the results, as can anyone. The Liberal Party and Mr Will Hodgman made it very clear what their proposals were for the forest industries. They were endorsed by a significant majority of Tasmanians. Yet the Greens will not accept this. The Greens think they know better than the voters of Tasmania. The voters of Tasmania have indicated their disdain for the Greens political party, and rightly so.

The same thing occurred back in the 2004 federal election. You might recall that John Howard finally, in the last few days of the campaign, came down on the side of the forestry industry in Tasmania. He was hedging his bets until the last minute, but he went to that very significant rally in, I think, Launceston. There, surrounded by people wearing hard hats and blue singlets, the Liberal Prime Minister was cheered when he said he was going to look after the forestry industry. From that day I thought we had destroyed the wish of the Greens political party to destroy this significant, sustainable industry of Australia. I thought we had won. I was the then forestry minister and we had spent three years working with the ‘F’ part of the CFMEU, day in and day out, to get a solution that was good for Tasmania, good for the environment and good for jobs. I applaud the forestry division, then represented by the current president of the CFMEU, because we worked together to get a result, against the then Labor opposition leader, who fell into some difficulties. I have even forgotten his name!

Senator Ronaldson: Mr Latham.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: Thank you, Senator Ronaldson; Mr Latham. He was going with the environmentalists because he thought it meant votes in Sydney and Melbourne, and it did not matter that it was not very good policy.

The forestry industry in Tasmania is world class. It is better than any other forestry industry around the world. Yet the Greens have been on this campaign for 20 years, trying to shut down that industry, so we can import into Australia logs that are taken from forests in the Solomons and Indonesia which used to be raped by people who had no idea of how to run a sustainable forestry industry. It seemed to me that then Senator Bob Brown was all in favour of the rape of the forests of the Solomon Islands, Indonesia and Malaysia, and importing that all into Australia when Australia's most sustainable industry in the forestry industry was being shut down by the Greens political party.

What encouraged me to leave the work I was doing in my office and come down and participate in this debate was the fact that Mr Will Hodgman has just won an unprecedented victory in the Tasmanian election. His proposals for the forestry industry were not hidden. Everybody knew what they were. Did they vote for Mr Hodgman or did they vote for the Greens political party?
It is a rhetorical question. We all know that the Greens were annihilated and, if it had not been for the strange system in Tasmania, they would have been off the map. Ten years ago I predicted that the Greens had reached their peak and that they were on the downward slide. I think the result in the Tasmanian election—the heartland and place where the Greens political party was formed—has demonstrated that, as a political force, the Greens are finished. People have woken up to them. And that is a fact. People now understand that they cannot believe anything that the Greens political party tell them. They have only got to see what happened to all the sustainable logging just south-east of the city of Canberra. It was the most controlled industry of any in Australia.

I well remember, back in 1990, then Senator Richardson, with the urgings of the Greens, shutting down the forestry industry on the Atherton Tablelands, in northern Queensland. I well remember him going there and saying, 'This forest is so sustainable, we've got to protect it.' But, as the locals pointed out, it had been logged for 100 years. Yet former Senator Richardson and the Greens thought it was a pristine forest. Similarly, my colleague Senator Colbeck has over the last few weeks been pointing out photos of parts of the Tasmanian forest which are described as pristine but which have also been logged for 100 years. It is that sort of misrepresentation, those sorts of lies, which come from the environmental movement that the people of Tasmania eventually woke up to. The people of Queensland have woken up to them before.

There are all of these arguments that the Great Barrier Reef is going to be destroyed by spoil from the Abbot Point harbour project being dumped out on the reef. Of course, the spoil is being dumped tens of kilometres from the Barrier Reef—nowhere near it. If you looked at anything the Greens political party said, you would think the spoil was being dumped straight on the reef. This is just another example. Anywhere you see an environmental protest sponsored by radical groups, the Greens and GetUp, you will know there will be a fallacy in relation to it.

But do we hear anything about the Greenpeace ship that was in the Cairns harbour, with former senator Bob Brown on board? I think he is now the patron of Greenpeace or Sea Shepherd. Its ship is leaking oil into the Cairns harbour. Now, that will cause environmental damage. Do we hear the Greens moving motions about Bob Brown's ship in the Cairns harbour leaking oil into the Great Barrier Reef area? No. We do not talk about it. We only talk about it when we can attack the Liberal government here or in Tasmania. On the occasions that ALP governments have had the courage and intestinal fortitude to stand up to the Greens, the Greens attack them. But, when their ship in the Cairns port leaks oil into the Great Barrier Reef, there is not a murmur from the Greens political party. Can you imagine what would have been said if an Australian Navy vessel had done that? We would have had motions before this chamber and we would have had protests in the streets. But because Bob Brown is on board the Sea Shepherd ship, when it leaks oil into the Great Barrier Reef—not a word.

I conclude my remarks by saying that Will Hodgman was upfront and open about what he proposed. I cannot even tell you exactly what it was—I did not follow it that closely—but he was upfront. Yet on election night we have the Greens leader threatening Will Hodgman for honouring the promise he made and which the Tasmanian voters so strongly supported.

Question agreed to.
Senator WRIGHT (South Australia) (18:25): I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the response of the Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne, to the Senate resolution on the Australian curriculum agreed to on 12 February 2014.

Leave granted.

Senator WRIGHT: I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

The resolution agreed to called on the Abbott government to immediately restore an established system of appointing independent education experts to oversee the development and implementation of the Australian curriculum. The minister's response, which was tabled in this place today, is totally unacceptable. It does not address the motion itself and it does not address the widespread community concern about the nature of the Abbott government's rushed and ideological review of the national curriculum. The letter is merely a restatement of previous comments by the minister. It is not a response at all, in fact. If members in this place were interested in knowing more about the minister's evasions on this issue, they could have just watched one of his numerous media conferences that have occurred in the past.

What the members in this place and the Australian community at large want to know is that this minister will not be forcing his politics into the classroom. We want this minister, Mr Pyne, to say he will respect the independent process that delivered the national curriculum that is still being implemented. It is a national curriculum which was developed over several years and which takes into account the views of more than 17,000 submitters, including those of experts across a range of disciplines and fields. The curriculum was negotiated with each state and territory government. But the review announced by the education minister is nothing more than a manipulative, ideological exercise by the minister based on a paranoia about left-wing bias in schools.

We have seen the minister hand-pick Mr Ken Wiltshire and Dr Kevin Donnelly to run this hasty and premature review to overturn the work of many people and the thousands of submissions taken into account over a period of years. Essentially what Minister Pyne is doing is paying to hear what he wants to hear. He will push his ideological barrow at any cost. Several millions of dollars have already been spent to get us to where we are today—several millions of dollars that this education minister is happy to see made redundant, all for an ideological review of what our children will be learning in school.

The Australian Greens remain extremely concerned that this is a politically motivated review. It is being headed by Dr Kevin Donnelly, a person who is underqualified and clearly driven by ideology, as is evident from his statements on the public record. We are concerned about Dr Donnelly's comments on Australia's Indigenous heritage and multiculturalism. We are concerned about his stance on LGBTI rights. We are concerned about his apathy about public education and the teachers who teach in government schools throughout Australia. And we are concerned about his clear bias towards elite non-government schools. Of course, Dr Donnelly is entitled to his views—although many Australians do not share them—but what he should not be entitled to do is to help engineer a curriculum that is designed to promulgate his own divisive ideology and one that is apparently shared by this government.

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So, yes, we are very, very concerned—and we are not the only ones who are concerned—about appointing essentially men of the past to oversee what should be a curriculum of the future. So last month members of this house voted to return to the established system of appointing independent education experts to oversee the development and implementation of the Australian curriculum. On behalf of the Australian Greens, I restate our commitment to a world-class education for every child and our position that the current review is premature and lacking objectivity.

Debate interrupted.

**Prodeedings suspended from 18:30 to 19:30**

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Furner): The question is that the motion moved by Senator Wright be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

**BILLS**

**National Health Amendment (Simplified Price Disclosure) Bill 2013**

**Governor-General Amendment (Salary) Bill 2014**

**Assent**

Messages from the Governor-General reported informing the Senate of assent to the bills.

**REGULATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS**

**Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines (Education) 2013**

**Commonwealth Grant Scheme Guidelines 2012**

**Disallowance**

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (19:31): by leave—I move:

No. 1—That the Commonwealth Scholarships Guidelines (Education) 2013, made under section 238-10 of the Higher Education Support Act 2003, be disallowed, and

No. 2—That Amendment No. 1 to the Commonwealth Grant Scheme Guidelines 2012, made under section 238-10 of the Higher Education Support Act 2003, be disallowed.

I move these disallowance motions because Labor are opposed to the unrelenting attacks on education being displayed by this government. We are opposed to the government’s ideological obsession with cuts for what appears to be nothing more than the sake of cuts. We are opposed to the breaking of an election promise—namely, the government committed to the maintenance of education funding for schools. If I recall rightly, the commitment made by various opposition spokespeople at the time was that there would be not one dollar less for schools under a coalition government than there would be under a Labor government. Of course, that is not to be the case.

I say this in the context of Labor’s outstanding record when it comes to higher education, a record that put an additional 190,000 students into our universities. If you look at the forward estimates, under Labor there was an increase in funding for universities to some $17 billion by 2017. Under Labor, there was a funding boost for science, for research and for innovation of 35 per cent. We are very proud of that record. In contrast, the coalition have a lot to answer for. They show every sign of hostility towards education, which is in part because, in Liberal
Party iconography, there is a view that universities in particular are institutions of the cultural Left. We know the reality is a little bit more complex than that, but how quickly the new government have changed their tune for political convenience.

The Prime Minister, if I recall rightly, when the Labor government was in office, took issue with the efficiency dividend; now, in government, he is adopting that position. But he is not putting the savings towards schools. He is not putting them towards building a much better program for schools, on which the prosperity of this nation ultimately depends. The once-in-a-lifetime reform plan for schools that Labor initiated, commonly known as the Gonski reforms, provided $11.5 billion backed by funding guarantees from the states. That national program of expansion of school education is now to be jettisoned by this government. Mr Abbott is in fact proposing a reduction in funding for school education, particularly in out years 5 and 6 under the program announced by the Labor government and which the states signed up to. What we see here is a clear breaking of the government's election promise and a clear betrayal of education—broken promises in terms of schooling but also in terms of our higher education sector. So Labor will oppose these changes.

There is clearly a presumption within this government that the principles of equity, quality and justice when it comes to education should not be honoured. The education portfolio is essentially in a condition that can be characterised as a shambles. I remember, with some disdain, that the Minister for Education, Minister Pyne, sought to execute a triple inverted backflip on funding almost in one day, which is truly a remarkable achievement, even for this fine public institution! In the past, Mr Pyne argued that Gonski was in fact a 'conski'. Before the election he pledged to match Labor's funding dollar for dollar; he then said he could not guarantee that the money promised to schools under the Better Schools plan could be delivered. Then he abandoned the needs-based funding model. He signed off on agreements with the states—with Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory—with no commitment from them at all in terms of the requirement for them to maintain their efforts. It was a desperate shambles. The Prime Minister then had to intervene to try to fix the resulting mess, following Minister Pyne's somewhat inept handling of all these issues.

None of this is a surprise, because what needs to be appreciated is that the coalition have form on these issues. When last elected to office in 1996, they undertook a program of quite extensive reductions in funding for universities—a full quarter of the cuts in the infamous Costello horror budget of 1996. Of course, none of that had been announced before the election either. So it will not be a surprise to me if the report of the Commission of Audit, when it is finally released, displays equal hostility towards universities.

Labor came to office determined to make things right. We increased funding of higher education from $8 billion in 2007 to $14 billion in 2013 and our funding was linked to a broad program of reform that set out our unwavering commitment to the principles of equity and quality. One in four of the students in university today are there due to the additional places delivered under the Labor government—one in four. Many of those students are from disadvantaged backgrounds, with many of them the first in their families to access higher education. There are some 36,000 more students from disadvantaged backgrounds attending universities now than there were under the previous conservative government.

This is a great enterprise and the importance of education cannot be overestimated. But we all understand how important the foundation stone of schooling is to ensuring future growth in
our capacity to bridge the equity gap in higher education. It is ironic that the wreckers of Gonski are now suggesting that some of these issues in school education can just be dismissed. I think it is a remarkable irony that we are discussing these issues on the same day as the 14th annual ‘Science meets Parliament’ gala dinner. It is ironic because no doubt those opposite and their counterparts in the other place will find time in their diaries to shake hands with vice-chancellors and talk about their great passion for education.

They have to put their money where their mouth is. Their undermining of the schools reform program will have profound consequences for the future prosperity of this nation. We know they are walking away from the equity targets, we know they are washing their hands of universities and we know they are undermining the principle of equality of opportunity for everyone in this country. Changing the funding arrangements of universities in such a way as to achieve growth in consolidated revenue in order to meet the obsessions of the new government is a measure that we simply cannot support. I call on this chamber to fund the education system at all levels, to ensure that we maintain the principle of equity, to ensure that we maintain the principle of quality and, in order to do so, to disallow these instruments.

**Senator RYAN** (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education) (19:39):

I have learned something tonight. I did not realise that Senator Carr was the shadow minister for sport or perhaps a former Minister for Sport from one of the many reshuffles that occurred under the previous regime—because what we just saw was a backflip worthy of the Winter Olympic Games. He just got the gold medal for doing backflips.

The truth is that he is moving a motion to disallow measures that the government he was a member of proposed. Nothing of what Senator Carr just said matters—nothing—because, when he had the chance to put his money where his mouth was, his government's record was to do exactly what these measures entail. When Labor had the chance, they did exactly this. The guidelines which the opposition are seeking to have disallowed are in fact Labor's own measures. The guidelines are to give effect to part of the efficiency dividend which the previous Labor government announced in April last year. They announced it in April, included it in the May budget and took it to the election as part of their Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook as a government measure.

The reason this efficiency dividend had to be introduced by the previous Labor government was their own profound financial irresponsibility—the massive deficits and ballooning public debt for which they were responsible. They knew the public did not buy their empty promises anymore. It is the need to overcome the legacy of financial recklessness left to the coalition by the Labor government that gives us no alternative but to proceed with Labor's savings measures, including these guidelines.

We are just trying to keep our promises, but on this occasion we are trying to keep Labor's promises too. These were measures the previous government took to the election. These were measures in the previous government's budget. All the coalition are seeking to do is implement what we said we would do and what they said they would do. I cannot help wondering whether the Green noise that hits our ears from down the far end of the chamber has yet again taken hold of the Labor Party's agenda.

They—and Senator Carr stood—in this chamber and defended these measures, yet he now has the gall to stand up and assert that somehow the coalition are reneging on our statements or valuing education differently from how the Labor government valued it. These were your
measures. We are seeking to introduce them as we promised to—and as you promised to. For the Labor Party to come into this chamber and move these motions shows that they are absolutely bereft of any foundation in philosophy, policy or trust.

This government has actually been a friend of universities and students. We are working to reduce overregulation and excessive reporting requirements, we are funding every recommendation of the Australian Research Council, we are making it clear that Australia welcomes international students and we are taking sensible stock of the demand driven system. We have scrapped Labor's $2,000 cap on the tax deductibility of self-education expenses, one of the greatest assaults on individuals investing in their own education and productivity that any government has ever considered. We have rejected that. Labor took it to the election not caring about the impact it was going to have on workers, not caring about the impact on those who were seeking to improve their skills. Labor were simply seeking a budget saving.

What is Labor's record? Labor's record included the $2.8 billion of cuts announced without notice last April as part of an accounting trick to try to fictionalise the budget situation to make it look better—something the Australian people now know the truth about. They cut the Sustainable Research Excellence in Universities scheme by nearly $500 million in the 2012 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook update. They put research funding on an unsustainable stop-start basis and failed to make any provision in the forward estimates for the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy or the Future Fellowships program of the Australian Research Council. They converted the Higher Education Endowment Fund—set up out of surpluses put aside by the previous coalition government to allow investment in the betterment of people over the long term—into a 'spendathon' fund which halved in value. The Labor government presided over an incredible drop in the number of international students coming to Australia. The list goes on. That is not the record of a friend of universities or a friend of students. It is a record of appalling financial and general mismanagement which Labor persist in pursuing in opposition, even while they reject the measures they took to the people only six months ago. We know that it is only by getting the nation's finances back in order that we will be able to give universities and students strong, sustainable, predictable and stable support.

I did not sense that Senator Carr had the same degree of passion in his voice about that speech. The truth is, whether it was on car funding or whether it was on higher education funding, Senator Carr could not carry his own colleagues, and today, when he came into this chamber, he had managed to get the Labor Party to agree to his policies when in opposition. Senator Carr referred to putting money where the mouth is. The Labor Party's money is where its mouth is. We are seeking to implement our promise. We are seeking to implement the Labor Party's promise. The only time that Senator Carr has been able to get his colleagues to agree is when they are in opposition. Whether it is car funding or higher education funding, because of the stop-start nature of it—we will pump it up in the forward estimates, then we will strip it away as a way to try and balance a budget—Labor assaulted this sector with the most worrying aspect of government policy, which is instability, unpredictability and a lack of trustworthiness. What they are asking this chamber to do tonight is to breach the commitment they made to the people and breach the commitment we made to the people. We
are going to stand behind the commitments we made, and, on this occasion, we are going to stand behind the commitments that Labor made.

Senator PERIS (Northern Territory) (19:45): I rise today in support of Senator Carr’s motion on disallowance of Amendment No. 1 to the Commonwealth Grant Scheme Guidelines 2012 and to talk about why this disallowance is so important to members of my constituents in the Northern Territory. The challenge we face due to our landscape and the enormous distances to cover in the Territory is an issue we must continue to meet head on, especially when we talk about delivering quality education. As I have continued to state since coming into parliament, Labor believes that every child in Australia should have access to quality education, no matter where they come from. This is the difference between Labor and the coalition. In order to ensure we continue to increase the number of regional and remote enrolments and student completion of courses, it is integral that the government continues to offset the increased costs of running universities in regional and remote areas. The students of today, especially those from remote and regional communities, will be the leaders of tomorrow—the leaders who will inspire the next generation to go to school, to achieve and to want to contribute to society and to make a change for the better.

Under a Labor government, we increased participation in universities. We introduced measures to increase indexation to university funding, increase money for essential student services, improve career paths for academics and improve access to Youth Allowance, Austudy and Abstudy for students. Through these incentives we were able to ensure that, for the first time, remote and regional students had access, pathways and opportunities to reach their dreams of commencing tertiary education. Before the election, the coalition said that they were on a unity ticket with Labor on the Better Schools Plan and went as far as to say that no school would be worse off under the coalition. Since then, as is the case in many other areas, the coalition has backflipped on their promise to invest this money in schools. They have abandoned the needs based funding model—the very model designed to improve education for remote and regional children in particular.

It has taken a Labor government to increase participation rates in universities, with 190,000 more students at university today—a number we are proud of, and a number Labor will continue to ensure increases through incentives such as the ones we are talking about today. The Commonwealth Scholarships Program assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly those from rural, regional and remote areas, with costs associated with higher education. The scholarship program also includes Indigenous Staff Scholarships, which develop Indigenous leadership in our universities and other tertiary institutions by providing opportunities for professional development. Indigenous staff represent a key element in encouraging children not only to go to school but to stay in school. If the legislative instrument goes through, these scholarships for Indigenous students and staff will be diminished, and there will be no additional funding to improve these students’ school education.

I will end by mentioning a few ideas I think resonate with Labor’s values on education. I believe you cannot put a price on quality education for an Australian child. I believe that quality education is just like the seed of hope—if we plant it right, nourish it, and continually care for it, it will grow and flourish. I believe that the seed of hope is the core of what you are, but it is also the promise of what you can become. I believe that a quality education is the
basic fundamental right of every child of this country, irrespective of their race, their creed or the colour of their skin. That is why I cannot support the removal of such key education incentives. Simply put, Labor believes we must put education first. That is why those on this side of the house believe these instruments must be disallowed.

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (19:49): I rise to speak in favour of the motion to disallow Amendment No. 1 to the Commonwealth Grant Scheme Guidelines 2012. These legislative instruments are very much part of the brutal agenda that we are seeing coming from the coalition. They know it is not going to get through, but there is a real intent here to slash and burn in areas where people are doing it tough—and when it comes to education, it is an area that needs to be improved on, not cut further. One of the legislative instruments relates to reducing the amount of funding available as part of loadings offered to higher education providers, and the other cut, if it gets through, would be to money that should be retained for Indigenous scholarships.

Firstly, I will address the loadings. The loadings are offered to higher education providers that offer services via regional campuses and those that deliver courses that teach medicine. It was interesting and quite informative to look at the explanatory memorandum for this instrument, which cuts higher education funding. One of the stated aims is to 'improve the quality of higher education'. A classic way that governments with bad policies try to sell them is by saying the exact opposite of what will actually happen. So there it is, stating that it will 'improve the quality of higher education'. It should be quite straightforward, but that is in fact not the case. It is certainly a very bold and arrogant statement and claim from the minister, because, while he is attempting to rip billions of dollars out of higher education funding, he is claiming that it is improving quality.

We need to look at the instruments here. And we need to look at this motion to disallow them, in the context of the broader cuts to higher education that the coalition government is trying to implement. To help achieve that, some of the answers we received at estimates become quite informative. This one was actually to a question on notice. It was provided by the department on students, university staff and the wider community and was quite informative on where the brunt of these cuts will be. We are now able to see where the proposed $900 million cuts will be felt.

In my home state of New South Wales this government is planning to rip out an estimated $253 million from universities. For regional universities, which are already doing it tough, this is very serious. It is estimated that Southern Cross, New England, Charles Sturt, Newcastle and Wollongong universities will lose $88 million. The quality of education they can provide, how they plan for the future and how they maintain the standards in their universities are all under a heavy cloud. It is estimated Victorian universities will lose $214 million in funding, Queensland universities $162 million and South Australian universities $67 million, and the University of Tasmania is facing a funding cut of almost $24 million. This is all in the face of a government that says it is out to improve higher education.

In Western Australia the government is attempting to take $81.2 million from universities. Last year was a year of strikes and actions at our universities around the country. They were pushed to the point where they had to take that industrial action because of the savage way the government was treating them. Sadly, it was not just the coalition government but also the Labor government. It is good that Labor is now taking on this issue and moving for these
disallowances. While it is only a small part of what is going on, funding of higher education, how the scholarship system works and how all those instruments work need to be tackled head on.

The other instrument the minister introduced that is relevant to this motion attempts to cut funding to higher education by reducing the amount of money offered to Indigenous students via crucial scholarships. When I saw that one I really found it hard to credit. We already know that the number of Indigenous students who continue with their education through to tertiary education is small. Yes, there have been some successes, but there needs to be a lot more work done. And what have we seen from this government? It has been taking away the money. These scholarships assist Indigenous students with the costs associated with studying at university. These scholarships are vital, covering costs of resources, books, accommodation and transport. There is a whole range of student needs that these scholarships are absolutely critical for.

The figures on the numbers of Indigenous students who stay on at university are not impressive. The figures are embarrassing. They are a reminder of how far Australia has fallen behind in working with Indigenous communities. While Indigenous people make up 2.5 per cent of our population, only 1.09 per cent of university students are Indigenous. And here we have a government taking away scholarships. It is not a huge amount of money but it is a very important amount of money. I think we all know that money, like a lot of things in life, is relative, and for some people this scholarship can make a huge difference to their future.

The government clearly needs to be doing more to improve Indigenous access to higher education, not taking the steps that we are seeing them try to push through tonight. They need to provide more support for degrees and programs, not cut funding, as they are attempting. Again, these cuts need to be viewed in the context of the coalition's wider agenda in relation to student welfare. So much of the cost burden is being pushed onto all students. That is the trend of successive governments.

The coalition's plans, if implemented, would increase student debt by $1.2 billion over four years. That is across the board. The individual debt of students receiving Youth Allowance will increase, on average, by $10,000 over the course of their degree. That can really make a difference. I am conscious of that in my own family. I was the first to be fortunate enough to have the opportunity to go to university, and a scholarship made all the difference. Now, with the cost burden being pushed onto students, what I hear from so many young people is that they think twice before they consider if they will take on a university education. That is because of the debt factor. Student debt has risen by almost 30 per cent in six years. An increasing number of students are missing out on classes and are going without food, because of the financial pressure they are under.

NUS did an important survey that made this assessment. When you consider the hardship that so many Indigenous students have, losing their scholarships is simply unacceptable. How deeply wrong it is. What a reflection on this government, on what their standards are—that they would even consider bringing forward such a proposal. The Greens will be supporting both these disallowances.

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

The Senate divided. [20:02]
(The President—Senator Hogg)

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

AYES

Bilyk, CL (teller)  Bishop, TM
Brown, CL  Carr, KJ
Collins, JMA  Conroy, SM
Dastyari, S  Di Natale, R
Farrell, D  Faulkner, J
Furner, ML  Gallacher, AM
Hanson-Young, SC  Hogg, JJ
Ludlam, S  Ludwig, JW
Lundy, KA  Marshall, GM
McEwen, A  Milne, C
Moore, CM  O'Neill, DM
Peris, N  Polley, H
Rhiannon, L  Siewert, R
Singh, LM  Sterle, G
Tillem, M  Urquhart, AE
Waters, LJ  Whish-Wilson, PS
Wright, PL

NOES

Back, CJ  Bernardi, C
Birmingham, SJ  Boswell, RLD
Brandis, GH  Bushby, DC
Cash, MC  Edwards, S
Eggleston, A  Fawcett, DJ
Fierravanti-Wells, C  Fifield, MP
Heffernan, W  Johnston, D
Kroger, H (teller)  Macdonald, ID
Mason, B  McKenzie, B
Nash, F  O'Sullivan, B
Payne, MA  Ronaldson, M
Ruston, A  Ryan, SM
Sculion, NG  Seselja, Z
Smith, D

PAIRS

Cameron, DN  Boyce, SK
Lines, S  Parry, S
McLucas, J  Colbeck, R
Pratt, LC  Cormann, M
Stephens, U  Williams, JR
Thorp, LE  Abetz, E
Wong, P  Sinodinos, A

Question agreed to.
BILLS

Clean Energy Legislation (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013
Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013
Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Manufacture Levy) Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013
True-up Shortfall Levy (General) (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013
True-up Shortfall Levy (Excise) (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013
Customs Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013
Excise Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013
Clean Energy (Income Tax Rates and Other Amendments) Bill 2013

In Committee

CLEAN ENERGY LEGISLATION (CARBON TAX REPEAL) BILL 2013

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS (Victoria) (20:06): by leave—I move opposition amendments (1) to (3) on sheet 7443 together:

(1) Title, page 1 (line 1), omit "repeal", substitute "amend".
(2) Clause 2, page 1 (line 7) to page 2 (line 6), omit the clause, substitute:

2 Commencement

This Act commences on the day after this Act receives the Royal Assent.

(3) Schedule 1, page 4 (line 1) to page 70 (line 21), omit the Schedule, substitute:

Schedule 1—Amendments

Australian National Registry of Emissions Units Act 2011

1 Subsection 66F(2) (paragraph (c) of the definition of prescribed amount for the financial year in which the compliance deadline occurs)

Repeal the paragraph.

2 Subsection 66F(4) (paragraph (c) of the definition of prescribed amount for the financial year in which the compliance deadline occurs)

Repeal the paragraph.

Clean Energy Act 2011

3 Section 4

Omit ", 1 July 2013 and 1 July 2014", substitute "and 1 July 2013".

4 Section 4

Before "1 July 2015", insert "1 July 2014,".

5 Section 5 (paragraph (b) of the definition of fixed charge year)

Omit "2013; or", substitute "2013.".
6 Section 5 (paragraph (c) of the definition of fixed charge year)
  Repeal the paragraph.

7 Section 5 (paragraph (a) of the definition of flexible charge year)
  Omit "1 July 2015", substitute "1 July 2014".

8 After paragraph 14(2)(b)
  Insert:
  (ba) if the regulations declare the carbon pollution cap, and the carbon pollution cap number, for the flexible charge year beginning on 1 July 2014—must have regard to any report that:
  (i) was given to the Minister by the Climate Change Authority under section 60 of the Climate Change Authority Act 2011; and
  (ii) dealt with the carbon pollution cap for that year; and

9 At the end of subsection 15(1)
  Add "(other than regulations that declare the carbon pollution cap, and the carbon pollution cap number, for the flexible charge year beginning on 1 July 2014)".

10 After section 15
  Insert:

15A When regulations must be tabled—2014-15 flexible charge year

Scope
  (1) This section applies to regulations that declare the carbon pollution cap, and the carbon pollution cap number, for the flexible charge year beginning on 1 July 2014.

When regulations must be tabled
  (2) The Minister must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the regulations are tabled in each House of the Parliament under section 38 of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003 not later than 31 May 2014.
  (3) The regulations must not be made, or tabled in a House of the Parliament, after 31 May 2014.

Reasons must be tabled
  (4) If, on a particular day (the tabling day), a copy of the regulations is tabled in a House of the Parliament under section 38 of the Legislative Instruments Act 2003, the Minister must:
    (a) cause to be tabled in that House a written statement setting out the Minister's reasons for making the recommendation to the Governor-General about the regulations; and
    (b) do so on, or as soon as practicable after, the tabling day.

11 Section 16 (at the end of the heading)
  Add "—later flexible charge years".

12 Subsection 16(3)
  Omit "made for the purposes of section 14", substitute "to which section 15 applies".

13 Section 17 (heading)
  Omit "2015-16", substitute "2014-15".

14 Subsection 17(1)
  Omit "1 July 2015", substitute "1 July 2014".

15 Subsection 17(2) (formula)
  Repeal the formula, substitute:
Total emissions numbers for the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2012 – 25,000,000

16 Subsection 18(1)
Omit "1 July 2016", substitute "1 July 2015".

17 Section 93
Before "1 July 2015", insert "1 July 2014,".

18 Subsection 100(1)
After "following table", insert "(other than an exempt item)".

19 Subsection 100(1) (table items 5 and 6)
Repeal the items.

20 Subsection 100(1) (table items 7, 8 and 9)
Repeal the items, substitute:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table Item</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>(a) beginning at the emissions number publication time of the person for the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2014; and (b) ending at the end of 1 February 2016.</td>
<td>the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(a) beginning at the emissions number publication time of the person for the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2015; and (b) ending at the end of 1 February 2017.</td>
<td>the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(a) beginning at the emissions number publication time of the person for the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2016; and (b) ending at the end of 1 February 2018.</td>
<td>the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(a) beginning at the emissions number publication time of the person for the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2017; and (b) ending at the end of 1 February 2019.</td>
<td>the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 Subsection 100(1) (note)
Omit "Note", substitute "Note 1".
22 At the end of subsection 100(1) (after the note)
Add:
Note 2: For exempt item, see subsections (13A), (13B) and (13C).

23 Subsection 100(2)
Omit "item 7, 8 or 9", substitute "item 7, 8, 9 or 10".

24 Subsection 100(3) (heading)
Omit "items 1, 3 and 5", substitute "items 1 and 3".

25 Subsection 100(3)
Omit "item 1, 3 or 5", substitute "item 1 or 3".

26 Subsection 100(4) (heading)
Omit "6, 7, 8 and 9", substitute "7, 8, 9 and 10".

27 Subsection 100(4)
Omit "item 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 or 9", substitute "item 2, 4, 7, 8, 9 or 10".

28 Subsection 100(6)
After "subsection (1)", insert "(other than an exempt item)".

29 At the end of subsection 100(6)
Add:
Note: For exempt item, see subsections (13A), (13B) and (13C).

30 Before paragraph 100(9)(a)
Insert:
(aa) the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2014;

31 After subsection 100(13)
Insert:
Exempt item
(13A) The regulations may declare that item 8 of the table in subsection (1) is an exempt item for the purposes of this section.
(13B) The regulations may declare that item 9 of the table in subsection (1) is an exempt item for the purposes of this section.
(13C) The regulations may declare that item 10 of the table in subsection (1) is an exempt item for the purposes of this section.

32 Subsection 100(14)
Omit "31 May 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".

33 Subsection 100(15)
Repeal the subsection.

34 Before subsection 101(1A)
Insert:
(1AA) Subsection (1) does not apply to carbon units with the vintage year beginning on 1 July 2014 that are issued as a result of auctions that are conducted by the Regulator during the financial year beginning on 1 July 2013.
(1AB) The Regulator must ensure that not more than 40 million carbon units with the vintage year beginning on 1 July 2014 are issued as a result of auctions that were conducted by the Regulator during
the financial year beginning on 1 July 2013 if there are no regulations in effect that declare the carbon pollution cap, and the carbon pollution cap number, for the vintage year.

35 Subsection 121
Omit "first 5 flexible charge years", substitute "first 6 flexible charge years".

36 Subsection 123A(3)
Omit "1 July 2015", substitute "1 July 2014".

37 Subparagraph 123A(6)(a)(i)
Omit "1 July 2015", substitute "1 July 2014".

38 Subparagraphs 123A(6)(b)(i) and (ii)
Repeal the subparagraphs, substitute:
(i) if the eligible financial year begins on 1 July 2014—6.25%; or
(ii) if the eligible financial year begins on 1 July 2015, 1 July 2016, 1 July 2017, 1 July 2018 or 1 July 2019—12.5%; or
(iii) if the eligible financial year begins on or after 1 July 2020, and the regulations do not specify a percentage for that year—12.5%; or
(iv) if the eligible financial year begins on or after 1 July 2020, and the regulations specify a percentage for that year—that percentage; and

39 Subsection 123A(7)
Omit "(6)(b)(ii)", substitute "(6)(b)(iv)".

40 Subparagraphs 133(7)(a)(i) and (7A)(a)(i)
Omit "1 July 2015", substitute "1 July 2014".

41 Subparagraph 133(7A)(a)(ii)
Omit "4", substitute "5".

42 Subparagraph 133(7E)(a)(i)
Omit "1 July 2015", substitute "1 July 2014".

43 Subparagraph 133(7E)(a)(ii)
Omit "4", substitute "5".

44 Subparagraph 133(7F)(a)(i)
Omit "1 July 2015", substitute "1 July 2014".

45 Section 160
Omit "each of the next 3 financial years", substitute "the financial year beginning on 1 July 2014".

46 Subsection 161(2)
Omit all the words from and including "On each" to and including "the following formula", substitute "On 1 September in the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2013, the Regulator must issue a number of free carbon units equal to the number worked out using the following formula":

47 Subsection 161(3) (formula)
Repeal the formula, substitute:

\[
\frac{\text{Annual assistance factor specified in the certificate}}{\text{Total annual assistance factors for that eligible financial year}} \times 125,115,000 - A - B
\]
48 Subsection 196(1AA) (heading)
Omit "31 May 2015", substitute "31 May 2014".

49 Subsection 196(1AA)
Omit "end of 31 May 2015", substitute "end of 31 May 2014".

50 Subsection 196(1AA) (definition of number of units issued as the result of auctions)
Omit "May 2015", substitute "May 2014".

51 Subsection 196(1AA) (definition of total auction proceeds)
Omit "May 2015", substitute "May 2014".

52 Subsection 196(1AB)
Omit "May 2015", substitute "May 2014".

53 Paragraph 196(1)(a)
Omit "May 2016", substitute "May 2015".

54 Paragraph 196(2)(a)
Omit "November 2015", substitute "November 2014".

55 Paragraph 196(3)(a)
Omit "1 July 2015", substitute "1 July 2014".

56 Subsection 196A(18) (paragraph (a) of the definition of designated 6-month period)
Omit "May 2015", substitute "May 2014".

57 Subsection 196A(18) (paragraph (c) of the definition of designated 6-month period)
Omit "November 2015", substitute "November 2014".

58 Subsection 212(2) (paragraph (c) of the definition of prescribed amount for the financial year in which the compliance deadline occurs)
Repeal the paragraph.

59 Subsection 212(3) (paragraph (c) of the definition of prescribed amount for the financial year in which the compliance deadline occurs)
Repeal the paragraph.

60 Subsection 289(8)
Repeal the subsection, substitute:

Report

(8) The report of the first review must set out recommendations relating to the level of carbon pollution caps for each of the following flexible charge years:
(a) the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2015;
(b) the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2016;
(c) the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2017;
(d) the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2018;
(e) the eligible financial year beginning on 1 July 2019.

The bills that we are debating here have been dressed up as bills to terminate the so-called carbon tax. Indeed, the bill that we are addressing now is principal to that endeavour. If that were really what they were, the opposition would be in a position to support them, but they do so much more than simply terminate the carbon tax. For that reason the opposition cannot and
will not support the bills without them being substantially amended. I make no apology for the substantial effect that the amendments we have circulated will have.

As just a taste of what these bills would do beyond simply terminating the carbon tax, they also remove the legislative cap on carbon pollution, an essential discipline in ensuring that we meet our 2020 target to reduce Australia's emissions. The bills abolish the entire framework for an emissions trading scheme, a scheme which caps and then reduces our carbon pollution while letting business—not the minister or his bureaucrats here in Canberra but business—work out the cheapest and most effective way to operate within that limit.

The amendments that I am moving introduce an emissions trading scheme from 1 July 2014. They ensure a cap on pollution and they ensure that Australia moves towards a clean energy future. Across the world it is recognised that the most effective long-term response to climate change is an emissions trading scheme which places a legal cap on carbon pollution, reducing over time, and allows business to work out the cheapest way to operate within the cap. This is the model in place or being introduced from Germany and the UK to California, China and Korea, amongst many others.

The introduction of an emissions trading scheme in Australia, along with strong policies to drive the expansion of renewable energy, has been a longstanding policy within the Labor Party. There is now a point of agreement between Australia's two major parties: the carbon tax should be terminated as soon as practicable. But—and I stress 'but'—there is profound disagreement about what replaces the centrepiece of Australia's action on climate change. These are not easy questions to answer. As the OECD Secretary-General, a few weeks ago, said:

It would be hard to imagine a more complex risk management issue than that posed by climate change. Indeed, this is why the Senate is still considering Direct Action and why many questions remain about what the alternative may be. There are many questions that my colleagues and I will address in the Senate committee's report but indeed should be addressed as part of this discussion as well, because, while the removal of a carbon tax is one element of the picture, what replaces it is absolutely critical.

An emissions trading scheme is the cheapest way to achieve that objective because it creates a genuine market. The ability to trade pollution permits means that business works out the cheapest way to operate within the national pollution cap. One of the more recent of a long list of falsehoods argued by the Liberal Party is that an emissions trading scheme and a carbon tax are the same thing. They are not. This is far from the truth. It behoves the Liberal Party to say that, but they have been happy to further this confusion.

Those arguing this case are either deliberately trying to mislead the community or simply do not understand the basic economics of the two models. A carbon tax seeks to change behaviour by imposing a price signal without any other legal discipline on the behaviour—in this case, carbon pollution. An emissions trading scheme, on the other hand, changes behaviour through the discipline of a legislative cap on pollution and then lets business work out how to operate. The effective price on a tonne of carbon pollution under an ETS would be only one-quarter—I stress 'one-quarter'—of the current carbon tax. The different paths before us are, on the one hand, an emissions trading scheme and, on the other, the Liberal Party's so-called and fairly vacuous Direct Action policy.
Let us look at some of the history. I mentioned in my second reading contribution the
comment the member for Sturt, Christopher Pyne, once posited:
The idea that somehow the Liberal Party is opposed to an emissions-trading scheme is quite frankly
ludicrous.
This highlights how ludicrous some of this debate is now. The backflips that have occurred in
the positions of coalition members is what is, in fact, ludicrous. Those opposite have done an
about-face for political reasons, but the emissions trading scheme model is still recognised as
the cheapest and most effective way to tackle climate change.

The Liberal government is trashing Australia’s efforts to tackle climate change at exactly
the same time as the scientific community is warning that climate change poses a real and
serious risk to our precious Australian environment. We are committed to putting a cap on
pollution through an emissions trading scheme. An emissions trading scheme was what both
major parties committed to back in 2007, when the Liberals accepted the science of climate
change. How swiftly things have changed. In July 2009, the now Prime Minister said, ‘I am
hugely unconvinced by the so-called settled science of climate change.’ In October 2009, he
famously described the science as ‘absolute crap’—excuse my language, Mr Temporary
Chairman. In March 2010, he said: ‘I don’t believe that the science is settled.’ In March 2011,
he suggested:
… whether carbon dioxide is quite the environmental villain that some people make it out to be is not
yet proven.
To suggest that climate scientists have not reached a settled view about global warming is
simply misleading.

If these bills are passed unamended, an emissions trading scheme for Australia will
disappear. The Prime Minister will truly get his way in throwing the baby out with the
bathwater—no legislated cap on carbon pollution and no market mechanism for business to
tap into. Labor is willing to cooperate in terminating the carbon tax. The obvious way forward
for Australian business and households is for the Prime Minister to swallow his pride and for
the parliament to work together on an emissions trading scheme. We have called for this again
and again and have been stonewalled completely. This is the point that needs to be
highlighted in this debate. This is, indeed, what these amendments will do. These
amendments will move us to an emissions trading scheme from July 2014, introducing a cap
on the amount of carbon pollution that can be dumped into the atmosphere and allowing
business to work out the most effective way of reducing that pollution.

We will join countries such as Germany, France, the UK and other major trading partners,
including—and I stress this—China, South Korea and parts of the United States, who have
embraced emissions trading to cut carbon pollution. This is no unilateral folly, as I think
Senator Cormann was suggesting earlier. The argument that has been pressed publicly by the
coalition that Australia stands alone in tackling climate change is simply wrong. It is wrong
on two levels. It is factually wrong; it is also wrong in the myth it propagates that has been
attached to a scaremongering campaign.

As a rich country with a high level of carbon emissions, we have a responsibility to reduce
our pollution output. Labor has already demonstrated the balance of sensible, positive actions
necessary to reduce carbon pollution, tackle climate change and protect our environmental resources. The case that has not been made is one for dismantling many of those measures that we know from the debates before the Senate and other sources have been working well and at no or little cost. What is unjustifiable is that many of the measures in this package of bills will dismantle what we know is working, all under the guise of removing the carbon tax.

I will go back and stress the point I made at the outset, which was that, if removing the carbon tax was all that these bills were about, the opposition would be able to join the coalition and support these bills. But of course this is not what this package of bills is about. It is about dismantling even workable measures to further the case that this Prime Minister has consistently propagated, arguing against the science. This is the settled science that tells us we need some significant action. The saddest component of this package of bills is what is not included. We have sought to substitute for that.

But by the same token we should highlight what direct action is not. I earlier described direct action as 'vacuous' because I think that is a fair description of what that policy slogan captures. That we are proceeding with these bills while the Senate is still considering direct action is highly concerning. I know my colleagues and I will have some questions now to highlight to the government our ongoing concern that direct action is simply that—a slogan. It does not replace the measures that these bills will remove. It compromises progress in renewable energy and other measures that have taken place to date. It compromises the consensus that has been built around not only the science but the need to take action.

This government's suggestion that we should proceed in removing the carbon tax without any substantive policy position beyond that is not only irresponsible but dangerous. Simply using slogans like 'direct action' as a substitute for measures that have been introduced, that have started working and that will be trashed if these bills proceed is highly irresponsible. It is very concerning, and I look forward to this committee stage not only to deal with the amendments that I have moved and as I have outlined but also to address what the case will be in their absence. That is the vacuous Direct Action.

Senator MILNE (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (20:22): I rise tonight to defend the existing emissions trading scheme, which is the law in Australia. What we are now seeing is the logical conclusion to the fundamental mistake made by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard. I remember this with absolute clarity. It was 24 February 2011 in a 7.30 interview with Heather Ewart. Heather asked the Prime Minister whether she conceded that what had been legislated was a tax. She said:

… I am happy to use the word tax, Heather.

Therein lies the massive problem that has resulted ever since and has led us to this ridiculous position that we are in tonight, where the Labor Party is trying to defend a strategy developed by the next Prime Minister after Julia Gillard—that is, Kevin Rudd.

So Prime Minister Rudd in trying to distance himself from the carbon tax—so-called by the Leader of the Opposition of the day, Tony Abbott—said that he would get rid of the carbon tax and instead bring in an emissions trading scheme. The whole thing is a complete fabrication. From day 1, what has been legislated in Australia is an emissions trading scheme, with a fixed price for three years, moving to a flexible price in 2015. That is what is legislated, that is the law and that is as it stands.
Now, because the former Prime Minister Rudd in an election campaign decided to pretend that there was a carbon tax and conceded what should never have been conceded in the first place, this has now let us into this ridiculous position where we have the Labor Party pretending that what they want to move for is emissions trading. We have the framework. It is the law in Australia. We have an emissions trading scheme. It is due to go to flexible pricing on 1 July 2015 and the first auctions were meant to being held right now. The only reason they have not been is because Labor joined with the coalition and refused to support the Greens' disallowance motion, which would have maintained the scheme as we currently have it.

Let us get it completely on the record from the start of this debate. Far from shifting from a tax—and in basic terms you would have to say that a tax would have to come under the taxing powers in the Constitution, and this legislation does not do that—what we have now is a situation where all Labor is doing with these amendments is bringing forward everything in the emissions trading scheme by one year. That is why these whole amendments are around bringing forward the dates. The overwhelming majority of the document with the amendments circulated is all about bringing everything forward by one year.

That is essentially what it is doing and it is foolish. That is because if you are committed to reducing emissions and if you are serious about understanding the science—that we are on a trajectory for at least four degrees of warming—then the last thing you would want to do is actually bring down the carbon price. Let me put this to you, Mr Chairman: if the European price was currently $50 a tonne, would Labor be now moving to bring forward flexible pricing by 12 months? The answer is 'no'. Would GE have been out today, talking about flexible pricing? No, they would not. The only reason that anybody is talking about bringing forward flexible pricing is because of the low price in the European Union.

The reason we went to linking the Australian emissions trading scheme with the European Union was because Rob Oakeshott, in the former parliament, would not agree to the amendments that would have guaranteed the floor price. He reneged on that part of the deal. So the upshot of that was that we had to move forward with the linkage to the EU, always on the understanding that the EU price would recover. At that time the EU was moving to backload the emissions permits, because they had an overallocation of permits. The EU was supposed to be taking out large numbers of permits to backload the auction scheme so that it would increase the price, so that by 2015 we would see a recovery of the European price such that there would not be significant dislocation in Australia in going from the $23, $24 and $25 price and then to the flexible pricing with the EU.

As it turned out, the European price has collapsed, but I am pleased to say that on 24 February this year the council gave the green light to the European commission on regulation concerning allowances to be auctioned between 2013 to 2020. It has agreed that 900 million allowances in the third trading period of the EU's emission trading scheme would be able to be backloaded. So the European Union has made that decision.

But if you were actually serious about carbon pricing—driving the transition to the low-carbon economy, making sure you did not get dislocation in Australia and making sure that we stepped up our efforts with the level of ambition that is required—there is no way that you would be seeking to bring forward a flexible price just so you can drop the price in Australia. You would not be doing that if you were serious about the climate. But, quite obviously, this
is not a serious addressing of the climate crisis; it is simply a political manoeuvre that started on that fateful night on 24 February 2011, when former Prime Minister Gillard conceded that a carbon price was a carbon tax. That led Minister Rudd to his position, and that has led to the Labor Party position here tonight—and the whole thing is a nonsense. We have a perfectly good framework for emissions trading. We have a well-considered progress towards flexible pricing, and I stand by that.

Secondly, we had set up the Climate Change Authority to in order to determine what the appropriate emissions reductions target for Australia should be. I tested this today in the second reading debate, where I put the Climate Change Authority's trajectory into an amendment saying we should be adopting a target for 2013 of 40 to 60 per cent below 2000 levels—and Labor voted it down. And nothing in Labor's amendment tells you what target they are adopting for the scheme. Yes, they are saying they want to go to flexible pricing on 1 July this year—but what is the cap? Why have we not got an amendment that tells us what Labor's cap is? It is because they are happy with a five per cent default cap. They are not moving to implement the Climate Change Authority's cap. Just a few weeks ago, Labor came out saying that the 2020 target should be 19 per cent below 2000 levels and that the 2030 target should be the 40 to 60 per cent trajectory. If Labor were genuine about this, they would have moved to amend the cap. They have not done that. They have simply said it has to be taken into account. But the way the Labor amendment is worded means that we would end up with the default cap being five per cent. What we have here is not a serious attempt to do anything other than save face from a series of disasters of Labor prime ministers who have not understood either the challenge or the emissions trading scheme and how it would actually work.

That is why the Greens are not going to support these amendments. We think the scheme as it is currently designed—which goes to flexible pricing on 1 July 2015—is the way to go. That is why we moved to disallow getting rid of the auctions which would have allowed business to start preparing for that transition. That is why we put up an amendment today to incorporate the 40 to 60 per cent reduction by 2030 in the legislation so that the serious effort to reduce emissions is legislated as part of the cap. But we are not seeing that from the Labor Party. This is very little more than a stunt. Apart from anything else, even if the Labor amendment were to be passed in the Senate, it would be rejected in the House of Representatives. This is not a serious effort to address the climate crisis.

I would like to go back to first principles: we are on a trajectory of four degrees or more of warming. We are living in a climate emergency. Every scientific report—and they are coming out regularly—is saying the same thing: in Australia, there will be more extreme weather events, more intensity in those events and more people dying. There is a greater likelihood of the spread of diseases like dengue further into Queensland and even into New South Wales. We are hearing reports of the coral reefs dying. We are seeing every kind of scenario that has been predicted by scientists for a long time, in terms of the impacts of global warming, actually happening and being recorded—and yet we have denialism from the government, and we have a failure by the Labor Party to recognise the seriousness of the climate crisis and a failure to build that into the targets.

I would put to the Labor Party as it moves these amendments: why have you not put a cap in the legislation? What is the cap you are proposing for when you want to go to flexible
pricing on 1 July this year? And why do you want to drop the price? If you are serious about the transition to the low-carbon economy, why would you not delay moving to flexible pricing until we get a recovery in the European price so that we would see less dislocation in the Australian economy? It seems to me that what we have here is just a playing out of an election scenario from the former Prime Minister.

I also want to go to this idea that it is a logical consequence of the election that, post the change of the Senate on 1 July, carbon pricing will automatically be going—that is not a foregone conclusion at all. People in Western Australia are going to have something to say about that on 5 April. But, apart from anything else, nobody in this Senate can possibly be looking at the abolition of carbon pricing without looking at what is being proposed to take its place. Nobody has said that the Direct Action Plan proposed by the government is anything other than a joke. We have Ken Henry, Bernie Fraser, Ross Garnaut all out there saying, 'Direct Action cannot be scaled up' and 'Direct Action is a joke in an economic framework'. Why would you be abandon the polluter pays principle and instead tax the Australian people in order to pay polluters? That makes no sense whatsoever. There is not a single economist who is out there saying (a) that it will work or (b) that it can be scaled up. How are you going to implement Direct Action for a 40 to 60 per cent reduction in emissions on 2000 levels by 2030? It is impossible. It is a vast amount. We are talking billions in the budget context. It makes zero sense to go down this path—so I would not be making an automatic assumption that people landing here in the Senate on 1 July are going to be condemning Australian taxpayers to the kind of impost that Direct Action is going to mean. And there are others who are already here in the Senate saying that, whilst they do not support the existing trading scheme, they are not going to vote for something which is inferior. Frankly, what is on the table is inferior.

I challenge the automatic assumption that carbon pricing is going. I will do everything in my power to maintain the existing carbon-price mechanism. We have an emissions trading scheme. It is legislated. It is the law. I will do everything in my power to maintain it. These foolish games only undermine public confidence in the scheme which we have already worked through and legislated. I am not going to stand by and let that happen.

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (20:37): What is direct action? There are lots and lots of questions about this, and I am concerned that the coalition government has no intention of ensuring that Australia meets our internationally committed target of a five per cent reduction on 2000 levels by 2020. Our climate policies must be capable of achieving Australia's maximum internationally committed targets of up to 25 per cent reductions by 2020. Notably, a failure to demonstrate a credible plan weakens our ability to play a constructive role in the new agreement that will cover all major emitters from 2020. Australia's existing policies give certainty in this regard.

The key feature of the existing carbon-pricing legislation ensures that Australia can meet its targets and stronger post-2020 targets if it chooses to do so. Australia's existing carbon reduction policy suite has a greater capacity to meet our current and future targets because it features a legally binding cap on emissions. These features are the ability to set legally binding annual caps on carbon emissions and for liable entities to access international carbon permits to comply with these caps. These features provide confidence that Australia's carbon
policy framework is sufficiently robust to manage the risks and uncertainty of future emissions drivers at reasonable cost. These features also allow significant flexibility. The government can choose to adjust Australia's emissions trajectory through the caps, or companies can choose within certain limits how best to fulfil their obligations, whether by reducing their emissions, by producing domestic and international permits or by a combination thereof. Meanwhile, direct action has no commitment to targets beyond 2020 and there is uncertainty within the policy about how it can even achieve these 2020 targets.

The government is currently yet to demonstrate that its alternative policy can achieve Australia's minimum commitments, and all independent analysis to date indicates that emissions will continue to increase under its current proposed framework. The coalition government's lack of long-term funding commitments under direct action further confirms Labor's view that the coalition government has no long-term commitment to meaningful action to address climate change. Mr Anthony Wood from the Grattan Institute, in evidence before the committee that I participated in, highlighted how direct action can have no longevity as a policy without further significant budget appropriations. Mr Wood said:

My understanding from every conversation I have had with the senior representatives of the government is that direct action has been targeted directly to achieve the five per cent target by 2020. That is shorthand obviously. Many have criticised whether it might even to that but just focusing on your question there is fundamentally no reason why the emissions reduction fund, which is the centrepiece of direct action, could not be expanded but because it is funded on budget, which is by its very nature of the instrument different from an emissions trading scheme or of renewable energy target, it would require additional budget appropriations in future times to be able to achieve that outcome.

The source of funding for the direct action policy was raised as a concern by the Australian Council of Social Services. Its submission to the committee highlighted that there is no benefit for low-income Australians from one year of reduced power prices if the direct action policy is funded by reducing programs on which these people rely. This has been the centrepiece and one of the main points that the government has relied on in trying to trash this program. Of course, programs that low-income Australians rely upon are right in the coalition's sights, with moves already to scrap the income support payment, schoolkids bonus and low-income super contribution.

A 2010 Auditor-General's report into the administration of climate change programs raised serious concerns about the effectiveness of a direct action policy:

The Emissions Reduction Fund is a grant/tender scheme similar in structure to several previously implemented in Australia.

The 2010 Administration of Climate Change Programs report of the Auditor-General evaluates the success of a range of programs aimed at reducing Australian greenhouse gas pollution. The assessed greenhouse gas pollution reduction policy that most closely resembles the ERF was the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Program. The Auditor-General’s finding was that the actual abatement achieved by the GGAP program was substantially less than originally planned, with only 30 per cent of planned emissions abatement being achieved.

This underperformance was partly due to delays in finalising funding agreements, but also because of the termination of 40 per cent of funded projects—largely due to organisations bidding with unsustainably low quotes for pollution reduction, before abandoning projects when costs were higher than anticipated. The OECD considers that capital subsidies, as per
the direct action policy, were among the most expensive ways of reducing emissions. The CEO of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, Mr Oliver Yates, in evidence to the committee highlighted concerns with financing emissions reduction programs with grants rather than loans:

Our experience is that providing people with debt creates discipline and ensures that the person who is borrowing from the state uses that money carefully. Our own view is that, if you are given money for taking an action, you are less likely to be as cautious as you would be if you were borrowing the money to achieve that outcome.

That evidence highlights the major concern that the coalition is not serious about reducing Australia's carbon emissions. The direct action policy has no guarantees of funding and no guarantees of reducing emissions. The Australian Conservation Foundation said:

If it passes into law, the Clean Energy Act Repeal Bill will remove Australia’s legislated cap on pollution. Government has indicated the—replacement—

Emissions Reduction Fund scheme will have no legislated cap on pollution, nor any mechanism … to ensure that Australia’s pollution reduction targets are satisfied. Government has also committed to capping spending on the ERF scheme.

The Senate inquiry also made clear that the coalition government has no clear policy rationale or evidence base to support its direct action policy. The policy is being developed in the absence of economic modelling. This was made clear by both officials from the Treasury and the Department of the Environment during hearings of the inquiry.

I understand that Treasury has previously done extensive work examining emissions trading schemes but has done no work under this government looking at direct action. Previous work done by Treasury supported emissions trading as the most efficient policy framework for Australia, over and above that of direct action policies.

So my question to the parliamentary secretary is: what is the direct action? What is the government's direct action replacing, given that you will not consider the Labor Party's view on the ETS?

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (20:46): I thought the filibuster was going to continue there and I have little doubt that it will. I was going to respond to the amendment, previously moved by Senator Collins, so I will touch on that amendment now.

The amendment before the committee stage of the chamber really demonstrates the lie of the Labor Party's position on the carbon tax and the lie they took to the last election. One lie is: what they are now proposing through this legislation is what they claimed to have done at the time of the last election.

The Labor Party ran around Australia at the last election, saying, 'We have abolished the carbon tax.' But they never brought legislation, reflecting the amendments they seek to introduce today, into this parliament. It was a complete and utter lie that they took to the election.

That is but a small point in the general debate around the carbon tax. Labor are attempting to play semantics with the Australian public and attempting to pull the wool over the electorate's eyes. Frankly, they cannot, have not and will not succeed on this. People know
full well that the carbon tax is exactly what Labor put in place. It was a scheme that ran well out into the future. It does not matter that they might be proposing and might have come up with, under Mr Rudd, some crafty little scheme to tweak—and that is all this amendment does—by one year what they had put in place, because the Australian people voted emphatically and deliberately against the carbon tax.

This amendment does not get rid of the carbon tax. It changes the terms of its application by one year. It changes the legislation that the Labor government brought in under a lie at the 2010 election, when they promised not to have a carbon tax. It brings in one year's worth of changes. That is all it does.

There will still be a carbon tax if this amendment were to carry through and become law. There would still have been a carbon tax if the Labor Party had got their way at the last election. Our government went to the last election with a very clear position, crystal clear: that we would repeal the carbon tax lock, stock and barrel, fixed or floating. No ifs, no buts—we would repeal the whole show. That is exactly what the legislation before the Senate does and exactly what the Labor Party promised or tried to make the Australian people believe that they would do. It shows that that was a lie and that they were only ever interested in tweaking it. It also shows that they remain committed to having a carbon tax forever into the future.

In the future—in Western Australia shortly—at the next general election and beyond, the Labor Party will have to explain yet again why it is that they still stand by this policy of a carbon tax. More than 1½ million Australians voted for the coalition than the Labor Party at last year's election. That should have sent a very clear message to those opposite. But, clearly, it did not.

Rather than accepting that the prime focus of the coalition's campaign, the abolition of the carbon tax, was overwhelmingly accepted, they instead slink into this chamber and propose these tricky little amendments that do not repeal the carbon tax but just simply seek to rebrand it.

**Senator Jacinta Collins:** Slink!

**Senator BIRMINGHAM:** We are not into word games, Senator Collins.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Senator Fawcett):** Senator Birmingham, you will ignore the interjections.

**Senator BIRMINGHAM:** We are not into word games; we are into doing what we were elected to do and what we promised we would do. And what we promised we would do is abolish the carbon tax lock, stock and barrel.

The amazing thing about these amendments is that they are not even complete. The amendments before the Senate do not even deal with all aspects of the fixed-price period of the carbon tax. So whilst Labor proposes taking the fixed-price component away for some parts of the carbon tax application, these amendments in fact do not deal with the impact on synthetic greenhouse gases. They do not terminate the carbon tax in fuels and synthetic greenhouse gases. If Labor's amendments were carried through to become law, we would have an even more perverse circumstance where some parts of the economy would have a floating or variable carbon tax and other parts of the economy would have, after 1 July this year, a fixed $25.40 per tonne carbon tax equivalent. That is how much thought and work Labor have put into the policies which they went to the last election on, claiming they had
already enacted. They cannot now even bring in amendments that make sense or apply consistently.

What is more, by shifting to the variable price and claiming, as Senator Collins does, that this is all about putting a legislative cap in place, Labor come into the Senate without even proposing what that cap would be. So they expect to have a capped emissions trading scheme carbon tax in place on 1 July this year, under their legislation, but they do not have the guts or the courage to tell the Australian people, Australian businesses or Australian industries just what that cap would be. It is shoddy legislation that the opposition is proposing. These are shoddily drafted amendments, and of course they do nothing about getting rid of the carbon tax. They are simply a sneaky, tricky way of attempting to rename it. That is not what this government will accept. We know that only through abolishing the carbon tax will we be able to remove the impost on Australians, on Australian businesses and on Australia's competitiveness overseas. In terms of revenue for this financial year, about $7.6 billion is generated through the sale of permits, through the tax on aviation and non-transport fuels and through all of the different aspects of the carbon tax that are applied to around 75,000 Australian businesses. That $7.6 billion is stripped out of their business competitiveness and passed on to Australian households to have to foot the bill.

Labor want to pretend that they can end all of that pain through these amendments, that they can end all of that pain by going to a variable carbon price. But that is just not true, because the Treasury modelling undertaken by the government—when the Labor Party were in power—demonstrated that the carbon tax under Labor's model of a variable price would grow not just to $25, as the fixed price is forecast to go to next year, but all the way to $38 per tonne by 2020. So the lie that Labor have proposed tonight is that, if this amendment were to succeed and become law, they would not be scrapping the carbon tax; they would simply have a scheme in place whereby the carbon tax would be even higher by 2020 than it is today. The carbon tax would be $38 per tonne by 2020 compared with where it is today.

Senator Collins comes in here with her tricky little amendment, which she pretends is getting rid of the carbon tax. But, in reality, if this amendment were to go through, the carbon tax would keep going up and up and up, just as it was forecast to do under the government which Senator Collins was a member of. Ultimately, we will see far more than that $7.6 billion per annum paid by Australian businesses. We will instead see $8 billion, $9 billion or $10 billion. It will keep going up and up by a billion dollars every single year and it will be paid for by Australian businesses. It would be irresponsible for this chamber to do; and it would be irresponsible for a government like ours, which campaigned very clearly to get rid of the carbon tax, to do.

This is also a remarkable act of inconsistency by the Labor Party. In the last week of the previous sitting, the Labor Party came in here and supported the government in abolishing scheduled auctions in relation to the carbon tax. There were future auctions scheduled for the floating-price period of the carbon tax. The Labor Party supported us in abolishing those auctions. Yet, tonight, in the following sitting week, they come in and propose amendments to try to have a floating carbon tax that would require auctions. What are you? Are you for auctions or against auctions? You voted against them a couple of weeks ago, and tonight you are moving amendments to keep them—and you are not even moving complete amendments in that regard.
The government rejects these amendments outright. During the committee stage we will not be playing the Labor Party's game of having speaker after speaker on this matter. I can see them all lined up over there. They will all read, as we saw Senator Urquhart do just before, a 15-minute prepared statement. It will be like another second reading stage that will go on and on, as long as the Labor Party choose to play this little game. We will not play it. I will not be having much more to say in this debate, and I am sure that other members of the government will not either, because we want to get on with repealing the carbon tax as we promised to do, as the electorate voted for and as the Australian people endorsed us to do at the last election. I invite those opposite to have the courage to actually let this matter come to a vote some time soon.

Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (20:58): I have a number of questions that I would like to put to the 'Dorian Gray of climate change', the parliamentary secretary, who we know previously supported an emissions trading scheme but has obviously been rolled into supporting what nearly everyone in this country believes to be a dud of a policy, and that is Direct Action. I have a couple of questions, but I think it is important to point out that Senator Birmingham, in his response, did not answer any of the questions that have been put to him.

He may want to say that people are filibustering but the senators in here have put relevant questions to the parliamentary secretary, and what he did in his contribution of 10 or so minutes was just to again slur the opposition. This is the MO of the government. This is what they do. They do not have robust policies. They use one-liners or they embark on personal attacks. That is what we are seeing here tonight.
number of other initiatives that are planned under the Direct Action Plan. But, as I said, I
think it is also very important, given some of the comments by the parliamentary secretary, to
restate the Labor Party's position. We have been very clear about our position on climate
change. We accept the science of climate change and we believe that something needs to be
done and that something real has to be done. I personally think that the parliamentary
secretary agrees with that as well.

The Labor Party believe that the most cost-efficient way to deal with carbon pollution is an
emissions trading scheme. An emissions trading scheme, a market based mechanism with a
legal cap on carbon pollution, is the cheapest and most effective way to reduce emissions
while encouraging business. Labor accept the science and the fact that we cannot afford to
leave the challenge of climate change to future generations. We know that climate change is
real and that something must be done—and, as many of the contributions that have been made
here tonight and on other days in this debate have said, it has to be meaningful action. It is a
simple, basic logic. It is a logic that we must listen to in the interests of our children, their
children and future generations of Australia and of all countries around the world.

If the government continues down this path and has its way in terms of the Direct Action
Plan, history will not be kind to it. It is a government that will look foolish for ignoring the
science. It is a government that has ignored the biggest problem of this century because it has
lacked the courage to tackle the real issues.

Carbon pollution changes our weather and harms our environment. That is the best
available science that we have. The experts agree. All the reputable scientists say it is a fact
that the climate is changing and humans are accelerating that change. That is why
governments from all around the world are taking action, meaningful action—and that
included the previous Labor government. Labor argue that we should tackle the problem and
that Australia should back itself to compete with the rest of the world by still acting
responsibly for future generations. Those future generations would be proud to be able to look
back on this period of history and see that Australia made a difference. Instead, they are likely
to read about an isolationist Australian government that shrugged its shoulders, paid a bit of
lip-service, tore up a policy that was making meaningful change and established a slush fund
of billions of taxpayer dollars to hand to polluters.

The coalition, as we have heard, want to replace the clean energy laws with this dud of a
policy, Direct Action, that nobody with any economic or environmental credibility thinks will
work. As I have indicated, they want to—

Senator Fifield: Mr Temporary Chairman Fawcett, on a point of order on relevance: this
is not a contribution to the debate. This is just tedious repetition and filibustering, and I think
is very important that those who may be listening to these proceedings know that those
opposite are making no attempt to make a constructive contribution to this debate. They are
simply seeking to fill time for the sake of filling time and to delay this legislation, this
package of bills, coming to a vote.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Senator Brown, I do draw your attention to the
question before the chair, which relates to opposition amendments (1) to (3) on sheet 7443.

Senator CAROL BROWN: I understand the amendments that are before the chamber—

Senator Fifield: Well, mention them!
Senator CAROL BROWN: but I also would like to—
Senator Fifield: Provide context?
The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!
Senator CAROL BROWN: point out that—
Senator Jacinta Collins: Don't put words in her mouth!
Senator CAROL BROWN: I am responding in part to the parliamentary secretary's—
Senator Birmingham interjecting—
The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Senator Brown, please resume your seat. I again remind senators on my left and my right that Senator Brown has the right to be heard in silence.

Senator CAROL BROWN: As I was saying, I was responding in part to the parliamentary secretary's contribution, and I think that is also my role—that I should be able to respond to the parliamentary secretary's nonresponse to questions that have been asked by the opposition. He went into very little detail. So, if I may, I will continue. I will of course get to a number of questions that I would like the parliamentary secretary to answer.

What I think is important to understand, though, is that the policy the coalition is seeking to replace the current law with is a dud of a policy. There are many reputable, highly credible scientists and economists who do not support their policy—people whom the government would normally take notice of. No less an authority than Mr Alan Kohler sums it up by saying:

Tony Abbott will have to either drop the promise to cut emissions by five per cent or the promise to repeal the carbon tax - both together will be impossible without massive Government spending under the proposed "direct action" policy of paying companies to reduce emissions.

I ask the parliamentary secretary to respond to that assertion while responding to the other questions he has so far failed to respond to in this debate. I also ask the parliamentary secretary when we can expect to see the release of the white paper on the Emissions Reduction Fund.

Mr Kohler went on to say:
The liquefied natural gas (LNG) export boom will make it virtually impossible for Australia to meet the Government's carbon emissions reduction target.

According, therefore, to one of the most respected economic voices in Australia, there is no chance of meeting the minimum target under the Direct Action Plan. Mr Kohler also says:

… not trying to reduce carbon emissions at all would put Australia at odds with the rest of the world, including China and the US, and endanger trade agreements …

He further suggests:
… the Prime Minister and Treasurer Joe Hockey will be, or at least should be, desperately hoping that the Senate never allows the repeal of the emission trading scheme legislation, so it's not exactly a broken promise—at least they tried.

I ask the parliamentary secretary to respond to those points made by Alan Kohler.

I have a further question to put to the parliamentary secretary. In doing so, I also seek more information about the Emissions Reduction Fund. My understanding is that the coalition's
approach to reducing carbon pollution is focused on the creation of the $2.9 billion Emissions Reduction Fund, which will pay Australian companies to reduce pollution. Labor's focus, in contrast, was to cap the amount of pollution permitted to enter the atmosphere and to have a system allowing businesses to find the cheapest way to reduce their pollution. The coalition's policy is to use taxpayers' money to pay big polluters.

My understanding is that there has been independent research and modelling undertaken by SKM-MMA and Monash University's Centre of Policy Studies. Their study showed that the ERF will see pollution increase by eight per cent to 10 per cent above 2000 levels by 2020, will reduce pollution by nearly one-third less than Labor's policy and will require significant additional investment of between $4 billion and $15 billion to achieve the 2020 target of at least a five per cent reduction on 2000 levels. I would like to hear the parliamentary secretary's views on those findings.

The same research and modelling says that costs and pollution both increase over time under the coalition policy. Even with spending increasing to around $88 billion from 2014 to 2050, pollution would still increase by about 45 per cent over this timeframe. Up to 2020, the cumulative effective subsidy to businesses that do not make changes to their pollution was estimated at $50 billion.

A final question I would like the parliamentary secretary to respond to relates to the 20 million trees initiative. Can the parliamentary secretary provide more information about the 20 million trees initiative? For example, can he tell us where these trees will be planted, when the program will be rolled out, how much is budgeted for it and how much abatement is expected from the 20 million trees? I have also been asked by a number of constituents whether the Green Army will be involved in the 20 million trees initiative.

Senator Fifield interjecting—

Senator CAROL BROWN: I would have thought that these questions would have been something that Senator Fifield would like to see a response to. It is, after all, an initiative of his government. I know they are not much on letting out information but, considering they have brought this legislation to the Senate here today, I think they should have been prepared to answer some very basic questions, and I am sure that Australians around the country would be very interested to hear those responses.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment) (21:15): I will keep my responses brief, as I promised. For Senator Brown's interest, I will quote from the green paper released on the Emissions Reduction Fund:

The latest estimates of Australia’s future greenhouse gas emissions reflected in Australia’s Abatement Task and 2013 Emissions Projections confirm that on current trends, Australia faces a cumulative emissions reduction task of around 431 MtCO2-e from 2014 to 2020 …

This is significantly less than the coalition built its Direct Action policy on, and we are confident we will be able to deliver on the funding for the Emissions Reduction Fund. I reject outright the assertions made in some of the statements that Senator Brown was relating, some of which she attempted to relate to Mr Kohler. He can speak for himself. The coalition built a budget which we stand by and which we believe will achieve the abatement challenge required, which is now less then when we originally developed that budget.
The white paper will be released in due course, in the coming weeks or so I would anticipate, but it is going through the proper processes. However, we are committed to the Emissions Reduction Fund being ready to commence next year, and that means progressing through that white paper process relatively quickly. The 20 Million Trees program guidelines will properly be developed around that, unlike Senator Brown's government, which asked for the full costings proposal of the home insulation program in two days, it was revealed in the Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program today. We will go through the proper process, and I expect you will hear more about that in the budget context.

Senator SINGH (Tasmania) (21:17): Part of the government's so-called plan to tackle climate change deals with solar roofs, solar schools and solar town programs. On the face of it, you would think that the opposition would be supportive of the government's plan in that vein, because it was the former Labor government that was very innovative in its reforms around solar energy and the way in which solar power was encouraged and induced through its reforms and programs as part of the package of clean energy bills that went forward. Of course Labor supports solar energy. It supports solar power promoted through the use of small- and large-scale solar PV installation through a range of means, including the renewable energy target, which has, until now, had bipartisan support. I remember that Senator Birmingham was supportive of the renewable energy target, which had both small- and large-scale subtargets as well. We had the support of the then opposition for that particular part of the former Labor government's clean energy package, but unfortunately that is no longer the case. In relation to solar energy, which my questioning is about—which I will get to, Senator Birmingham—another component was to do with ARENA, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, which also provides funding for new technologies and projects that provide large-scale—

Senator Birmingham: Mr Temporary Chairman, I raise a point of order. To assist Senator Singh, it might be helpful if she knew that amendment (7), yet to be moved and not before the chair at this stage, is the opposition amendment that deals with ARENA.

Senator Jacinta Collins interjecting—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Senator Fawcett): Order, Senator Collins! Senator Singh, you have the call—

Senator SINGH: To give some context, I will just outline the fact that ARENA is relevant to this part of the committee stage because we are talking about renewable energy. My question to you, Senator Birmingham, is about your particular solar roofs program. So we are certainly talking about renewable energy, and ARENA is certainly a part of renewable energy, which this particular part of the committee stage is about. ARENA has played an incredible role when it comes to renewable energy. If there is one thing you would think we would still have some bipartisan support on, it would be in the renewable energy space. You would think that this government would still be supportive of ARENA but, no, we know that Senator Birmingham is very uncomfortable with any other senator in this place raising issues about the government's handling of ARENA, because we know that recently, in the MYEFO, there was a huge cut to ARENA of $450 million.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Senator Singh, I will just draw your attention to the fact that the question before the chair is opposition amendments (1) to (3) on sheet 7443.
Senator SINGH: Thank you, Chair. I am very well aware of that.

Honourable senators interjecting—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Senators Collins, Birmingham and Fifield, I remind you that it is disorderly for you to interject.

Senator SINGH: Thank you, Mr Chairman. My questioning is in regard to the Million Solar Roofs program that this government has as part of its program that it has put forward. I am trying to give some context and to understand where the government is coming from with this solar roofs program. I was raising ARENA as part of that because the Australian Renewable Energy Agency is an agency that provides funding for new technologies, like solar projects. In fact, there were some 70 different projects in an array of different types of solar energy technology developments which I think is available on their website. It shows very much the way in which ARENA plays an active role in ensuring solar energy is part of the mix of renewable energies, which I think this government would be interested in because, in its Direct Action Plan, it has outlined that solar energy is part of that. It has outlined a solar roofs program. That is what I want to get to in this particular component of the committee stage.

I raised ARENA because I am concerned that nearly $450 million has been cut from it in MYEFO. What I want to know is: where is the funding going to come from for these programs that are being raised by the government in relation to its One Million Solar Roofs program? On the one hand, they want solar energy for renewal energy, and on the face of it that does sound positive for the country—a One Million Solar Roofs program sounds like a good thing; but, on the other hand, they have cut from it in MYEFO which is going to have a detrimental effect on how that program can be rolled out.

The public want to know, the opposition want to know, if the government is genuine in putting forward these bills in the area of renewal energy, particularly this solar roofs program. In contrast, I know what the expenditure was when we were in government, when the Labor government introduced its clean energy bills. I know the incredible investment that was made in ARENA that ensured ARENA could provide solar energy across the country and which led to so many incredible solar energy projects. I could list 70 from right across the country but I do not have the time.

If this government is genuine, it will explain how it can ensure its One Million Solar Roofs program will be rolled out when there has been a cut to MYEFO. On top of that, I would like to know if low-income households will be targeted at all, and exactly how the solar roofs program will be rolled out. Will there be some kind of copayment arrangement with the solar roofs program or will it just be a straight subsidy from government? How much abatement is expected from the program? One would expect there would be some analysis going on to see how the One Million Solar Roofs program could have some positive impact on abatement. Also, where will funding for the solar towns program come from? Again, it sounds like a good thing, a solar towns program, but where is that funding going to come from? This is especially when, I understand, there could be regional towns, suburbs and local government areas. It is not clear.

Senator Birmingham: Mr Temporary Chairman Fawcett, on a point of order: I ask you to again draw Senator Singh's attention to the question before the chair. We have been incredibly
tolerant about the length of time taken, but not a single question, comment or otherwise from Senator Singh has related to the question before the chair or, frankly, even the legislation before the chamber.

**Senator Jacinta Collins:** Mr Temporary Chairman Fawcett, on the point of order: Senator Birmingham needs to be appraised of the advice that was provided to the opposition on this matter in terms of how we proceeded with the amendments. The first set of amendments—and indeed we would have been happy to remove them as a whole—

**Senator Birmingham:** I'm sorry you couldn't adjust your tactics!

**Senator Jacinta Collins:** It is not an adjustment of tactics, Senator Birmingham—in fact, your whole manner and demeanour does you no credit this evening.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! Senator Collins, you will address your remarks through the chair.

**Senator Jacinta Collins:** I will address my remarks through the chair. Chairman, to sit in this chamber—and I will respond later—and be accused of having no guts, no courage, to be slinking around, to be sneaky, tricky—

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! Senator Collins, you will come to the point of order.

**Senator Jacinta Collins:** I will come to the point of order—

**Senator Fifield:** I'm sure you can slink with the best!

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order, Senator Fifield!

**Senator Jacinta Collins:** because, aside from Senator Birmingham's poor parliamentary behaviour, he needs to understand that in this committee stage of the debate we are dealing with the first set of questions—which are moved in one set because of the way in which the question is cast. The remainder of the questions will be on the motion that matters in the bill stand as printed. The advice the opposition received from the Clerk was that senators could raise and move through issues throughout all of the amendments. If you want to challenge that advice, Mr Temporary Chairman Fawcett, that is all well and good. But for Senator Birmingham to be making cheap, snide remarks about how senators are addressing a routine—

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! Senator Collins, you have made your point; you will resume your seat. Senator Singh, you have six minutes and 36 seconds remaining.

**Senator SINGH:** I have been on my feet now for a good eight minutes, so for Senator Birmingham to now say that what I have been addressing, the questions that I have been raising, are not pertinent to his sense of what is compatible with this section of the bill is a little bit late, quite frankly. But he knows very well my line of questioning. I have been talking now for some eight minutes about solar energy. I have been talking specifically about the government's One Million Solar Roofs program and where the funding for that program is going to come from. You would think that in the last eight minutes he would have started to think about how he is going to respond to some of these questions, when in the next five minutes he will get the opportunity to do so.

To make points of order, pretending he has no idea what is going on and that I am in some other world with regard to this section of the bill, is a little bit ordinary, quite frankly. That is
especially the case because, having been on the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications with him for the last 18 months or so, I know that he is quite engaged in this portfolio. I think I am right in saying that he is actually quite passionate about renewable energy and about the area of climate change—as opposed, perhaps, to some of his colleagues in the government. Senator Birmingham actually understands this issue and is on the record as being supportive of an emissions trading scheme. At that time he was adamant that that was the way that his party room was going to move. In fact, he said that they were going to do it better than the then Rudd government. But now they are not going to do it at all. They are going to introduce a direct action scheme and pretend that they never even imagined the emissions trading scheme.

It is on the record that Senator Birmingham was very much supportive of an emissions scheme but we will let that aside. Hopefully, Senator Birmingham will listen to my questioning in relation to the bill that is before us—that is, my questions in relation to solar roofs, solar schools and solar towns programs. Specifically, my questions are: where will the funding for the one million solar roofs program come from? Will low-income households be specifically targeted in a program of that sort? Will there be some kind of co-payment arrangement for households? How much abatement is expected from such a program?

Also, where will funding for the solar towns program come from? There is a solar roofs program, I understand, but there is also a solar towns program. Will there be regional towns? Will there be suburbs or local government areas in regional areas? Also, how much abatement is expected from that program?

There are the solar roofs program and the solar towns program. My final questions are in relation to where the funding for the solar schools program will come from. I am specifically interested in the solar schools program because that is an area I am very familiar with, having understood the over-$217 million investment that the last Labor government made in providing 5,310 schools to install renewable energy systems, rainwater tanks and a range of energy efficient measures into their schools.

Where will that funding for the solar schools program come from? Will it go exclusively to public schools or will it go to schools in low socio-economic status areas? How will it be determined which schools will get that funding? Like the questions in relation to the solar roofs program and the solar towns program, how much abatement is expected from the program?

I have been talking about three programs. I am sure that Senator Birmingham is very aware of the three programs that are part of his government's package. I am sure he is able to answer these three questions in great detail. I know he has great interest in this area, having been a supporter of the emissions trading scheme, and that he is, therefore, aware of all of the benefits that renewable energy provides by encouraging changes in behaviour—which is what occurs through an emissions trading scheme.

I will finish my remarks by highlighting that I, too, am interested in and passionate about renewable energy. I think it is the way of the future. I think that it is something that the opposition and the government could have some bipartisan agreement on. Where we differ is probably on how it is delivered and, certainly, on how it is funded. Cutting $450 million in MYEFO from ARENA is certainly going to leave the government very short in being able to
deliver these three programs. So I will be very interested to hear from Senator Birmingham exactly how this is going to occur.

**Senator MILNE** (Tasmania—Leader of the Australian Greens) (21:34): I rise to ask a question about the amendment that is before the Senate. In particular, I am referring to amendment (3), subsection 8:

**After paragraph 14(2)(b)**

Insert:

(ba) if the regulations declare the carbon pollution cap, and the carbon pollution cap number, for the flexible charge year beginning on 1 July 2014—must have regard to any report that:

(i) was given to the Minister by the Climate Change Authority under section 60 of the *Climate Change Authority Act 2011*; and

(ii) dealt with the carbon pollution cap for that year …

Labor is moving to bring forward the flexible-pricing period. That is what this amendment does. This amendment means that the regulations need to be in place by 31 May 2014. It is now 17 March. That means, according to the Labor Party's amendment, we will be going to flexible pricing in 3½ months, with the regulations having to be tabled in a matter of 2½ months, maximum. So I put to the Labor Party: given that the Climate Change Authority has now made its recommendations to government about the target, and that the recommendation is a 15-plus-four reduction on 2000 levels—that is, 19 per cent by 2020—with a trajectory of 40 to 60 per cent below 2000 levels by 2030, what is the cap that the Labor Party is proposing? Since they are saying the Climate Change Authority report must be taken into account, what is the cap that the Labor Party is proposing with this amendment, that they would expect to be introduced on or by 1 July 2014 with regulations in place by 31May?

I put this question very clearly because the way the amendment is written—I asked this question before and did not get an answer, so I am asking it again—it assumes a default of five per cent. It does not take into account or implement the Climate Change Authority's recommendations as released in its report a few weeks ago. This goes to the crux of why we actually have a fixed price period leading to a flexible price. If people cast their minds back, the Labor Party and the Greens could not agree on the emissions reduction target in Prime Minister Rudd's first attempt to introduce an emissions trading scheme. The cap that he proposed was a five per cent emissions reduction target on 2000 levels by 2020, when all of the science said that was woefully inadequate. In fact, at the Bali UNFCCC conference, the Bali Road Map was a 25 to 40 per cent reduction by developed countries by 2020 to enable developing countries to have a window of opportunity. That was the Bali Road Map. The Greens supported the Bali Road Map. We said it had to be a minimum of 25 per cent, and that was back in 2007.

Seven years later, the climate science is far more settled, but it is far worse. We are now on a trajectory of at least four degrees, if not more, in a climate emergency. Clearly, five per cent is woefully inadequate. When the clean energy package was designed, five per cent was a default. It was not an acceptance that five per cent was adequate. It was to protect from the fact that, if the Climate Change Authority made a recommendation to the parliament to have a certain target and the parliament rejected that target, the scheme would not stop. It would continue with a default of five per cent until the parliament determined what the cap would
be. That is why there is a default in the scheme—not that anyone expected the default to be effective but, rather, that the default would enable the scheme to continue.

I put the question very clearly to the Labor Party: given that you want to go to flexible pricing starting 1 July 2014, what is the cap you are proposing under this amendment?

Senator FURNER (Queensland) (21:39): Prior to my rising, one of the opposition senators was seeking a response on solar changes—solar roofs, Solar Schools and solar town programs. I am equally seeking some responses from Senator Birmingham with respect to the questions that were put to him on those particular issues. It is good to be in the chamber with two fellow senators from the Sunshine State that I think understand and appreciate the importance of solar powered energy. I can use one example: Chinchilla. When we were in government, in the state of Queensland we had a program with one of the largest solar powered energy areas in the town of Chinchilla, west of our capital, Brisbane, which has been canned by the Liberal-National Party in Queensland as a result of the inadequate position they take on climate change and solar powered energy.

I would like some response on how the modelling has been arranged with regard to selecting those particular towns for solar town programs. Is it going to be a case of some sort of cooperative, some sort of tripartisan arrangement with local councils, given that there are broad ranges of regional councils in Western Queensland? What is the arrangement that they will be successful in through the modelling? Would it be a tendering process or a case of granting an area that is considered relevant, subject to reaching solar powered arrangements through our far and great western areas of Queensland? Regarding the Solar Schools program, I would like some feedback and some answers on how the modelling is going to be conducted on the selection of schools, given that the state LNP government is now selling schools in Queensland as a result of their cuts in order to balance the books in Queensland. I would like some responses around those particular areas.

I would also like a response on funding and the selection of socioeconomic status areas. Is it going to be the case that we are going to examine areas such as parts of Logan? Are we going to look at housing commission areas? What is the criteria in the selection process with regard to particular areas of low socioeconomic status? Is it going to be a case of examining the wages of families in those areas? Is that the modelling that will be applied or are there other measures with respect to how those places are going to be selected?

Also, I would like some guarantees around how the sustainability of solar power will be continued with respect to the likes of the example I gave earlier, where state governments are going to shut down their solar powered energy programs. Is the partisan arrangement to be met? I am making an assumption here with regard to having arrangements with the state or local governments. Is the partisan arrangement going to be guaranteed or is it at the whim of a state government or a local council to decide whether the program is sustainable? Or is the federal government going to make some application that there are guarantees to ensure that the state government or local councils continue the arrangements to ensure that the programs are sustainable and will continue to supply energy to the power grids?

While we are at it, with regard to Direct Action as a whole, I would like some feedback in terms of the modelling done on the 20 million trees plantation process. What sorts of trees are going to be planted? Which areas are they going to be planted in? Are we looking at the eastern seaboard or the southern areas of our nation? Are we going to be looking at the types
of trees for plantation? Are they going to be drought-proof, given that we are moving to a warmer environment and the climate is changing in areas? That side of the chamber, the government, does not accept the science with respect to climate change. I would like to have some understanding of what the government is intending to do—what types of trees it intends to plant among those 20 million—

Senator Gallacher interjecting—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Senator Edwards): Order! I remind senators to address their remarks in an orderly fashion.

Senator FURNER: I was listening to an interjection that I thought was relevant to the particular subject, and it was with regards to what sorts of trees will be considered for planting as a result of the Direct Action program. As we know, there are certainly areas in the northern state of Queensland now that are subject to climatic change as a result of increasing cyclone activity. In fact, I was just up north the other week when there were three cyclones bearing down on the cape of Queensland.

Senator Ian Macdonald: One of them was only a rain depression.

Senator FURNER: I would like to know how the government intend to address that particular issue. If there are going to be increases in climatic change and more intense cyclones and cyclonic wet weather, how are they going to maintain those types of trees? Senator Macdonald would know very well what happened with Cyclone Larry, when it came through that particular northern part of Queensland. It stripped the forests up there and left them bare. If the government are going to go to all this trouble planting trees, are they really wasting their time in doing tree plantations in the areas of North Queensland where there is an increase in cyclones?

Senator Ian Macdonald: Have a look now; the trees are growing beautifully!

Senator FURNER: I have driven through there quite extensively. Climate change critics and the climate sceptics across the corridor here, like Senator Macdonald, know very well what happened to those trees in those rainforests. Maybe he would be able to explain what sorts of rainforest trees are going to be planted in North Queensland as a result of having some answers forthcoming from the relevant senator responsible for this legislation.

Senator Ian Macdonald interjecting—

Senator FURNER: If I want nonsense from you, I will come over there and squeeze your head!

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Senator Furner, would you please address your remarks through the chair.

Senator FURNER: It is pretty straightforward. I do not know why some of these answers are not forthcoming. There are a broad range of trees, as you might be familiar with, Mr Temporary Chairman Edwards, that it is possible to plant in areas of Queensland. But, once again, there are certain areas that should not be considered as a result of climate change, particularly in North Queensland; we have seen the effects of climate change up there, with significant weather extremes and cyclones. I would like some responses with regards to how that tree planting will be conducted and how many people they intend to introduce in the program to ensure that the program is successful.
Once again, relying upon my earlier questions about partnership arrangements with local councils, will it be a program that is a partnership between federal government and local council to ensure that the tree program is successful and sustainable? What are the conditions of employment as a result of those tree plantings? I heard some time ago that the LNP government proposes to cut the minimum wage by half for those people that are going to be planting those trees.

**Senator Ian Macdonald:** What are you going on about?

**Senator FURNER:** That is what you read in the media, Mr Temporary Chairman. I do not know whether it is true or not.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN:** Order! Please ignore the interjections.

**Senator FURNER:** It would be a concern if the program were not sustainable—if it could not plant the required number of trees because it had reduced the minimum wage for those people willing to go out there and plant the trees. They are the sorts of questions that I propose the government respond to to ensure that their Direct Action program is successful.

We only need to consider what happened on our watch with regards to our programs in the particular area of renewable energy targets. Certainly, on Labor's watch, we went from around 7,500 households, for example, with solar PV systems to one million. Our credentials have been clear in respect of our delivery in renewable energy, so I would like that commitment from the government in terms of what they are proposing, to ensure that those renewable energies are sustainable.

It is important that the public know where their tax-funded dollars are spent and how that funding is going to be reached with regards to partnership funding from the local councils and partnership funding from the state governments, given the position of the LNP state government.

Progress reported.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Edwards) (21:50):** Order! I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

**Australian Greens**

**Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (21:50):** Earlier today I had occasion to highlight the hypocrisy of the Greens political party in the way they chose to disregard the vote of the Tasmanian people at the election on Saturday. I was watching TV on Saturday night and saw the biggest landslide in Tasmanian history giving the Liberal Party the biggest vote it had ever received in that state. Then I saw the Leader of the Greens political party come on and say, 'Well, if Mr Hodgman carries out the promises he made in his policy commitments, we are going to bring Tasmania to a standstill.' That hypocrisy, that refusal of the Greens to understand democracy and what the voters of that state want, reminded me—

**Senator MILNE:** Mr Acting Deputy President Edwards, I rise on a point of order. If the senator wishes to quote me, I would prefer it if he quoted me accurately and did not tell lies about what was said.

**The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Edwards):** There is no point of order.
Senator IAN MACDONALD: It is a surprise that, every time I get to my feet to talk about the Greens, they try to interrupt me with spurious points of order.

But I was saying that that incident this afternoon reminded me of another one of the Greens' great campaigns, and that was to get some tax-free funding for a newspaper that was going to be set up by the person who has made the biggest donation in Australia's political history to any political party, and that is, of course, Mr Graeme Wood. He donated—and do not quote me on the figure—something like $1½ million.

Senator Back: $1.37 million.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: $1.37 million was it? Thank you, Senator Back. He donated $1.37 million to the Greens political party. Curiously, at about the same time, you might recall that the former leader of the Greens political party, then Senator Bob Brown, was trying to convince the parliament and the Labor government that it should give tax-free status to not-for-profit journalism. We did not know quite what that was all about until we saw Mr Wood pop up with his baby at the time, the online newspaper called The Global Mail.

My colleague Senator Bernardi brought to the Senate's attention back in January 2013 an article in Crikey which detailed the 'culture of bullying, nepotism and incompetence' at The Global Mail. Crikey subsequently published this apology:

> Crikey now accepts that our report incorrectly asserted that the journalists' union was liaising with Global Mail staff at the time of publication about taking a case to Fair Work Australia. Moreover, it was not Crikey's intention to reflect adversely on the professionalism or qualifications of Global Mail management or staff members.

Crikey regrets the hurt and damage caused by our reports, and apologises to The Global Mail and its staff.

This apology was highly qualified, given Crikey's previous detailed disclosures of the toxic culture at The Global Mail. I therefore was not surprised to read the following in The Australian: 'Following the apology the journalist's union took to Twitter to declare: "For the record: Media Alliance did consult members from The Global Mail about possible action in Fair Work Australia."' The Australian understood that the union had 'no contact from either party before the apology was published. So apparently Crikey has apologised for something that was not wrong, while the more contentious parts of their report still stand.' That, according to The Australian was 'a curious affair', and curious indeed it was.

It would appear that The Global Mail's culture as a rogue employer extended to rogue corporate behaviour: standing over a competitor—namely, Crikey. Since its launch, The Global Mail had struggled to gain any presence with its technological bugs, and its readership halved within the first two months of operation. But you might recall, Mr President, that The Global Mail sought millions of dollars of subsidies from the Australian taxpayers, thanks to the Greens, by way of tax deductibility status, direct funding, seed funding and payroll tax concessions. Today this is all off the agenda. Gone, too, is former Greens leader Bob Brown, who supported tax deductibility for not-for-profit journalism.

As I mentioned, Mr Wood had made the single largest donation in Australian political history to the Greens. He also made a commitment to fund The Global Mail for, I think, five years. Mr Wood told Crikey in 2011 that he was happy to 'cop ongoing losses' and, in February 2013, he guaranteed ongoing funding to The Global Mail. When asked by Radio National's Fran Kelly, 'Will you continue to fund The Global Mail?' Mr Wood replied:
'Absolutely. I'm very optimistic about The Global Mail and its future, and this year we'll start kicking big goals.' Well, 11 months later, The Global Mail staff were informed that Mr Wood had prematurely terminated his funding of the media enterprise less than two years after its launch—that is, despite pledging $15 million over five years to fund the venture.

This is only relevant to what the Greens tried to do to get taxpayer support for that business enterprise, which clearly has gone under. I had a look at the website tonight, just to see what The Global Mail was doing, and I noticed a statement saying that, as of February 2014, it had ceased business. Mr Wood did not seem to have much regard for the jobs dependent on him honouring his commitment for funding. He was asked by Fran Kelly early in 2013 whether it was a mistake that journalists had been made redundant, and Mr Wood replied, 'That's life.' It looks like The Global Mail has now become The Global Fail.

According to one former broadcaster, Mr Stephen Feneley, 'the editors struggled to understand the online medium'. It was 'a retirement home for a privileged coterie of armchair socialists who can boost each other in the twilight of their careers'. I repeat: this is relevant because the Australian Greens would have had taxpayers' money prop up media enterprises such as this one—as I say, 'coincidentally' underwritten by the single biggest donor of the Australian Greens, only to have that funding prematurely terminated.

I understand that, according to media reports, this has not been Mr Wood's only failure in business in recent times: just before Christmas, shares in Wotif, which he still had, apparently, quite a substantial part in, fell 32 per cent, wiping $250 million off the value of the corporation, and Mr Wood suffered a paper loss of some $45 million. I might be able to assist Mr Wood by telling him why Wotif has lost so much money: I and a lot of people I know refuse to use Wotif these days because of the fact of this large political donation given to the Australian Greens, and for the fact that, at about the same time, the Greens were trying to get tax deductible status for this venture, The Global Mail. As I say, the botched experiment of The Global Mail is a cautionary tale, warning us against proposals to direct taxpayers' money toward underwriting such narrow partisan enterprises. And so I guess we can all say to The Global Mail farewell and goodbye. These sorts of business operations should be able to stand on their own two feet without the support of the Greens political party. It is interesting to note that when the Greens political party talk about other businesses that might get some government funding, all hell seems to break loose from the Greens political party. But here they are on another occasion trying to ensure support for that business enterprise launched by a guy who was the very significant donor to the Greens political party. Some lessons for us all there, and I highlight this tonight as a follow-up to the highlight I had earlier on today about the Greens—(Time expired)

Breast Cancer

Senator GALLACHER (South Australia) (22:00): I rise tonight in this adjournment debate to make a contribution on the Adelaide Breast Cancer Friendship Group. I wish to bring to the attention of the Senate the wonderful work of local groups like the Adelaide Breast Cancer Friendship Group and the benefits they bring to the community. The Adelaide Breast Cancer Friendship Group is a registered member group of the Breast Cancer Network Australia. Its key focus is to connect women, in a comfortable social setting, who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. The Adelaide Breast Cancer Friendship Group gives women at
any stage of their early or secondary breast cancer journey the opportunity to come together for friendship, support and understanding.

The group is facilitated by two members, Jenny Marsland and Celeste Macleod: one who has experienced early breast cancer and the other who has experienced early breast cancer and now has metastatic breast cancer. This group is unique in the way that it is focusing on the psychological and emotional aspects of breast cancer diagnosis, and that this is dealt with in a social setting. It is allowing women to connect with others who have an understanding of what they have been going through. This group provides these women with the opportunity to talk, listen, laugh, cry and share their early or secondary breast cancer experiences with other women. Group members have the opportunity to talk to each other about their treatments, treating staff, good and bad experiences, emotional and psychological issues as well as the impact that their diagnosis has had on their family and friends.

The emphasis in this group is connecting with others. Their early get-togethers saw only two, three and four people attending. Today these numbers have increased significantly, and a recent get-together saw 26 people attend. They continue to report a steady flow of women joining the group, and the number of women attending these get-togethers continues to increase as the group becomes more well known. In the words of the facilitating members:

It was in September 2010 when a call was put out on the Breast Cancer Network Australia … Online Network to establish a breast cancer friendship group in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. Only one person answered the call at that time. It wasn't until 2012 that the [friendship group] really began to form. The group had changed its name from Breast Cancer Friendship Group—Adelaide Northern Suburbs to Adelaide Breast Cancer Friendship Group and recruited members through the BCNA Online Network.

Their get-togethers are now held fortnightly across various venues throughout Adelaide for a combination of lunches and dinners. Get-togethers are informal, which provides the women with a non-threatening and safe environment in which they are able to connect with other women who share their similar experiences. These get-togethers have occurred in the northern, eastern and western suburbs of Adelaide but, as the group continues to grow and the demand continues to increase, this year the group is extending these get-togethers to include the southern suburbs of Adelaide.

The group appeals to a wide range of women. The age of the women attending the get-togethers ranges from women in their 20s to women in their 70s and they come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Jenny and Celeste say that new members sometimes feel nervous about attending their first get-together. This may be because new members may not know what to expect or because they may experience a lack of confidence due to the effects of treatment such as chemotherapy. To make themselves known to new members, a pink lady is displayed on the group's table to make it easier for new members to identify their group. New members and their families and friends are always welcome. The demand is building for groups like this. At a recent get-together two women drove for an hour and a half one way just to attend. Another woman drove from Port Pirie, a three-hour drive. Word is spreading about the group, and Facebook has become an important tool in promoting the group, recruiting members and communicating events.

The Adelaide Breast Cancer Friendship Group promote themselves through the BCNA online network, the Cancer Council website and Facebook. Celeste and Jenny also have
business cards for the group, and information sheets are distributed to key people and key organisations like hospitals, clinics, shops and the Cancer Council. Word of mouth is bringing in new members. Members also connect with each other online through the Breast Cancer Network Australia online network to chat online; they connect through telephone calls and visits. The most popular way for members to connect between get-togethers is through the private and secure Adelaide Breast Cancer Friendship Group chat room on Facebook. This form of contact is thriving. Jenny from the group said today that there were now 91 members in their online chat group. Celeste and Jenny say it is satisfying to know that women are connecting with others and that they do not feel so alone on their breast cancer journey. They say it is also rewarding to see that lifelong friendships have been formed as a result of this group.

It is clear that there is a demand for groups like this. The work that the Adelaide Breast Cancer Friendship Group does to support women is inspiring, and I hope that they can inspire more groups similar to theirs to form around the country. In the words of the facilitating members:

We are a free service to the community in that we do not charge membership fees or fees to attend our get-togethers. This group is unique in that its focus is on the psychological and emotional aspects of a breast cancer diagnosis, in a social setting. While this group is not a formal therapeutic support group as such, it has been reported to have therapeutic benefits, not only to the members who attend but also to their families and loved ones …

Just a little bit of statistical information to give background to this extraordinary effort by these very courageous and extremely hardworking volunteers. It is estimated that in 2014, 15,270 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. Approximately 42 women will be diagnosed each day in 2014. One in eight Australian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer by the time they turn 85. It is estimated that in 2020, approximately 17,210 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer diagnosed in women.

I have had some dealings with these excellent people, in minor supportive efforts with some business cards and the like. What struck me about these people is that, in their time of adversity, when they were going through extremely difficult circumstances emotionally, physically and in their family and social settings, they did not think of themselves; they thought of others. That is the genesis of this organisation. They reach out to other people because they have been through it. They have been through it and they have experienced extremely tough emotional and physical times. They have been to hospital and visited young women with an early diagnosis of breast cancer and helped them to understand what to expect in emotional and social terms. Their husbands have had to go and mow lawns and clean houses. This is the beautiful thing about this organisation of really decent and hardworking volunteers—in their time of adversity, they have reached out, pushed through that and looked to help others.

They are not only looking to help a small number of others; they are looking to grow in stature and size, not with the formal charitable not-for-profit structure but as a simple network of people who can come together in a social setting to comfort their fellow travellers and genuinely bring some decent, honest benefits to people in dire need. Some of the stories you hear are about the incapacity or inability of families to deal with the diagnosis. Family
members do not always readily accept that someone in their family is no longer able to perform the function they performed for many years. That causes trauma in relationships. The people in this organisation have been through all of this and they are now reaching out to others in a most generous way.

They are extremely courageous people, having suffered physically—the two founders in particular—the awful effects of the disease. But they are able to be cheerful. They are able to laugh. They know where all the best wig shops in town are. Adelaide has plenty of those. Canberra, I think, has the online, and best, shop for prostheses. All of these things they are able to impart to people who are in the direst emotional straits, to lift their spirits and to show them the way ahead. They contribute in a way that is extremely inspiring to see. One thing about being a senator or a political person is that, when you come into contact with these groups, it lifts your spirits. This is a great country. We are a generous people, and people who experience dire adversity push through it and extend a friendly helping hand to others. I commend to the Senate the work of this group of volunteers.

Renewable Energy

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia) (22:10): A fortnight ago I rose in here to share my frustration and anger at the course set by our elected government over the past six months. I have been genuinely overwhelmed by the response. I apologise if you are still waiting for a reply to your email or Facebook message. Most of all, I thank you for sharing it. Without you, it would just be me talking to an almost empty room. You know who you are, and now we also know that, despite the daunting obstacles we face, we are many.

Because frustration and anger will only take us so far, tonight is not another attempted take-down of the Prime Minister. I will leave that in the capable hands of a class of spirited year 9s from the Newtown High School of the Performing Arts. Instead, I want to set out what it is that we are trying to achieve in Western Australia. In my first speech in parliament I said that I wanted to be a part of the movement that turned the ship. Whether we know it or not, whether our leaders are in denial of it or not, the most urgent task of this present generation is to drive the transition to the clean energy economy and to call time on those whose blind pursuit of fossil profits now risks everything.

The truth is that we are on our way. The ship is turning to face the sun. More than 1.1 million Australian households have installed solar PV on their rooftops, providing thousands of jobs for companies like Solargain in Western Australia. This is driving electricity costs down, and not just in the places you might expect. The number of family owned power stations in Perth increases the further you get from St Georges Terrace. The lower the household income, the higher the likelihood of finding a household that has taken its power back. That is not because the good people of Baldivis or Gosnells have suddenly all turned into deep ecologists but because it is a smart decision for the budget bottom line. Save money. Save the planet.

Now scale this up and ask what would happen if a city, or a nickel mine in the north-east goldfields, applied this thinking. Imagine, if you will, a field of 10,000 mirrors, tracking heliostats in a glass mandala more than a mile from side to side. Imagine that this power station runs in total silence, on no fuel but sunlight, and can deliver constant, reliable electricity 24/7 with a flexibility that makes it perfectly matched to back up variable output from wind, wave and PV plants. Maybe this sounds like science fiction, but it is 2014. The
future is here; it is just not widely distributed yet. These utility-scale solar thermal plants already exist in southern Spain and the western United States, and the next plants are on drawing boards in China, India and the Middle East.

Apply this thinking to the whole grid and you get Energy 2029, a costed plan to take Western Australia's south-west grid 100 per cent renewable by the year 2029. It creates up to 26,000 jobs and costs are roughly the same as the Barnett coal and gas as usual trajectory.

The year 2029 has special resonance for my home town. It will mark the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Swan River colony. The proud descendants of the Wadjuk Nyoongar people who bore the brunt of colonial occupation remind us today of the time Wadjemup, Rottnest Island, was a concentration camp. When we try to bury this collective trauma in sepia-toned nostalgia, they remind us of the fact that even today they make up two per cent of the Western Australian population but 40 per cent of the prison population. It is time for justice reinvestment. It is time to build communities, not prisons, so that the culprits of 2029 might feel like lending their 40,000 year cultural inheritance to the celebrations of our young city. May your campfires burn forever.

The tragedy of poverty and homelessness is all the more sharp because Western Australia is a wealthy place. It is wealth built in part on mining, the liquidation of non-renewable resources at scales that double in impact, and double again roughly once every 25 years. Mining is an important part of the Western Australian economy and it will remain as such for as long as we build wind turbines weighing hundreds of tonnes out of steel and other metals. But, with recent falls in the iron ore price and unemployment in WA now at ten-year highs, we urgently need to talk about what sectors will provide stable employment in the years to come.

So on the weekend we launched a set of detailed plans for the economy in WA. The Western Australian jobs package highlights the employment potential in renewable energy, a home-grown modular housing industry, telecommunications, transport and agriculture. I take this opportunity tonight to call on the other WA Senate candidates for a debate on your vision for the Western Australian economy, if you have one, and your plan for jobs, if you have one.

When we set our sights on the Perth of 2029, we imagine a city transformed—a network of vibrant urban centres linked by fast, frequent public transport, light rail and bus rapid transit. The idea of consolidating diverse and affordable housing along a network of rapid transit lines is the basis of the Transforming Perth project that we undertook with the Property Council and the Australian Urban Design Research Centre. Focusing development into an archipelago of urban villages in this way allows us to take the pressure off our stressed urban bushland.

The Perth Greenways Project vividly illustrates the major benefit of such a city. We can save precious threatened areas like Point Peron, Point Grey, Anstey Keane and the Beeliar wetlands and mesh them together under a new urban forest along routes proposed by the WA Local Government Association, giving the Carnaby's and other threatened species a fighting chance to come back from the brink of extinction.

This transit city of the near future is also going to be one of the world's best cities for bikes. With just three percent of the state transport budget and a small federal contribution, our Bike Vision plan could deliver Copenhagen-style cycling infrastructure across WA cities and towns for the increasing numbers of people who want to spend more time getting around on the most elegant invention of the industrial age. We call these collective initiatives the WA2.0
project—the most urgent steps we need to take now to have any chance of making a good home in the 21st century. They are a small slice of the fruits of 30 years of collaborative work by Greens WA MPs, staff and volunteers. The last fortnight has shown the power of our online community to get the word out, whether the old gatekeepers want us to or not. I have no illusions about the ability of politics as usual to deliver this vision or prevent some of the more catastrophic collapse scenarios on offer. If only it were as simple as electing another white male politician to parliament to fix all of these things. Our political system might as well have been staring into the headlights for the last 30 years, as the deepening crisis mounting outside these marble halls continues to mount.

So for real leadership I look to a young woman perched 40 metres up a 400-year-old karri tree in a last stand for Challar in the wild south-west. I look to fourth generation farmers who locked the gate and linked arms with allies from far away when the gas industry came trespassing. And what happened on the beach at Walmadan, where the people of the West Kimberley mobilised against the political might of the gas industry? That was leadership. Whatever it was that got you and the 80,000 or so others like you out to March in March, it is good to be reminded that there are a lot of us. On behalf of all of you—and with the consent of the whips—I seek leave to table your statement of no confidence in this government.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted.

Senator Kroger: I actually have not seen it.

Senator LUDLAM: Senator Kroger, I checked with Senator Back shortly before you arrived, and Senator Gallacher.

Senator Kroger: I have not seen it.

Senator LUDLAM: I will come back to it.

The PRESIDENT: What we will do is the usual practice in these circumstances. Subject to the whips notifying that it is proper to table it, we will have the document tabled.

Senator LUDLAM: That is understood. No discourtesy intended, Senator Kroger—I did check with the whip before you arrived.

We know that the state is already turning to the tools of mass surveillance and police intimidation against those who put their bodies on the line in defence of country and community. Without the freedom to organise and the freedom to communicate online or off, all our other freedoms are at immediate threat—an invisible electronic thread that links the pirate and the hacker with the public interest whistleblower and the young climate campaigners fighting to secure the future of their generations—and, I might add, those who bore witness in the Victorian parliament only a few days ago, when the right to lawful dissent and protest was taken out of the statute books.

The stakes are high, as high as the ruination of Fukushima on the Pacific coast of Japan, as high as small island states facing saltwater inundation and forced evacuations as our planet warms. We are all in this together. Wherever you are in this great country tonight, however you can help to turn the ship, it would be—noted.

Wind Farms: Health Effects

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (22:19): Tonight I rise to speak on the relationship between a community and their doctors and how that relationship has been bastardised. But
first I will give the chamber some background. In January 2012, researchers at the renowned Stanford School of Medicine published a report that found tobacco companies had conducted a carefully crafted, decades-long campaign to manipulate throat doctors. The aim was to calm concerns among an increasingly worried public that smoking might be bad for their health.

The campaign by the tobacco industry, beginning in the 1920s, continued for over half a century. I repeat, it continued for more than 50 years. Tobacco companies successfully influenced physicians to not only promote the notion that smoking was healthy but actually to recommend it as a treatment for throat irritation. The tobacco industry did this by schmoozing doctors and by bribing them, and for a long period of time it was a widespread and successful campaign. So it is clear that the medical profession is not immune to outside pressure, to financial inducements, and to the lure of research grants and corporate donations. It happens, it is real and it impacts members of our community in devastating ways.

Australia is not exempt from this. A 2006 University of New South Wales paper by Susan Engel and Brian Martin says companies have a range of techniques to devalue, demonise, discredit or vilify victims of corporate activities. Companies can label victims as misguided, ignorant, complainers, self-seeking, vindictive, pawns in the hands of anti-corporate manipulators, or even as criminals. The paper quotes the CEO of CSR in the late 1980s, who referred to asbestos claimants as 'malingers'. The asbestos industry in Australia hid medical evidence of the health impacts of asbestos dust from at least the mid-1930s through to the late 1970s. As late as 1976 a pamphlet from James Hardie denied outright any risk to consumers of asbestos products. And parts of the medical industry—and I use the word ‘industry’ deliberately—were complicit in this.

With the benefit of hindsight, we look back at such practices—such corruption and venality—with appropriate horror. And we hope it would not happen in this country again. But this brings me to a current example of a major Australian company—a household name—that has attempted to influence and intervene in people's relationships with their doctors. I have in my possession a letter written by one of our power generation companies, AGL—a household name in Australia and, for many, a trusted name. In November 2012, AGL wrote to doctors at 12 clinics across western Victoria about one of its power generation facilities, the Macarthur wind farm. These medical practices span an area of several hundred kilometres, from Hamilton in the north to Portland and Warrnambool in the south.

In short, the letter aims to discredit and discount any patient visiting any doctor with any claims of ill health brought about by living near the Macarthur wind farm. It is an outrageous and pre-emptive example of corporate propaganda and was directed straight into the consulting rooms of rural and regional doctors. It suggested that anyone presenting to their doctor with symptoms of wind turbine syndrome should be directed by that doctor to visit the AGL Macarthur wind farm website or to ring the Macarthur wind farm community engagement team! If a similar letter had come from a coalmine or a coal seam gas company, I am sure Senator Di Natale and the Greens would be howling in selective moral outrage. This letter categorically denies any health impacts from living near wind turbines.

This is a blatant lie. It is now on the public record that many residents near Macarthur wind farm have experienced serious health effects and repetitive sleep disturbance since the beginning of operation of merely 15 of the 140 turbines at the beginning of October 2012. In 2013, when the turbines had been operating for not even a year, a preliminary health survey
was carried out, anonymously, in this district—and the results were astounding. Around 23 families responded to this survey, indicating around 66 people living out to eight kilometres were already experiencing detrimental impacts from the turbines. Once again, AGL has totally denied responsibility. It is extraordinary and sobering that so many families who have lived in this district happily and healthily for between 30 and 50 years suddenly all began to experience serious health symptoms at the same time when the turbines began operation. And it is on the public record that rural and regional communities living near turbines around the world are suffering similar symptoms.

In support of its propaganda, in that letter to local doctors dated 13 November 2012 AGL quoted an organisation called the Climate and Health Alliance. The CAHA includes a coterie of known public health pro-wind supporters such as Fiona Armstrong, Liz Hanna, Peter Tait, Suzie Bourke, Michael Moore and Simon Chapman. The CAHA is not an independent health body by any stretch of the imagination. It is a pro-wind health lobby group whose clinical members ignore their professional ethics and the known science. And did this letter from AGL to doctors across Victoria work? I have in front of me a statement from one local resident, Janet Hetherington, who said her doctor’s reaction to her symptoms changed remarkably after he received the AGL letter. Janet said she felt violated by the experience. And she was forced to seek medical help elsewhere.

This is unprofessional and dishonest behaviour by a major Australian company. Like the tobacco and asbestos industries, the wind power generation sector has long known its products make people sick. I call on the government to move as quickly as possible towards independent eminent health research into wind farms.

Senate adjourned at 22:28

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The following documents were tabled by the Clerk:

[Legislative instruments are identified by a Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (FRLI) number. An explanatory statement is tabled with an instrument unless otherwise indicated by an asterisk.]


Australian Education Act 2013—Australian Education (SES Scores) Amendment Determination 2014 (No. 1) [F2014L00252].


Australian Prudential Regulation Authority Act 1998—Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (confidentiality) determination No. 2 of 2014 [F2014L00258].

Civil Aviation Act 1988—
Civil Aviation Regulations 1988—Permission — flying over a public gathering at the 2014 Tyabb Air Show, Tyabb, Victoria; Permission — flying below minimum height at the 2014 Tyabb Air Show, Tyabb, Victoria—CASA 47/14 [F2014L00235].
Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998—
Exemption — Requirements for conversion training to be in a Qualified Synthetic Training Device (QSTD)—CASA EX10/14 [F2014L00246].
Exemption — take-off with traces of frost—CASA EX13/14 [F2014L00247].
Commissioner of Taxation—Public Rulings—
Goods and Services Tax Advices—Notices of Withdrawals—GSTA TPP 005 and GSTA TPP 006.
Taxation Determination—Erratum—TD 2014/1.
Corporations Act 2001—
Accounting Standard AASB 1048 Interpretation of Standards [F2014L00238].
ASIC Market Integrity Rules (Competition in Exchange Markets) 2011—Class Rule Waiver—CW 14/6 [F2014L00239].
ASIC Market Integrity Rules (Competition in Exchange Markets) Amendment 2014 (No. 1) [F2014L00233].
Fisheries Management Act 1991—
Northern Prawn Fishery (Closures) Direction No. 166 [F2014L00253].
Northern Prawn Fishery (Closures) Direction No. 167 [F2014L00254].
Northern Prawn Fishery (Closures) Direction No. 168 [F2014L00255].
Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery Management Plan 2003—
Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery Overcatch and Undercatch Determination 2014 [F2014L00234].
Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery Total Allowable Catch (Quota Species) Determination 2014 [F2014L00230].
Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery Management Plan 2005—Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery Overcatch and Undercatch Determination 2014 [F2014L00231].
Higher Education Support Act 2003—VET Provider Approvals—
No. 12 of 2014 [F2014L0248].
No. 14 of 2014 [F2014L0249].
No. 15 of 2014 [F2014L0250].
No. 16 of 2014 [F2014L0251].

Privacy Act 1988—
Approval of guidelines issued under Section 95A of the Privacy Act 1988 [F2014L00243].
Approval of guidelines issued under Section 95AA of the Privacy Act 1988 [F2014L00244].
Privacy (International Money Transfers) Generalising Determination 2014 (No. 1) [F2014L00242].
Privacy (International Money Transfers) Temporary Public Interest Determination 2014 (No. 1) [F2014L00241].
Privacy (Persons Reported as Missing) Rule 2014 [F2014L00229].
Privacy Public Interest (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Amendment and Repeal Determination 2014 [F2014L00240].


Indexed Lists of Departmental and Agency Files

Tabling

The following documents were tabled pursuant to the order of the Senate of 30 May 1996, as amended:
Indexed lists of departmental and agency files for the period 1 July to 31 December 2013—Statements of compliance—
    Commonwealth Ombudsman. [Received 13 March 2014]
    Defence portfolio. [Received 11 March 2014]

Departmental and Agency Contracts

Tabling

Pursuant to the order of the Senate of 20 June 2001, as amended, the Acting Deputy President (Senator Ruston) tabled the following document received on 11 March 2014: