COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

P A R L I A M E N T A R Y  D E B A T E S

Senate

Official Hansard

No. 5, 2015
Tuesday, 12 May 2015

FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SIXTH PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE
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**SITTING DAYS—2015**

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<th>Month</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26</td>
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<td>December</td>
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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SIXTH PERIOD

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

Senate Office holders
President—Senator Hon. Stephen Parry
Deputy President and Chair of Committees—Senator Gavin Mark Marshall
Temporary Chairs of Committees—Senators Christopher John Back, Cory Bernardi,
Sam Dastyari, Sean Edwards, Alexander McEachian Gallacher, Susan Lines,
Deborah Mary O'Neill, Nova Maree Peris OAM, Dean Anthony Smith,
Zdenko Matthew Seselja, Glenn Sterle, Peter Stuart Whish-Wilson and John Reginald Williams
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 Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator the Hon. Stephen Conroy
Leader of the Australian Greens—Senator Richard Di Natale
Co-deputy Leaders of the Australian Greens in the Senate—Senator Scott Ludlam and
Senator Larissa Joy Waters
Chief Government Whip—Senator David Christopher Bushby
Deputy Government Whips—Senators David Julian Fawcett and Anne Sowerby Ruston
The Nationals Whip—Senator Barry James O'Sullivan
Chief Opposition Whip—Senator Anne McEwen
Deputy Opposition Whips—Senators Catriona 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abetz, Hon. Eric</td>
<td>TAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Back, Christopher John</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bernardi, Cory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bilyk, Catryna Louise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birmingham, Hon. Simon John</td>
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<td>Brandis, Hon. George Henry, QC</td>
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<td>Brown, Carol Louise</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Canavan, Matthew James</td>
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<tr>
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<td>VIC</td>
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<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fierravanti-Wells, Hon. Concetta Anna</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gallacher, Alexander McEachian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gallagher, Katherine Ruth</td>
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<td>Hanson-Young, Sarah Coral</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>30.6.2020</td>
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<td>Ludlam, Scott</td>
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<td>Macdonald, Hon. Ian Douglas</td>
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<td>Marshall, Gavin Mark</td>
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<td>30.6.2020</td>
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<td>McAllister, Jennifer</td>
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<td>McEwen, Anne</td>
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<td>McLucas, Hon. Jan Elizabeth</td>
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<td>Moore, Claire Mary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muir, Ricky Lee</td>
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<td>Nash, Hon. Fiona Joy</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>30.6.2017</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<tr>
<td>O'Neill, Deborah Mary</td>
<td>NSW</td>
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</table>

(1) Includes ALP Senator (1)
Senator | State or Territory | Term expires | Party
--- | --- | --- | ---
O'Sullivan, Barry James | QLD | 30.6.2020 | NATS
Parry, Stephen Shane | TAS | 30.6.2017 | LP
Payne, Hon. Marie Ann | NSW | 30.6.2020 | LP
Peris, Nova Maree OAM | NT | 30.6.2020 | ALP
Polley, Helen Beatrice | TAS | 30.6.2017 | ALP
Reynolds, Linda Karen CSC | WA | 30.6.2020 | LP
Rhiannon, Lee | NSW | 30.6.2017 | AG
Rice, Janet Elizabeth | VIC | 30.6.2020 | AG
Ronaldson, Hon. Michael | VIC | 30.6.2017 | LP
Ruston, Anne Sowerby | SA | 30.6.2017 | LP
Ryan, Hon. Scott Michael | VIC | 30.6.2020 | LP
Scullion, Hon. Nigel Gregory | NT | 30.6.2017 | CLP
Seselja, Zdenko Matthew | ACT | 30.6.2017 | LP
Siewert, Rachel Mary | WA | 30.6.2017 | AG
Singh, Hon. Lisa Maria | TAS | 30.6.2017 | ALP
Sinodinos, Hon. Arthur | NSW | 30.6.2020 | LP
Smith, Dean Anthony | WA | 30.6.2017 | LP
Sterle, Glenn | WA | 30.6.2017 | ALP
Urquhart, Anne Elizabeth | TAS | 30.6.2017 | ALP
Wang, Zhenya | WA | 30.6.2020 | PUP
Waters, Larissa Joy | QLD | 30.6.2017 | AG
Whish-Wilson, Peter Stuart | TAS | 30.6.2020 | AG
Williams, John Reginald | NSW | 30.6.2020 | NATS
Wong, Hon. Penelope Ying Yen | SA | 30.6.2020 | ALP
Wright, Penelope Lesley | SA | 30.6.2017 | AG
Xenophon, Nicholas | SA | 30.6.2020 | IND

**Casual vacancy

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territory</th>
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<th>Party</th>
<th>Senator</th>
<th>Party</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Gallagher, K.</td>
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<td>Seselja, Z.M.</td>
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<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>Scullion, N. G.</td>
<td>CLP</td>
<td>Peris, N.M.</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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</tbody>
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(1) Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice R. Carr), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

(2) Chosen by the Parliament of New South Wales to fill a casual vacancy (vice J Faulkner), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

**Casual vacancy to be filled (vice B. Mason, resigned 15.4.15), pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution.

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party;
AMEP—Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party; CLP—Country Liberal Party;
FFP—Family First Party; IND—Independent, LDP—Liberal Democratic Party;
LNP—Liberal National Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia;
NATS—The Nationals; PUP—Palmer United Party
Heads of Parliamentary Departments
Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—Acting Secretary D Heriot
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tony Abbott MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</em></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</em></td>
<td>The Hon. Charles Porter MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</em></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><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</em></td>
<td>The Hon. Steven Ciobo MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Trade and Investment</em></td>
<td>The Hon. Steven Ciobo MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Employment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Keenan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Joshua Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</em></td>
<td>The Hon. Kelly O’Dwyer</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture</em></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Education and Training</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Education and Training</td>
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<td><em>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Training</em></td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Human Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry and Science</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Veterans' Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</em></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Darren Chester MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Communications</td>
<td>The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Health</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Sport</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans' Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
### SHADOW MINISTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon. Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Science</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Small Business</td>
<td>Hon. Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Jacinta Collins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
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<td>Hon. Michael Danby MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</td>
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Tuesday, 12 May 2015

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

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The Clerk: I table documents pursuant to statute and returns to order. 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

Meeting

The Clerk: Proposals have been lodged as follows: by the Environment and Communications References Committee, for a public meeting on 13 May from 3 pm and a private meeting on 14 May from 1 pm; by the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, for public meetings on 13 May from 12.45 pm and 14 May from 9.45 am; by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, for a public meeting on 13 May from 11 am; and by the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for a public meeting on 13 May from 5 pm.

The PRESIDENT (12:31): Does any senator wish to have the question put on any of those motions? There being none, we will continue with business.

BILLS

Customs Amendment (Anti-dumping Measures) Bill (No. 1) 2015

Customs Tariff (Anti-Dumping) Amendment Bill 2015

In Committee

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (12:32): These bills were referred to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee and a number of concerns were raised in evidence that was presented to that committee. In particular, we heard very serious concerns being raised about the initiative the government was taking to abolish the International Trade Remedies Forum despite the fact that this body was established under legislation and is required to meet at least twice a year. It has, in fact, not been meeting, and the government has been in breach of that legislation. Labor, therefore, will be moving an amendment that retains the International Trade Remedies Forum. I understand that the government will be supporting this amendment. I trust that is the case.

I note that a number of other concerns were raised over the course of the inquiry regarding technical elements in the bills. To this end, Labor has called on the government to hold an urgent meeting of the International Trade Remedies Forum so that these issues can be addressed and to ensure that the antidumping system is operating effectively.

It is my understanding that our colleague Senator Xenophon is moving amendments that also seek to address issues raised over the course of the inquiry in relation to the definition of
a subsidy and on the issue of the lesser duty rule. Labor acknowledges that stakeholders are concerned about the unintended consequences of the government's proposed changes to these issues, which is why we are working to ensure that the International Trade Remedies Forum remains in place and can investigate these concerns. However, we also understand that Senator Xenophon's amendments will have the effect of keeping Labor's previous regime in place until such time as stakeholders can work through these concerns. For this reason, Labor will be supporting Senator Xenophon's amendments, as they are consistent with the regime that Labor introduced while in government.

I also note that concerns were raised in the Senate inquiry by stakeholders regarding the proposal to introduce a fee for reviews by the Anti-Dumping Review Panel which the government has said that it will introduce via regulation at a later date. Labor will continue to consult with users of the antidumping system and will carefully consider the implications of such a measure when the government seeks to introduce fees for review via its legislative instrument. The opposition opposes part 15 of schedule 1 of the Customs Amendment (Anti-dumping Measures) Bill (No. 1) 2015 in the following terms:

(1) Schedule 1, Part 15, page 38 (lines 1 to 4), to be opposed.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (12:36): Just in relation to Senator Carr's amendment and comments on the forum, I will indicate that the main function of the forum was to provide advice on the practical implementation of the previous government's reforms, which we have implemented. The government believe that more flexible, targeted and consultative arrangements are a better fit for the emerging challenges faced by today's antidumping system. Unlike those opposite, we do not feel the need to legislate our stakeholder engagement. The government regularly consult with business and other stakeholders on antidumping policy issues, and we will continue to do so. While the government do not support this amendment, we will not be opposing it.

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (12:36): These are important matters to legislate on because it is well known within this government that, despite its rhetoric, there is a requirement to consult by law and it ought to be implemented. The government has failed to do so under the current legislation, and this gives the lie to the claim that the government does not need legislation to do so. If this amendment is carried, we will be calling upon members of the government to call a meeting immediately. This body is important in terms of not just consulting on previous changes to the law but providing advice to government on the current state of play when it comes to measures being taken against Australian industry by foreign competitors. The expert group provides strategic advice about not just past matters but future matters. I would strongly urge the government to call this group together as soon as possible to provide the advice that is so lacking within the department at the moment.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:38): I indicate that I strongly support the opposition's amendment. It is important that we keep the International Trade Remedies Forum. In the short and sharp Senate inquiry we had into this bill on Monday last week, it was quite obviously anomalous that this Trade Remedies Forum, which has a valuable role, has not met since mid-2013. Both industry and unions are at one on this. They are on a unity ticket for this forum to be kept. That is why I believe that the government ought to listen to industry, unions and independent commentators who consider this forum plays a valuable role.
in the context of Australia's antidumping regime. For those reasons and many others, I support this amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment before the chair is opposition amendment (1) on sheet 7678. The question is that part 15 of schedule 1 stand as printed.

Question negatived.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:39): I have amendments in respect of schedule 1, parts 7 and 11, of the Customs Amendment (Anti-dumping Measures) Bill (No. 1) 2015 in terms of the definition of 'subsidy' and notification of subsidies. I oppose schedule 1 in the following terms:

(1) Schedule 1, Part 7, page 20 (lines 1 to 13), to be opposed.
(2) Schedule 1, Part 11, page 25 (lines 1 to 11), to be opposed.

Amendment (1) removes the provisions that change the definition of 'subsidy' under the act. This is in response to concerns that were raised during the Senate inquiry process that this new definition was far too broad. In essence, the new definition in the bill requires proof that a payment made to an entity has provided a benefit to that entity. As the law currently stands, the fact that a payment was made is enough for it to be considered a subsidy. We have already seen the significant difficulties faced by Australian manufacturers seeking to put forward cases for antidumping or countervailing duties when they try to meet the evidence thresholds already in the bill. This proposed change will simply mean one more thing that they have to prove and one more hurdle until duties can be applied. In fact, it will weaken our antidumping regime.

Further, it is generally acknowledged that it is incredibly difficult for the commission to access accurate financial information in the course of their investigations. Adding this additional requirement to prove a benefit has occurred is only making matters more difficult. In my view, we should be making it easier for Australian manufacturers to apply for antidumping or countervailing duties, not harder—of course, within the context of our WTO obligations. As such, my proposed amendment will remove this new definition from the bill and allow the current definition to stand.

Chair, can I get some guidance from you. I can speak to the second amendment at this time, or do you wish to deal with them separately?

The CHAIRMAN: I think we should deal with them separately. There are not a lot of amendments.

Senator XENOPHON: Yes, so we could perhaps deal with the first amendment. Senator Carr has carriage of this bill for the opposition, so if he is satisfied with us dealing with the amendments one at a time—

Senator Kim Carr: Yes.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (12:41): I indicate to Senator Xenophon that the current bills change the definition of 'subsidy' because the current definition is not fully aligned with WTO treaties and therefore represents a risk for the integrity of our antidumping system. Greater alignment means fewer challenges in the WTO. While the government do not see the necessity for this amendment, I can indicate that we will not be opposing it.
Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (12:42): These matters relate to concerns that were raised at a Senate inquiry by a number of submitters, including the AWU, the AMWU, the CFMEU and a large number of industry employers, including the Manufacturers’ Trade Alliance. It was put to the committee that the proposed changes added an additional layer of complexity and appeared to impose an additional burden on industry and the Anti-Dumping Commission to validate government payments. If these concerns are legitimate, these changes have the potential to weaken the regime, not strengthen it. Labor believes that these concerns should be dealt with by the International Trade Remedies Forum. Senator Xenophon’s amendment has the effect of taking these concerns offline so that they can be dealt with under arrangements currently in place. The minister’s claim that there were somehow or other changes in the WTO definition does not bear close scrutiny. There was no evidence presented to support that claim. In fact, Minister Macfarlane, in his second reading speech in the House of Representatives, stated:

Australia’s current regime for combating injurious dumping and subsidisation is transparent and complies with our obligations under World Trade Organization agreements.

If they were compliant with the WTO agreements when Labor introduced them, what has changed? I put it to you: nothing.

This is one of those great red herrings we hear from time to time when people want to promote these changes: ‘It is inconsistent with the WTO.’ Prove it. That is the response that I have to give now: prove it. It is extraordinary how often it is that these statements of grand intent are not demonstrated in fact. The current system is already WTO compliant, and that is why we are supporting these measures. They actually strengthen the regime as a result of the changes that Labor introduced, and they ought to be protected and preserved. The amendment that Senator Xenophon is proposing is consistent with the legislation that Labor introduced.

The Trade Remedies Forum is the appropriate body to look at new practices. I take the view that dumping is like tax avoidance: you always have to look at new scams that people get up to to try to undermine Australian industry. The Trade Remedies Forum is the appropriate body to examine those principles. It is certainly not appropriate to weaken the regime, as is proposed by the government.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:45): The minister asserts that it is not compliant with the WTO. Can he please tell us how it is not compliant? Senator Carr makes a very fair point: to what extent is it not compliant? These are just broad assertions that do not bear the scrutiny that Senator Carr says that assertion deserves. Also, why is it that we seem to be so much weaker in the way we deal with WTO obligations? I think that the Europeans, the Americans and other countries have a much tougher approach to these issues, rather than taking a literal, fundamentalist view of WTO rules. There is a reason we are joked about in international forums as being the free-trade Taliban in trade negotiations. It is time we stopped that.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (12:46): I am advised that the claim is not that it is not compliant but that the amendment provides greater alignment, which would reduce challenges.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:46): Could the minister say that again? I did not quite follow it. Is he saying that they are no longer concerned about—
Senator Kim Carr: They've changed their tune!

Senator Xenophon: Yes. I am just trying to work out what tune it is. Is the government now supporting this amendment, given the concerns that have been raised?

Senator Fifield (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (12:46): In my previous contribution I indicated that the government would not be opposing your amendment.

Senator Whish-Wilson (Tasmania) (12:47): I was interested in the minister's earlier comments about this being WTO compliant and whether, perhaps, it might be WTO–plus and might relate to a current deal that is being negotiated called the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement?

Senator Fifield (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (12:47): My advice is that there is not a connection.

The Chairman: The amendments before the chair are amendments (1) and (2) on sheet 7694, moved by Senator Xenophon. The question is that parts 7 and 11 of schedule 1 stand as printed.

Question negatived.

Senator Kim Carr (Victoria) (12:48): Mr Chairman, are there not some consequential amendments that flow from the vote that has just been had and may be contained on sheet 7701?

The Chairman: I understand, and think my advice to you, Senator Carr, is that that is in relation to the Customs Tariff (Anti-Dumping) Amendment Bill 2015.

Senator Kim Carr: But I understand that they are required.

Senator Xenophon (South Australia) (12:48): Mr Chairman, this may assist the committee, and I apologise for any mix-up: I seek leave to move the second part of that amendment. This is in relation to part 11. It is a consequential amendment, because this amendment seeks to remove the proposed changes that would clarify the application of the lesser duty rule when subsidies are not reported. I seek your guidance as to whether I can move that amendment now. It is an issue that is distinct from the previous issue but, in a sense, it could be argued that the two are interrelated.

The Chairman: Senator Xenophon, I have put the question on your amendments (1) and (2). I do not have any further amendments in front of me. If there are other amendments, we will need to track them down and work out what we need to do with them.

Senator Xenophon: Perhaps I am mistaken, but my understanding was that I moved the first amendment—item 1—and that I was to move item 2. The idea was to deal with them separately, because there are two distinct issues. The second amendment—item 2—which I seek leave to move, relates to the application of the lesser duty rule. Perhaps that is the basis of the confusion.

The Chairman: I see where the confusion is. I thought you were asking me whether I wanted to deal with your amendments (1) and (2) on sheet 7694 and then, separately, your amendment (1) on sheet 7697, but what you were actually seeking to do was to do amendments (1) and (2) on sheet 7694 separately.
Senator XENOPHON: That is right. I apologise for the confusion. It is the excitement of budget day for all of us.

The CHAIRMAN: I know—we are all excited. But you did actually seek leave to move them together, so in fact we have done them.

Senator XENOPHON: I did not even get a chance to give my explanation on the record!

The CHAIRMAN: I am happy for you to have another crack at talking about those amendments before you go on to move amendment (1) on sheet 7697.

Senator XENOPHON: Just so there is no confusion, the amendment that has been passed will clarify the application of the lesser duty rule when subsidies are not reported, that the lesser duty rule requires the minister to have consideration for the least amount of duty that can be applied and that this disadvantages Australian manufacturers. This amendment dealt with those issues and would remove those provisions from the bill, and the amendments to the bill on sheet 7701 are consequential to this. I hope that helps to clarify that on the record.

The CHAIRMAN: While the committee determined that the bills would be taken together, my advice is that we are going to be voting on each bill separately, and these amendments you are now referring to do in fact relate to the second bill.

Senator XENOPHON: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I think at the moment we are trying to bite off far too much, so let us deal with one bill at a time. We will work through it that way and we will ensure that all amendments are dealt with. Senator Xenophon, perhaps you would be so kind as to move your amendment (1) on sheet 7697, and that will deal with all the amendments to the Customs Amendment (Anti-dumping Measures) Bill (No. 1), and then we will move to the second bill and deal with your amendments on sheet 7701.

Senator XENOPHON: Thank you, Chair, and I am also grateful to Senator Leyonhjelm, who has not been actively involved in this bill but seems to know what is going on. I am grateful to Senator Leyonhjelm for his helpful advice. I move amendment (1) on sheet 7697:

(1) Schedule 1, page 38 (after line 4), at the end of the Schedule, add:

Part 16—Review of Anti-Dumping Commission

Customs Act 1901

129 At the end of Part XVB

Add:

Division 10—Anti-Dumping Commission reporting obligations

269ZZYAA Annual report

(1) The Commissioner must, as soon as practicable after the end of each financial year, prepare and give to the Minister, for presentation to the Parliament, a report on the Anti-Dumping Commission's operations during the financial year.

(2) A report under subsection (1) must include the following:

(a) the number of preliminary affirmative determinations in the financial year in which public notice was given, under section 269TD, 60 days after the date of initiation of an investigation;

(b) the number of days (averaged over the financial year) taken to give public notice, under section 269TD, of the making of a preliminary affirmative determination;
(c) the number of instances in the financial year in which the Commissioner has relied upon submissions lodged by interested parties under Division 6A without verification of the contents of such submissions;

(d) the number of days (averaged over the financial year) taken for a nominated exporter of goods to Australia to answer questions in a questionnaire given to the exporter by the Commissioner under subsection 269TC(8);

(e) the total amount of interim duties collected during the financial year;

(f) the total amount of final dumping duties collected during the financial year.

(3) A report under subsection (1) may be included in the annual report of the Department.

(4) The Minister must cause a copy of the report to be laid before each House of the Parliament within 15 sitting days of that House after the Minister receives the report.

I had an opportunity to meet with Minister Macfarlane and his very capable staff earlier today, along with members of the Anti-Dumping Commission. The aim of this amendment is to ensure certain information regarding the Anti-Dumping Commission's activities is reported to parliament annually. This will help to ensure the transparency and oversight of the commission and of the antidumping system as a whole. This information does not include any specifics about a particular case but instead covers broad statistics that will provide a guide to the operation of the commission. This amendment will ensure that this information snapshot is publicly available and easily accessible by requiring the minister to table it in parliament. I believe that this is an important oversight mechanism that will not create a burden on the commission or the department.

That was my view until I met with the minister's office earlier today and their view is that it would be quite resource intensive. These are matters that can be obtained as questions on notice, or particularly through the Senate estimates process, and I understand the government is opposing the amendment on that basis, because of the diversion of resources rather than being involved in actual cases. I still move the amendment but I will be guided by my colleagues in the opposition and on the crossbenches. I understand the concerns of the department and of the government in respect of this amendment.

If it is not supported I will seek to obtain this information through the estimates process and through questions on notice, for instance, and if that does not prove to be a satisfactory basis for obtaining information then it will need to be revisited. I am looking for an undertaking from the minister that these are matters that the government and the department will provide in the course of, say, Senate estimates or questions on notice. It will not be the same as an annual report but, to me, it would be a fair compromise that would achieve the same outcome. I am sorry I have not had a chance to speak to my crossbench colleagues, and especially Senator Carr, about this beforehand.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (12:56): I do understand that Senator Xenophon has had some good discussions with the minister and the minister's office. I can indicate that the information being requested in this amendment is information that can already be made available, and that the government is happy to provide this sort of information when requested but does not believe it needs to be legislated for. The Anti-Dumping Commissioner obviously appears before estimates three times a year and can provide this sort of information in that
forum. The Minister for Industry and Science has advised me that he can provide an assurance to Senator Xenophon that he will provide this type of information when it is requested.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:57): I am satisfied with the minister's explanation. Again, I thank Minister Macfarlane and his office for that undertaking. I wonder whether the simplest thing to do, given that undertaking, is to simply seek leave to withdraw amendment (1) on sheet 7697.

Leave granted.

Senator XENOPHON: I withdraw the amendment.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (12:57): I thank Senator Xenophon for his goodwill and courtesy in this matter.

The CHAIRMAN: We will now deal with the amendments to the next bill.

Senator XENOPHON (South Australia) (12:58): by leave—I oppose schedule 1 of the Customs Amendment (Anti-Dumping) Amendment Bill 2015 in the following terms:

1. Schedule 1, item 1, page 3 (lines 4 to 11), to be opposed.
2. Schedule 1, items 8 and 9, page 4 (lines 8 to 21), to be opposed.
3. Schedule 1, item 13, page 5 (lines 3 to 9), to be opposed.

I also move:

4. Schedule 1, item 18, page 5 (line 26), omit "items 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 14", substitute "items 2, 5, 10 and 14".

To clarify any confusion that occurred earlier, this amendment is consequential to the amendments in respect of item 2, which relates to the lesser duty rule. The government's proposal would see the lesser duty rule applied if a country has made a report once in every four years, but the current WTO practice is every two years, and I know that the opposition has had a particular concern about this, as have the Australian Greens. I want to acknowledge Senator Whish-Wilson in respect of his longstanding concerns about these issues of dumping, as well as Senator Madigan, who has been a champion on these issues as well. So it is a consequential amendment to the amendment that was previously moved and accepted, which was amendment (2) on sheet 7694, which related to part 11 of schedule 1 of the Customs Amendment (Anti-dumping Measures) Bill (No. 1) 2015.

All four amendments relate to notification of subsidies, which are consequential to the previous amendments that have just been passed on sheet 7694 in respect of the other bill.

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (13:01): The opposition will be supporting the amendments.

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (13:01): The advice that I have been given is that the lesser duty rule provisions effectively give Australian industry an advantage in cases where a foreign country fails to properly notify the WTO of all its current subsidy programs. In summary, that provision is only triggered when the foreign country has not notified the WTO in the four years preceding the investigation. The amendments, I understand, seek to redraft the provision to make this clearer. May I indicate that the government will not be opposing the amendment.
The CHAIRMAN: There are two questions that I need to put with respect to these four amendments. The first question is that items (1), (8), (9) and (13) of schedule 1 stand as printed.

Question negatived.

The CHAIRMAN: The next question is that amendment (4) on sheet 7701 be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN: That deals with the consequential amendments. The question now is that these bills, as amended, be agreed to.

Bills, as amended, agreed to.

Bills reported with amendments; report adopted.

Third Reading

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (13:04): I move:

That these bills now be read a third time.

Senator LEYONHJELM (New South Wales) (13:04): I had hoped that the committee stage for this legislation would improve it, but that has turned out to be wishful thinking. At the last election the government misled vulnerable businesses. The government told these businesses that they would be well served—and, indeed, that the nation would be well served—if they stepped into the antidumping system, rather than go about their business of doing business.

The bills before us today are the culmination of this grooming of the vulnerable. These are the Customs Amendment (Anti-dumping Measures) Bill (No. 1) 2015 and the Customs Tariff (Anti-Dumping) Amendment Bill 2015. These bills adjust antidumping procedures. The effect of this will be to make it easier for businesses that are struggling to compete against low-price imports to get the Anti-Dumping Commissioner or the industry minister to impose duties on these imports. This is not in the long-term interest of the businesses facing competition from low-priced imports. Instead, it encourages those businesses to divert their efforts and resources away from being competitive and winning customers towards seeking government assistance. They will eventually get wrapped up in red tape and fail anyway, as we have seen with the Australian car industry.

The businesses that have been encouraged to step into the system of antidumping complaints have been sold a lie. They were told that 'in the longer term, international dumping hollows out Australian industry, decreases competition, costs jobs and increases prices'. Each of these claims is false. It is false to claim that low-price imports increase prices in the long term. For this to occur, a low-price importer would need to eventually sell products well above cost, and also there would need to be barriers to Australian businesses or other importers entering or re-entering the market in response. These barriers do not exist. It is false to claim that low-price imports decrease competition. If an Australian business that produces the product cannot compete and closes down, this is evidence of competition, not a reduction in competition.

It is also false to claim that so-called dumping hollows out Australian industry and costs jobs. When a business closes down, this indicates that it would be more profitable for
Australian workers and resources to produce other things. It is well documented that the rise and fall of Australian businesses is a process that supports better paying jobs and more profitable industry. Those who oppose this well-worn capitalist path to prosperity cannot see the forest for the trees.

The purpose of the government should be to improve the competitiveness of the Australian industry by reducing their costs, like red tape and inflexible labour rules. It should not be seeking to prop up uncompetitive Australian businesses by pretending importers are evil and forcing them to increase their prices. Low-price imports help consumers and businesses, and we should welcome them.

I suspect I will be the only parliamentarian to oppose this legislation, because I am the only parliamentarian to dare speak in favour of imports. It seems sacrilegious to make the basic point that it is not the exporting of products to foreigners but the importing of products from foreigners that makes us better off. It seems that importers are modern-day lepers, with no advocate beyond a sole Liberal Democrat. Protectionism is alive and well in Australia and will continue to grow while the economic rationalists in this chamber stay silent.

Question agreed to.

Bills read a third time.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (13:09): I move:

That government business order of the day no. 2 (Australian Securities and Investments Commission Amendment (Corporations and Markets Advisory Committee Abolition) Bill 2014) be postponed till the next day of sitting.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Biosecurity Bill 2014

Biosecurity (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014
Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Amendment Bill 2014
Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Customs) Amendment Bill 2014
Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Excise) Amendment Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That these bills be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment in respect of the Biosecurity Bill 2014 was moved:

At the end of the motion, add "but the Senate calls on the Government to enshrine the independence of the Inspector-General in legislation by re-introducing the Inspector-General of Biosecurity Bill 2012".

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Back) (13:10): The question is that the amendment moved by Senator Siewert be agreed to.
Question negatived.

**Senator XENOPHON** (South Australia) (13:11): In respect of the Biosecurity Bill 2014, I move:

At the end of the motion, add "but the Senate calls on the Government to review the biosecurity framework to provide that biosecurity policy determinations are subject to disallowance and therefore Parliamentary scrutiny".

Question negatived.

**Senator WATERS** (Queensland) (13:11): In respect of the Biosecurity Bill 2014, I move:

At the end of the motion, add "but the Senate calls on the Government to establish and resource Environmental Health Australia in the same manner as Plant Health Australia and Animal Health Australia, in order to establish a partnership between communities, governments and environmental organisations to focus on high priority policy and planning issues in environmental biosecurity".

This amendment relates to the establishment of Environmental Health Australia, a body which would be equivalent to Plant Health Australia and Animal Health Australia, in order to establish a better partnership with the community, governments and environmental organisations to get a better focus on environmental biosecurity.

Question negatived.

Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

**In Committee**

Bills—by leave—taken together and as a whole.

**Senator CAMERON** (New South Wales) (13:13): I advise the Senate that the opposition will not be proceeding with opposition amendments on sheet 7671. The opposition will be supporting the government amendments on sheet ES125. The opposition will not be supporting the Greens amendment on sheet 7676.

In concluding the second reading debate on the Biosecurity Bill, Senator Colbeck said:

The inspector-general will be appointed by the agriculture minister and report directly to the minister, ensuring the position remains independent from regulatory functions of the Department of Agriculture. The government amendment also provides that the inspector-general may compel a person to provide information and documents or to answer questions relevant to a review. This is crucial to the inspector-general's ability to review the performance of functions and the exercise of powers by biosecurity officials. The Director of Biosecurity would also be required to comply with any reasonable request from the inspector-general for assistance for the purpose of conducting a review.

The government can assure stakeholders that the regulations will state that the inspector-general is to set an annual review program in writing in consultation with the Director of Biosecurity and the minister. The review program will be publicly available to stakeholders so stakeholders are aware of review topics in advance and, importantly, the inspector-general will not be subject to the direction of either the minister or the Director of Biosecurity, so reviews will be independently conducted.

What Senator Colbeck effectively told the Senate in his summing up was that the government's backdown on its attempt to abolish the Inspector-General of Biosecurity appears complete. It has been executed under the cover of budget week to avoid embarrassment, but it is a backdown that Labor welcomes. There is nothing more important to Australian
agriculture than the effectiveness of our biosecurity system. Australia's clean, green and safe food image relies on it.

The great unanswered question is: why did the Minister for Agriculture try to effectively abolish the position of the Inspector-General of Biosecurity in the first place? Answering a question from the shadow minister on the issue in the House prior to his capitulation, the minister said:

… we still have an inspector-general. We will continue to have one. His name is Bond—it is not James Bond; it is Michael Bond. He is still there. I checked his health this morning. He is happy, smiling and continuing on with his job.

This was Minister Joyce in the House of Representatives, in Hansard on 23 February 2015. That was before the government circulated its amendments in this place. While I am not suggesting the minister misled the House, it is curious that the government has seen the need to subsequently circulate its amendments to give legislative effect to the minister's statement to the House in February. While Minister Joyce is yet to explain why he tried to remove the independent oversight of the Inspector-General of Biosecurity, Labor welcomes the government's backdown and Senator Colbeck's assurances in the second reading debate.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (13:17): I thank Senator Cameron for his contribution and particularly the Labor Party for indicating that they will not be proceeding with their amendment. That is quite welcome to the government.

Senator Cameron has repeated a large chunk of what I said yesterday in our discussion in relation to the amendments in the committee stage and which I was going to repeat today, so I do not need to do that. I do need to note, however, that I do not believe that Minister Joyce was being anything other than genuine when he made the comments about the Inspector-General of Biosecurity and the government's initial approach to that position. In fact, in estimates in February Mr Bond, who was there, still is there and is still in good health, indicated that he believed that his powers would be enhanced by—

Senator Cameron: Like James Bond in some of the movies.

Senator COLBECK: Not James Bond but Mr Michael Bond. He believed his powers would be enhanced by the government's then approach.

But it is important to note that there was important work done by the committee and also in our communication with other stakeholders in relation to this piece of legislation. I said yesterday that we took the work of the committee seriously. Having been a part of the review process of the initial stages of this legislation in the previous parliament as a member of the committee, I believe it is very, very important that we do so. That is why the government is proposing the amendments that it is proposing, which make changes to the inspector-general's position. But we welcome the opposition's indication that they will not be proceeding with their amendment. At this point, while I am on my feet, I seek leave to move the amendments on sheet ES125 together.

Leave granted.

Senator COLBECK: In respect of the Biosecurity Bill 2014, I move government amendments (1) to (8) on sheet ES125 together:
(1) Clause 9, page 19 (after line 30), after the definition of *incoming passenger aircraft or vessel*, insert:

Inspector-General means the Inspector-General of Biosecurity appointed under section 566A.

(2) Clause 9, page 22 (after line 5), after the definition of *outgoing passenger aircraft or vessel*, insert:

paid work means work for financial gain or reward (whether as an employee, a self-employed person or otherwise).

(3) Clause 539, page 531 (line 13), omit "reviews by the Agriculture Minister", substitute "the Inspector-General of Biosecurity and reviews by him or her".

(4) Part 6, clauses 567 to 568, page 557 (line 1) to page 558 (line 13), omit the Part, substitute:

Part 6—Inspector-General of Biosecurity

Division 1—Inspector-General of Biosecurity

566A Inspector-General of Biosecurity

(1) There is to be an Inspector-General of Biosecurity.

Appointment

(2) The Inspector-General is to be appointed by the Agriculture Minister by written instrument.

Note: The Inspector-General may be reappointed, subject to subsection 566B(2): see section 33AA of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901.

(3) The Inspector-General may be appointed on a full-time or part-time basis.

566B Term of office

(1) The Inspector-General holds office for the period specified in the instrument of appointment. The period must not exceed 5 years.

(2) The Inspector-General must not hold office for a total of more than 10 years.

566C Remuneration

(1) The Inspector-General is to be paid the remuneration that is determined by the Remuneration Tribunal. If no determination of that remuneration by the Tribunal is in operation, the member is to be paid the remuneration that is prescribed under subsection (4).

(2) The Inspector-General is to be paid the allowances that are prescribed under subsection (4).

(3) This section has effect subject to the Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973.

(4) The Agriculture Minister may, by legislative instrument, prescribe:

(a) remuneration for the purposes of subsection (1); and

(b) allowances for the purposes of subsection (2).

566D Leave of absence for full-time Inspector-General

(1) If the Inspector-General is appointed on a full-time basis, he or she has the recreation leave entitlements that are determined by the Remuneration Tribunal.

(2) If the Inspector-General is appointed on a full-time basis, the Agriculture Minister may grant the Inspector-General leave of absence, other than recreation leave, on the terms and conditions as to remuneration or otherwise that the Agriculture Minister determines.

566E Engaging in other paid employment

Full-time Inspector-General

(1) If the Inspector-General is appointed on a full-time basis, he or she must not engage in paid work outside the duties of his or her office without the Minister's approval.
Part-time Inspector-General

(2) If the Inspector-General is appointed on a part-time basis, he or she must not engage in any paid work that conflicts or may conflict with the proper performance of his or her duties.

566F Other terms and conditions

The Inspector-General holds office on the terms and conditions (if any) in relation to matters not covered by this Act that are determined by the Agriculture Minister.

566G Resignation

(1) The Inspector-General may resign his or her appointment by giving the Agriculture Minister a written resignation.

(2) The resignation takes effect on the day it is received by the Agriculture Minister or, if a later day is specified in the resignation, on that later day.

566H Termination of appointment

(1) The Agriculture Minister may terminate the appointment of the Inspector-General:

(a) for misbehaviour; or

(b) if the Inspector-General is unable to perform the duties of his or her office because of physical or mental incapacity.

(2) The Agriculture Minister may terminate the appointment of the Inspector-General if:

(a) the Inspector-General:

(i) becomes bankrupt; or

(ii) takes steps to take the benefit of any law for the relief of bankrupt or insolvent debtors; or

(iii) compounds with one or more of his or her creditors; or

(iv) makes an assignment of his or her remuneration for the benefit of one or more of his or her creditors; or

(b) if the Inspector-General is appointed on a full-time basis—he or she is absent, except on leave of absence, for 14 consecutive days or for 28 days in any 12 months; or

(c) if the Inspector-General is appointed on a full-time basis—he or she engages, except with the Agriculture Minister's approval, in paid work outside the duties of his or her office (see subsection 566E(1)); or

(d) if the Inspector-General is appointed on a part-time basis—he or she engages in paid work that conflicts or may conflict with the proper performance of his or her duties (see subsection 566E(2)); or

(e) the Inspector-General fails, without reasonable excuse, to comply with section 29 of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (which deals with the duty to disclose interests) or rules made for the purposes of that section.

566J Acting appointments

The Agriculture Minister may, by written instrument, appoint a person to act as the Inspector-General:

(a) during a vacancy in the office of Inspector-General (whether or not an appointment has previously been made to the office); or

(b) during any period, or during all periods, when the Inspector-General:

(i) is absent from duty or from Australia; or

(ii) is, for any reason, unable to perform the duties of the office.

Note: For rules that apply to acting appointments, see section 33A of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901.
Division 2—Reviews by the Inspector-General

567 Inspector-General may review administration of provisions

(1) The Inspector-General may review the performance of functions, or exercise of powers, by biosecurity officials under one or more provisions of this Act.

Note: A review under this section is different from a review of a reviewable decision under Part 1 of Chapter 11. Although this section lets the Inspector-General review an exercise of power under a provision of this Act that may involve a reviewable decision, the Inspector-General cannot affirm, vary or set aside the decision.

(2) Subsection (1) does not permit the Inspector-General to review only a single performance of a function, or a single exercise of a power, by a single biosecurity official.

Note: A review under this section must be more general.

Report on review

(3) The Inspector-General must publish a report on each review he or she conducts under this section.

Regulations may deal with reviews and reports

(4) The regulations may make provision for or in relation to:

(a) the process to be followed in conducting a review under this section; and

(b) the content of reports of reviews conducted under this section.

568 Inspector-General may require information etc. for review

(1) The Inspector-General may, by written notice given to a person who the Inspector-General believes on reasonable grounds has information or documents relevant to a review under section 567, require the person to:

(a) answer questions, or give information in writing, about the relevant information or documents by the time specified in the notice; or

(b) produce the documents to the Inspector-General by the time specified in the notice.

Note 1: A person may commit an offence or contravene a civil penalty provision if the person gives false or misleading information (see section 137.1 of the Criminal Code and section 532 of this Act).

Note 2: A person may commit an offence or contravene a civil penalty provision if the person provides false or misleading documents (see section 137.2 of the Criminal Code and section 533 of this Act).

(2) The time specified in the notice must be at least 14 days after the notice is given.

Civil penalty provision

(3) A person who is required to answer questions, give information in writing or produce documents under subsection (1) must comply with the requirement.

Civil penalty: 30 penalty units.

Copying documents produced

(4) The Inspector-General:

(a) may make copies of, or take extracts from, a document produced under subsection (1); and

(b) for that purpose, may remove the document from the place at which it was produced.

(5) Clause 643, page 631 (lines 6 to 19), omit subclauses (4) and (5).

(6) Clause 644, page 633 (after line 12), after paragraph (6)(d), insert:

(da) the Inspector-General;
(7) Clause 644, page 633 (line 21), omit "637;", substitute "637."
(8) Clause 644, page 633 (lines 22 to 24), omit paragraph (6)(l).

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (13:20): I have a number of amendments that I will soon seek leave to move, but I want to respond to both Senator Cameron's comments and Senator Colbeck's comments and indicate the Greens' support for the amendments that the government has just moved. We were prepared to support the ALP's amendments when they first brought them into the place, and I had a second reading amendment that likewise called for an independent Inspector-General of Biosecurity. I think the government has made a very wise decision to proceed with the amendments. Again, it did not go quite as far as we would have liked, but they are good amendments to this bill.

We have understood the need to make sure that we progress this biosecurity legislation. It has been a long time coming, but we saw the role of the inspector-general as being very important, which is why we were prepared to move amendments and support the ALP's amendments. When the government saw that there was a need for and strong support for changes to the legislation, I think it was a very good move that they in fact moved amendments themselves. We are supporting those amendments.

However, as I will articulate further when we get to the Greens amendments, we do not think this bill is perfect. You could say that no bill in this place is necessarily perfect, but there are some holes in the legislation that we think need to be addressed and that stakeholders think need to be addressed. So while we are very pleased that the government have proceeded with this particular set of amendments, and we support them in doing that, we will still seek to move some further amendments. But the government does have our support for these amendments.

Senator BACK (Western Australia) (13:22): I would like to endorse the comments that have been made around the chamber. From an industry perspective, in every area I have been in recently—in the east, in the Northern Territory and in WA—there has been a very strong anticipation and, in fact, impatience, by agriculture and related industries for the Senate to come together particularly on this amendment but also on the bill in general. I endorse the comments of Minister Colbeck in appreciating the comments of both Senator Cameron, on behalf of the ALP, and Senator Siewert, and again express how important and bipartisan the discussions leading up to this bill and the amendments have been. I hope that the spirit of goodwill and the recognition of the importance of this biosecurity legislation will continue through to its passage today.

Question agreed to.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (13:23): by leave—In respect of the Biosecurity Bill 2014, I move Greens amendments (1), (2) and (11) on sheet 7676 together:

(1) Clause 5, page 6 (line 16), at the end of note 2, add "However, if there is insufficient evidence to evaluate the level of risk associated with goods, then the precautionary principle will apply."
(2) Page 6 (after line 16), after clause 5, insert:

5A Precautionary principle must be applied when making a decision under this Act
A person making a decision under this Act must take account of the precautionary principle, to the extent that he or she can do so consistently with the other provisions of this Act.

(11) Clause 9, page 23 (after line 24), after the definition of PPSA security interest, insert:

precautionary principle means the principle that lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing or limiting cost-effective measures to prevent a biosecurity emergency, or a human biosecurity emergency, or to postpone or limit a response to a biosecurity risk.

I will make a brief overarching statement to put the context for these amendments and then I will move through the amendments. I do look forward to the government's response to the amendments. I do want to get some of the responses on record because these issues have come directly from the community—from both industry and the environmental organisations that work particularly on biosecurity and environmental biosecurity. I think it is very important that the community and industry understand where the government is coming from on these particular amendments.

As I said in my contribution to the second reading debate and in additional comments to the bill, the Greens feel that by and large the bill builds on the work that was done in 2012 and addresses the issues that were raised at the time. However, we believe that it does not address particular issues around regional differences; the eminent scientists; the Inspector-General of Biosecurity, which we have just dealt with; third-party appeal rights; advisory committee and the issues which I traverse in these amendments.

I am particularly moving the amendments that relate to the precautionary principle. Amendments (1), (2) and (11) seek to insert reference to precautionary principle to include a note that in appropriate level of protection, specifying that if there is insufficient evidence to determine a biosecurity risk or if the available evidence is inconclusive in that regard, then the precautionary principle will apply and require application of the precautionary principle in decision making under the Biosecurity Act in a similar way to the Queensland Biosecurity Act 2014.

The precautionary principle is integral, we believe, to effective biosecurity. It is a fundamental principle in environmental decision making and is required for import decisions made under the EPBC Act. The precautionary principle is particularly important for the environment because of the limited knowledge about many of the potential impacts and the great harm that can result from invasive species—which, of course, is what this legislation is about. The precautionary principle is part of the Queensland Biosecurity Act 2014 and is part of the guiding principles for the implementation of article 8(h) of the biodiversity convention, which was adopted during the 2002 conference of the parties. The principle states:

Guiding principle 1: Precautionary approach

Given the unpredictability of the pathways and impacts on biological diversity of invasive alien species, efforts to identify and prevent unintentional introductions as well as decisions concerning intentional introductions should be based on the precautionary approach, in particular with reference to risk analysis, in accordance with the guiding principles below …

The precautionary approach should also be applied when considering eradication, containment and control measures in relation to alien species that have become established. Lack of scientific certainty about the various implications of an invasion should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take appropriate eradication, containment and control measures.
Although legal opinion may be divided on the precise boundaries between trade laws and the precautionary principle, Australia should still give priority to harmonising biosecurity integrity and environmental protection in a way that incorporates the precautionary principle without bringing such regulation into direct conflict with the rules of the WTO.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (13:27): Before giving an overview on this suite of Greens amendments, I need to table a supplementary memorandum relating to government amendments moved to the bill today. I table that.

I think it is worth acknowledging everyone's contribution to this debate, as Senator Back did a few moments ago. I agree with Senator Siewert and her discussion around the work that has been done by all parties in relation to this legislation. I know that we all regard this as an important piece of legislation not just in the context of agriculture but more broadly for the broader environment. Quite often, agricultural or food products that are brought in end up having an environmental impact. I mentioned things like myrtle rust and Asian bees yesterday, and I know this chamber has debated that recently, and fire ants can also have a broader environmental impact. I think that does go to demonstrate that this is an important part of the legislation and it is something that is considered part of the legislation.

Part of conducting an import risk assessment assessing potential risks of disease incursions from products into the country. That is the point of the process: we want to be able to trade without having those incursions. The only way to have zero risk is to have zero trade—I think we all understand that. That is why the appropriate level of protection is being set as strongly as it is. It so important.

I can indicate, as the opposition has, that the government will not be supporting the Greens amendment. I will just run through a few of the reasons, in no particular order, why we will not be doing that. To bring the environment minister into the process that is currently run through the Department of Agriculture requires a significant change to the government's administrative arrangements. The amendment that the Greens are moving is not consistent with the government's administrative orders. The amendment provides the environment minister or the Secretary of the Department of the Environment with a number of specific decision-making roles under the biosecurity act—for example, in declaring a first point of entry or in the management of the biosecurity agency. The bill as it stands is consistent with current arrangements whereby the agriculture minister, not the environment minister, is responsible for biosecurity, including environmental biosecurity. I want to make that point because I think it is important.

We all value the broader biosecurity implications for this country which this act provides. The government can assure the Senate and the Greens that, while the current drafting of the Biosecurity Bill does not confer specific powers to the environment minister, administrative arrangements already exist for the ongoing collaboration and consultation between the agriculture and environment portfolios to ensure that there is a whole-of-government approach in the management of any matters of environmental significance. I think that is an important point to make. The agriculture department works closely with the environment department to ensure that, where possible, biosecurity risk management aligns with environmental conservation and protection. This is facilitated, for example, with the endorsement by the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act of decisions
made under the Quarantine Act in relation to the importation of a plant specimen. This will continue to be the case under the Biosecurity Bill.

The agriculture department is also subject to the EPBC Act in managing biosecurity risks. The environment department is also an observer on a number of forums on biosecurity—for example, the National Management Group committees. The government believes that the Biosecurity Bill, as it is currently drafted, has the capability of achieving many of the policy outcomes sought in the amendment, and the government will address them either in the regulations or through its administration of the bill. For example, the government acknowledges the benefit of having external scientific advice in the biosecurity import risk analysis process and supports the establishment of an eminent scientist group or a similar body with a role in this process. However, as the process for the establishment of an external scientific group is largely procedural, this is more appropriately contained in the regulations.

Whilst not diminishing the importance of the consideration of the environment and conservation, the focus of the Biosecurity Bill is the management of biosecurity risks. The definition of biosecurity risk clearly includes a reference to the environment. There are more appropriate Commonwealth acts which support environmental conservation, and many of the ideas put forward by the Greens in this space are best placed in such legislation. For example, the proposed conservation zones relate directly to matters that are established and already regulated under the EPBC Act. There are a number of provisions within the amendment relating to technical drafting issues, issues of law or amendments which do not align with the government’s international trade obligations. The government can, however, assure the Senate and the Greens in particular that bills have been drafted in accordance with best legislative practice. The Biosecurity Bill relies on a broad range of constitutional powers for legislative support. Reliance on a broad range of powers ensures that the bill is given the widest possible operation, consistent with Commonwealth legislative power.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (13:34): I thank the minister for his response. Some of the issues that the minister raised obviously relate to other amendments, and I will save my questions on those issues for when we deal with the amendments. I want to go back to the precautionary principle and, in particular, point to the fact that the Queensland act does address the precautionary principle. I ask the government: given the fact that the Queensland legislation addresses the precautionary principle, why can’t we address it more fully in this piece of legislation?

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (13:35): It is done at a state level because that is where it is appropriately done. That is not possible at a federal level, as proposed, due to our WTO obligations. However, our system does already allow for a precautionary process—for example, if the science is not conclusive on an import risk assessment, we can apply provisional conditions until the science is settled. So, as I indicated earlier, through our import risk assessment process there is capacity to apply that principle. Where the science is not conclusive, we can apply provisional conditions until the science is settled. It can occur at a state level, and that is where it is appropriate for it to occur within the Australian context.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (13:35): I am not intentionally trying to prolong this. I just want to make sure that I get things clear and on the record. One of the key things here that I understand you are saying is that our obligations
under the WTO undermine Australia's ability to implement more fully the precautionary principle, despite us having signed the biodiversity convention.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (13:36): If I understand your question correctly, I would say that is the case. There is capacity for states to do things that are not possible at a Commonwealth level under WTO provisions.

You mentioned in your initial presentation to the amendments some issues around regional difference. That was a significant issue during the initial discussions on the legislation prior to the election. There has been considerable work done to mitigate those concerns in this piece of legislation. It is effectively dealt with through the capacity of the country to consider Australia or part of Australia—which means a region—and that is then largely managed through the import risk assessment analysis process. As I mentioned before, if the science is not conclusive, it does give us the capacity to apply provisional conditions until that science is settled.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is that Greens amendments (1), (2) and (11) on sheet 7676 be agreed to.

Question negatived.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (13:38): Sorry, my notes are not the same as the running order for the amendments, so I apologise for that.

The CHAIRMAN: You do not need to follow the running sheet if you do not wish to.

Senator SIEWERT: I think it is easier for the rest of the chamber. Greens amendment (3), in respect of the Biosecurity Bill 2014, relates to consultation. I move:

(3) Page 6 (before line 17), before clause 6, insert:

5B Consultation with community in relation to administration

Chapters 2 to 8 of this Act are to be administered, as far as practicable, in consultation with, and having regard to the views and interests of, the following:

(a) Indigenous groups;
(b) industry groups;
(c) State and Territory governments;
(d) local governments;
(e) public sector entities;
(f) conservation organisations;
(g) any other interested groups;
(h) the general community.

This amendment relates to issues around better consultation. There are similar provisions in the Queensland Biosecurity Act, which I think is the most modern of all the states' biosecurity legislation. We think it is particularly important that there is wide consultation through this process. We know the importance of biosecurity and, as the minister just outlined, it is an issue that is pervasive across a number of issues. It does require consultation with a range of bodies, so we felt that the legislation should more clearly point out those bodies that need to be consulted in the process of decision-making and implementation and administration of this particular act.
Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (13:40): I think the real concern that we have at this point in time is about being prescriptive about who should be consulted. During the development of an import risk assessment, it is an open consultation process. Anybody is free to submit to that process. By prescribing who should be consulted, I think you potentially limit that capacity. We will not be supporting the amendment, because there is already a consultation process considered within the process, and it is open to anyone who wants to make a submission.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (13:41): I would seek the government's assurance with respect to the named particular groups. I understand what the minister has just said in terms of it being open to anybody. We have also included 'any other interested groups' and 'the general community' to cover that, but I think there are some specific organisations and groups—state and territory governments, local governments, Aboriginal organisations or Indigenous groups, industry groups and conservation organisations—that we should fundamentally acknowledge, in the legislation, should be consulted, which is why we came up with that list. Yes, it is more prescriptive than government obviously prefers, but it does include the catch-all that other interested groups can be consulted. Again, I do not think it is adequate to keep it broad. This would mean that if the government has not consulted a particular group, or the process has not consulted a particular group, it does not matter that they have not been consulted, even where their views may be particularly important—for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over whose land decisions may be taken, and whose cultural practices may come into play here as well.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is that Australian Greens amendment (3) on sheet 7676 be agreed to.

Question negatived.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (13:43): by leave—In respect of the Biosecurity Bill 2014, I move Greens amendments (4), (5) and (13) together:

(4) Clause 7, page 6 (lines 25 to 32), omit the clause, substitute:

7 Extension of Act to external Territories
(1) This Act extends to every external Territory other than the Australian Antarctic Territory.
(2) The regulations may extend this Act or any provisions of this Act, other than Chapter 5 (ballast water), to the Australian Antarctic Territory.

Note: Chapter 5 extends to all the external Territories (see section 259).

(5) Clause 9, page 9 (after line 27), after the definition of associate, insert:

Australia when used in a geographical sense, includes all the external Territories other than the Australian Antarctic Territory.

(13) Clause 12, page 30 (lines 5 to 18), omit the clause, substitute:

12 Meaning of Australian territory
A reference in a provision of this Act to Australian territory is a reference to:
(a) Australia and any external Territory to which that provision extends; and
(b) the airspace over an area covered by paragraph (a); and
(c) the coastal sea of Australia and of any other external Territory to which that provision extends.
Note 1: Under subsection 7(2), the regulations may extend this Act, or any provisions of this Act, to the Australian Antarctic Territory.

Note 2: The definition of coastal sea of Australia or an external Territory in subsection 15B(4) of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901 includes the airspace over Australia or the external Territory.

These amendments relate to the extension of the act to external territories. It is an area of reform. I know that the government made comment about some of the amendments they would not be supporting because they change the way they have chosen to implement this particular legislation and those amendments are not consistent with their administration of the process. I understand that this is in fact a structural reform issue. We understand that the government has already addressed some of the elements here in terms of applying this legislation to external territories. We agree that there has been some progress here, but we do not think it goes far enough in terms of the ability to apply this law to make sure we have proper control of biosecurity, both from an industry and an environmental perspective, in external territories. That is why we have proposed these amendments. As I said, I understand that it is a more structural reform, but the Greens do think it is important that this legislation is able to be applied, particularly in an environmental context. We do not think that, from an environmental perspective, the legislation does have enough application for external territories.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (13:45): Senator Siewert has just acknowledged that we have made some changes to the coverage of our biosecurity zone. It is the government's view that these changes adequately reflect what is appropriate under the act, so we will not be supporting the amendment.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (13:45): I had understood from both your comments and from feedback that you would not be. One of the issues that I do want to flag is that we will be keeping a close eye on this. We do think it is going to have to be reviewed into the future because we are not convinced. A lot of the issues in our external territories are absolutely environmental issues. Yes, there is potential for some industry issues, but a lot of the invasions and incursions that we are talking about are actually environmental. That is an issue we will continue to monitor. We will ask government to keep an eye on that as well, because we do think that this is particularly important.

I also put it in the context—and I will be very quick here—that some of these islands contain rare and endangered species and threatened species that are found nowhere else on the planet. It is particularly important that we get biosecurity in these places, in these external territories, right. We have some classic examples in Australia already of biosecurity incursions that we can say are leading to extinctions. This is why we think this is so important. I urge the government to continue to review it. We will certainly be reviewing it, and I know environmental organisations will also be keeping a close eye on this.

Question negatived.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (13:47): by leave—In respect of the Biosecurity Bill 2014, I move Australian Greens amendments (12) and (48) on sheet 7676 together:

(12) Clause 9, page 27 (after line 4), after the definition of taxon, insert:

  taxon has the same meaning as in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
(48) Page 633 (after line 24), after clause 644, insert:

644A Biennial biosecurity status reports

Biennial report—biosecurity

(1) The Director of Biosecurity must, as soon as practicable after the end of every second financial year, prepare and give to the Agriculture Minister, for presentation to the Parliament, a report on the following:

(a) the current status of the biosecurity system in Australia, including:
   (i) a baseline assessment of diseases and pests in Australia which have detrimental impacts on the environment, economy or human health against which changes in the risk from these diseases and pests can be measured and progress in biosecurity measures assessed; and
   (ii) changes within the previous 2 years in the status of diseases and pests in Australia, including new incursions detected, new taxa naturalised and eradications;

(b) Australia's state of biosecurity preparedness, including:
   (i) a baseline assessment of the percentage of permitted species that have undergone risk assessment for import; and
   (ii) risk assessments conducted within the previous 2 years, specifying the goods that have been assessed and the type of risk assessment conducted, and priorities for BIRAs; and
   (iii) monitoring conducted and priorities for such monitoring; and
   (iv) contingency plans prepared and implemented, and priorities for future contingency planning; and
   (v) an assessment of the likely impact of climate change on existing and emerging biosecurity risks;

(c) Australia's responses to diseases or pests that have entered, or have emerged, established themselves or spread, in Australian territory or a part of Australian territory, within the previous 2 years, including:
   (i) taxa considered for eradication and the results of assessments under any agreements with the relevant States or Territories; and
   (ii) progress in eradication programs;

(d) performance of other biosecurity functions within the previous 2 years, including:
   (i) enforcement actions; and
   (ii) consultation undertaken with relevant persons or bodies.

(2) The Agriculture Minister must table the report in each House of the Parliament as soon as practicable.

Biennial report—human biosecurity

(3) The Director of Human Biosecurity must, as soon as practicable after the end of every second financial year, prepare and give to the Health Minister, for presentation to the Parliament, a report on the following:

(a) a baseline assessment of diseases and pests in Australia that may cause harm to human health against which changes in the risk from these diseases and pests can be measured and progress in human biosecurity measures assessed;

(b) an evaluation of the changes within the previous 2 years in the status of such diseases and pests in Australia;
(c) performance of other human biosecurity functions within the previous 2 years, including risk identification, risk prioritisation, risk assessments, monitoring, inspections, interceptions, eradication, containment and control;

(d) emerging human biosecurity risks and preparedness to respond to new incursions;

(e) an assessment of the impact of climate change on human biosecurity;

(f) information sharing with biosecurity industry participants, including internationally.

(4) The Health Minister must table the report in each House of the Parliament as soon as practicable.

Meaning of relevant persons or bodies

(5) For the purposes of subparagraph (1)(d)(ii), relevant persons or bodies means the following:

(a) Indigenous groups;

(b) industry groups;

(c) State and Territory governments;

(d) local governments;

(e) public sector entities;

(f) conservation organisations;

(g) any other interested groups;

(h) the general community.

These amendments relate to reporting to parliament every two years on the state of Australia’s biosecurity. Biosecurity has been characterised by a lack of transparency. For example, there is no regular reporting on incursions, priorities or the outcomes of most risk assessments. The ones that are a bit more sensational will get some media. They will be the ones we will hear about most and that this place will pay particular attention to.

A reporting requirement will improve accountability and allow biosecurity participants, members of the parliament and the public to better gauge the state of biosecurity in Australia and identify areas most in need of improvement. We have, in the proposed amendments, a detailed list of things that we believe need to be reported on. I understand that we are asking for a pretty long list to be included in that reporting process. That is because we think this is such an important issue. If we get biosecurity wrong, not only could it have dire consequences for industry—that is why we are here to talk about it—but it could also have dire consequences for the environment. I will comment on some of the issues around the environment a bit more when I deal with those particular amendments.

It is particularly important that there is a regular and proper process for reporting on biosecurity matters, as I have just articulated, so that the community and this place have a clear understanding of where we are up to on biosecurity. Where we know we have had incursions, what are the priorities? In fact, what have been the outcomes of those risk assessments? I understand that risk assessments are very complicated processes. Having sat through a number of committee inquiries not only into biosecurity but also into the risk assessment process, I understand that it is fairly inaccessible to the general community. I think it is a much better process for the government to be required to report on biosecurity and thus increase its transparency and accountability. I think this is a particularly important area where we can make sure that a government, any government—I am not having a go at just this government—into the future is held accountable for biosecurity measures and for the decisions that are taken.
Question negatived.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (13:51): In respect of the Biosecurity Bill 2014, I move Australian Greens amendment (15) on sheet 7676:

(15) Page 46 (after line 4), at the end of Chapter 1, add:

Part 5—Proposed decisions affecting the environment

32A Requirement to seek advice from Environment Minister where significant risk of environmental harm

Before making a decision under this Act, the implementation of which is likely to result in a significant risk of harm to the environment, the Director of Biosecurity or the Director of Human Biosecurity (as the case may be) must consult with the Environment Minister.

32B Director to take advice into account

If the Director of Biosecurity or the Director of Human Biosecurity (as the case may be) receives any advice from the Environment Minister within 28 days after consulting the Environment Minister under section 32A, the Director must:

(a) ensure that the advice is taken into account in making the relevant decision; and
(b) inform the Environment Minister, in writing, as to how the advice was taken into account.

This amendment relates to consultation with the Minister for the Environment. I understand the government has responded to the inclusion of the Minister for the Environment. There has been a Senate inquiry into environmental biosecurity. I think the report is due tomorrow, so I am not going to go into the details of the report. I certainly can talk about what is on the public record, on some of the evidence the committee received. There is a great deal of concern in the community that in fact biosecurity has largely been skewed towards industry. I think it would be fair to say that that is a legitimate concern because there is not the same level of resources going into environmental biosecurity. There is not same degree of invested stakeholders. I do not mean that in a derogatory sense at all to industry. Of course, the agricultural industry is focused on production. I am not saying that they do not care about the environment but they are largely focused on production and the economic loss that biosecurity incursions can cause. We only need to look at what has happened in Queensland to see the most recent instance.

The list of costs that invasive species have incurred in this country is as long as your arm. They also have had a significant impact on the environment—myrtle rust is one of those. Many others are having a devastating impact on our natural environment, leading to species extinction. That is why it is so important that we include the Minister for the Environment and have a more defined role for the environment.

These amendments would allow the Department of the Environment and the minister to have a role in biosecurity management and to be delegated powers including issuance of biosecurity guidelines and priorities for BIRAs, delegation of powers to the Minister for the Environment or the department, review and auditing of relevant risk assessments, BIRAs and import decisions, declarations of environmental biosecurity emergencies, provide the Secretary to the Department of the Environment with powers to make biodiversity control orders where there is a biosecurity risk of national environmental significance under the EPBC Act, for decisions resulting in significant harm to the environment and declarations of...
biosecurity zones for conservation purposes, which the minister touched on in his contribution.

Endangered species, as I articulated, are a large environmental threat. In fact, they are in the top three environmental threats. Improving biosecurity should be a very high priority for the Department of the Environment and for the minister, as well as for the Department of Agriculture. The environment minister and department should have defined statutory roles to ensure that environmental biosecurity receives high priority and is integrated with the environmental biosecurity functions under the EPBC Act. In other words, I acknowledge the minister has referred to the powers under the EPBC Act, but we would like to see them better integrated to ensure that related environmental obligations are part of the biodiversity and conservation strategy. It should facilitate cooperation between the two departments.

There is a statutory role for the health portfolio under the Biosecurity Bill and the Quarantine Act. The previous act required consultation with the environment minister over biosecurity decisions that may involve significant risk of environmental harm. We acknowledge the powers that the minister outlined. We do not think they go far enough, as I said at the beginning. While this bill is a significant improvement and again, as the minister acknowledged, we all in this chamber agree that biosecurity is a huge issue, the areas of disagreement are how far some of the power should extend. We do not think this bill goes far enough to ensure that environmental biosecurity is as high a priority as we think it needs to be.

Senator COLBECK (Tasmania—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture) (13:55): I did largely address this in my comments earlier but I just cannot let the perception go that the system is skewed too much towards industry or trade. Anyone who has filled in an incoming visitor card at the airport would understand that the issues that Senator Siewert has just been talking about are very much top of mind as part of our process. They go through a range of issues, potential biosecurity vectors, which are obviously of concern and are of direct relevance and importance to protecting the environment. It is a significant cost as part of our overall biosecurity system. So I do not think I could let go of the characterisation that it is largely skewed to business and industry because people movement is a significant vector. Senator Siewert mentioned health. It is for that reason and for the reasons I outlined earlier that we will not be supporting this amendment.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (13:57): I do not think I characterised it necessarily as being skewed. I acknowledge we do do all that. The point is that the resources brought to bear in dealing with environmental biosecurity quite plainly are not as comprehensive as those resources that are brought to bear for industry biosecurity issues for the very nature that often with incursions that affect industry there are resources that the industry itself obviously brings to bear. There is plenty of evidence to show that environmental biosecurity incursions have not had the same level of resources and it is not just about resources; it is also about ensuring that the minister and the Department of the Environment are there as decision makers under the powers I described in the amendment. We believe that would ensure that the environment is given adequate attention in this process.

As I said, it was not a criticism at all of the level of effort that we put into biosecurity to protect industry, to protect agriculture and to protect horticulture. Everybody agrees that we need to be putting in those resources. In fact, in many cases we have argued that more
resources need to be put in. This is about the fact that we make sure that the environment gets as much attention and if necessary as many resources but also that it is right up there in terms of the decision making. I do not want anyone saying that we are critical of the fact that resources are spent on agricultural biosecurity.

Progress reported.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:00): My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Abetz. I refer to the Prime Minister's pre-election promise that there would be no cuts to health and the minister's claim in the chamber yesterday:

Last year's budget did not breach that promise in any way, shape or form. What we did do, quite rightly, was reallocate funding within the Health portfolio to deliver better services to where they were needed.

Given that Treasury has confirmed a cut of $57 million from health over the next 10 years, will the minister now correct the record?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:00): The honourable senator, as a former finance minister, ought to have a better understanding of budget documentation. But, of course, clearly she does not, and that is why the country is in the financial mess that we find ourselves in today. But we are getting the country out of that mess and morass. In last year's budget, hospital funding increased by nine per cent in the first year, nine per cent in the second year, nine per cent in the third year and six per cent in the final year. In anybody's language, in the low-inflation environment that we currently have, that could not be considered to be a cut. This was an increase in hospital funding of around $5.3 billion, or 40 per cent, over four years. And, unlike some of the funny, rubbery figures that the Labor Party sought to promise 10 or 15 years hence, we actually have budgeted figures that are supported of, I repeat, nine per cent, nine per cent, nine per cent and six per cent, totalling around $5.3 billion worth of increases. I commend the budget papers to Senator Wong.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:02): Mr President, I seek leave to table an answer by Treasury to a question on notice confirming the $57 billion cut.

Leave granted.

Senator WONG: Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Isn't the Medical Association right to say that the Abbott government's cuts to health funding mean 'public hospitals will never meet the targets set by governments and patients will have to wait longer for treatment'. Isn't the AMA right?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:03): The AMA is one of the most powerful unions in the country and it will continue to advocate in relation to its particular area of interest. That is understandable and I think everyone in this place accepts that. But this government is faced with ensuring that we have a secure and responsible
budgetary future. What the Australian Labor Party did in their last year or two of government was simply promise the world without any funding base, without any basis for making those promises. And then when we pointed out the fact that there was no funding base, that this was funny money, that there was simply no basis to make those promises—and therefore that some of those Labor promises need to be looked at in that context—all of a sudden it was alleged that we had somehow broken promises by being responsible and honest to the Australian people. (Time expired)

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:04): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Will tonight's budget confirm the Prime Minister's breach of his own commitment that there would be no cuts to health under the coalition?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:04): What tonight's budget will confirm is that we are on a path to regaining the sort of responsible budgeting that this country enjoyed for many decades until the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government—and the Whitlam government—destroyed that general record. Tonight's budget will be one that sets us on a path to ensuring future security, especially for the next generation. I do not know how those on the other side can sleep or somehow say to the next generation that we are not responsible economic managers. Indeed, we are putting in place the building blocks to ensure the future of our country.

Centenary of Anzac

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia) (14:05): My question is to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC, Senator Ronaldson. Can the minister inform the Senate about the commemorative events which marked Anzac Day this year?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:05): I thank Senator Johnston for his question. On 25 April this year, both at home and abroad, many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Australians commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing. This watershed event in our nation's history has for the past 100 years been remembered as a nation-defining event. The government has supported community based commemoration, national and international commemoratives ceremonies and a wide program of events to support the Centenary of Anzac and the century of service that has flowed from it.

The government's Centenary of Anzac Local Grants Program, which built on the approach of the former government, provided $125,000 for commemoratives events across each federal electorate, supporting many Centenary of Anzac commemoratives events. Over 1,700 applications were funded. I want to acknowledge the ex-service organisations throughout the nation and community groups that applied for the funding and coordinated what have been quite magnificent local community events.

In communities large and small throughout the nation this year hundreds of thousands of people gathered to commemorate the supreme sacrifice made by so many in all wars, conflicts and peace-keeping operations over more than 100 years. The sheer magnitude of these crowds
has undoubtedly meant that a new generation of young Australians will have instilled in them that 'Anzac' means service and sacrifice. I was having a quick chat to Senator Williams before, who said that in the town of Inverell alone some 2,000 people were at the dawn service. (Time expired)

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia) (14:17): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I thank the minister for his answer. Can he further inform the Senate how Australia's involvement in the Great War was commemorated outside of Australia?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:07): I again thank Senator Johnston. The Prime Minister and myself, the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow minister gathered in Gallipoli with some 10½ thousand Australians and New Zealanders for the Anzac dawn service. This was a very moving ceremony.

Included in those commemorations were 10 World War I veterans' widows. They themselves had remarkable stories and we were deeply honoured to have them there. Mrs Niki Alldritt and Mrs Ann Beasley were asked to lay wreaths at the dawn service. They did it on behalf of all widows and noted their unique connection because their two husbands fought at Gallipoli before they went on to the Western Front.

In France over 6,000 people gathered at the commemorative site at Villiers-Bretonneux and, as we know, there were some 290,000 Australians who served on the Western Front. (Time expired)

Senator JOHNSTON (Western Australia) (14:09): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate what further investments the government will make to commemorate a century of service as part of the Centenary of Anzac?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:09): A nation that fails to remember is, of course, a nation that fails itself. In tonight's budget there will be a further $35 million in additional funding for commemorative events throughout the remainder of the Centenary of Anzac period. There were 295,000 Australians who served in the First World War; 62,000 died and 70 per cent of those were on the Western Front. There will be additional funding for commemorative events at Lone Pine, Fromelles, Pozieres, Le Hamel, Polygon Wood, Belgium and Beersheba. There will also be a number of commemorative events inside Australia for events that are actually outside the Centenary of Anzac. One of the most important of those will be the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan during the Vietnam War. It is now 50 years. We will be using some of those funds to appropriately commemorate that event. (Time expired)

The PRESIDENT: I need to clarify that there was leave granted for the tabling of a document. I have to get that on the record. The document is now tabled.

Liberal Party Leadership

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (14:10): My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Abetz. I refer to senior Liberal Senator Bernardi, who says he hopes the foreign minister, Ms Bishop, gets the opportunity to hold the top job. Does the minister share that view?
Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:11): Casting a very casual eye over to Senator Bernardi, I would hardly describe him as senior, whereas the gentleman sitting next to him I might describe as senior. Nevertheless, Senator Bernardi is, I think, quite right to acknowledge that there is an embarrassment of riches on this side of the chamber, both in this House and the other. For him to acknowledge and say that potentially one day Ms Bishop might lead the party, I see no difficulty with that.

I do not know if Senator Carr has a difficulty with that because it is a woman who Senator Bernardi is supporting. We do not know whether that is the reason, but what I can say is that this is 2015—the year that Mr Shorten promised would be the year of ideas. Of course, I thought the piercing intellect of Mr Shorten had reached its height when he said, 'I don't know what the Prime Minister said but I support it.' Now he has reached another height. He has achieved an even greater saying, and it is this: 'I don't know what the Treasurer is going to say tonight, but I know I am against it.' That is the attitude of the Australian Labor Party. On the eve of the federal budget, all that Senator Carr can do is trawl through and talk about the gossip rather than the real issues confronting the Australian nation—getting the budget back into shape and creating jobs for our fellow Australians. That is the task that Senator Bernardi and I are dedicated to. I can inform the honourable senator that Ms Bishop is dedicated to that task as well. (Time expired)

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (14:13): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer to the former Liberal member for Indi, Ms Sophie Mirabella, who says that the social services minister, Mr Morrison, will be 'the next conservative Prime Minister of Australia'. Does the minister share that view?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:13): Yet again the honourable senator has confirmed the embarrassment of riches on our side of the chamber—that there are all these potential leaders. The good news is that we are well and truly satisfied with the leadership of the Prime Minister and he will do a fantastic job right through to the next election, and after, because we have confidence in his leadership.

In relation to Ms Mirabella, can I say that her involvement in public life is something that I welcome, and I hope that she runs for the parliament again and is re-elected. What I can say to the people of Indi is that, in relation to Bruck Textiles of Wangaratta, I get more representations from Ms Mirabella looking after the interests of the workers there than the current member for Indi, and I think the people of Indi made a great mistake at the last election and I look forward to Ms Mirabella's return. (Time expired)

Senator KIM CARR (Victoria) (14:14): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Does the minister agree with GQ magazine's description of the communications minister, Mr Turnbull, as the 'primed minister', whose next stop is the Lodge? With at least three prime ministers in waiting, isn't it true that this budget is all about shoring up the support of the current Prime Minister and not about doing what is right for the Australian people?

Honourable senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: On my right and my left! Order! Let's settle down.
Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:15): Mr President, I suspect that Senator Carr's avid reading of *GQ* is an indication of his lack of IQ.

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

The PRESIDENT (14:16): I acknowledge in the gallery the presence today of former Senator Santoro. Welcome to the Senate.

Honourable senators: Hear, hear!

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**National Security**

Senator WRIGHT (South Australia) (14:16): My question is to the Minister representing the Prime Minister, Senator Abetz. I refer to the Prime Minister's announcement to media outlets this morning that tonight's budget will include a further $450 million for spy agencies, taking the total of the coalition's anti-terror spending announcements to over $1 billion. My question is: why is only a minuscule proportion of this money, $35.4 million, 3.2 per cent, going to something that will actually make us safer—that is, community cohesion programs?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:17): I think I can understand why the Greens in the reshuffle moved Senator Wright a little bit further backwards. If there is one duty of a national government, it is to protect its borders from external aggression, and then to protect its citizenry from the sorts of activities to which the senator referred—and that is terrorism. I make no apology for this government being absolutely committed to protecting its citizens and residents from terrorism and terrorist attacks. The best way to do that, with great respect, is to ensure that the law enforcement agencies have the capacity to protect us—laws against which the Greens continually vote. Why? I do not know.

In relation to social cohesion, of course everybody wants social cohesion. We all support social cohesion, but what we do not support are those people that deliberately embark on a course to ensure, in effect, the downfall of our society, and that is what some of these people, unfortunately, are dedicated to. And Senator Cameron is laughing. Well, the death cult of Daesh—

Senator Cameron: Yeah, laughing at you! I'm laughing at you.

Senator ABETZ: The death cult of Daesh—

Senator Brandis: Serious people take this seriously—

Senator ABETZ: This is a frontbencher of Mr Shorten's. This is the Labor Party attitude on such a serious issue.

Senator Wong: We show bipartisanship on this. Settle down.

Senator ABETZ: Senator Wong interjects and says, 'We show bipartisanship on this.' Then let your frontbench show it by their actions. Their actions speak so much louder than their words.

The PRESIDENT: Pause the clock!
Senator Whish-Wilson: On a point of order: I understand you were speaking to the Clerk, Mr President, but I was on my feet for a while, and Senator Abetz was not addressing the question. He was addressing the Labor Party, a totally separate issue to the question that was being asked.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Whish-Wilson. I think even the minister has acknowledged that. Minister, have you concluded your answer?

Senator ABETZ: Yes, I have, and the time has run out too.

Senator WRIGHT (South Australia) (14:19): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I will not stoop to personal comments—I do not need to do that—but I will ask: why is it that, when almost all counter-terror experts are recommending greater investment in deradicalisation programs, the government is directing almost every national security dollar away from community programs to prevent young people from being radicalised in the first place?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:20): When it comes to personal comments, I would just invite Senator Wright to have a look at the comments of her Deputy Leader Ludlam in relation to the Prime Minister. So, before you seek to take any high moral ground, I suggest you deal with your own deputy leader.

Having said that, can I say that this government is absolutely committed to seeing every possible element of the government's resources being used in an effective manner to ensure the deradicalisation or, indeed, prevent the radicalisation. Of course, rather than deradicalising somebody, we would prefer they were never radicalised at all. So that is where we all in this place have an important responsibility, and part of that important responsibility is to say, without any equivocation, that IS and Daesh—the death cult—are an untold evil. (Time expired)

Senator WRIGHT (South Australia) (14:21): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister clarify why the Prime Minister continues to use the term 'death cult' even though experts say it is counter-productive, ineffective and does some of the terror groups' marketing for them? Is it because your government is more concerned—

Government senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Just a moment, Senator Wright. On my right!

The PRESIDENT: Senator Brandis! You will have to withdraw that.

Senator Brandis: I withdraw.

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:22): We make no apologies for calling these evil elements a death cult, because, when you line up Christians and behead them—on video—when you rape women and say, 'That's okay,' because they are of a different religion and then kill them, you know what? That is a death cult. And I do not
think any Australian would disagree with the use of that terminology. So now, all of a sudden, people who engage in this behaviour should no longer be called murderers—they are murderers. We will call them murderers. And we will not rest as a government until such time as our population and the world population is safe from this evil death cult.

**Illicit Drugs**

**Senator McKENZIE** (Victoria) (14:23): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Health, Senator Nash. Can the minister inform the Senate what the government is doing to tackle the devastating problem of crystal methamphetamine, ‘ice’, in our communities?

**Senator NASH** (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:23): I thank Senator McKenzie for her question and note her very significant interest in this. Indeed, Senator McKenzie was one of the first of my colleagues to raise this as an issue with me. This is a devastating issue across the nation. The coalition has been extremely concerned about this and I have, personally, for a significant period of time now. There has been a rapid escalation in the use of this drug right across the country, borne out by the National Drug Strategy Household Survey and also by the Australian Crime Commission.

As I have been travelling around it has not ceased to worry me, the tragic stories that are coming before us. I was in Moree recently with the member for Parkes, Mark Coulton, where there is the tragic story of a young brother and sister who, following the use of ice, both suicided. This is not an isolated event. This is happening right across the country—the psychosis, the impact that it has, the long-term psychological issues and the links to violent criminal attacks and assaults. People now, right across the country, are becoming aware of the devastating nature of this drug.

The government moved, in April, to form the National Ice Taskforce, leading to a national ice strategy. On the task force we have Ken Lay, the previous police commissioner in Victoria, Dr Sally McCarthy and Professor Richard Murray. They will be travelling the country, as I and my colleague Minister Keenan will, running community consultations, round tables, making sure we get that input from the community as well, so a report can come to government—an interim report by the middle of the year—which will do a stocktake, if you like, to see exactly where we are at, across the country, in dealing with this drug.

Nobody believes they will get addicted to the drug. People think they can manage it. I can assure you, Mr President, they cannot. That is why the government is taking this so seriously.

**Senator McKENZIE** (Victoria) (14:25): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister inform the Senate about the launch of the Ice Destroys Lives public-awareness campaign on the weekend and the activities of the National Ice Taskforce?

**Senator NASH** (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:25): On Sunday the government did indeed launch an advertising campaign as a first step in raising awareness across the country of the devastating nature of this drug. Part of the reason for that is to make sure we raise that awareness, that people know the task force is there and that they have the ability to contribute and make sure they have that voice heard through that task-force process.

The ads are hard-hitting, they are confronting and they show the devastating effects of this drug, and this government makes absolutely no apology for doing that. What this does is
illustrate that ice destroys lives. It is going to run for six weeks online. This is particularly important in targeting our young people. We want young people never to start. It is not just about getting people off these drugs; it is ensuring that young people never start. Community is going to have to be involved with this as well, and that has been one of the targets of the campaign.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria) (14:26): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Will the minister advise the Senate what the government is doing to target the scourge of ice, particularly the impact it is having on regional Australia?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (14:26): One of the things that has become very clear is the rapid escalation in rural and regional communities. Indeed, many of my colleagues—and I thank them for their feedback—raising this issue with me are from rural and regional areas. We are seeing a particular impact there.

The Australian Crime Commission report indicated that organised crime is targeting rural and regional areas as a new market, and this is something we absolutely have to address. Both the task force and their work around the country will particularly target rural and regional areas. The campaign will obviously reach into rural and regional areas. I will be travelling, along with Minister Keenan, around the country. I will be going particularly to rural and regional communities and we will ensure that the voice is heard around the community of what the devastating impacts of this drug are, community by community. We have made capacity for written submissions so that anybody across the country who wants to have an input into this will be able to do so.

Veterans

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Ronaldson. Can the minister confirm that his department does not have reliable data about the extent of homelessness amongst veterans and has ongoing links with just one in five recently returned soldiers?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:28): As the senator well knows, homelessness in this country is funded by both the state and the Commonwealth government as part of housing agreements. I think the shadow minister is aware of that. The issue of homelessness is an issue for many Australians, not just homeless veterans, but my department works with the VVCS in relation to counselling, in relation to short-term accommodation for homeless veterans.

The trouble is that, when you try to make a political point by just pulling out one aspect of what is a very significant issue, you do not do yourself any justice. The real issue about veterans' homelessness is that this is the end of the process. What I am determined to do and what the government is determined to do is address those matters that lead to homelessness. That is why we have a full suite of—

Senator Moore: Mr President, I rise on a point of order and it is on direct relevance to the question. The question particularly relates to data held by the minister and also the ongoing links with the returned soldiers. I understand the minister has been building up to the answer, but, with 44 seconds to go with his answer, could you draw his attention to it?
An opposition senator interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Moore. I remind the minister that he has 44 seconds within which to answer the question.

Senator RONALDSON: The interjection was that talking about early intervention matters is fluff. According to the opposition, that is fluff. Quite frankly, it is not fluff and this is a very significant issue. We are working to ascertain the level of homelessness of veterans in this country, but, as I said before, we are going to address those core issues which lead to homelessness—that is, mental health—with a whole range and a suite of options available for veterans now which are part of an early intervention program, and many of these veterans are suffering some form of mental health issue. We are going to try and intervene before they get to that stage, and we are indeed doing the appropriate work to see how many are homeless. (Time expired)

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (14:31): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister confirm that 3,000 recently returned veterans are sleeping rough at night? And can I ask: what is the minister doing about it?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:31): Again, the trouble with these things is if you just pick up a newspaper article and start quoting. This 3,000 figure, Senator, is actually something that came out of the United States I think two or three years ago—it might have been four years ago now—and there has been an attempt to extrapolate that into an Australian situation. We think there are probably about 300 veterans who are homeless or at risk of being homeless—homeless or at risk of being homeless—not 3,000. Can I suggest you do your homework before you ask a question like this. All you are doing is trying to create a political situation rather than addressing the policy that is required. I have not heard a word from the Australian Labor Party yet in 18 months in relation to these— (Time expired)

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (14:32): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Given that the minister has already scrapped the $900 seniors supplement for war veterans, axed three months of backdating of veterans disability pensions and closed Veterans' Access Network offices across Victoria and New South Wales, how can Australians have any confidence that he will take action to support the most vulnerable in the veterans community?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:32): I will tell you what I do not need, and that is a lecture from the Australian Labor Party, who did nothing at all for six years. You have a choice in relation to this: you work with us or you keep on being the noes of the Australian political scene. We are doing what is required. If you want to work with us, you will find me a very willing ally in that task. If you just want to play cheap politics and keep on attacking these initiatives, then you will stand utterly condemned for being totally irrelevant in not only this area of veterans affairs but right throughout the Australian policy setting. You did nothing; you keep on knocking our initiatives. Come and join me in trying to resolve this issue, otherwise excuse yourselves from the policy debate whatsoever. We are trying to address these issues. If you want to be part of it, come and be part of it. If you want to be negative, just remain doing what you are doing. (Time expired)
Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union

Senator McGrath (Queensland) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Employment, Senator Abetz. Can the minister inform the Senate of any recent court findings against the militant construction union, the CFMEU, and of any recent judicial commentary about the conduct of that union?

Senator Abetz (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:34): I can inform Senator McGrath that on 1 May the Federal Court yet again found that the CFMEU had brazenly broken the law by trying to pressure Hazell Bros Group to sign an enterprise agreement. When Hazel Bros asked about the consequences if they refused to sign, a CFMEU official said things were 'going to get ugly', together with a string of expletives for good measure. When the company refused to sign, the CFMEU blockaded the site. Hazel Bros representatives reminded the union that they needed a right of entry permit, to which a CFMEU official retorted, 'We don't have to comply with the act.' Police were required to attend the site. FWBC inspectors also attended the site and Justice Tracey found that the inspectors were treated with disdain and subjected to uncouth remarks as they went about their work. This is not surprising given that this is the same CFMEU whose recent newsletter said of inspectors—and I quote from that document: 'The leeches get treated with the contempt they deserve whenever they slither onto a job.' These are Commonwealth public servants. Justice Tracey rightly condemned 'the CFMEU's sense of entitlement to pursue its objectives by any means, lawfully or unlawfully'. He also said its conduct bespeaks a deplorable attitude to its legal obligations. What makes this more disgraceful is that this is the union that has donated $6.4 million to the Labor Party since 2007 and, when this union's conduct comes under question, Mr Shorten rolls in Labor frontbenchers to try to defend the CFMEU. (Time expired)

Senator McGrath (Queensland) (14:36): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister inform the Senate of any other judicial commentary about the attitude of the CFMEU and its officials towards the rule of law?

Senator Abetz (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:36): Unfortunately, I can confirm for Senator McGrath that the incident which I related is not an isolated one. There have been at least 87 industrial cases against the CFMEU since 1999, most involving multiple instances of lawbreaking. Since 2001, the CFMEU has been found guilty of contempt of court on six separate occasions and fined over $1 million as a result, in addition to its legal costs. This is members' money. Judges have repeatedly condemned the union's contempt for the rule of law, finding that the concept of the rule of law was 'anathema' to it. They said, in another quote: … the CFMEU is to be regarded as a recidivist.

It has a 'dismal' record and an 'attitude of indifference' to compliance with the requirements of the legislation. It has shown a depressing litany of misbehaviour. And who supports them? Mr Shorten and the Labor Party. (Time expired)
Senator McGrath (Queensland) (14:37): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Will the minister inform the Senate of any other recent findings against the militant construction union, the CFMEU?

Senator Abetz (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:37): The Heydon royal commission has found a 'culture of wilful defiance of the law which appears to lie at the core of the CFMEU'. That commission has heard recordings of death threats and other threats of violence made by senior CFMEU officials. There have recently been 72 CFMEU officials before the courts at once, including the national secretary and several state secretaries. Victoria Police has confirmed it has intelligence showing that the CFMEU has organised crime figures to act as debt collectors, and outlaw bikie gangs to engage in activity on their behalf—engagements that often involve commissions of serious crime. This is the union that continues to donate millions of dollars to Mr Shorten's Labor Party. And the Labor Party, in turn, rolls its frontbenchers into Senate estimates to defend the CFMEU. It is time for Mr Shorten to show national leadership.

Renewable Energy

Senator Muir (Victoria) (14:39): My question is to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Ronaldson, representing the Minister for Industry and Science. Recently, the Australian government announced that it would reinstate native forest wood waste as a feedstock for the renewable biomass as part of the renewable energy target. I note that today the Australian Labor Party has confirmed that it would oppose this move. I understand that this feedstock will be waste material such as tree branches, sawdust and timber offcuts from sustainable forest harvesting and processing operations. Can the minister confirm that this is the case?

Senator Ronaldson (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:39): I thank Senator Muir for his question and for some earlier notice about it. I can confirm that situation. The use of native forest wood for the sole or primary purpose of generating renewable electricity has never been eligible to create certificates under the RET scheme. And that will remain. But as he quite rightly suggests, offcuts, sawdust, tree branches—essentially by-products of forestry projects—are what is used to generate renewable electricity. Indeed, wood waste was included in Labor's original legislation, but they decided to remove it from the scheme in 2011. And I will have a bit more to say about that soon. In a dirty deal done with their Greens colleagues, they preferred to see the wood waste lie on the ground and rot—which, coincidentally, produces more carbon dioxide than if the waste is used for a useful purpose. In 2012, Labor's own Climate Change Authority recommended that wood waste be reinstated as an eligible form of electricity generation.

This government has consistently raised this issue at the negotiating table over the last 12 months. This is not a last-minute addition. It is a matter that the coalition has been discussing for years—indeed, since Labor removed wood waste from the scheme in 2011.

Senator Muir (Victoria) (14:41): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. It has been claimed—which I have just heard—that including native wood waste as part of the renewable energy target will threaten native forests. Can the minister please inform the Senate
of what sort of safeguards will exist if native forest wood waste is included in the RET to ensure that native forests are not harvested for the sole purpose of bioenergy production?

Senator RONALDSON (Victoria—Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Special Minister of State) (14:41): I am not surprised that what you were told by the Left has filled you with horror, because it fills me with horror every time I hear them speak. The government intends to use the same legislation that was in place under the original bipartisan RET deal, before Labor and the Greens removed it in 2011. This legislation requires that the wood waste must be the by-product of a harvesting operation based on ecological sustainable forest management principles. As was the case before Labor and the Greens did their dirty deal, the principles that define ecological sustainable forest management practices will be clearly outlined in the regulations for everyone to see.

Senator MUIR (Victoria) (14:42): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. The renewable energy industry has faced enough uncertainty in recent times. Despite reaching an in-principle agreement with the opposition, the announcement by the government that it will conduct two-yearly reviews has revived this uncertainty. Can the minister confirm whether the government would proceed with two-yearly reviews of the renewable energy target or whether it will consider conducting its first review in 2020 in order to provide some real certainty to the sector?

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 thank Senator Muir again. Clearly, the Labor Party say they want to do a deal but, when push comes to shove, they are not prepared to do so. Labor, with the help of the Greens, set up the Climate Change Authority and two-yearly reviews. It is Labor's review; it is Labor's Climate Change Authority. We believe the two-yearly review must be maintained to protect consumers. As the Senate is well aware, the Australian government is committed to a RET that allows sustainable growth from both small- and large-scale renewable energy. We have come to an agreement with Labor in good faith in relation to the gigawatt hours, but the government believes that if the target is not met because it is set too high households and business will have to pay for this failure via a penalty price on renewable energy certificates. That would mean an increase to electricity bills similar to the carbon tax. If the renewable energy industry is on track to meet the target, then the review will show this and nothing will change. But if the price of certificates is heading towards the penalty then customer should not be paying. 

(Time expired)

Defence Procurement

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:44): Thank you, Mr Speaker. My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, Senator Brandis.

Senator Abetz: 'Speaker'! Where did you get that one from?

Senator CONROY: Mr President! I refer the minister to the press conference on April 16 2015 at which Mr John Birkler, Director of National Security Research Division at RAND Corporation, confirmed that RAND's report on Australian shipbuilding failed to address the building of Australia's future submarines because the government's charter directions were to
exclude submarines. Can the minister confirm that the government specifically directed the contractor to ignore Australia's submarine-building capabilities in the analysis?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:44): I am sorry to say that I am not familiar with Mr Birkler's statement, but I will check it and I will get back to you.

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:45): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer the minister to table 3.3 on page 38 of the RAND report, which lists Australia's future submarines as 'an offshore build'. Will the minister again confirm that RAND Corporation was told to ignore Australia's submarine-building capacity because the Prime Minister has already done a secret deal with the Japanese government to build Australia's future submarines?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:45): I am not familiar with the instructions to the RAND Corporation, but I will have a look at them and get back to you in relation to that specific matter. But in relation to the second element of your question, I can tell you that no decision has been made—

Senator Conroy interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Conroy, you have asked your question.

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:46): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I refer the minister to the Japan Times last week, which reports that the Japanese National Security Council will meet to decide whether or not to participate in the bid to build Australia's future submarines. And a Japanese government source stated that Japan is highly likely to be selected. Why do the Japanese government believe they have a deal with the Prime Minister to build Australia's future submarines?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate, Vice-President of the Executive Council, Minister for Arts and Attorney-General) (14:46): I have not seen last week's Japan Times, but, as it happens, by coincidence I did happen to read last Friday's London Times, which contained a report to similar effect—that is, that the National Security Council of Japan was meeting this week. And, according to that report, the National Security Council of Japan was expected to authorise Japan to bid in the competitive evaluation process for the Australian submarine.

Second Sydney Airport

Senator SINODINOS (New South Wales) (14:47): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Senator Cash, representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Can the minister outline to the Senate the coalition
government's commitment to building the Western Sydney airport and the work that has been done so far?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:47): Yes, I can. Senators will recall that in April last year the Prime Minister announced the go-ahead for the second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek. It has been talked about, as we know, for more than 50 years. The land was acquired approximately 30 years ago, but it was this government that bit the bullet and finally made the commitment. This is not just a second Sydney airport, as Minister Truss has said; it is an airport for Western Sydney. And the government's in excess of $3.6 billion investment in roads around the airport is part of our record $50 billion infrastructure investment for all Australians.

Senators will know that the Commonwealth-owned land at Badgerys Creek is a large site of around 1,700 hectares. And, as you would expect, extensive investigation is required to assist in planning for the first stage of the airport. But, unlike those opposite, who sat on their hands for years and did nothing, we are getting on with the job. Earlier this month the second phase of geotechnical works commenced on the site. These vital works are progressing on schedule, and they are doing so following extensive consultation with stakeholders. The $3.6 billion Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan is also well underway, with the Prime Minister breaking ground on the Bringelly Road upgrade earlier this year. Construction works on the Werrington Arterial Road have also commenced, and round 1 of the local roads package is rolling out. The New South Wales government has also set aside a future corridor for a South West Rail Link extension to the airport, with community consultation underway. Going forward, a detailed plan for Western Sydney airport is expected to be developed by the end of the year, and residents of the area should be able to scrutinise a draft environmental impact statement within months. This is a project that will result in jobs and long-term economic growth for Western Sydney. (Time expired)

Senator SINODINOS (New South Wales) (14:49): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Following on that theme of jobs, what are the benefits of the airport to Western Sydney, New South Wales and the national economy?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:50): The Western Sydney airport will be among the nation's most impressive civil engineering projects over the next decade, and it will be a truly world-class project. Analysis by Ernst & Young found that an airport at Badgerys Creek has the potential to generate $24.6 billion in direct expenditure by 2060.

Senator Cameron: I've heard all this before.

Senator CASH: Senator Cameron, you will be pleased to note that Western Sydney, under this government, is set to see an economic bonanza—something that your government, in the six years in office, failed to deliver. You sat on your hands. We are delivering, for Western Sydney, 4,000 jobs in the construction phase alone, and 4,000 additional jobs. Senator Cameron, you are always talking about jobs, but you failed to deliver them. This government is delivering for Western Sydney.
Senator SINODINOS (New South Wales) (14:51): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister advise the Senate of any impediments to the success of a Western Sydney airport?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women) (14:51): Unfortunately, I can, and because of these impediments those on the other side and the Greens—who I will get to shortly—do not support the job creation in Western Sydney that we on this side are committed to. For example, the big contribution of the New South Wales Greens to transport policy in New South Wales is ‘to support the relocation of Kingsford Smith Airport’. But then they fail to tell you where they are actually going to relocate the airport to. I am assuming they will be handing out wings to everybody so they can flap them to try and get everywhere. Then, of course, we have those on the other side who sat on their hands for years and did absolutely nothing, despite having Senator Cameron as a big advocate for jobs in Western Sydney. Senator Cameron, you delivered nothing to the people of Western Sydney. It is those of us on this side who are committed to ensuring that jobs, jobs, jobs are given to those in Western Sydney, and that is what we will do. (Time expired)

Economy

Senator KETTER (Queensland) (14:52): My question is to the Minister representing the Treasurer, Senator Abetz. Minister, will the government maintain the AAA credit rating from all three ratings agencies that it inherited from the previous government?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:53): That will be the case. There is no doubt that if we had kept on with a Labor Party trajectory of 667 thousand million dollars of debt, then that would have been more severely prejudiced than it may be at the moment. I am confident that the AAA rating will be able to be maintained because we are setting in place a credible path to surplus and recovery for the Australian economy, something that the Australian Labor Party failed to do. When it comes to matters international, I do happen to note that Mr Keating and Mr Swan both seem to have won the accolade of being the best treasurers in the world. And yet the really best Treasurer, Mr Costello, never seemed to get an accolade, so I do not know how these international bodies go about it, but I know what the Australian people thought about the economic management of both Mr Keating and Mr Swan in comparison to Mr Costello. In brief, the building blocks that were set in the last budget are being built upon tonight to further secure Australia’s financial security, and, as a result, individuals’ cost of living and job security.

Senator KETTER (Queensland) (14:54): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Does the minister agree with the chair of the government’s financial system inquiry, Mr David Murray, who says, ‘The AAA rating of the Commonwealth is looking increasingly vulnerable’?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:55): I have not seen Mr Murray’s comments, but let me say that as a government we are always attuned to the problems that might be out there in front of us, and we have commented on headwinds that have buffeted the Australian economy. In those circumstances it is very wise and proper to ensure that you try to limit the deficit as much as possible, rather than be on the trajectory the
Australian Labor Party had us on, which was a trajectory to 667 thousand million dollars of debt.

Senator Conroy: What will the debt be tomorrow? Higher?

The PRESIDENT: Senator Conroy!

Senator ABETZ: The immature interruptions of Senator Conroy just confirm why he is not fit to ever be the defence minister of this country.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order on my left! We have a colleague waiting to ask a question.

Senator KETTER (Queensland) (14:56): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. Can the minister confirm that under this government deficit and debt have increased, unemployment has risen, and business and consumer confidence have flatlined. Will our AAA credit rating be another casualty of this government's economic incompetence?

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (14:56): History and economic history did not start on 8 September 2013, as those opposite would like to have the Australian population believe. The simple fact is, and let us be very clear on this, that Labor had us on a trajectory into debt of $667 billion. Your own last budget had us on a trajectory, which I personally thought was an underestimate of 6.25 per cent unemployment. Under the previous Labor government the labour figures shrunk by about 5,000 in 2013, whereas we actually added about 100,000 people to the Australian workforce in 2014. When the big ship of state of Australia is going in the wrong direction, as it was under you, it takes a while to turn her around, but we are up to the task and we will do it. (Time expired)

New South Wales and Queensland Storms

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales) (14:57): My question is to the Minister for Human Services, Senator Payne. Will the minister inform the Senate what arrangements are in place to help New South Wales communities affected by the recent east coast storms and floods?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (14:58): Thank you for the question, Senator Williams, because the parts of New South Wales that were heavily impacted obviously are very familiar to both of us. Several weeks ago, between 20 and 23 April, a large part of the New South Wales coast, from Sydney to the Hunter area, was battered by the most intense east coast low that we have seen since the storms of the Pasha Bulker in 2007. Severe flooding affected the Hunter Valley. It inundated homes. It isolated communities for days, and it actually claimed the lives of four people.

On Wednesday 23, April my colleague the federal Minister for Justice and the New South Wales Minister for Police and Emergency Services announced a very comprehensive joint Commonwealth and state assistance program under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. That assistance provided help for state agencies and local councils, for small businesses, for primary producers and for non-profit organisations, as well as immediate assistance to individuals.

Senator Cameron interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cameron!
Senator PAYNE: On the Friday of that week it became increasingly clear that the extent of the damage was extraordinarily serious. The then Acting Prime Minister, Mr Truss, the Minister for Justice and I announced additional government assistance in the form of the disaster recovery payment and the disaster recovery allowance for those who were hardest hit in the Hunter Valley, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Central Coast and the mid-North Coast regions. The Department of Human Services is responsible for administering both of those payments.

As at the close of business yesterday, we had granted 29,272 disaster recovery payment claims, which is a total of $36.9 million, as well as 253 disaster recovery allowance and equivalent ex gratia assistance claims. We have also taken over 39,660 phone calls in response to the New South Wales coast storms and flooding. (Time expired)

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales) (15:00): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. Will the minister inform the Senate what the government has already done to help affected communities, particularly in the immediate aftermath of these storms and floods?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (15:00): The Department of Human Services were able to respond very quickly because we have a series of regular emergency responses in place. We actually had 25 of our own service centres in the affected areas closed by the effects of the weather, which had quite an extraordinary impact on business. Most of those centres endeavoured to reopen on the Friday, albeit with very large generators in place to assist them. They were opened by 27 April. We have also been working in the recovery centres at Dungog, Cessnock and Raymond Terrace.

Gillieston Heights was completely isolated and the SES very helpfully took six of our staff in a boat to a hill which was effectively surrounded by a moat to enable us to support the community there. I have enormous respect for the work that my departmental staff did and the work that those SES volunteers do to ensure that we can support the communities. (Time expired)

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales) (15:01): Mr President, I ask a further supplementary question. I thank the minister—

Senator Cameron interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cameron, can you just be quiet for at least this final segment.

Senator WILLIAMS: Mr President, could I ask that the clock be started again.

The PRESIDENT: Yes, you can commence again, Senator Williams.

Senator WILLIAMS: Can the minister advise the Senate how affected communities have responded to the support from the government?

Senator PAYNE (New South Wales—Minister for Human Services) (15:02): On the Monday I went to Raymond Terrace, to Maitland and to Dungog, where people were killed, where homes were completely destroyed and where the inundation was something like I had never seen before. The farmers had not been able to access roads to clear away dead and drowned stock, so cattle and horses were still across the roads and everywhere else. Water was still preventing movement of a great number of people. In Dungog, in particular, tragically, one gentleman had saved five friends in his apartment block and lost his best friend. He was supported, amazingly, by the local community, state authorities and the
Department of Human Services as well. In Dungog, food banks and clothing banks were set up.

Senator Cameron interjecting—

Senator PAYNE: He is all yours, Senator Wong! Later in the week, when I was able to visit both Wyong and Gosford with the members for Dobell and Robertson—and previously of course with the member for Paterson—I found that those communities were very grateful for the contribution of all of those—(Time expired)

Senator Cameron interjecting—

Senator Abetz: I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper and that Senator Cameron desist.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Answers to Questions

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (15:03): I move:

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

Let me be very clear: this is a government that just cannot be trusted. This is a government whose words mean little and whose actions bear almost no resemblance to its words before the election. Solemn commitments to the people of Australia were casually tossed aside once it got into power—none more so than the now infamous pledge that there would be no cuts to pensions, no cuts to health and no cuts to education.

What happened? The government went on to break every single one of those promises in their very first budget. We have learnt that this Abbott-Hockey-Morrison government are more interested in protecting multinational companies—instead of making them pay their fair share of tax—than they are about protecting the health of the Australian people. The government are more interested in preserving superannuation perks for very high income earners than fulfilling their commitments on hospital funding.

Today I would like to look at the axe that the government has taken to health funding since this promise was made. It is a shameful record indeed. One of the fundamental duties of a government is to look after the health of its people. But this government has been more concerned about destroying Medicare than looking after the health of Australians.

Again, in this place, we have heard Senator Abetz deny the reality of his very own budget papers, which clearly state that the government has callously ripped billions of dollars from hospital funding. And this is no small matter. In fact, Mr Abbott’s $50 billion cut to Australian hospitals is equivalent to sacking one in three doctors, sacking one in five nurses and shutting down one in 13 hospital beds. At a time when the ageing population will require a robust health system, this government is doggedly set on bringing Australia’s health system to its knees.

The fact that those opposite can stand there brazenly and say with straight faces that there have been no cuts to health is absolutely outrageous. Make no mistake: this is a broken promise. The government promised that there would be no cuts to health and then ripped out $50 billion from hospitals. Not only that but this Abbott government also set out to destroy
the fine tradition of universal healthcare with the GP tax mark 1, mark 2 and mark 3. When
the second GP tax was proposed the government denied that it would have any impact on
bulk-billing.

The area where I live, on the north-west coast and the west coast of Tasmania, is home to
some of the poorest communities in the country, with 85 per cent of doctor visits bulk-billed.
People there are very vulnerable to healthcare cost hikes like the government's various GP
taxes. So I went out to local doctors to get their perspective on what this meant, and the
results of a survey that I sent to doctors told me a very different story from what the
government claimed. I got a great response to the survey, with responses from doctors in
close to 75 per cent of practices. And the results were extremely clear: in fact, close to three-
quarters of north-west coast and west coast doctors believe that bulk-billing would decrease
or end completely if the government's proposed Medicare changes were to proceed. Not only
that, but they told me that the government's blatant attacks made no financial sense
whatsoever, as they would discourage people from visiting the doctor until their problems got
even worse and again more expensive to the health system.

So it is clear that this is not a government that is willing to invest in the health of the
Australian people and that this is a government that has blatantly broken its promise that there
would be no cuts to health. But that is just one broken promise among many.

In fact, after only one budget, the government have managed to break almost as many
promises as they have kept, with a tally of 14 promises broken to 16 that they have delivered.
While I would like it to be different, I suspect that we will see the broken-promise tally rise
again tonight. But, whatever we see tomorrow, those opposite have already shown their true
colours. They have proven that they will do anything they can to take down Medicare. They
have shown little regard for expert opinion. And they have demonstrated that they are willing
to put at risk, for their own twisted priorities, the health of Australians—the health care of
people who are the most vulnerable in our society: those who can least afford it. But the
health system cannot afford it either. It makes no sense whatsoever to reduce the healthcare
provisions to people and to then have the back end of hospitals deal with the problems. (*Time
expired*)

**Senator FAWCETT** (South Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (15:09):
In rising to speak to the motion to take note of answers, I take note of comments made by
members opposite. I would like to deal with the issues of rhetoric versus fact. If you want to
understand why the ALP is full of rhetoric at the moment, just look at the front page of
today's paper, which highlights that the opposition leader has been out advocating that people
rise up and oppose the measures in this budget, when the budget has not actually been issued.
So it goes back to the days when Mr Shorten said: 'Whatever Ms Gillard said, I agree.' Now
he is saying: 'Whatever Treasurer Joe Hockey says in his budget, let's disagree.' So you see
very clearly that so much of what is being said is merely rhetoric.

Let us look at some of the facts. There are two key facts that are really pertinent to this
argument: first, the structure of Australia's parliamentary and budgetary system, which
appears to be completely ignored in the rhetoric that is being used by the ALP, and, second,
the facts of the actual figures.

To go to the first point, we have a process that is known as the forward estimates. To take it
to an extreme, if you tried to estimate over 100 years, and said, 'In 100 years time, we are
going to promise you this payment or this return,' people would say, 'You're having a lend; you can't estimate what, in 100 years time, economic circumstances are going to be like, or what our mining prices are going to be like.' So is that 90 years time, or 80 years? How far do you go out?

Traditionally, what Australia has done is: we have set a limit of four years—the forward estimates—as the time frame for which governments say we have reliable estimates about income and expenditure, and that becomes things that are funded in the forward estimates. That is the only reliable framework which both sides of politics in Australia have used to actually make reliable decisions and announcements for which they are going to be held accountable. That is why when, under the Gillard government, they started making promises of funding that went out five or six years or beyond, any serious student of Australian politics said, 'They are unfunded; those are not serious commitments, because they are unfunded. They go outside the factual basis of how governments of both persuasions in this nation have always made budgetary commitments.'

So let us look at the other group of facts, because this goes to, and completely gives the lie to, the claim that there have been cuts to health funding. I am a Senator for South Australia, and clearly I am interested in the case there. So let us look at the 2013-14 budget, which is the last budget under the Rudd-Gillard government. In it, there was $983.3 million in hospital services and $23.1 million in public health; so, just over $1 billion. In the 2014-15 budget, it is $1.07 billion to health, and, over the forward estimates, by the time we get to the 2017-18 budget, it is $2.188 billion. I did not major in maths at university, but my maths is not so bad, and, when I compare 1.07 to 2.188, it is very obvious that that is a continuous rise. In fact, the hospital funding for South Australia has gone up nine per cent in the first year, and goes up nine per cent the second year, nine per cent the next year and six per cent the year after that—sorry; that is the overall budget for Australia, for funding. So there is a total increase of some $5.3 billion, or 40 per cent, over the four years of the forward estimates.

So the argument that is being put forward, that the coalition government is cutting funding for health, is a sheer fabrication. The ALP can have all the rhetoric they like, but the facts tell us that the way we measure budgetary commitments is the forward estimates—it has been ever thus—and the facts tell us that the money which has been committed by this government is increasing, to the tune of 40 per cent, over those four years.

I make the point that this is not unusual for a coalition government. The Museum of Australian Democracy, which looks back at the key achievements of government, said that one of the key achievements of the Howard government when Prime Minister Abbott was the health minister was the record investment in health funding in 2006-07. At that time, it was $47.6 million. That indicates that, despite the rhetoric of the ALP, we, the coalition, show by our actions that we support investment in health for Australians.

Senator GALLACHER (South Australia) (15:14): I rise to take note of answers from Senator Ronaldson and Senator Brandis. In relation to Senator Ronaldson's answers, I want to put on the record on behalf of a number of veterans' organisations that are very interested in the particular subject of veterans becoming homeless, that I think his answer was less than ministerially appropriate. There are occasions in question time when you can have a good joust across the chamber, but there are certain questions that really do require ministerial competence when you are answering them. Bluff and bluster are no substitute for ministerial
competence, and sneering denigration of the questioner and the opposition is no substitute for ministerial competence, either.

We know from the submission of the minister’s own department to the 2012 inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade into the care of ADF personnel wounded and injured on operations, that between 4,000 and 6,000 personnel leave the ADF each year. The DVA cited a Defence survey stating that 60 per cent of the serving personnel had reported being deployed, with 43 per cent reporting multiple deployments. The DVA stated that, as of June 2011, there were around 45,000 surviving veterans with operational service from conflicts since 1999, with a significant sub-group of reservists—21,554—with operational service. There is a lot of community interest in this. The simple facts are that people who serve their country and have then been discharged will, in a lot of cases, eventually resurface a number of years later and get some form of assistance and payments. It would be prudent and appropriate to make contact or, as Mr Moose Dunlop OAM says, that the DVA should keep track of these people. Rather than letting them go to the bottom of an inevitable path if they do suffer from post traumatic stress or some other thing they should be contacted, looked after and, at the very least, there should be a survey to find out what is going on. The last ones to do that were the Labor government of 2009.

Returning to my well-trodden path on submarines, it is interesting that, amongst the many, many people who have now joined the voice of those calling for submarines to be maintained, sustained and built in Adelaide—lo and behold, it has been revealed after a freedom of information request that the high-level departmental advice to the government noted an overwhelming preference for the Adelaide-based, government-owned shipbuilder, ASC, to do the bulk of the work. That is what the department advised the minister. We have now had a comment from the Prime Minister in an article titled ‘Abbott denies subs snub’:

The Prime Minister has fended off allegations that he ignored the advice of the department for the majority of the construction of Australia’s new submarines to be built in Adelaide. Freedom of information has revealed the advice, and the advice was very clear. We now know that, along with most of the Liberal members from South Australia either in this House or in the other House, the department is on side as well. Not only is the majority of the population in South Australia wanting to maintain, build, sustain, develop and to get every bit of work that we can get out of the submarine project done in South Australia, but the only one who is on the outer is the Prime Minister and his National Security Committee.

Very clearly, common sense was prevailing. However, a chance agreement between Prime Minister Abe of Japan and Prime Minister Abbott of Australia looks like facilitating the Japanese into the competitive evaluation. We know that the Japanese are having their own meeting to see whether they will share their secrets. But the reality is that in South Australia you cannot move without being approached about this. We need to build, maintain, develop, sustain and design in South Australia.

Senator EDWARDS (South Australia) (15:19): I rise to also take note of answers. It is somewhat fitting that I follow my Senate colleague from the opposite side from South Australia in talking about things that are close to me. But first of all, may I acknowledge the great work of Senator and Minister Ronaldson in the most recent Anzac Day commemorations. His passionate work is second to none in relation to veterans’ affairs over the many, many years that I have been following it—with no inference. The celebration of the
Anzac tradition is something we in this country are very proud of. The government's funding commitment to the Anzac Centenary program is not at the expense of expenditure on mental health services for our returned soldiers. The mental health needs of our veterans are a very significant priority indeed for the government and they certainly will not be jeopardised in any way. That has never been the language or the actions of the minister, as has been asserted quite wrongly from the other side.

Indeed, we are looking to improve both the access to mental health treatment for veterans and the processing times in which compensation claims are paid. I might remind the other side of Minister Ronaldson's performance in the role since coming to government, and the government's form in this area: we have extended access to non-liability health care to include the treatment for alcohol misuse disorder and substance abuse disorder, and we have extended access for conditions diagnosed by a GP and a clinical psychologist. So it is empty to say that we have abandoned veterans here. It is outrageous to even suggest that this is not a priority of the veterans' affairs minister.

I might also, in addressing taking note of the answers from the ministers, take note of ones which were made in reference to health and follow up comments of my fellow senator from South Australia, Senator Fawcett, with regard to diminished funding. The contention from the senator from Tasmania, Senator Urquhart, that we have diminished spending in health is a matter for, in my experience, state governments. I will give you a direct comparison to what and an extension of what Senator Fawcett said in relation to what is happening with funding in my home state of South Australia, and this is overall payments. This is to add to the comments that were made about medical.

It is the complete remit of the South Australian Labor government as to how they allocate their spending, but total Commonwealth funding to South Australia continues to increase in each and every year of the forward estimates. Total Commonwealth payments to South Australia will rise from $7.6 billion last financial year, 2013-14, to $8.2 billion this year to $9.3 billion in the last year of the forward estimates, 2017-18. This is a $1.8 billion increase over the period of time. In anybody's elementary maths book that is an increase. How you can continue to emptily say that there are cuts in health and talk about it for five minutes is unbelievable. In fact, going forward, South Australia is projected to receive $35.6 billion in total funding from the Commonwealth from the 2014-15 year to 2017-18. This figure includes $2 billion in funding for major South Australian road projects overseen by the South Australian based assistant minister, Minister Briggs. I do not know how you can say that there has been diminished funding anywhere in any of your responses to the answers from the minister. It is just hollow to suggest that you can continue to say that there have been cuts. It is like a broken record. I applaud the Treasurer's venture into helping small business and I look forward to seeing the response from the business community to his contribution tonight.

(Time expired)

Senator KETTER (Queensland) (15:24): I rise to take note of answers given by Senator Abetz. It is clear that the Abbott government is continuing its dedication to take the fair go out of Australia. From yesterday's performance, it is clear that this government has lost confidence in the Treasurer as its primary economic spokesperson. This budget we are about to see is clearly about securing the jobs of Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey. This is a chaotic and dysfunctional government in which, following the leadership spill of earlier this year, we are
seeing a number of names being referred to, and these names did come up during the course of question time today. No less a Liberal luminary than Senator Bernardi has speculated about the desirability of Ms Bishop going on to higher office at some point in the future. We also see speculation about Mr Morrison and Mr Turnbull. In this environment of leadership speculation, it is quite understandable that the Prime Minister and the Treasurer are looking at protecting their own positions rather than looking at advancing the interests of our country. The Australian reported that the Liberal whip Scott Buchholz told the Prime Minister two weeks ago that if the budget tanked a second time around Mr Hockey would have to be replaced as Treasurer. So the primary driver behind the settings of the 2015 budget is not about what is in the interests of the country but rather the desire to save those two jobs.

There is a perception in the community that this government is not governing for the average Australian, and from what has been released so far in the media it appears nothing has changed. Senator Abetz, in his responses today, has continued to downplay the facts in relation to the cuts to health, and a document was tabled today illustrating that there were $57 billion in cuts in health over a 10-year period. To add insult to injury, Assistant Treasurer Josh Frydenberg is still defending last year's unfair budget. He told ABC Radio National Breakfast that last year's budget was not unfair. He said he was very proud of last year's disastrous and unfair budget and lamented that the GP tax was being blocked by Labor because there would have been big savings and it is unfortunate. When Mr Frydenberg was asked about the measures the government has had to ditch, he described it as being unfortunate.

There was GP tax 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Then there are the $100,000 university degrees, which we have defeated twice. Mr Abbott went to the last election promising a gold plated parental leave scheme. He said the paid parental leave would happen over his dead body. He promised an extravagant $20 billion scheme that gave wealthy women $75,000 to take six months off to have a baby. Mr Abbott's centrepiece policy has subsequently been abandoned. In the face of our campaign he decided to scrap that signature policy, despite declaring that it was a fundamental conviction. Now he wants to cut paid parental leave and incentive employer based provided schemes. Labor is extremely concerned that nearly 80,000 new mothers will lose some or all of their paid parental leave.

I also want to talk about cuts that have affected other areas. I recently made a visit to Stanthorpe where I met with John Mahoney from the Granite Belt Neighbourhood Centre. That neighbourhood centre will have to wind back services after the Abbott government slashed $270 million from the national discretionary grant program that provides their funding. This service is the only one of its kind serving Stanthorpe and its region. It does some great work for the community, such as its upcoming forum on the drug ice and domestic violence prevention initiatives. However, this work is being put at risk due to the loss of funding after 30 June. This community centre is the lifeblood of its local area, providing speedy and comforting responses to those who are doing it tough. These cuts will mean a reduction in counselling services and for those dealing with personal tragedies. Labor will continue to stand with pensioners, young people and families and fight these cuts every day between now and the next election, and I call on Mr Morrison to listen to the community and reverse these cuts to important services. *(Time expired)*

Question agreed to.
National Security

Senator WRIGHT (South Australia) (15:30): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Minister for Employment (Senator Abetz) to a question without notice asked by Senator Wright today relating to national security funding.

Tonight's budget will include a further $450 million for spy agencies, taking the total of the coalition's anti-terror spending announcements to over $1 billion and making spy agencies bigger and more powerful than ever before while reducing accountability. It is a huge amount of money but it will not make us safer. The fact is that the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, is following an irresponsible but trusted formula to try and shore up his leadership by creating fear and division in the community and pressing the terror button. Despite this huge terror spend, only 3.2 per cent of the money is going to something that will in fact work and actually make us safer: social cohesion programs and deradicalisation. These are fundamental to fighting terror, yet they are grossly underfunded by this government. Why could that be?

Expert after expert in Australia has lined up to say we need to stop terrorism at its source: those young people who are vulnerable to its insidious call. It is a complex matter, but anyone paying attention knows it is crucial to disrupt the recruitment of young people. Sometimes it happens by playing on their very youth. Sometimes—ironic but, sadly, true—it plays on their sense of idealism. We know that these organisations commit atrocities, but many of these young people are motivated by a sense of injustice. Sometimes it plays on their sense of alienation—complex matters. But so far, despite all the rhetoric of government, only $1.65 million has actually reached the communities who are crying out for support and at the front line of effective action. It is small change from a government which is shovelling money to spy agencies at unprecedented levels.

The Greens want to know why help for our local communities has taken so long to roll out and why so little funding is being made available. Muslim communities have clearly warned that many more young Australians are at risk of being recruited to Islamic State and other terror groups because of the federal government's delay in funding for these deradicalisation programs. Desperate parents, troubled elders, have been calling out for help. Prevention is much better than cure when it comes to keeping us all safe from risks associated with terrorism. But, of course, that requires wisdom and thoughtful, evidence-led responses. As we know, this is too much to expect from this government. The Greens have introduced legislation to set up an Australian Centre for Social Cohesion to develop and implement best practice deradicalisation programs. I repeat our call to the government to support the Centre for Social Cohesion today, to be wise and take up the evidence that is available there from experts around the world.

A safer Australia is a more inclusive, generous and supportive Australia. Fanning the flames of fear, difference and anxiety will only put Australians more at risk. Tony Abbott, the Prime Minister, is shameless and extreme. His obsessive rhetoric about death cults has today been described as counterproductive, ineffective and doing some of the terror groups' actual marketing for them. Can we expect him to stop? I doubt it. He has said it 346 times since September and he will continue to do it because he is actually promoting his own domestic agenda. A genuine response to terrorism will not isolate Muslims by targeting them or making them the focus of surveillance. Real leadership would bring people together, not divide them. Building a cohesive, tolerant and inclusive community in Australia should be our
government's top priority in the national interest and could be Australia's most powerful strategy to counteract terrorism. If the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party are serious about making Australians safer, they should invest in programs that bring young Australians from all walks of life together. Rather than implementing divisive new laws and a mass surveillance society, money should be spent on building communities. That is truly in our national interest.

Question agreed to.

CONDOLENCES

Walsh, Hon. Peter Alexander, AO

The PRESIDENT (15:34): It is with deep regret that I inform the Senate of the death, on 10 April this year, of the Hon. Peter Alexander Walsh AO, a senator for the state of Western Australia from 1974 until 1993.

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (15:35): by leave—I move:

That the Senate records its deep regret at the death, on 10 April 2015, of the Honourable Peter Alexander Walsh, AO, former senator for Western Australia, places on record its appreciation of his long and highly distinguished service to the nation and tenders its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Peter Alexander Walsh was born on 11 March, 1935 at Kellelberrin, 200 kilometres east of Perth. He grew up in the town of Doodlakine and went onto the land, farming in the wheat belt and becoming involved in the Farmers’ Union and later in the local branch of the Australian Labor Party. It is said that he had one of the best eyes for estimating the yield of a crop of wheat as it was growing and that he was able to predict the crop very accurately. So he brought that very practical experience to this place. He contested the seat of Moore in both 1969 and 1972 and then entered the Senate at the double dissolution election in 1974 as a Labor senator for Western Australia. He was elected to the shadow ministry under Mr Hayden in 1977 and held a variety of shadow portfolios. In 1983, on the election of the Hawke government, he was appointed Minister for Resources and Energy. He served in this portfolio until the 1984 election and then was moved to become finance minister. As far as the finance ministry goes, it was an inspired appointment.

Peter Walsh had a very healthy disdain for big government. He did not—and he readily acknowledged this fault—have an ear well-attuned to the political consequences of certain decisions, but he was resolute in two tasks: protecting the integrity of the nation’s revenue, and scrutinising government spending.

Many ministers of that time have written of the trepidation they felt when facing the expenditure committee of cabinet and the critical analysis of Peter Walsh. This is easy to believe given his robust language in public and in the Senate, especially against my side of politics. This led not only to headlines but also to suspensions from the Senate. I will not provide examples. Suffice to say, it was neither pretty nor rare. The positive aspect of this approach was that no-one was ever left in any doubt as to what he thought. On one occasion, he bizarrely, from my perspective, snubbed Chief Justice Barwick but quickly rose to his feet to acknowledge Justice Murphy—an indication of a set of values with which I personally
could not identify but which were indicative of his fierce, tribal loyalties. The sequel to that was media coverage with a picture of Senator Shirley Walters, from our home state, as opposed Senator Peter Walsh, who was alleged to have undertaken this snub. I think that both were as offended as each other with the mix-up by the media.

It is said that he had a four-drawer filing cabinet with the fourth drawer simply labelled 'dirt'. It is alleged that that drawer was the most frequently used. Walsh was the first minister censured in 10 years in 1984, and the second in 12 years. Indeed, such was his robust conduct in this place, that a contingent notice of motion was moved by Senator Chaney—if I am recalling this correctly—and Senator Don Chipp from the Australian Democrats, so that he could be readily removed if there was another egregious breach of Senate standing orders. Indeed, as I understand it, some of his robust commentary also led to this Senate allowing private citizens to have a right of reply to that which was said about them in this chamber.

It is as finance minister that we remember him now. One paper reported, on his appointment, 'Walsh finds a new target for his cutting edge.' He recognised the concept of budget repair and applied himself fully to the task, often butting heads with the then Treasurer, Paul Keating. His approach was that reining in waste and unnecessary expense provided funds to do more for those in society who were disadvantaged. He was at the vanguard of governmental economic reform in the 1980s.

After leaving parliament in 1993 he began writing the 'Cassandra' column for The Australian Financial Review, and penned one of the enduring political memoirs of modern Australia, Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister. The current Minister for Finance, also from Western Australia, Senator Cormann, last month described that book as remaining 'the compelling manual of choice for any finance minister today'.

The book is well worth reading, or re-reading. It describes not only Peter Walsh's tough upbringing in rural Western Australia and his introduction to politics, but his angst at what he described as treachery against his leader, Mr Hayden, with whom he remained close throughout his life. It is also frank about the failings of the Whitlam years and the temptations always before government—and any government—to spend.

Famously, he reprints a letter he sent to Prime Minister Hawke, in 1989, following a routine request by the Prime Minister to all ministers for ideas to save government expenditure. The letter was, as he writes, prepared entirely by him and not his department. It showed two things—that he hated sectional interests, and that he had no care for the political effect of some decisions. Just for a taste, the letter suggests cutting immigration; recovering nursing home costs from deceased estates; opening up all of Kakadu for mining; abolishing the Law Reform Commission and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission; ending cabotage; reforming the waterfront; cutting local government grants to larger cities; and stopping funding so-called public interest groups, who were sabotaging government projects such as the third runway in Sydney. That is only a selection of his suggestions, many of which, I must confess, I find quite appealing.

In his valedictory speech, a good friend of mine who was himself an impressive Minister for Finance, former senator Nick Minchin, said that the honour of the best finance minister in Australia 'rightfully belongs to Peter Walsh', the Labor identity whom he most admired.
In 1996, Peter Walsh was appointed an officer of the Order of Australia for his service to the parliament, particularly as Minister for Finance, and to journalism. I do question whether his contribution to journalism was for the copy he provided during his career, or the columns he wrote after his parliamentary career.

In 2009, Peter Walsh co-authored a booklet about the Rudd government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme for the Lavoisier Group. The booklet is called *Back to the 19th Century*, and the cover photograph depicts a 1930s farmer driving a horse-drawn plough. In his foreword, Peter Walsh was brutal in his assessment of the CPRS, which he declared would send Australian agriculture right back to the 1930s. He was, of course, correct. Given his political allegiances, it was a brave position for him to adopt, but he did so without any compunction. It is clear that he held that very strong approach to all of his views right through to the end. The honourable Peter Walsh AO was respected for his legacy of rigour in spending that stands as a guide to us all.

On behalf of the government, I offer to his wife, Rosalie, their four daughters, Karen, Shelley, Anne and Deborah, and their 11 grandchildren our sincere condolences—and, if I might also say, to his son-in-law, whose presence I recognise in the chamber.

**Senator Wong** (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (15:44): I rise to support this motion of condolence and to pay tribute to the Hon. Peter Alexander Walsh AO. The wheat belt in Western Australia may seem an unlikely place from which to send a Labor senator to Canberra, but the life and career of the late Peter Walsh was not one that was made to fit any established mould. Born in 1935 in Kellerberrin, Peter Walsh was elected to the Senate in 1974. With the election of the Hawke Labor government in 1983, he served as Minister for Resources and Energy and then as Minister for Finance. He relinquished that position in 1990 before leaving the Senate in 1993. In his post-ministerial career, he wrote regularly for publications such as *The Australian Financial Review*. He died on 10 April 2015 at the age of 80.

Peter Walsh came to Labor from a farm, with a much-detested stint of national service and a loathing of the economic policies advocated by the Country Party defining his politics. Walsh's experience with national service was characterised by what he described as 'its functional uselessness, especially in peacetime; its—admittedly moderate—dehumanising ethos; and its denial of civil liberty'. He went on to say: 'Such beliefs helped to take me into the Labor Party.' In relation to the Menzies government's policy of conscription that was in place in the early 1950s, he also saw it in an economic light, viewing it as 'a serious waste of manpower' at a time of labour shortage. Whilst not opposed to conscription on any grounds, his hostility intensified when conscripts were sent to fight in Vietnam, which he described as 'the most criminally insane war in history'.

In his first speech, he observed:

Perverted logic also enables conservatives to pose as champions of civil liberty and individual freedom while simultaneously voting for conscription, sometimes with enthusiasm and apparently without embarrassment.

On the farming side, he spoke of the positive influence of his father, whose views on taxation in particular were an encouragement in the Labor direction, although neither his mother nor his father were lifelong Labor voters. It was during many hours spent on the tractor at Doodlakine, and following some exposure to agricultural economics through the University of
Western Australia in the 1960s, that he came to particularly recognise the detrimental effect the policies of the Country Party had 'not just on the Australian economy and agriculture but on farmers themselves'. Walsh saw that protectionism, through a myriad of policies including bounties, tariffs, import prohibition, quotas and subsidies, was not strengthening Australian industry but causing it to decline, with the costs passed on to those who could least afford them.

Peter Walsh saw the Country Party's policies as being not about farmers and regional communities but about keeping 'bums on Country Party seats'. He described its members as 'frauds and drongos'. Walsh's views were formed well before he entered the Senate. His election to this place gave him an opportunity to advance his case in closer quarters to the enemy. Much of his first speech is dedicated to a repudiation of Country Party policies and attitudes, possibly demonstrating the importance of beginning as one means to continue. He lamented the Country Party's:

… passion for treating symptoms instead of causes and consistently ignoring economic realities, thereby aggravating long term problems.

He said:

... the agricultural policies which [the coalition] implemented when in government, woven as they were from a mixture of romanticism, economic illiteracy and Country Party pork-barrelling, would at best be ineffective and at worst counter-productive.

Perhaps he always had an intuitive reaction against the Country Party. Former Queensland Nationals senator Ron Boswell told the story that his grandmother shared a fence with the Walsh family farm and that, as a child, Walsh wired Boswell up to the spark plug lead on his father's tractor.

Walsh stood as a candidate for the House of Representatives in 1969 and again in 1972, before his eventual election to this place in '74. He was not expecting to come into the Senate then, but the double dissolution election accelerated the timetable and enabled him to be elected. As with all Labor members and supporters, the dismissal of the Whitlam government on 11 November 1975 had a searing impact on Walsh. More than most, he dedicated a significant portion of his energy to pursuing those whom he saw as the architects of this travesty: Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, Governor-General Sir John Kerr, Chief Justice Sir Garfield Barwick and future National Party leader Ian Sinclair. He did nothing to hide his contempt for these figures, and in 1980 he refused to stand when Barwick left the Senate chamber at the opening of the parliament.

Walsh came to the Senate with no ministerial ambition. When he arrived here, he believed that the then ministers and opposition shadows were more experienced and competent than he could ever hope to be. He later said:

It took the simple country boy I was then more than a year to realise that that was not so.

He played a pivotal role on Labor's front bench—first in opposition and then in government. Before the election of the Hawke government, he served in the primary industries portfolio, doing the hard policy yards to build Labor's credibility in this area. This role was followed by finance, trade and national development. After Labor's election in 1983, he served as Minister for Resources and Energy from 1983 to 1984. Although only minister in this portfolio for a brief time, he had a substantial influence on policy, with the legacy of some of his decisions enduring today. The introduction of a resource rent tax on oil production was one of his
proudest achievements. Another significant contribution was his announcement of the royal commission into British atomic tests conducted in South Australia and Western Australia between 1952 and 1963. In government, Walsh continued to be a formidable parliamentary contributor, a reputation he had established in the 1970s. Paul Lyneham described Walsh as 'acidic'—and that was on a good day.

But, as Senator Abetz has noted, it really was as Minister for Finance from 1984 to 1990 that Peter Walsh made his mark. He was determined to repair Labor's fiscal credentials and to escape the economic malaise that had enveloped Australia under Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and Treasurer John Howard. He was a central member of an economic team that was not afraid of taking on sacred cows as it wrote a new manual for the Australian economy. Their achievements, and his achievements, yielded an unprecedented period of economic growth for our nation. Walsh was a particularly dogged contributor to cabinet's Expenditure Review Committee. As finance minister he regarded himself as the government's chief 'prosecutor' for savings. It has been said that for every hour that Treasurer Paul Keating spent in the ERC Peter Walsh spent two—others would say even more.

Labor's fiscal record in the 1980s was remarkable. It presided over unprecedented change in the Australian economy whilst turning around the deficit of $5.57 billion bequeathed to it by the Fraser government in 1983-84 to a surplus of $2 billion in 1987-88. Walsh highlighted Labor's 1987 election victory, after the party had pursued vigorous fiscal consolidation, as a particular success. He said:

The 1987 victory confounded the pre-existing conventional wisdom that a government which actually practised fiscal responsibility, closed tax loopholes, desisted—mostly—from pork barrelling and cut perks to the affluent could not survive an election

Walsh entitled his memoir *Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister* but nothing could be further from the truth. His obituary in *The Australian* noted:

… Walsh excelled as finance minister in a government that relentlessly and mercilessly cut budget spending to a degree never repeated by any subsequent government and unleashed a reform agenda that gifted 25 years of economic growth and prosperity.

As my colleague Senator Abetz has noted, Nick Minchin, when he left parliament in 2011, noted that he had been Australia's longest-serving finance minister but Peter Walsh had been its best. In his press release announcing his decision to not stand again for the ministry on 2 April 1990, Walsh stated:

I have been particularly proud of a number of the Government's achievements over the last three terms. Most prominent amongst these are the correction of the Commonwealth's budgetary imbalance, significant improvements in income support for people on low incomes, the recent decision to extend fee relief to parents of children using private childcare, and the introduction of a resource rent tax on oil production.

There have been many opinions published on the contribution of Peter Walsh, following his passing. Some of these have sought to extrapolate policy positions he held onto contemporary political debate. For example, one editorial lauded him as a 'common-sense reformer', one of the 'steady hands and fine minds during Labor's golden era of reform from 1983 to 1996'. These are all sentiments I endorse.

The same editorial went on to talk about the necessity of broadening the consumption tax base. Yet Walsh opposed a consumption tax when it was proposed in the lead-up to the tax
summit of 1985. He argued that such a tax was inequitable and that compensating those on low incomes would be all but impossible. Peter Walsh's approach to fiscal policy was not based on rigorous discipline for abstract, philosophical ends. He said he 'came into the Senate with strong and long-held beliefs about a fair society, and the importance of economic efficiency in achieving one'. His approach was always grounded in Labor values.

It is this that distinguished him from those with similar views about government spending and intervention in the economy, such as his friend from the other side of politics John Hyde, and the Secretary to the Treasury, who later became a National Party senator, John Stone. I note all three of these men came from the same part of Western Australia.

On this budget day, let us recall that Peter Walsh was always driven by fairness. He saw the twin policy 'goals of human welfare and economic efficiency were often in conflict and that a final policy is most likely to incorporate a sensible compromise between the two'. He saw the principal role of a Labor government as addressing income redistribution. As Paul Malone said in *The Canberra Times* in 1988:

Social justice and equity have always been at the centre of his thinking but some found it convenient to drop this reference.

Early in life he recognised there was no fairness for the small farmer who received little assistance from measures that only served to make wealthy farmers richer. The goal of fairness was evident even from experiences in his youth, when he witnessed the way what he described as the 'natural' social order treated some members of society, including the Aboriginal children with whom he grew up. He saw: 'Labor was more likely to correct life's unfair deals than the other side.'

In preparation for Walsh's retirement from the Senate in 1993, *The Australian* ran the headline, 'Last great hater ready to call in old debts'. This was an accurate statement. There are some—maybe from the other side of politics—who may seek to lay claim to the Walsh legacy now. But the fact remains that he really got under the skin of his political opponents, even to the extent that his valedictory speech was peppered with points of order from those on the opposite side objecting to Walsh's use of his parliamentary farewell to have the final say on some of those whom he had spent so many years pursuing; in this case, Sir Garfield Barwick. Walsh also made clear in his valedictory that fairness could not be achieved without creating the economic conditions that would allow a society to prosper. He drew on the Chifley legacy, stating:

... mouthing Chifley rhetoric is a poor substitute for sharing his beliefs, especially his belief that economic growth, or development as he would have called it, has a paramount role in improving the life of ordinary Australians.

One theme that continued to repeat itself throughout Walsh's life was his contempt for 'rent-seekers'. This began, of course, with the Country Party and continued throughout his parliamentary, ministerial and post-parliamentary career. In *The Canberra Times*, he was described as 'a scourge of special pleading, bad arguments, intellectual humbug, and assertions associated with apple-pie ideas that were not supported by evidence or experience.' Walsh stored up a special dislike for particular groups of people, including environmentalists, campaigners against uranium mining and what he described as the compassion industry. He used his aptly-named 'Cassandra' column in *The Australian Financial Review* to provide
Australian decision-makers with the benefit of his views on the parliament, economics, immigration, infrastructure, the environment, tertiary education and the Labor Party.

I will conclude by drawing on the words of former prime minister Bob Hawke, in whose cabinet Peter Walsh served from 1983 to 1990. Hawke described Walsh's role in cabinet as being fundamental to every decision his government made. Hawke said:

... it was as Minister for Finance that Peter really made his mark. His highly principled, no-nonsense, and at times, acerbic style made him ideal for this position. In agricultural terms, of which he was well versed, he was able to sort the wheat from the chaff in a very efficient manner.'

As we farewell Peter Walsh—one of the architects of the Hawke government and modern Labor, who never forgot where he came from or his values—we express our condolences to his family and friends, including our colleague the member for Brand, his son-in-law, who I know feels this loss especially keenly.

Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (15:59): I also rise to pay tribute to Peter Alexander Walsh. The Financial Review described Peter Walsh as a Labor authentic. Many people who had felt the sting of Walsh's acerbic tongue might have other views. But Peter Walsh was a rare character in the Senate, berating all opponents but particularly picking on the Nationals at every chance.

The reality of his parliamentary service was left to the coalition's Nick Minchin, who described Walsh as the best finance minister Australia has ever had. We would like to think, of course, that that is up to today. We now have a new finance minister in Mathias Cormann. I can imagine Peter sitting back in the clouds of heaven with a drink in hand and shoes off, ready for tonight's budget and, no doubt, preparing to launch the shoes at the screen. He was credited with getting the budget under control in the Hawke government, a very difficult feat for any government and certainly a feat utterly impossible for the Rudd-Gillard governments. He wrote:

There are, of course, people in parliament, the media and some academics—not to mention the compassion industry—who believe that spending should be higher and deficits don't really matter.

As we listen to the budget tonight, we will be listening to one of Walsh's reforms: the establishing of budgeting over the forward estimates. Walsh was also known for detesting government waste and for his opposition to what he described as 'unscientific Greens'. The carbon tax would, he felt, eventually 'turn farmers into curiosities like the Amish'. The Australian editorial described Walsh as 'one of the steady hands and fine minds during Labor's golden years of reform from 1983 to 1996'. And all this from a Western Australian wheat-farming background.

Right from the start, as has been indicated before, he declared war on the Country Party in his first speech and absolutely never let up. In his later years, I think he came to some understanding and formed a bit of a truce with Nationals' senator Ron Boswell over their united views on what they saw as a common enemy: the carbon tax. We heard an anecdote from Senator Wong. There is a little segue to that. I think it was Boswell's grandmother giving him a thump in the ear for such an indiscretion that ensured that Peter Walsh's vendetta against the National Party was welded forever.

Peter Walsh entered parliament as a senator for Western Australia in the May 1974 double dissolution and was re-elected for four terms until retiring in 1993. During that time he was
Minister for Resources and Energy from 1983 to 84, implementing the petroleum resource rent tax; he was Minister for Finance from 1984 to 1990; as well as being the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Public Service Matters from 1984 to 1987. In his last speech, always the fierce anti-coalitionist, he admitted that he had surprisingly made some friends on the coalition side. He chose his own time to leave parliament, which few of us can hope for. He described the pinnacle of his personal political ambition as the five years he was Minister for Finance, claiming that ‘the most satisfying and significant period of my life was the period I spent working with that excellent department’. Peter said that he came into the Senate with the belief that he could make an important contribution to agricultural policy, an area in which, he confessed, the Labor Party had long been ignorant and confused. He found the adjustment of wheat farmer to politician was not easy, to the extent that he nearly gave it away. That was sharply turned around by the events of 1975.

Walsh's valedictory speech was interspersed with heckling as he went out the same way he came in: fighting to the end. He did not just pick on the Liberals or, always his target, the National Party; he also went for his own side, saying:

I feel that Ben Chifley's Labor Party, to which I made a personal commitment more than 40 years ago, has lost its way … Does anyone believe that Ben Chifley would have closed down mines and banned exploration in a sequence of highly prospective mineral provinces, not for any serious environmental reason but to appease the secular religious sanctimony of Balmain basket weavers? Would Chifley have allowed the long-footed potoroo, or whatever fad was in vogue with the chattering classes, to take priority over a million unemployed?

He certainly had a great use of the vernacular. Peter Walsh was a great contributor to the parliament and his country. I extend the condolences of my National Party colleagues to his family.

Senator DAY (South Australia) (16:04): I rise in support of this motion. In John Bunyan's great epic Pilgrim's Progress, we read of the encounter between Mr Great-Heart and Mr Valiant-for-Truth:

Then they went on; and just at the place where Little-Faith formerly was robbed, there stood a man with his sword drawn, and his face all over with blood. Then said Mr. Great-Heart, Who art thou? The man made answer, saying, I am one whose name is Valiant-for-Truth. I am a pilgrim, and am going to the Celestial City. Now, as I was in my way, there were three men that did beset me, and propounded unto me these three things: 1. Whether I would become one of them. 2. Or go back from whence I came. 3. Or die upon the place … To the first I answered, I had been a true man for a long season, and therefore it could not be expected that I should now cast in my lot with thieves. Then they demanded what I would say to the second. So I told them that the place from whence I came, had I not found incommodity there, I had not forsaken it … but finding it … unsuitable to me, and very unprofitable for me, I forsook it for this way. Then they asked me what I said to the third. And I told them my life cost far more dear than that I should lightly give it away. Besides, you have nothing to do thus to put things to my choice; wherefore at your peril be it if you meddle. Then these three … Wild-head, Inconsiderate, and Pragmatic, drew upon me, and I also drew upon them. So we fell to it, one against three, for the space of above three hours. They have left upon me, as you see, some of the marks of their valor, and have also carried away with them some of mine.

Mr. Great-Heart: But here was great odds, three against one.

Valiant-for-Truth: 'Tis true; but little and more are nothing to him that has the truth on his side: "Though an host should encamp against me," … "my heart shall not fear: though war should rise
against me, in this will I be confident," … Besides … I have read in some records, that one man has fought an army: and how many did Samson slay with the jawbone of an ass!

… … 

Mr. Great-Heart: But you fought a great while; I wonder you was not weary. 
Valiant-for-Truth: I fought till my sword did cleave to my hand … and when the blood ran through my fingers, then I fought with most courage.

Mr. Great-Heart: Thou hast done well … Thou shalt abide by us … for we are thy companions.

I heard this same introduction at the funeral of one who reminded me very much of Peter Walsh: the former member for Wakefield, the late Bert Kelly. I have used it today because I think it is an apt description of Peter's life and work: 'Mr Valiant-for-Truth'.

I first met Peter through the work of the Lavoisier Group, whose founding members—Peter being one of them—challenged the so-called scientific consensus surrounding anthropogenic global warming. Peter rejected, outright, claims that the science was settled in this matter. Writing in 2006 about Labor's pro-Kyoto stance, Peter wrote:

Since the 1980s, ALP policy has been incrementally hijacked by … morally vain … authoritarian activists, whom the media often misdescribe as the intelligentsia.

Peter Walsh was no 'Don Kyoto', tilting at wind turbines. As for what Mr Valiant-for-Truth would say today about his home-state university's decision to censor debate on climate change, I can only imagine.

Peter's Lavoisier Group has done Australia a great service and provided us with some extremely valuable work promoting vigorous debate within Australia on the science of global warming and climate change. Peter's work has contributed to a more informed public debate about the economic consequences to Australia of both unilateral and multilateral decarbonisation. It is a pity more Labor members who think like Peter do not speak out on this subject and question their party's position.

Peter gave me a signed copy of his book, *Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister*. In it there are similarities to the Bert Kelly book, *The Modest Member*. The Bert Kellys and Peter Walshes are becoming all too rare. I honour Peter Walsh here today.

Question agreed to, honourable senators standing in their places.

MacKellar, Hon. Michael John Randal, AM

The PRESIDENT (16:09): It is also with deep regret that I inform the Senate of the death on 9 May this year of the Hon. Michael John Randal MacKellar AM, a former minister and member of the House of Representatives for the division of Warringah, New South Wales, from 1969 until 1994.

Senator ABETZ (Tasmania—Leader of the Government in the Senate, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Employment) (16:09): by leave—I move:

That the Senate records its deep regret at the death, on 9 May 2015, of the Honourable Michael John Randal MacKellar, AM, former minister and Member for Warringah, places on record its appreciation of his long and highly distinguished service to the nation and tenders its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Michael John Randal MacKellar was born on 27 October 1938 in Sydney. He grew up on a small grazing property near Narrabri and attended Sydney Church of England Grammar
School and Sydney University, where he graduated as a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture—a rarity in the parliament. He then went to Oxford and graduated as a Master of Arts. He joined the New South Wales Department of Agriculture in 1961 and worked as an agricultural extension officer and part-time lecturer in agricultural extension at Sydney and NSW universities until entering parliament.

He won preselection for the seat of Warringah against the sitting MP, Edward St John, who had fallen foul of the Liberal Party with his outspokenness against the then prime minister. Mr MacKellar was elected, at the 1969 election, to the House of Representatives. He quickly showed his capacity, being appointed to represent the House on the council of the ANU, becoming Deputy Chairman of Committees in 1974 and joining the shadow ministry that same year. After the 1975 election, he was appointed Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. He held this portfolio until 1979, when he was appointed Minister for Health. He also held portfolios as Minister for Home Affairs and Environment, and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister.

It was as immigration minister that Michael MacKellar's contribution to our nation is most remembered. As his successor in the seat of Warringah—our current Prime Minister, the Hon. Tony Abbott MP—said on the weekend, Mr MacKellar oversaw the placement of tens of thousands of Vietnamese who were fleeing communism. The wonderful contribution that many Vietnamese Australians have made to our country over the last 40 years can be traced to the positive decisions made by Mr MacKellar as minister at that critical time. It is worthy to reflect that at that time there was not unanimity about this approach. Indeed, the then Labor leader disparagingly referred to the Vietnamese refugees as 'Viet Balts'—a reference to another population, from the Baltic states, also fleeing the horrors and oppression of communism. Mr MacKellar argued for the positive influence of immigration. Indeed, in 1979 he argued that immigration was important given the ageing of the Australian population, making the prediction then that by 2011 the average age of an Australian would be 35. I checked this morning with the library and he was nearly right: in 2011 the average age of an Australian was 37.

Mr MacKellar was also, with the then communications minister, the Hon. Tony Staley, the instigator of the ethnic television services of the Special Broadcasting Service, SBS, in 1978. He held the seat of Warringah for 25 years, being elected on 11 successive occasions. Apart from serving as a minister, Michael MacKellar served as Opposition Whip, Deputy Manager of Opposition Business and on a range of committees. He was a parliamentarian in the true sense.

In early 1994, he retired from the House to enter the private sector. At that time, the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, noted that they were the last two of the 1969 intake, and he paid warm tribute to Michael MacKellar's contribution to the parliament and to his character.

Mr MacKellar was chief executive officer of the Plastics and Chemicals Institute of Australia until 1997, when he became chief operating officer of the Baker Medical Research Institute. He was also active on the board of the Sydney 2000 Paralympics Games, having a strong personal interest in sport for those with disabilities. In 1998 he was appointed chairman of the Australia New Zealand Food Authority.

He had a compelling commitment to aged care from his work in the health portfolio and served as a director of the Ageing Research Institute and the Centre for Eye Research.
Australia and as a council member for the Royal Blind Society. He was also chairman of Vasey RSL Care in Melbourne. Michael McKellar's contributions to the parliament and the community were recognised by his being awarded the Centenary Medal in 2001 and then being appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2011.

To his children, Cameron, Duncan and Maggie, and his grandchildren, and to his partner, Pam, and her family, on behalf of the government I offer my sincere sympathies. His was a major contribution to our nation, and we salute his service.

Senator CONROY (Victoria—Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (16:16): I rise to express condolence on behalf of the opposition following the passing of Michael MacKellar. The Hon. Michael John MacKellar AM served the Australian parliament as a member of the House of Representatives for nearly 25 years. He also served as a minister in the Fraser government.

Born in 1938 in Sydney, MacKellar came from a farming background and was an agricultural scientist before his election to parliament. He worked in the New South Wales Department of Agriculture and was also a lecturer in this field at the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales. He drew on this experience when he made his first speech in a contribution on the Wheat Industry Stabilisation Bill. This was not appreciated by his coalition colleagues in the Country Party, who believed they had a monopoly on rural policy and rural debate. Mr MacKellar entered the parliament as the member for Warringah on Sydney's North Shore in 1969, two days before his 31st birthday. He continued to hold this seat until his resignation in 1994, being elected 11 times in total. The ensuing by-election resulted in the election of the now Prime Minister.

The highlight of Mr MacKellar's parliamentary career was undoubtedly the time he spent in the ministry from 1975 to 1982, in particular as Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs from 1975 to 1979 and as Minister for Health from 1979 to 1982. He also spent a short period of time in other portfolios, including assisting the Prime Minister, assisting the Treasurer, home affairs and the environment. In his valedictory speech Mr MacKellar agreed with another departing member, Labor's Dr Neal Blewett, that a parliamentary career is capped if you are privileged enough to become a minister. He said:

Becoming a minister gives you the opportunity, as no other position does, to put into practice some of the things that you would like to see done. I remember my ministerial role in a couple of ministries with very great affection because it gave me the opportunity of proving not only that I could work long hours and hard but also that we as a government could do many things for people which otherwise they would not be able to hope for.

For Mr MacKellar, being a minister was about achievement. As Minister for Immigration, he oversaw the resettlement of thousands of Vietnamese migrants. He reflected on a time when:

… Australia faced a challenge which it had never faced before—the potential arrival of hundreds of thousands of distressed refugees from Indo-China in small boats. We as a government and I as the minister helped to deal with that situation in a way which, I believe, did Australia a great credit.

The Fraser government is rightly acknowledged for its sensitive leadership in this area. Handled in another way, this issue could have been a political and social disaster given the pressures that existed at the time, but this was thankfully not the case.

Mr MacKellar was involved in the organisation of two United Nations conferences on refugees, demonstrating the importance of multilateral cooperation in this area and in
initiatives to truly recognise Australia’s multicultural community. Policies he implemented or set in train include the establishment of the Special Broadcasting Service, SBS; support for new arrivals; creation of the Migrant Resource Centre; and what became the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Mr MacKellar later reflected:

We led the world in many areas and proved to be a model for other countries. However, he also stated that Australia is not part of Asia and should ‘pay more attention to migration from traditional sources’ to ‘maintain balance in the face of regional pressures’. These statements reflected the policy challenges he was grappling with at the time—the policy challenges of the time. Later, in 1988, he was one of six Liberals who challenged the hardline immigration policy of opposition leader John Howard.

As health minister, Mr MacKellar inherited a policy that was ‘one of the biggest political hot potatoes of 1980’ as the Fraser government attempted to wind back the Whitlam government’s Medibank. He saw his role as ensuring that there was a discernible connection between expenditure and health standards, that all Australians had proper access to high-quality health care at a cost that the individual and the community could afford. Prior to his ministerial service, Mr MacKellar also served as the Commonwealth parliamentary representative on the Council of the ANU from 1970 to 1976.

As his parliamentary career came towards its conclusion, he made clear his view that the Liberal Party should not concentrate on the rights of some with little regard for society overall. He stated:

It is not good enough to concentrate solely on the rights and benefits of individuals, important as that is. An equal role for government is to protect the public good and enhance the national interest.

When he made his valedictory speech in the House of Representatives in February 1994, Mr MacKellar made a concerted effort to set out what he saw as some of the challenges of the future for those he was leaving behind. He identified the necessity of engaging with young people, developing policies that foster ‘a sense of personal worth, a feeling that how they live their lives and the contribution their lives can make to the greater good really matters’. He also spoke of the importance of looking after Australia’s fragile environment, of understanding it and adapting policies to take this into account, or else risk losing it for future generations. He identified the role of population policy and good urban and regional planning in this area. Of course, as Minister for Immigration, he had to see different sides of this debate and the role that migration choices played in population policy.

He recognised the significance of parliament as an institution that must be guarded by those who are privileged enough to serve in it. He saw that when the public standing of parliament diminishes, the future of democracy in our country is weakened. Members of parliament needed to be active and engaged if the institution was to be strong.

In his post-parliamentary career, Mr MacKellar served with a wide variety of organisations including on the Board of Vasey RSL Care; the Plastics, Chemicals and Allied Industries Association; the Australian Institute of International Affairs; the Australia New Zealand Food Authority; and the Sydney Paralympic Games Organising Committee.

In expressing the condolences of the opposition following the death of Michael MacKellar, may I particularly extend our sympathies to his family and friends, and to our Liberal Party colleagues.
Senator SCULLION (Northern Territory—Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of the Nationals in the Senate) (16:22): I rise to associate the Nationals with this condolence motion for the Hon. Michael MacKellar AM. Born in Sydney in 1938, MacKellar was an agricultural scientist specialising in agricultural extension before election to parliament. He was the member for Warringah for a record 25 years before the current member, Mr Tony Abbott, became the local member in a by-election.

The Hon. Michael MacKellar was Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs between 1975 and 1979 and Minister for Health from 1979 to 1982, in the Fraser government. He also held the positions of Minister Assisting the Prime Minister from 1979 to 1980 and Minister for Home Affairs and the Environment in 1981. It is clear from these appointments that Michael MacKellar was highly regarded and an important member of the Fraser government.

As Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, he oversaw the placement of tens of thousands of Vietnamese who were fleeing communism. This has been a lasting legacy such that we now have a thriving and industrious Australian Vietnamese community.

In many ways it was a shame that MacKellar had to resign over unpaid duty on a television. His contribution had been core to the government. But MacKellar refused to be stopped from making a further contribution. The after-politics section of this contribution is testament to his continuing commitment to important issues of the day. Maintaining his sense of public service, after leaving politics MacKellar became the Chairman of the Australia New Zealand Food Authority, in 1998. He also acted as Chief Operations Officer of the Baker Medical Research Institute and Chief Executive Officer of the Plastics and Chemicals Industries Association. MacKellar also served as the president of the Melbourne based National Ageing Research Institute.

In his last speech in Parliament, MacKellar spoke of the privilege of being not just a member but a minister, because you can make real change happen. He said:

I think particularly of the difficulties in the immigration and ethnic affairs area when Australia faced a challenge which it had never faced before—the potential arrival of hundreds of thousands of distressed refugees from Indo-China in small boats. We as a government and I as the Minister helped to deal with that situation in a way which, I believe, did Australia great credit.

That is quite true. Dr John Hewson explained in his valedictory speech for MacKellar that, along with Malcolm Fraser, Michael was instrumental in organising two United Nations conferences on refugees:

He really did internationalise an understanding of the problem of refugees. I think that will long be remembered as a very significant contribution.

Michael also, in conjunction with Malcolm Fraser, commissioned the Galbally report on migrant services and subsequently implemented most of its recommendations. I think that this represented the first substantive commitment by any Australian government to a multicultural society.

Out of this, we saw the establishment of the SBS, comprehensive support for new arrivals, the Migrant Resource Centre and the Australian Institute of Multicultural Studies.

MacKellar also had a broader vision of Australia that made him understand what the future would bring. He said in his last speech, in 1994, that the prime ministership of Malcolm Fraser has been denigrated far too much—not so much by his political opponents but by those who should be his political supporters. He added that in the sweep of history great
achievements were made by the Fraser ministries. It is only now that Malcolm Fraser has passed on that true recognition for him and his government achievements is happening.

On the lighter side, Dr John Hewson described Michael MacKellar as an absolute burglar on the golf course. He was renowned for his sporting ability and his avid readership. He was also well known for founding the coalition’s wine appreciation society—the source, I understand, of many a good night. All this from a boy who was born and grew up in Baan Baa in the former electorate of Gwydir. No wonder his first speech was on the wheat industry.

It is a sad time for his family and close friends. I extend condolences to them on behalf of all Nationals senators.

Question agreed to, honourable senators standing in their places.

PETITIONS

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

Internet Services

To the Honourable President and members of the Senate in Parliament

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Senate:

1. The significant and ongoing barriers faced by the Beveridge, Wallan and Whittlesea communities in not accessing adequate and reliable internet services.

2. The potential safety risk to these communities during bush fires and other emergencies because of mobile black spots.

The petitioners therefore request that the Senate acknowledges the importance of mobile and fixed networks in the education, economic development and public safety of the Beveridge, Wallan and Whittlesea communities and supports these communities in their need to access improved services.

by Senator Ryan (from 395 citizens).

Tax Avoidance

To the Honourable President and members of the Senate in Parliament assembled:

The petition of the undersigned shows:

Our tax system needs reform: we need to end the free ride for the big end of town and crack down on the loopholes which allow tax avoidance rorts for the mega-rich.

Your petitioners ask that the Senate:

Call on the Federal Treasurer to stop the free-ride for the big end of town at the expense of everyday Australians, crack down on tax avoidance by the super-wealthy, and support the Greens plan to raise revenue from those who can afford to pay.

by Senator Di Natale (from 7,231 citizens).

Petitions received.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senator Fifield to move:

That—

(1) To ensure appropriate consideration of time critical bills by Senate committees, the provisions of all bills introduced into the House of Representatives after 14 May 2015 and up to and including 4 June
2015 that contain substantive provisions commencing on or before 1 July 2015 (together with the provisions of any related bill), are referred to committees for inquiry and report by 15 June 2015.

(2) The committee to which each bill is referred shall be determined in accordance with the order of 13 November 2013, allocating departments and agencies to standing committees.

(3) A committee to which a bill has been referred may determine, by unanimous decision, that there are no substantive matters that require examination and report that fact to the Senate.

(4) This order does not apply in relation to bills which contain:
   (a) no provisions other than provisions appropriating revenue or moneys (appropriation bills); and
   (b) commencement clauses providing only for the legislation to commence on Royal Assent.

Senator Fifield to move:
That consideration of the business before the Senate on Wednesday, 17 June 2015, be interrupted at approximately 5 pm, but not so as to interrupt a senator speaking, to enable Senator Gallagher to make her first speech without any question before the chair.

Senator Bernardi to move:
That the following matters be referred to the Economics References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 November 2015:
(a) the extent of food certification schemes and certifiers in Australia including, but not limited to, schemes related to organic, kosher, halal and genetically-modified food and general food safety certification schemes;
(b) current labelling requirements of food certification schemes;
(c) the need for labelling on products produced by companies that pay certification fees;
(d) whether current schemes provide enough information for Australian consumers to make informed purchasing decisions;
(e) details regarding certification fees paid by food producers and/or manufacturers, and the potential for these to impact on prices for consumers;
(f) the importance of food certification schemes in relation to export market access and returns to producers;
(g) the extent and adequacy of information available to the public about certifiers including, but not limited to, certification processes, fees and financial records; and
(h) any related matters.

Senator Ludwig to move:

Senators O'Sullivan, Williams and Canavan to move:
That the Senate—
(a) notes that childhood immunisation is one of the most effective ways of preventing disease;
(b) congratulates the Prime Minister (Mr Abbott) and the Minister for Social Services (Mr Morrison) for removing 'conscientious objection' as an exemption category to immunisation for preventable diseases for child care payments (Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate) and the Family Tax Benefit Part A end of year supplement;
(c) condemns the Townsville Greens and their leader, Ms Gail Hamilton, for supporting debunked and discredited research such as Dr Andrew Wakefield’s MMR paper to justify their scaremongering and continuing to expose children to the dangers of preventable childhood diseases; and

(d) calls on all parties to support the implementation of the ‘no jab no pay’ policy as part of a science-based approach to stopping the spread of communicable childhood diseases.

Senator Rhiannon to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes:

(i) an independent report commissioned by the City of Sydney analysing the traffic impact of the WestConnex project found that congestion on Parramatta Road would increase following the motorway’s construction, and

(ii) the report provides further evidence that investment in public transport is the best way to solve Sydney’s traffic and congestion bottlenecks; and

(b) calls on the Federal Government to withdraw its financial support for the WestConnex project.

Senator Rice to move:

That the following matter be referred to the Education and Employment References Committee for inquiry and report by 10 August 2015:

Consideration of the creation of a nationwide portable workplace entitlement scheme for long service leave and any other appropriate entitlements, taking into account:

(a) the number of Australian workers in insecure work;

(b) increased workplace mobility and increasingly precarious working conditions; and

(c) any other related matters.

Senators Day, Leyonhjelm, Back, Canavan, Williams, Bernardi, Madigan, O’Sullivan and McKenzie to move:

That the Senate—

(a) questions the restriction of land for new housing and subsequent pricing policies by state and territory land management agencies; and

(b) highlights the constraints on land supply which are the principal causes of worsening housing affordability.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Senator FIFIELD (Victoria—Manager of Government Business in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Social Services) (16:27): I move:

That general business order of the day no. 62 (Food Standards Amendment (Fish Labelling) Bill 2015) be considered on Thursday, 14 May 2015 under the temporary order relating to the consideration of private senators’ bills.

Question agreed to.

Leave of Absence

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (16:28): by leave—I move:

That leave of absence be granted to Senators Bilyk, Dastyari and Ludwig for 11 May 2015, for personal reasons.
Question agreed to.

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Chief Government Whip in the Senate) (16:28): by leave—I move:

That leave of absence be granted to Senator Macdonald from 11 May to 14 May 2015, for personal reasons.

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

Postponement

The following items of business were postponed:

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 1 standing in the name of Senator Whish-Wilson for today, proposing a reference to the Environment and Communications References Committee, postponed till 18 June 2015.

General business notice of motion no. 674 standing in the names of Senators Rice and Wright for 13 May 2015, proposing the introduction of the Automotive Transformation Scheme Amendment (Sustainable Jobs in the Auto Component Industry) Bill 2015, postponed till 16 June 2015.


General business notice of motion no. 709 standing in the name of the Chair of the Finance and Public Administration References Committee (Senator Gallagher) for today, proposing a variation to the order for the production of documents relating to departmental and agency contracts, postponed till 13 May 2015.

COMMITTEES

Reporting Date

The Clerk: Notifications of extensions of time for committees to report have been lodged in respect of the following:

Community Affairs References Committee—Commonwealth community service tendering processes by the Department of Social Services—extended from 12 May to 19 August 2015.

Community Affairs References Committee—out of home care—extended from 13 May to 12 August 2015.


Environment and Communications References Committee—electricity network companies—extended from 8 May to 5 June 2015.


Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee—provisions of the Migration Amendment (Maintaining the Good Order of Immigration Detention Facilities) Bill 2015—extended from 12 May to 5 June 2015.
Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee—provisions of the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Biometrics Integrity) Bill 2015—extended from 12 May to 5 June 2015.

Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee—provisions of the Copyright Amendment (Online Infringement) Bill 2015—extended from 13 May to 29 May 2015.


The PRESIDENT (16:29): Does any senator wish to have the question put on any of those matters? There being none, we shall proceed.

National Capital and External Territories Committee

Meeting

Senator McEWEN (South Australia—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (16:30): At the request of Senator Brown, I move:

That the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories be authorised to hold public meetings during the sittings of the Senate, as follows:
(a) Thursday, 14 May 2015;
(b) Thursday, 18 June 2015; and
(c) Thursday, 25 June 2015.

Question agreed to.

Treaties Committee

Meeting

Senator BUSHBY (Tasmania—Chief Government Whip in the Senate) (16:30): by leave—At the request of Senator Fawcett, I move:

That the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties be authorised to hold private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1), followed by public meetings, during the sittings of the Senate, as follows:
(a) Monday, 15 June 2015; and
(b) Monday, 22 June 2015.

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Mental Health

Senator WRIGHT (South Australia) (16:31): I move:

That the Senate—
(a) welcomes, after significant delay, the release of the National Mental Health Commission’s Report of the National Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services, which found:
(i) mental health care in Australia often comes too late, is fragmented, fails to prevent crisis situations, and often does not take into account a person’s broader social needs,
(ii) inadequate responses to significantly higher rates of mental distress, trauma, suicide and intentional self-harm among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and

(iii) mental health funding is concentrated in expensive acute care services, and too little is directed towards prevention and early intervention strategies; and

(b) calls on the Government to expeditiously progress reform of the mental health sector and address the significant unmet mental health needs of Australians.

Question agreed to.

**Wool Industry**

**Senator WILLIAMS** (New South Wales) (16:31): I seek leave to amend general business notice of motion No. 707 by omitting all words in paragraph (g) and substituting: 'PETA has embarked on a campaign to mislead the Australian community to the detriment of the wool industry.' The full text of the revised motion has been circulated in the chamber.

Leave granted.

**Senator WILLIAMS:** I move the motion as amended:

That the Senate notes that—

(a) for over 100 years the Australian economy was said to be 'riding on the sheep's back';

(b) wool is Australia's third largest agricultural export;

(c) the gross value of wool produced in Australia in 2013-14 was $2.53 billion;

(d) the value of Australian wool exported in 2013-14 was $2.87 billion;

(e) shearers and wool producers are hard-working people with strong animal welfare ethics;

(f) the activist group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has admitted its picture of a supposed bloodied lamb is a fake; and

(g) PETA has embarked on a campaign to mislead the Australian community to the detriment of the wool industry.

Mr President, I seek leave to make a short statement.

The **PRESIDENT:** Leave is granted for one minute.

**Senator WILLIAMS:** This was a disgraceful slur on the shearers and the wool industry as a whole. Agriculture minister Barnaby Joyce describes as 'a pack of lies' the campaign video by animal rights group PETA. Mr Joyce said that the video star guitarist Jona Weinhofen, from the band I Killed the Prom Queen, was a man 'living in vegan splendour' in California and who had little knowledge of shearing practices in Australia.

Having been a shearer for some 27 years part time I know the care that the shearers take in looking after the sheep, as do the graziers as well. We get emails from Ms Claire Fryer, Campaign Coordinator of PETA Australia, and phone calls to Senator Heffernan, saying that we should not be running sheep. I hope that these people do not have woollen jumpers, woollen suits or woollen coats in their wardrobes, making hypocrites of themselves. The wool industry built this modern nation of Australia through wool exports. The people who work in the industry are good, hardworking, decent people and they do not deserve to have this propaganda spread against them.

**Senator RHIANNON** (New South Wales) (16:33): On behalf of the Greens I request that *Hansard* notes that the Greens senators do not support this motion and that we note the constructive work that PETA undertakes to end cruelty carried out against animals.
The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Rhiannon; it is so noted.

Question agreed to.

DOCUMENTS
Office of the Gene Technology Regulator
Order for the Production of Documents

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (16:34): I move:

That there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Health, by noon on 14 May 2015, a copy of the advice generated by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator stating that crops developed using EXZACT Delete technology would not contain introduced foreign nucleic acid, once the ZFN genes are no longer present, and would not be considered GMO and therefore not subject to regulation under the Gene Technology Act 2000.

Question agreed to.

BILLS
International Aid (Promoting Gender Equality) Bill 2015
Reference to Committee

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (16:34): I move:

That, in accordance with the recommendation of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee in the report International Aid (Promoting Gender Equality) Bill 2015, the International Aid (Promoting Gender Equality) Bill 2015 be referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 17 June 2015.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES
Wind Turbines Select Committee
Appointment

Senator MADIGAN (Victoria) (16:35): I move:

That the resolution of the Senate of 24 November 2014, appointing the Select Committee on Wind Turbines, be amended to omit "24 June 2015", and substitute "3 August 2015".

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS
Excise Tariff Proposal (No. 1) 2014
Customs Tariff Proposal (No. 1) 2014

Senator LEYONHJELM (New South Wales) (16:35): I move:

That the Senate declares its opposition to the fuel duty rates for excise and customs contained in the Excise Tariff Proposal (No. 1) 2014 and the Customs Tariff Proposal (No. 1) 2014 respectively, and tabled in the House of Representatives on 30 October 2014.

Senator RICE (Victoria) (16:36): At the request of Senator Di Natale, I seek leave to move an amendment to general business notice of motion No. 705.

Leave granted.
Senator RICE: I move:
At the end of the motion, add "until other measures are implemented to transform Australia towards a cleaner, smarter economy".

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

The PRESIDENT: The question now is that notice of motion No. 705 standing in the name of Senator Leyonhjelm be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [16:41]
(The President—Senator Parry)

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

AYES

Bilyk, CL
Cameron, DN
Collins, JMA
Day, R.J.
Gallagher, KR
Ketter, CR
Lines, S
Marshall, GM
McEwen, A
Milne, C
Muir, R
Peris, N
Rhiannon, L
Siewert, R
Sterle, G
Wang, Z
Whish-Wilson, PS

Bullock, J.W.
Carr, KJ
Dastyari, S
Gallacher, AM
Hanson-Young, SC
Leyonhjelm, DE
Ludlam, S
McAllister, J
McLucas, J
Moore, CM
O'Neil, DM
Polley, H
Rice, J
Singh, LM
Urquhart, AE (teller)
Waters, LJ
Wright, PL

NOES

Back, CJ
Birmingham, SJ
Canavan, M.J.
Colbeck, R
Fawcett, DJ
Fifield, MP
Johnston, D
McKenzie, B
O'Sullivan, B
Payne, MA
Ronaldson, M
Ryan, SM
Sinedinos, A
Williams, JR

Bernardi, C
Bushby, DC (teller)
Cash, MC
Edwards, S
Fierravanti-Wells, C
Heffernan, W
McGrath, J
Nash, F
Parry, S
Reynolds, L
Ruston, A
Seselja, Z
Smith, D
Senator Brown did not vote, to compensate for the vacancy caused by the resignation of Senator Mason.

Question agreed to.

Senator RICE (Victoria) (16:44): Mr President, I seek leave to make a short statement.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator RICE: On the issue of the fuel tax excise, the Australian Greens have had a position over the last year that we are open to discussions about increasing the fuel tax excise if the revenue was going towards measures that would be creating a cleaner, more sustainable economy. In particular, we are open to discussion as to whether the revenue was going to be put towards public transport. The increased fuel tax excise was first considered in last year's budget in the context of a very unfair, brutal budget that was hitting low income earners very significantly. An increase in fuel excise was only going to add to that burden, unless they had the opportunity to be able to reduce the amount of fuel they were using or were able to undertake more of their transport by public transport.

Kangaroo Meat Exports

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Queensland—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (16:45): I move:

That the Senate recognises:

(a) the addition of Peru as an export market for kangaroo meat, with the first commercial size shipment of about 1 000 kg of product leaving our shores in February 2015 and headed for supermarket shelves in Lima; and

(b) that the Federal Government, through the Department of Agriculture and Austrade, has been working with the Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia and the exporter since 2008 to negotiate market access to Peru, and that these extensive negotiations between Australian and Peruvian authorities included agreements on import conditions, health certification and the process for approval of Australian export establishments.

Question agreed to.

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (16:46): On behalf of the Greens, I request that it be noted in Hansard that we did not support the motion, and that there is ongoing cruelty—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Rhiannon, I allowed you to get away with this the first time. It is okay to stand up and have that noted, but if you want to make a statement you should seek leave to make a statement.

Senator RHIANNON: I seek leave to make a short statement.

The PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator RHIANNON: Thank you, Mr President; I apologise. I request that Hansard notes that the Greens senators did not support this motion.
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Abbott Government

The PRESIDENT (16:46): A letter has been received from Senator Moore:

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

The Prime Minister's failure to honour his promise there would 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' under a Coalition Government.

Is the proposal supported?

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

The 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 POLLEY (Tasmania) (16:47): I rise today to reflect on this arrogant and out-of-touch Abbott government; a government that is suddenly starting to preach fairness, but does not know the meaning of the word. Fairness is something that you have; it is intrinsic to your values. You cannot just say 'fairness', like those opposite do, and have it suddenly appear. Last year's budget was an outright attack on all Australians. It was a budget that hurt students, hurt pensioners, hurt low-income families and certainly hurt job seekers. Fundamentally, it was a budget that attacked the principle of fairness. Before the last election Mr Tony Abbott promised no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no changes to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS. He broke all of those promises. Tony Abbott promised to make things better, but by attacking fairness in this country he has made everything worse.

Last year's Abbott-Hockey budget was a disaster for the Australian people and for the Australian economy. It directly resulted in the cost of living going up. The budget and its broken promises hurt Australians to the tune of $6,000 a year. Further to this, unemployment has increased again—and this was to be a good government! I think the Prime Minister said in February that there was going to be a good government, that there was going to be an adult government. But it has failed to turn up.

The unemployment figure now stands at 6.2 per cent—and this is a government that promised it would be a government of jobs, jobs, jobs. In my home state of Tasmania it has failed dismally, because they have not created any jobs. In the last month, 2,900 Tasmanians have lost their jobs—that is 2,900 families that are without a person working in our community. That is 2,900 jobs that have gone, which has a direct impact on our communities—our small communities, our rural communities.

Youth unemployment also continues to rise under the Abbott government, which said it was going to create one million jobs. As I said, the good government has failed turn up to work. This government has failed to deliver thus far on anywhere near creating a million jobs. Mr Abbott, you are taking this country and the economy in the wrong direction. As you can imagine, business confidence is also in decline. Roy Morgan data shows business confidence is at its lowest level in almost four years. Mr Abbott, you are taking the Australian economy backwards. The Prime Minister should be focusing on creating jobs, not protecting his own.
That is what tonight’s budget is all about—it is about Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey trying to protect their own jobs. This government has learnt the wrong lessons from last year’s budget. It has failed not because it was too exciting or too bold, but because it was fundamentally unfair. Labor called last budget for what it was from day one. We have fought this unfair budget every single day since the last budget, and we will fight this government on any future unfair measures. Australia cannot afford a budget that puts Tony Abbott’s job ahead of Australians’ having jobs. The Abbott government’s dishonesty and incompetence is still hurting Australians. Despite promising Australian voters a stable, a mature and an adult government, this government has achieved the exact opposite.

The problem with the coalition government is that it brought down a budget which broke all of the promises it vowed to keep. It not only misled but also lied to the Australian people when it said that there would be no cuts to health spending. It misled and lied to the Australian people when it said that there would be no cuts to education spending and there would be no change to the pension. If the pension indexation change that they tried to put through this place was not a cut to the pension why has it now been shelved? What I think really has happened to that pension indexation change is that it has been put in the bottom drawer, as I like to refer to it, because you cannot trust this government when it comes to their election commitments and promises.

To go out on the eve of the last election, the day before people went to the polling booths and voted for this government, and say—as the Leader of the Opposition at that time, Mr Abbott, said—there would be no cuts to education, he knew exactly that he had misled the Australian community. On the eve of the election he said there would be no cuts to health, there would be no change to the pension and there would be no cuts to the ABC and the SBS. It is not just we on this side of the chamber who are saying that Mr Abbott broke his promises. It does not matter where you go in the community. If you go out into your own electorates and listen to the Australian people, they will tell you that they do not trust Mr Abbott and this government. They have used up all their political capital. There is no future in this government when it continues to lie to the Australian community. Australians deserve so much more.

And then we have the Treasurer of this country—and I cannot remember: is it Mr Morrison or is it Mr Hockey?

Senator Bilyk: It is easy to confuse.

Senator POLLEY: It is.

Senator Lines: He’s hiding.

Senator POLLEY: But he is still the Treasurer. Yes, Mr Hockey is still the Treasurer. He said to the Australian people that people on low incomes could afford a fuel tax because they do not drive their cars very far. That was from the Australian Treasurer. Before the last election, they—that is, Mr Abbott, Mr Hockey, Mr Turnbull and Ms Bishop—also promised that there would be no new taxes. Again, that is another broken promise because they have introduced the petrol tax. We know that they wanted to introduce a GP tax—now I have lost count of whether we are up to version 3, 4 or 5 of the different versions of trying to tax people going to see their GP—because they are all about fundamentally undermining Medicare in this country.
Then when we to turn to education, they said there would be no cuts to education. In my home state of Tasmania, the northern campuses of the University of Tasmania, both in Burnie and in Launceston, are at the mercy of this government as to whether or not they will have to close. Shame on those on the government benches—the three Amigos from Tasmania—who have failed to stand up for Tasmanians! They have failed to stand up for pensioners in Tasmania. They have failed to stand up to the health cuts. They have failed to stand up when it comes to this government trying to introduce $100,000 degrees.

This is unacceptable to the Australian people, and they have seen through this government. As I said, in February Mr Abbott said that a good government had arrived. He has failed to deliver on that promise. At the last election, as we know, Mr Abbott said that there would be no changes to the pensions. There was no caveat. There were no qualifications. But yesterday in this place the minister, in response to a question that I asked, said: 'We did not bring in any change that was going to have effect in this term.' You can play with words, but the reality is that you have lost the trust of the Australian people. There is probably not a lot more that will come out of tonight's budget, because the government have leaked everything to the newspapers to get their stories out to try to prepare the Australian people for the unfair second budget that they will bring down. But there is one thing: you cannot fool the Australian people all the time. They are a wake-up to this childish, heartless, harsh government. (Time expired)

Senator BACK (Western Australia) (16:57): I am delighted to rise to speak to this particular matter of public importance. In fact, it is very much the same as the one on 28 October 2014. As Senator Kim Carr demonstrated today in question time, the question time committee have run out of ideas and, obviously, so have the MPI committee. But I will accept the fact that Mr Abbott did make one mistake leading up to the 2013 election. Mr Abbott believed the then Treasurer, Mr Swan, that the deficit in 2013-14 was going to be $18 billion. That was Mr Abbott's mistake. I will tell you why it was a mistake: because the deficit was not $18 billion. It was not even $20 billion or $30 billion or $40 billion, but, of course, as Mr Abbott should have predicted, based on the previous performances of Mr Swan and the various prime ministers of the Labor government during the six years, it was a $48 billion deficit.

For those of us on this side who are used to running businesses and used to running governments and used to turning around the debt of past Labor governments, the simple reality is that when you inherit a $48 billion deficit you have got to show some leadership and you have got to do something about it. You cannot let it keep going the way it did. What we inherited as we came into government was a scenario in which this country was spending $100 million a day, seven days a week, more than it was earning as revenue. And what have we actually seen since the coalition came into government? As my good colleague Senator Smith well knows from our producing state of Western Australia, we have had a further $90 billion write-down in our revenues. So if Labor was in government, where would we be now? We would be running much higher deficits, much higher debts.

Those in the gallery might like to know that when Labor came into government in 2007, as a result of the legacy of Howard and Costello there was no debt. We had cash in the bank. We had a significant surplus. And where did we find ourselves in September 2013? We had cumulative deficits of $200 billion and the debt was running towards $670 billion—and
Senator Moore invites us to comment on some form of failure of a government that has got hold of the failures of its predecessors and indeed is reversing those failures for the long-term benefit of the Australian community! Peter Costello inherited a $96 billion debt and he created a surplus. He established a saving of $6 billion a year in interest. That reminds me of the fact that we are actually paying $1 billion a month—not on repaying the debt, just on repaying the interest. That is a primary school that we are giving up every 12 hours, seven days a week, because we are borrowing overseas to repay the interest on Labor's debt.

So what level of responsibility do we have this evening from a leader of a party who should be hanging his head so deeply in shame? I quote from one of the newspaper articles: 'Comrade Bill Shorten says "nyet" to budget—without reading it! This is the man who said: 'I support what Prime Minister Gillard has said, although I do not know what she said.' And here today, before he even knows what's in the budget, he is saying: 'No, we're going to oppose it.' On the ABC this morning he said: 'The truth is it is a budget for the rubbish bin'—before he has even read it! What level of responsibility is the alternative Prime Minister of this country showing to the people of this country when he comes out with those sorts of statements!

In her condolence speech a few moments ago Senator Wong spoke about the efforts of the late Senator Peter Walsh, who came from a fine Western Australian wheat-growing family that is only about 40 miles from my own family in the wheat belt of WA. She said Senator Walsh had inherited a $5 billion deficit from the outgoing Fraser government and turned it into a $2 billion surplus. But we are not talking about $2 billion; we are talking about a $200 billion deficit moving towards $670 billion of debt. Contrary to what we have just heard from Senator Polley, let us talk about where we are. In the first three months of this year alone, 73,000 new jobs—most of them, I understand, full-time—have been created. In the 18 months since this government was elected in September 2013, some 247,000 new jobs have been created—70 per cent more than in the last 18 months of the Labor government. Job advertisements are up, retail trading numbers are up—and this is a very hard circumstance.

So the people of Australia have really got a right to ask: what is the Labor opposition doing to work with the government and with the Australian people to overcome these issues? It is not so much that they have opposed initiatives in this place; it is the fact that the Labor Party, in opposition, have opposed some $5 billion of savings that were their own savings—and that is an act of bastardry in which they left the country with some $200 billion worth of deficit.

The economic recovery of this country has started, and we will see further evidence of it this evening. Export volumes are up some 70 per cent through this year. Bankruptcies have fallen. Residential building approvals, in a fine sign of confidence in the economy, are 24 per cent higher than they were a year ago and at record levels. These are all signs of people's confidence in the government. Has it taken some time? Yes, it has—because people remember that we are still paying off $1 billion a month in interest. And imagine what that figure of $1 billion in interest would be if interest rates were to rise from their current two per cent to four or six per cent! So we are seeing recovery economically.

Senator Moore, in presenting today's MPI, spoke of the situation with education. Let me focus on education for a few minutes. Labor, along with the Greens, said very proudly about education: 'We give a Gonski!' The one thing the Labor Party did not do was put any money into it. In the final year of the Labor government—in case there are those who either do not
know or have forgotten—they actually carved $1.2 billion out of the education budget. It required an incoming coalition government to put that $1.2 billion back. So it is a little bit rich for the now opposition to jump up and down about education expenditure when it is this government that has returned it. There has been an increase in education expenditure of some $3.7 billion, bringing Western Australia and the Northern Territory back into a circumstance where there would be a return to fairness.

Over the last decade, for governments of both persuasions, there has been an increase of some 40 per cent in education expenditure. But it has been left to this government, a government which sees value in more than just throwing money at a situation, to put funding into education. We are putting money into better teacher quality; into better support for new teachers; into engagement with parents, who we all know are so vital; into increasing the opportunities for school autonomy so that school principals, their boards and the parents can have a greater say; and, of course, into the curriculum itself. There are many fine areas in which this coalition government is assisting education.

Senator Polley spoke of the risk, now, to university campuses in northern Tasmania. She can sheet that home exactly to herself and to the Labor Party in opposition, who have opposed the higher education initiatives of this government. Those in opposition can answer the 80,000 students who would have been getting HECS or HELP assistance and the 20,000 apprentices who now may not have the opportunity of that excellent funding—the opportunity for the universities to capitalise on international students. I, for one, remain very proud of what this government is doing. I eagerly look forward to the outcome of the budget this evening to further strengthen Australia’s economy.

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (17:07): I rise to contribute to this debate because the government did not keep its promises not to make those particular cuts. They also brought down a budget that attacked the most vulnerable members of our community, and they knew they were doing it because they knew from the information they had that those who were paying the most were the most vulnerable in this country. The situation would be worse if this Senate did not stand up to oppose those vicious budgetary attacks on the most vulnerable in our community. Our most vulnerable, however, are suffering from the cuts that the government has made to date, such as the cuts to the Department of Social Services—cuts to the vital services that communities need to survive, and cuts to emergency relief support services. Cuts to the programs that support and provide services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are cutting very deeply into the community, particularly when you combine those with the cuts to social services and the health cuts.

People have inundated my office with concerns, and they continue to ring to tell me of the concerns they have over the budget, and in particular the impact it is having on their lives. When you look at the cuts to health you see that the government broke their promise. They keep trying to break their promises on health, despite the fact that the measures they concoct do not get support from the community—measures such as co-payments and changes to rebates on times of consultations. And now they are trying $5 cuts to rebates and indexation freezes, or freezes to increases in rebates to 2018.

So they continue to try and break that promise. And who does that hurt? It hurts the most vulnerable, low-income members of our community—yet again hitting them. The government
may think these cuts are little but they are immense to people who are struggling to make ends meet. Then the government made promises about no cuts to pensions. The attempted to bring in not only cuts to the indexation of age pensions, but also cuts for struggling single parents and those on disability support pensions. They were cuts, and the community was not fooled for one minute.

There were attacks on families—cuts to family tax benefits, again—and now the government is attempting to blackmail the Senate. We will see what is in the budget tonight but there have been comments in the media saying that we, the Senate, have to pass their cruel measures—again, measures that impact on single parents through cuts family tax benefit part B; again, attacking the most vulnerable in our communities.

Their piece de resistance was their move, which is still on the books, to kick young people under 30 off income support for six months. I wonder if the government is going to try and say, 'Oh, don't you worry about that; it's only going to be a month in this budget,' or whether they actually do see the absolute folly in that measure and finally take it off the books. We will wait and see.

Then there are the issues around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the government's promises not to cut health. What do they do? They cut $270 million from the provision of health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. That is, for me, a double broken promise because this is the Prime Minister who came in saying that he was going to be the Prime Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and would deliver for them. Here we go! They have delivered chaos in the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. They have delivered cuts to health services. What do they do? They go to Andrew Forrest to give us the answers. And what is going to happen with the health and welfare card in this budget?

Who really believed the government when they said there would be no cuts to the ABC and SBS? Really, it is a joke that anybody would even believe that this government would not do that. They were always gunning for the ABC and SBS. You only had to look at comments by members of the opposition at the time to know very well that they would make cuts to the ABC. It was quite obvious that they were going to do that.

I move to Gonski and education. Again, who can actually believe the government when they make any commitments on anything?

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (17:12): I, too, rise to take note of our matter of public importance today, which is on the Prime Minister's broken promises. Certainly, we have heard, over and over again in this place—and we will keep repeating it—that Australians are entitled to have confidence in their politicians. But what the Abbott government has shown us is that you cannot have any confidence in them. You cannot believe anything they say because everything they have committed to has amounted to broken promises. We heard the pledges of no cuts to health. We heard the pledges of no cuts to education. We heard the pledge of no cuts to the SBS. We heard the pledge of no cuts to the ABC. I think that someone who puts themselves up as a future prime minister of the country should tell the truth. Yet, what we have seen, with every single one of those commitments, is a broken promise.
We heard, 'No change to superannuation,' and yet one of the first things the government did, in a dirty deal with the crossbench senators, was to freeze superannuation employer contributions—somehow trying to hoodwink workers that that money would end up in their pockets. Well, nobody believes that, and even the government has stopped trying to pretend on that one.

We also heard that there would be no changes to pensions, and yet we know, and Australian pensioners know, that if this government goes ahead with the cruel cuts they will be worse off—make no mistake. It does not matter how they dress it up. They can talk about savings because they do not like the word 'cuts', but whether it is cuts or savings, under the Abbott government, pensioners in this country will be worse off. Make no doubt about that.

Budgets should be the centrepiece of a government's agenda. They should represent the commitments made during an election campaign. They should be forward-looking and they should deliver to all Australians. With the Abbott government, we are seeing quite the opposite—nothing but broken promises and backflips. Worse than that, their first budget was so bad, so full of broken promises and so detrimental to Australians, that Labor rejected it outright, because we stand for fairness. Fairness is not something you can buy; fairness is something you believe in, and that first Abbott government budget clearly missed on the fairness agenda.

The Prime Minister said there would be no cuts to health. Despite repeated claims by the Abbott government that the GP tax is dead, research published in the highly respected Medical Journal of Australia and, more recently, in Deloitte Access Economics' Budget Monitor finds that the four-year rebate freeze, some sneaky backdoor deal of the Abbott government, will lead to even higher charges than the original GP tax. Low-income earners, pensioners and those who are unemployed will be slugged the hardest, as research tells us that the freeze on rebates will hit the hip pockets of ordinary Australians. This backdoor GP fee will hit harder than any of the GP taxes proposed by the Abbott government, as GPs will be almost $9 per patient worse off—and that cost will be passed onto patients. Australians will remember that the Prime Minister promised them 'no cuts to health', and they will remember that broken promise every time they pay more to see a doctor. They will remember that broken promise when they make the hard decision that they cannot afford to see a doctor—that they cannot afford that extra almost $9 that the Abbott government is pushing on them through some backdoor rebate freeze.

We have heard today from Mr Frydenberg on higher education. It is still on their agenda.

Government senators interjecting—

**Senator LINES:** Remember Mr Abbott's election promise? And those over there just parrot in with, 'Yes, that's right.'

**Senator LINES:** Remember Mr Abbott's election promise that there would be no cuts to education? Then we had the bombshell in last year's mean and harsh budget that universities would be cut and students would be slugged $100,000 for degrees—a big broken promise on education. According to the Assistant Treasurer, the Abbott government still wants to hike up university fees. Despite an overwhelming rejection by Australian voters, this out-of-touch government wants to continue to push students into $100,000 degrees. The Prime Minister is not doing any of the listening he promised he would do after he almost lost his job, and we
have certainly not seen the good government that he committed to again after his job was threatened.

Senator O'Sullivan: I tell you what: you people are hypocrites!

Senator LINES: From what has been leaked to the media, families will take a hit through cuts to family—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Williams): Order! Senator O'Sullivan, I suggest it would be helpful for you to withdraw that comment, please.

Senator O'Sullivan: I withdraw that, Mr Acting Deputy President.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you.

Senator LINES: So the Prime Minister is not listening and we have certainly not seen good government. We did not see it from September 2013; we are certainly not seeing it now. The Abbott government has no idea what good government is. We had all that talking up of the childcare package and what the government was going to do, and now we know that that package will come at a cost—robbing low-income families to help other families. The Abbott government somehow thinks it is fair to take $6,000 a year from some families to pay for its childcare package. Last year's budget favoured those who needed help the least and hurt those who could least afford it. It was bad for Australian households and bad for the Australian economy.

The Abbott government has continued to link spending measures that will be announced tonight to measures that were in last year's budget. The $6,000 cut to family payments remains even though it will not be in the budget papers tonight. What a dishonest, backdoor tax; what a dishonest, backdoor approach. This is what has been leaked. We hear tonight that the budget will be boring.

Senator Seselja interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order on my right! Senator Seselja!

Senator LINES: We know from the parroting coming from the Abbott government senators that, obviously, they do not like to hear the truth. The truth hurts them and they think that, by shouting and carrying on, they can drown out the truth. But the truth is there; Australians know. They can carp and parrot all they like, but the truth is well and truly out there.

Where has Mr Hockey been? He is missing in action. Fancy a Prime Minister saying that tonight's budget will be a boring budget. How can you have a forward-looking document and be an agenda-setting government if you have a boring budget? I do not know how you achieve a boring budget on the one hand and be an agenda-setting government on the other. I do not believe you can do that. I know that Australians agree that you cannot be an agenda-setting government that delivers, by the Prime Minister's own words, a boring budget. He is on the record as saying that. Really, what this budget is about is the Prime Minister saving his own job. No matter how he tries to hide Mr Hockey, no matter how he tries to put a photoshoot up—that is so awkward it is embarrassing, where the Prime Minister is touching the Treasurer on the arm, somehow trying to portray they are friends—no matter how much Mr Abbott puts Mr Morrison front and centre, the fact remains that Mr Abbott's success is linked to that of his hiding Treasurer, Mr Hockey.
We all know it is Mr Hockey who has his name as Treasurer, and he is such a lame-duck Treasurer. All of the major announcements are being done by the Prime Minister and Mr Morrison. We have hardly seen Mr Hockey, and when we have he has not been able to answer the questions. On the odd occasion that he has been in the media recently, he has done nothing but blunder or look very awkward, to say the least. The Abbott government and the Prime Minister know that Mr Hockey’s job is on the line with this boring budget. Let us see how it hurts ordinary Australians, once again. Let us see who the winners and losers are—because the biggest loser will be the Prime Minister.

Senator SESELJA (Australian Capital Territory) (17:23): I rise to contribute to the debate on this matter of public importance. It is difficult to know where to start, because there were about 27 conflicting messages from Senator Lines about what will be in this budget. But it was instructive, and Senator Lines gave us a glimpse of where she and the Labor Party are up to with their budget critique. The Labor Party's critique is now seriously flagging and running out of steam. Senator Lines, like her fearless leader, Mr Shorten, is running out of ideas and critique and really has nothing positive to say.

We heard about this 'year of ideas', that the opposition would present something to the Australian people about what they would do to fix the mess they left this country in. So far, we have heard nothing. When you have no ideas, when you have no plans and when you have no positive vision for the future, all you can do is have these flagging criticisms that change. We have heard it is going to be an 'unfair' budget, a budget about 'saving the Prime Minister', a 'boring' budget and a budget about 'saving the Treasurer'. Which is it? It will actually be a budget about the needs of the Australian people. It will be a budget about fixing the fiscal mess—that the vandals on the other side of this chamber left this country in—whilst seeking to grow jobs and support small business and families. That is what this budget will be about.

That is why we see such a confused critique from Senator Lines, Bill Shorten and others in the Labor Party. They just do not know what to say. It is one of the reasons we are seeing the Australian people waking up to Mr Shorten. We are seeing his personal approval rating go through the floor. Do you know why? It is going through the floor because people have figured out that he does not stand for anything. People have figured out that it is very easy, when the government makes tough decisions, to be critical. It is very easy to do that.

Over the last 12 months we have seen this critique falling flat. That is because the Australian people do not believe the Labor Party can fix the mess they created. The Labor Party are showing no signs of it in opposition—and we certainly know what their record is like in government. It is interesting to hear Labor senators talking about budgets and promises. I am reminded of Mr Swan's promise to return the budget to surplus. Hundreds of times, he promised that the budget was coming back to surplus. Mr Shorten went further than that: he said they had already delivered a surplus. He went out to the Australian people and said, 'We have delivered a surplus.' That was not true. In fact, we were tens of billions of dollars in deficit—every year.

Senator O'Sullivan: It hasn't been true for 26 years!
Senator SESELJA: We do recall, Senator O'Sullivan, that wonderful footage of Wayne Swan when he was asked when the Labor Party had last delivered a surplus. He scratched around, spilled his water and broke his glass and then—

Senator O'Sullivan: You were in primary school!

Senator SESELJA: I may have just entered high school that year. I am pretty sure it was 1989 and that was my first year in high school. Wyatt Roy may not have been with us then, but I was in high school the last time the Labor Party delivered a surplus. Senator O'Sullivan was but a young man in that generation when the Labor Party last delivered a surplus.

Politics is about choices: our plan for the future, our plan to grow the economy, to stimulate small business and support families, and to try to bring the budget under control. This is critical and this is an issue of fairness. This is a moral issue. Borrowing from your grandchildren or your children to fund your lifestyle—and the kind of profligate spending we saw under the Labor Party—is absolutely immoral.

Senator Wright interjecting—

Senator SESELJA: We have an interjection from the Greens. Have the Greens ever come up with a savings measure? They take the Labor Party view that a savings measure is, in fact, a new tax. They certainly do support new taxes—but it would not matter how many new taxes you came up with for the Greens; they would always find more ways of spending that money, more ways of throwing that money away. That is a moral issue. You would lumber generations to come with debt and deficit to pay for your lifestyle, to pay for ridiculous spending, to pay for the ridiculous schemes we saw under that Labor-Greens government. So we are not going to take lectures from the Greens. The Greens have the craziest of economic policies. They have no economic credibility.

Senator O'Sullivan: They have never been in business.

Senator SESELJA: Most Australians clearly believe that, because we see it in the level of support the Greens get across the country. It tends to be around eight to 10 per cent. So 90 per cent of Australians reject Greens policies, but unfortunately we have an opposition, the alternative party of government, which sometimes gets infected with the Greens' view of the world. We are certainly not going to be lectured to by the Labor Party on how to do budgets. We are not going to be lectured to by the Labor Party or their Greens coalition partners on how to fix the mess that they left us. But what we will do and what this budget will do—and I am confident that it will—is continue on the path of fiscal repair, which is critically important.

We have to acknowledge that this is a serious issue. We cannot just let the deficits keep growing as they would have under Labor. Whilst doing that, we need to deliver the critical services, but we need to support jobs growth and support the economy. We need to support small business, and I am very confident that there will be excellent news for small business in this budget. We need to support families. We need to help them in all sorts of ways, including getting back into the workforce and supporting them in those choices. By doing that, we can fix the mess that we inherited and we can ensure that we have a prosperous future as a nation. That is our responsibility as a government, that is a responsibility that this government is up to and it is a responsibility that those opposite have comprehensively failed at, which is why they have no credibility when it comes to these sorts of discussions.
Senator LAZARUS (Queensland) (17:31): As the only Independent senator for Queensland, my focus is, of course, on the people of Queensland. I have just returned from extensive tours around northern and western Queensland, much of which is on its knees. Communities are suffering due to the high levels of unemployment—particularly high youth unemployment—crippling drought and difficult business conditions. Since coming to office, the Abbott government has done nothing but cut, slash and burn. While the people of Australia are desperately trying to make ends meet, the Abbott government has quietly been cutting federally funded community support programs across the country and many of these cuts have occurred in my home state of Queensland. To make matters worse, many of the cuts are affecting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community, including First Australians.

I would like to give you an example. The Learn Earn Legend! program is a national Indigenous education program which was established in 2010. I will be seeking leave to table some documents regarding the Learn Earn Legend! initiative later on. It now sits under the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Tony Abbott’s portfolio. It was moved to this portfolio in 2013. The program was established to support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to stay at school, get a job and be a legend for themselves, their families and their communities. The program promotes the importance of education, training and employment to young First Australian peoples through the integration of sport and recreation. The Learn Earn Legend! program addresses three key closing the gap targets on Indigenous reform: to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy initiatives for Indigenous children within a decade; to halve the gap for Indigenous students in year-12-equivalent attainment by 2020; and to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

While I was in Townsville I visited several sporting organisations which are actively involved in the delivery of this program across North Queensland: the North Queensland Cowboys Rugby League Club and, of course, Townsville Fire, their women’s basketball club. These clubs, with federal government funding through the Learn Earn Legend! program, worked with year 12 Indigenous students to assist and support them to complete their year 12 education and transition into further study or employment. As a result of the good work of the Cowboys and Fire across North Queensland, hundreds of Indigenous youth are mentored, supported and encouraged by some of our country’s leading sports stars to succeed and build meaningful lives for themselves. Townsville Fire in particular focused on helping Indigenous girls to finish their high school education, build their self-esteem and plan for their future. They also encourage young girls to play sport and be healthy. The Learn Earn Legend! program is so successful it has become a model for other programs across the world. However, according to many sporting organisations and First Australian communities across the country, they are distressed because they have been advised by the Abbott government that funding has been cut and the program will cease at the end of June 2015.

To clarify and confirm this, my office rang the office of the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Nigel Scullion, to question the status of funding for this program only to be told that there was no such program. My office then rang the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet today to speak to someone regarding the status of the program, but was told by the operator and someone else who we were transferred to in the department that they
have never heard of the Learn Earn Legend! program. It would be nice if the Prime Minister's own department and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs actually knew about some of the programs they apparently administer. Maybe that is why funding is being cut. It must be easy to cut funding to a program you deliver but do not know exists. I call on the Prime Minister's office to get your department sorted, find out what you deliver and, once you have done this, reinstate funding to the Learn Earn Legend! program—

*Senator Scullion interjecting*

**Senator LAZARUS:** or whatever you call it now, to previous levels, because Indigenous youth across the country really need this.

**Senator BILYK** (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (17:36): I rise today to speak on the matter of public importance to remind the people of Australia about the Liberal-National coalition government's seemingly endless trail of broken promises. It has been a year since Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey unveiled a pathetic and cowardly budget that sought to attack the most vulnerable in Australia. The Australian people and the majority of senators in this place have rejected Mr Abbott's plans and his broken promises. Never has a government been so out of touch. Before the election, the Prime Minister—well, the Prime Minister for now—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, and that is what the Australian people expected. But, unfortunately, that is not what they got. Mr Abbott's promises have been broken time and time again.

Last year's budget paper show cuts of around $60 billion from health funding over the next decade. These cuts will increase emergency department waiting times, increase elective surgery waiting times and reduce the number of hospital beds across the country. Last year's budget also cut hundreds of millions of dollars from preventative health, dental clinics, mental health and medical training. They shut every Medicare local and sought to slug all patients with a GP tax—I think we had about four iterations of that—and higher prescription charges. This is clearly a broken promise which will hurt all Australians.

The last budget also ripped $30 billion from our schools, locked in inequality and ignored the need for further investment to ensure that Australian students do not fall behind. Education is the single most important thing that we can invest in to improve the lives of individuals and improve the productivity of our nation. It cannot be understated just how important education is. The government have shown that they either do not understand or do not care about the importance of education. And in tonight's budget they need to reverse this $30 billion cut and commit to funding years 5 and 6 of the Gonski reforms. They also need to keep their promise to fund the Gonski disability loading from 2015 to ensure that children with disability get the best educational outcomes that they can.

Our teachers and our schools do their best, but without extra resources students with disability will continue to miss out on vital educational opportunities. Before the election, the Abbott government promised to deliver extra funding for students with disability from 2015. Instead, they terminated the More Support for Students with Disabilities program—a cut of $100 million per year. And they have failed to implement the Gonski disability loading in 2015. They should be ashamed.
For the last year the government has fought tooth and nail to change the indexation for pensions, which would have left pensioners $80 a week worse off in a decade's time. Mr Abbott knew his cuts to pension indexation were unfair but stood his ground. He stood by his decisions and he put millions of pensioners through an entire year of worry and anxiety. Over that time, Labor fought relentlessly for pensioners and forced the government to back down from their plans for now. In addition, the government also cut, in the last budget, about $1.3 billion of funding for pensioner concessions, such as public transport, council rates and help with the cost of electricity and water bills. Mr Abbott and his ministers are both cruel and out of touch.

We have also seen more than half a billion dollars worth of cuts to the ABC and SBS. Since the 2014-15 budget, more than 250 people have been sacked from the ABC, and there are another 150 who will face the sack in coming months. Production facilities are being shut down, regional radio stations have gone and the Australia Network is but a distant memory. The Abbott government's dishonesty and incompetence is still hurting creative Australian jobs and ABC and SBS listeners and viewers. The ABC and SBS are crucial voices of our nation. I am extremely disappointed that women's sport is the latest casualty of the so-called Prime Minister for Women's unfair policies.

Tonight, Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey hand down their second—and possibly their last—budget. Already, we know it will contain more broken promises. We know it will not be fair; we know it will not be balanced. It will be a document designed to save the political skin of the Treasurer and the Prime Minister. But it will not work. The government have not learnt their lesson from last year's disastrous budget—(Time expired)

Senator LAZARUS (Queensland) (17:41): Mr Acting Deputy President, I seek leave to table a document.

Leave granted.

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (17:41): It is a great pleasure to take part in this debate on a matter of public importance today. It is always a pleasure to take part in any debate when the Labor Party starts on the issue of keeping promises. You have to admire the utter shamelessness and the brazen way that Labor Party senators have come in here this afternoon to lecture people, to lecture government senators, on the importance of keeping promises. This, of course, is the same Labor Party that promised 'no carbon tax' three days before an election and then introduced a carbon tax within months of forming a government. This is the very same Labor Party that promised it would deliver six budget surpluses and delivered six deficits. They promised that FuelWatch would keep prices low; they promised that Grocery Watch would keep grocery costs down. The list of broken promises from those opposite would take longer than I have time to recite this afternoon.

We heard in this Senate chamber not so long ago some very fine contributions from senators on all sides reflecting on the memory of the late Labor senator Peter Walsh from my home state of Western Australia, who, of course, served as Minister for Finance in the Hawke government back in the days when the Labor Party took a responsible attitude towards fiscal management and economic reform. Of course, it was Peter Walsh who memorably dubbed the Australian Democrats—who were at that time a major influence in this chamber—as 'the fairies at the bottom of the garden' because they dwelled in a make-believe world which economic reality seemed not to touch. As I have noted before, the mystical, ethereal spirit only
seems to have grown since that time. Yes, the Democrats have gone but they have been ably replaced by the Australian Greens and, increasingly, a Labor Party that seems to think fiscal challenges can just be resolved by magic, and magic alone.

I have no wish to be a Grinch—especially not on the eve of the budget—but the simple fact is that the deficit is not going to fix itself. The government promised the people of Australia that we would get the budget back on a path to surplus and would draw down Labor's unsustainable debt legacy. That is precisely what we have been attempting to do. That is precisely what we have been doing. That is what we will continue to do with tonight's budget.

Of course, Labor's shopsoiled complaints about cuts are not sustained by the evidence. The facts do not interest the Labor Party. But let's look for a moment at their claim of 'cuts' to education. Under the Abbott government Commonwealth spending for schools will actually reach record highs and increase over the next four years—an inconvenient truth for the Labor Party. At the last federal election the coalition promised to match the previous government's school funding commitments dollar for dollar over the four-year forward estimates. In fact, we have done better by adding almost $1.2 billion more than the previous government. This new investment is especially important in my home state of Western Australia as well as in Queensland and the Northern Territory after those states and territories had their funding cut by Labor.

But you do not have to take my word about the dishonesty of Labor's claims on supposed cuts to education funding. Where should we look? We should look to no other than the ABC's Fact Check Unit—not noted, of course, for being a mouthpiece for the government or for senators on this side of the chamber. But let's have a look at what the ABC's Fact Check Unit had to say last year in response to shadow minister Kate Ellis's claims about alleged cuts to education. The verdict was there for the world to see:

The Government did not cut $30 billion from schools in the May budget.

Senators Bilyk interjecting—

Senator SMITH: Senator Bilyk might be interested in hearing what the ABC's Fact Check had to say:

The Government did not cut $30 billion from schools in the May budget. The $30 billion figure is calculated over a 10 year period starting in 2017. It adds up the difference between the increase in funding that Labor says it would have delivered and the increase the Government may deliver. There is too much uncertainty for such a long-term estimate to be a reliable measure of either cuts or savings.

And what did they say about the shadow minister for education's commentary? They said:

Ms Ellis is sprouting rubbery figures. Surprised! Ms Ellis and the Labor Party are sprouting rubbery figures—an inconvenient truth: the coalition has not cut education spending.

Senator Bilyk interjecting—


Senator Bilyk: Where's the Gonski disability funding?

Senator SMITH: I know you want me to talk about GST distribution reform, but, Senator Bilyk, I will not be drawn—
The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Williams): Senator Smith, you will make your remarks through the chair, please. Continue.

Senator SMITH: I know that Senator Bilyk would love me to talk about GST distribution reform, but I will not. I will stick to the issue of pension cuts. So let's have a look at pension cuts. Pensions have increased several times under this government already, and, as a result of what Minister Morrison and the Prime Minister have recently announced, 170,000 pensioners will have a pension that is higher by around $30 a fortnight—and that includes 50,000 pensioners who will move on to a full pension. The Labor Party are running around saying this is a cut. It just does not measure up—another inconvenient truth for the Australian Labor Party.

Now, I am not here to assist the Australian Labor Party, but I might just take this brief opportunity in the time remaining to me to offer some words of caution. Less than a week ago we saw a stark example of what happens when one political party pursues a range of difficult but necessary policies to get the nation's fiscal situation back on a sustainable path while the other runs a national complaints bureau, indulges in class warfare and fails to acknowledge the folly of its own irresponsible spending while in office. I predict that the Prime Minister will be more like David Cameron, and Bill Shorten will be more like Ed Miliband. That is the inconvenient truth for the Australian Labor Party. Let's see the big ideas. (Time expired)

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

DOCUMENTS

Consideration

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Williams) (17:49): We now proceed to the consideration of documents. The documents for consideration are listed on page 7 of today's Order of Business and also on page 9 of the Notice Paper.

Mental Health

Senator WRIGHT (South Australia) (17:50): I rise to take note of a response given by the Minister for Health, Ms Ley, to a resolution of the Senate of 3 March 2015 relating to the mental health of those living in rural Australia and their ability to access mental health services. I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

The resolution noted a study by Melbourne's Monash University, which showed that fewer people in rural, remote and disadvantaged areas accessed mental health services. The study also found that rates of severe mental illness are higher in the most disadvantaged areas and that those in wealthier areas access psychologists and psychiatrists up to three times as much as those in the most disadvantaged areas.

I have a deep interest in the mental health needs of people living in the bush, thanks to a rural mental health tour I embarked on not long after I was elected to the Senate. The tour spanned 24 Australian towns and 55 meetings. Overall I sat down with about 185 people, from Launceston in Tasmania to Caloundra, Townsville, Cairns and Innisfail in Queensland to Geraldton in Western Australia and many places in between. I learned a great deal from the people I met with, who were consumers of mental health services, carers, service providers.
and community leaders. After the formal consultation ended, I shaped my observations into a report, *Voices and experiences*, which focuses on some of the key issues that emerged throughout the tour. As part of the report I also came up with a number of recommendations, which then formed the basis of the Australian Greens comprehensive rural mental health policy.

We know that 30 per cent of Australians live outside major cities but have far less access to support than those in cities. In fact, the figures show that when it comes to overall per person health expenditure, the most-remote Australians receive only eight per cent of the funding their city counterparts enjoy. Rural communities are the backbone of our nation; they are not only important to our sense of who we are in Australia and our history, but they are integral to our economy and, ultimately, to our survival. They help clothe us and provide food to sustain us. It is our farmers who are the custodians of our food future.

I am also conscious that people in the country face unique challenges that affect their mental health. There are the usual issues: unemployment, family breakdown and people struggling to make ends meet. But as well as these there are other unique rural challenges: droughts, floods and fires, the tyranny of distance and isolation. There are big challenges in terms of service delivery too: the difficulty of attracting the best and brightest to work in the country, funding shortages, trying to ensure the privacy of clients in small towns, culturally appropriate care and, once again, isolation and distance.

But rural communities are also innovative and self-reliant. Their responses to mental health challenges are often simple and practical. They know isolation is a problem, so they travel to meet people in their homes. They start community centres and neighbourhood houses to build resilience and support each other.

I came away from my tour convinced that addressing gaps in rural mental health services must be a priority. Implementing the recommendations of the Senate's 'hidden toll' report into suicide in Australia is a sensible place to start. The Nationals took this as a policy to the 2013 federal election, promising that they would implement these recommendations. Since then there has been no action on this urgent matter from the Nationals or their Liberal Party colleagues, in government.

The recommendations of the National Mental Health Commission's Review of Mental Health Programs and Services also offer practical, sensible ways of combatting issues identified in my consultation and highlighted in this recent Melbourne University study. Acknowledging that far too many Australians fall through gaps in services, it highlights the need for better coordination and integration and far more focus on the community based solutions that help people recover and function well and achieve concrete outcomes like work, good health and accommodation. There is no more time to delay, especially when it comes to rural Australia. Lives are at stake—years of wellbeing, functioning, productivity, participation in the community and, in some cases, life itself.

As the representative for Farrer in rural NSW I am sure Minister Ley understands the vital issues facing country people. I urge her to translate this knowledge into effective action that only she, as health minister, can take. I say to her: Minister, implement the recommendations of the 'hidden toll' report to bring down the suicide rate in Australia and particularly the disproportionate rate among people living in rural Australia. Get on and implement the
recommendations of the National Mental Health Commission's review, to start to address our shameful record on meeting the mental health needs of Australians, no matter where they live.

I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

DOCUMENTS
Consideration

The government documents tabled today were called on but no motion was moved.

Consideration

The following orders of the day relating to documents were considered:


Orders of the day nos 2 to 13 and 15 to 19 relating to documents were called on but no motion was moved.

COMMITTEES

Electoral Matters Committee

Corrigenda to Report

Senator O'SULLIVAN (Queensland—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (17:57): I present a corrigendum to the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters on the conduct of the 2013 election and matters related thereto.

Public Works Committee

Report

Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (17:57): On behalf of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, I present two reports of the committee as listed at item 15 on today's order of business, and I move:

That the Senate take note of the reports.

The first is the 3rd report of 2015—Fit-out of new leased premises for the Department of Finance, Australian Capital Territory. The second is the committee's 78th Annual Report, which outlines the committee's activities during the calendar year 2014.

Before I speak on the two reports, as the incoming Chair of the Public Works Committee, I would like to thank the previous committee chair, the member for McPherson, the Hon. Mrs Karen Andrews MP. Mrs Andrews has been a committed member of the committee since 2010. She chaired the committee from December 2013 to December 2014 and was instrumental in ensuring that the committee's scrutiny role was conducted with diligence and rigour. On behalf of the committee, we extend our congratulations to Mrs Andrews on her promotion to Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry and Science.

Mr President, the referral for the fit-out of new leased premises in Canberra to be occupied by Finance was received in December 2014. The estimated cost for the fit-out is $32.1 million. Finance proposes to occupy One Canberra Avenue, in Forrest. Currently, Finance's workforce is distributed across numerous buildings, under six tenancy agreements. The new
accommodation will allow the agency to consolidate most staff into a single tenancy, with only a small number of specialist staff to be located elsewhere.

On 13 February the committee visited the John Gorton Building, one of Finance's existing tenancies. This was followed by an inspection of the proposed new tenancy at One Canberra Avenue. The committee also held hearings on the same day.

The committee was told that market conditions in Canberra meant that Finance had been offered highly favourable terms for One Canberra Avenue, including a lease incentive to cover the fit-out. The committee questioned some aspects of Finance's cost-benefit analysis, seeking assurance that the proposed relocation and associated fit-out represent best value from a whole-of-government perspective.

In correspondence received after the first hearing, Finance revised its cost-benefit analysis, adding around $120 million to Commonwealth revenue that it advised had been inadvertently omitted. The committee pursued this matter in a second round of hearings and was subsequently reassured that the proposed lease and fit-out is the most cost-effective option.

The committee is therefore satisfied that the project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost, and recommends that the project proceed.

Before moving on, I would comment further on the committee's oversight role. Inevitably, when the committee examines the need for a fit-out, leasing arrangements will be raised and discussed. Although the committee's establishing act does not extend to it the authority to make recommendations in relation to leasing, the committee expects agencies to establish that leasing decisions have been made with due regard to whole-of-government costs and benefits.

Mr President, the second report I present today is the Public Works Committee's 78th annual report. In 2014 the committee reported on 13 works, with a combined cost of $2.3 billion. The committee had 35 meetings, including inspections and public hearings across the country. Projects scrutinised included a proposal to construct 50 tropically-designed dwellings at RAAF Base Tindal, at a cost of $89.4 million. As a result of concerns expressed by the committee, an amended project proposal was submitted for construction of the same number of dwellings but at a cost saving of around $47 million.

During the year the committee approved 38 medium works. These are projects with an estimated cost of between $2 million and $15 million. The combined costs of medium works approved in 2014 were $252 million.

The committee sought referral for inquiry of one additional medium work when it became apparent that the agency concerned had undertaken a series of similar projects in the preceding two years without notifying the committee. The committee has recommended that the Department of Finance write to all Commonwealth agencies reminding them of their obligations to the committee.

In July 2014 a delegation of the committee undertook a visit to Indonesia and Thailand under the leadership of the former chairman. The delegation examined progress on construction of new purpose-built Australian embassy facilities in both Jakarta and Bangkok. In its report on the visit, the delegation observed that both projects were progressing well and are expected to be completed on time and within budget.

Mr President, earlier I referred briefly to the committee's oversight role and the committee's authority under its establishing legislation. The committee is keen to ensure that its powers,
processes and practices continue to be relevant in the current construction environment. These are matters that the committee intends to consider further.

In concluding, I commend both reports to the Senate.

Question agreed to.

**Intelligence and Security Committee**

**Government Response to Report**

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals in the Senate and Assistant Minister for Health) (18:03): I present two government responses to committee reports of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security on the review of the listing of al-Murabitun, and the review of the listing of Boko Haram and review of the relisting of the Islamic State. In accordance with the usual practice, I seek leave to incorporate the documents in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

*The documents read as follows—*

**Australian Government response to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security report:**

**Review of the listing of al-Murabitun**

**MAY 2015**

**Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security**

**Review of the listing of al-Murabitun**

Tabled 16 December 2014

**Government's Response to Committee's Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1:**

The Committee recommends that the regulation, made under the Criminal Code section 102.1, to list al-Murabitun as a terrorist organisation not be disallowed.

**Response:**

The Government agrees with the recommendation.

**Australian Government response to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security report:**

**Review of the listing of Boko Haram and Review of the re-listing of the Islamic State**

**APRIL 2015**

**Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security**

**Review of the listing of Boko Haram and Review of the re-listing of the Islamic State**

Tabled 22 September 2014

**Government's Response to Committee's Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1:**

The Committee recommends that the regulation, made under the Criminal Code section 102.1, to list the Boko Haram as a terrorist organisation not be disallowed.
Response:
The Government agrees with the recommendation.

Recommendation 2:
The Committee recommends that the regulation, made under the Criminal Code section 102.1, to list the Islamic State as a terrorist organisation not be disallowed.

Response:
The Government agrees with the recommendation.

Economics References Committee Report

Senator McLUCAS (Queensland) (18:04): I present the report of the Economics References Committee Out of reach? The Australian housing affordability challenge and the interim report and move:

That the Senate take note of the report.

I am very pleased to speak to the tabling of the committee's report entitled Out of reach? The Australian housing affordability challenge. This is an important report, which documents the current state of affordability of housing in both the home ownership and rental-housing markets in our country.

The majority report finds, based on the evidence, that a significant number of Australians are not enjoying the security and comfort of affordable and appropriate housing and that, currently, Australia's housing market is not meeting the needs of all Australians.

We know that people who experience poor housing affordability are put at a higher risk of experiencing poor outcomes throughout their life. Poor housing affordability damages economic productivity, employment opportunities and increases risks to the stability of the financial system.

Families in housing stress struggle with their family budget, keeping food on the table, keeping their children engaged at school and maintaining their employment. So with this background the majority report calls for national leadership when it comes to housing and homelessness policy and programs. To achieve national leadership this government must change its approach. Firstly, there must be a minister for housing and homelessness. Witness after witness coming before our committee bemoaned the lack of a housing minister and the lack of engagement on housing policy by this government. Further, many argued that the minister responsible for housing needs to have an economic focus rather than just a welfare-based approach—that is, to be a housing minister, not a housing welfare minister.

Secondly, national leadership requires serious engagement with both local government and the states and territories—engagement that is not happening at present. This government has abolished the institutional architecture that facilitated good, cross-government planning and negotiation on service delivery. The National Housing Supply Council—gone! The COAG Select Council on Housing and Homelessness has also gone. The Prime Ministers Council on Homelessness has also gone. Gone are the governance structures that could and should exist to work across the complexity of intergovernmental responsibilities that naturally exist in housing policy. Access to safe, secure and affordable housing affects every Australian, and, as such, all levels of government need to be engaged.
Thirdly, the committee consistently heard that we need a national affordable housing plan. We heard this from right across the sector: from academics and researchers; from housing peak bodies like National Shelter, the Community Housing Federation of Australia and Homelessness Australia; from ACOSS; and from local governments, but also from the development sector—from the UDIA and MBA, to name just two. The City Futures Research Centre's submission detailed the attributes of a good national plan, and I commend their submission to the Senate; we quoted from it extensively in the report. The report also says:

In the committee's view, the Australian Government should be the driving force behind the development and implementation of such a plan.

So it was with significant disappointment that we saw that the government senators' dissenting report has reverted to the tired lines that we have heard from Liberal governments for a very long time. Over and over, they responded to the report's recommendations with: 'Not supported—is a matter for state and territory governments,' or, 'Not supported—is a state and territory issue,' or, 'Not supported—inconsistent with government's red tape reduction agenda.'

Mr Acting Deputy President Edwards, you know that government senators attended these hearings. They read the submissions. They heard, as we did, the calls for bi- and multipartisanship; of the need for certainty in land use and infrastructure planning and in decisions about population policy and taxation policy. They heard, as we did, that decisions taken by one government—or, indeed, even one part of a government—can and do impact housing affordability, albeit mostly unintentionally. So that is why Labor senators were keen to find areas of agreement, to reach the bipartisanship that was called for. It is disappointing, to say the least, that that was not achieved—or, in fact, even attempted.

Our majority report canvasses state and local government taxes, fees and charges, and zoning, planning and development approval processes, and recommends, in part, that the state and territory governments phase out conveyancing stamp duties, and notes that the ACT's recent stamp duty reforms provide a template or a starting point for others to consider. The committee heard from many submitters about the need for the Australian government to engage in decision making about our major cities, about urban regeneration and the use of transport corridors, about timely and coordinated infrastructure delivery, and so that is why the committee has recommended the re-establishment of the Urban Policy Forum.

Many witnesses and submitters discussed the effects of negative gearing and capital gains tax on affordability. In order to encourage an informed public debate on these contested issues, the committee recommends that if these issues are not addressed in the government's tax white paper then Treasury should prepare and publish a study on the influence of negative gearing and CGT on affordability of housing. It was disappointing that Treasury was unable to quantify the effect of the negative gearing arrangements on housing prices or rental affordability.

Time does not allow a full discussion of all of the considerations and the 40 recommendations of the committee, but that does not diminish their importance. I do, however, want to highlight one further issue.
In December last year, the government terminated the Housing and Homelessness Program in the Department of Social Services from June 2015. This resulted in the withdrawal of funding to National Shelter, to the Community Housing Federation of Australia and to Homelessness Australia, and a change to the funding arrangements for the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, AHURI. I want to record my concern about the evidence from the department that was vague about the reasons that decision was taken. One can only come to the conclusion that the decision taken was a political one.

Finally, I want to place on record Labor senators' thanks to all 231 organisations and individuals who submitted to this important inquiry. I thank those who presented evidence to the hearings, including witnesses who provided extra material for our consideration. I thank the Parliamentary Library staff who undertook some research at my request. And, most importantly, I want to thank the secretariat of the Senate Economics References Committee, Dr Kathleen Dermody, Dr Sean Turner, Ms Morana Kavgic and Ms Ashlee Hill, for their professionalism, for their patience and for their good humour.

I conclude by quoting from the press release from the UDIA that was released on Monday welcoming the tabling of this report. Mr Michael Corcoran says:

The Senate Inquiry into Affordable Housing report makes a valuable contribution to the national discussion on housing affordability …

And he concludes by saying:

We now well and truly know what the problems are; it's high time all levels of government engage with industry to identify and take the necessary actions to solve the increasing lack of affordable housing.

I commend this report to the Senate. I commend the report to the government. And I encourage this government to start to engage with housing and homelessness policy, for the good of all Australians.

Senator LUDLAM (Western Australia—Co-Deputy Leader of the Australian Greens) (18:13): Mr Acting Deputy President Edwards, I also acknowledge that you, on behalf of the coalition, played a role in this inquiry that actually traversed, I think, every state and lasted for more than a year. I would like to put on the record, on behalf of the Australian Greens, my thanks to the secretary and staff—particularly to Dr Turner and Dr Kathleen Dermody, and the secretarial staff, without whom we simply cannot do this kind of work.

There are a couple of witnesses who I would also like to specifically acknowledge. Can you imagine being called before a Senate inquiry into an issue that affects as many people as housing affordability does, just after you had had your funding cut, and asked to provide the kind of essential advice and advocacy that you had been doing on a shoestring of a budget. So I particularly acknowledge Carol Croce and Eddy Bourke from the Community Housing Federation of Australia, Adrian Pisarski and all those at National Shelter, and Glenda and her wonderful staff at Homelessness Australia. These are the most eminent experts and compassionate problem-solvers in the country in their field, and they were giving us evidence on what the consequences would be, as Senator McLucas identified in her contribution, of axing their funding. Mr Hockey, having introduced his task force after fobbing the entire country off for more than a year on this inquiry that the federal government was meant to be undertaking, has then shoved it under the rug of the tax white paper and the reform of the Federation. It is as though nobody is going to lift a finger to help people who are homeless or who are suffering skyrocketing rents and basically a generation that has given up on ever
being able to own their own home unless we sell a century's worth of disputes over the function and form of the Federation. We had what I thought were constructive contributions from everybody, including coalition senators. While collectively we bring very different perspectives to bear, at least the quality of debate and questions that were put to witnesses were very high. It was extremely disappointing to then see the government minority report effectively dismissing out of hand three-quarters of the recommendations on the basis that it is red tape. If you are so keen on operating the Commonwealth of Australia as though it is a corporation—effectively just sacking people and abolishing things—then go back to the private sector. Government is actually necessary for some things, and it would be very cold comfort for those homeless people in our community who are forced to go through another winter with nothing on the table.

Again, my acknowledgement and thanks go to those witnesses who, despite hearing the fact that they were going to need to wind up those entities I mentioned before, nonetheless had the grace to come and give us the benefit of their advice. We heard from a wide range of experts and practitioners, whether it be academics, advocates or those in the private sector or non-profit organisations, whose job it is to try and provide affordable housing. But a couple in particular came to mind in the West Australian hearing that we conducted. A number of people who are currently experiencing homelessness came and gave evidence to the inquiry for the first time. It was immensely moving, and it is good to see that some of the recommendations that they put forward have been taken up and, I believe, agreed to unanimously. What extraordinary courage and dignity Jonathan Shapiro, Owen, Bevan and Mort brought to the table to tell a bunch of senators and staff, who all had homes to go to after the conclusion of the inquiry, what it is like to actually suffer and experience homelessness. The description they gave is that once you fall off the bottom of the ladder, you suddenly realise that a bunch of the bottom rungs are missing. That is why it is so important that the Commonwealth steps up and accepts its responsibility.

The housing department in my home state of Western Australia has a decent reputation nationally for embedding good programs for homelessness in particular. They have just opened the new Foyer centre in Leederville, which effectively provides a way of getting people who are at risk of homelessness or are actually suffering it, particularly young people, and putting them into a safe environment with a roof over their head and a stable place to live. They then wrap services around them, including job training support and the kind of assistance that people need when they are suffering homelessness. It is devastating to hear from these people directly and realise that the single most important reason why many of them are on the streets is that their homes are not safe; that they are suffering domestic violence or intimate partner violence. It is not good enough for the government to then step back and say: ‘No, we are in the business of reducing red tape.’ That is one of the reasons why the bottom rungs on the ladder are missing. So thanks go to those individuals who gave evidence, and also a shout out to Nick—good on you for looking after your dad. These people have brought extraordinary dignity to the task, and it is absolutely up to us in this place to listen to them and then to carry out some of the things that they have proposed to us.

What really strikes me is that we have had report after report not just out of this place, but across the affordable housing sector for years, describing the meltdown in the Australian housing market—that there is a crisis. It is something beyond crisis—it is the largest single
component of the cost of living, and yet the government seems to pretend that it is really not the Commonwealth's problem, and that the states and territories can fix it up. But they simply do not have a broad enough tax base to do so. That is why we have made some recommendations that go to things like stamp duty and reform of the states' perilously narrow tax base. This is a report that contains answers though, of course, we could not get agreement on everything. We have also submitted some additional comments that propose, for example, that the Commonwealth develop an interest in mandatory standards for affordable housing in particular areas—inclusion rezoning, as it is known. That is something that we believe is essential, and should not have been left out of the majority report.

Similarly, on some of the comments that Senator McLucas made about tax, we have to finally confront the elephant in the room. I think it is quite positive that Mr Bowen, on behalf of the opposition, has indeed taken a tentative entree into the debate on behalf of the Australian Labor Party on those tax measures that tilt the housing market in favour of investors and substantially and systematically disadvantage first home buyers. There is no question at all that first home buyers are being priced out of the market by housing investors who are supported by incredibly generous tax breaks, including negative gearing and capital gains tax exemptions.

They should not be controversial. Mr Hockey, without even contemplating it, did not ask Treasury to do any modelling. Treasury told us they did not know what these tax breaks cost the taxpayer. However, we are fortunate that others and independent analysts have developed some models, and collectively it costs taxpayers billions of dollars. Recommendations that were supported by the coalition senators, and these are the areas that we would look forward to working with you in the brief time you have left in government, include things like the regeneration of urban corridors—that is, rather than considering that new housing supply always has to be on the fringe, and that the only affordable housing that we can provide for people needs to be dozens of kilometres away from jobs and schools and public transport. I am delighted that the coalition senators supported that recommendation. Housing supply bonds was another; supporting the possibility of a specialised instrument to get institutional investors into the affordable housing space. We think that that is an extremely productive idea, and a lot of work has been done on that. There are a number of other recommendations the coalition senators supported. We are very disappointed that you did not come and join the majority report, but I thank you on behalf of the Australian Greens for at least identifying the areas where you are amenable to working with the crossbenches and the opposition.

The reason why I point out that it is absolutely essential that we deal with the elephant in the room, which is the tax concessions, is simply, I think, a very powerful set of arguments around inequality in Australia: the fact that the top 20 per cent of people have five times more income than the bottom 20 per cent and we have an income tax system to deal with that fivefold imbalance between the top 20 per cent of Australians and the bottom 20 per cent. But the fact is the top 20 per cent hold 71 times more wealth, and that is because wealth is so generously concessionally dealt with under our tax system that we are taking human shelter, which is a human right, and converting it into just another asset class, and that is what is manifest in this extraordinary concentration of wealth in the Australian community. I do not think it is part of the Australian culture to do so, and it is something that we think, on budget night in particular,
there could have been some good news about for people suffering skyrocketing rents and people who have just about given up on buying their own home and, most significantly, people tonight who have nowhere to go. Those are the people that we will be letting down tonight if we refuse to take on these issues head-on, and the Greens are ready to negotiate with anybody in that regard.

Senator CANAVAN (Queensland) (18:23): It is a great honour to rise to speak tonight about this report that I had some time on as a committee member. I also want to recognise your efforts, Mr Acting Deputy President Edwards, as the deputy chair on this inquiry. I also would like to pay tribute to the secretariat staff and Dr Kathleen Dermody and Dr Sean Turner. They do stellar work under immense pressure at the moment. To get out a report of this quality and scope in the time available is a great credit to them.

I do want to start, though, by correcting what I believe are a few mischaracterisations from the previous speaker, Senator Ludlam. I think if, perhaps, the people listening tonight just took away his speech they would come away with the impression that the government has referred issues of homelessness and people living on the streets to a taxation white paper. That is exactly not the case. It is precisely not the case, because, as the good senator would know, through you, Mr Acting Deputy President, on 23 March this year the government announced that it would extend the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness for two years. In previous budgets it has only been extended for one year, including in the last budget of the former Labor government. But we have made the decision, we have listened to the sector and we have extended that for two years to give them certainty for that period and funded it to the extent of $230 million to be matched by state and territory governments. So it is absolutely not true that the government is not taking action on homelessness.

It is true that the broader issues about land supply and the correct planning of cities, as the senator raised, are very important issues that we do think need to be resolved through a federation process, and I will tell you why I especially have that view, and I think coalition senators in this report have that view. I believe we did have an approach under the Rudd government, in particular, of trying to do things unilaterally in this space, of trying to have the Commonwealth government step in with a major cities reform unit, with a National Rental Affordability Scheme. The approach that the Commonwealth knows best, we will come in and fix the problems of affordable housing and planning in cities was an absolute disaster. The problems with that rental affordability scheme are well catalogued. It was not particularly well targeted. It just shows the error of thinking that we, here in Canberra, know best and know how to tell states and territories how to do their job. If we were to repeat those mistakes, if we were to repeat history, we would only repeat the errors of that government, we would only lead to more fragmentation in this sector. We would not solve the underlying problem, which is to do this in a coordinated way, and that has to happen through a COAG process and/or through the broader reform of the federation.

I want spend the rest of my time in this contribution focusing on this issue of negative gearing because it is the one that I think is most important here. I think we can make it very clear that on this side of the chamber we do not stand for increased taxes. We want to promote investment in our community. We do not want to foreshadow making changes to longstanding taxation arrangements that would create fear and uncertainty for investors in this country, because we have had negative gearing for decades. We have had a tax assessment act since
the 1930s that has allowed legitimate deductions for business investment in this country. That framework that allows for legitimate deductions against income—you earn income from an investment, you are allowed to deduct the costs of earning that income—has been in place since we had income tax in this country. To say that that system is somehow responsible for the increase in prices we have seen in the last 10 to 15 years and the consequent reduction in affordability is just nonsense. It is total nonsense. It does not stack up with the data. We have had negative gearing for much longer than that period, so somebody needs to explain how, suddenly, the investors in this country woke up, apparently 10 or 15 years ago, and said: 'Well, because we have negative gearing—we didn't realise it for decades before—but now we're gonna bid more at auctions and all those things.' It just does not stack up. That is wrong.

Another thing that I think Senator Ludlam got wrong was that somehow there is some problem with tax deductions flowing to high-income earners or people with high wealth. We have a progressive tax system. I support a progressive tax system. The very fact we have a progressive tax system is going to mean that people—

Senator Ludlam: For income.

Senator CANAVAN: Yes, for income, Senator Ludlam! So, if you are going to have deductions from income, where are those deductions going to flow to? Where are their values going to flow to most greatly? It is going to flow to those people that are taxed more greatly. Who is taxed more greatly in this country? High-income earners. That is who is taxed more, so they are going to get more deductions. Of course they are going to. That is how the system works. If the Greens have a different proposal, if they do not want to have a progressive income tax system, if they want a flat income tax system, fine, let's put that on the table. But that is not the system we have.

I also want to finish by saying that I have never seen a workable proposal to change this system. There are proposals going around at the moment that we could somehow quarantine negative gearing to new houses or to new investors. But how does that work? If I buy a house and land package now and I get the deduction because this is a new house, then in a year or two's time I want to sell that house to some other person, do they lose the negative gearing? Do they lose the tax deductions? That will never happen. People look forward when they are investing and, because of that, that will affect their investment decisions now, and I, on this side of the chamber, stand for investors in this nation. I think that people who want to invest in our housing, invest in businesses, invest in their future should be supported and should not be denigrated by our parliament, because it is only through that investment in capital that we are going to get the economic growth and returns that will continue to make this a very prosperous country that can provide generous benefits, particularly to those who are homeless.

Debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 18:30 to 20:30

BUDGET

Statement and Documents

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (20:30): I table the budget statement for 2015-16 and other documents as indicated on the list circulated in the chamber.
The list read as follows—

The Budget 2015-16—Statement by the Treasurer (Mr Hockey), dated 12 May 2015.

Budget papers—

No. 1—Budget strategy and outlook.
No. 2—Budget measures.
No. 3—Federal financial relations.
No. 4—Agency resourcing.

Ministerial statement—Partnership for regional growth 2015-16—Statement by the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development (Mr Truss) and the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development (Mr Briggs), dated 12 May 2015.

I seek leave to move a motion relating to the documents.

Leave granted.

Senator CORMANN: I move:

That the Senate take note of statement and documents.

Debate adjourned.

Proposed Expenditure

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (20:30): I table the following documents:

Particulars of proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2016.
Particulars of certain proposed expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2016.
Particulars of proposed expenditure in relation to the parliamentary departments in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2016.
Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2015.
Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2015.

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

Leave granted.

Senator CORMANN: I move:

That the documents be referred to legislation committees for the consideration of the estimates.

Question agreed to.

Portfolio Budget Statements

The PRESIDENT (20:31): I table portfolio budget statements for 2015-16 for the Department of the Senate, the Parliamentary Budget Office and the Department of Parliamentary Services. Copies are available from the Senate Table Office.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance) (20:31): I table portfolio budget statements for 2015-16, and portfolio supplementary additional estimates statements for 2014-15, for portfolios and executive departments in accordance with the list circulated in the chamber. Copies are available from the Senate Table Office.

The list read as follows—

CHAMBER
Estimates of proposed expenditure for 2015-16—Portfolio budget statements—Portfolios and executive departments—
  Agriculture portfolio.
  Attorney-General’s portfolio.
  Communications portfolio.
  Defence portfolio.
  Department of Human Services.
  Department of Veterans’ Affairs.
  Education and Training portfolio.
  Employment portfolio.
  Environment portfolio.
  Finance portfolio.
  Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio.
  Health portfolio.
  Immigration and Border Protection portfolio.
  Industry and Science portfolio.
  Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio.
  Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio.
  Social Services portfolio.
  Treasury portfolio.
Estimates of proposed supplementary expenditure for 2014-15—Portfolio supplementary additional estimates statements—Portfolios—
  Attorney-General’s.
  Communications.
  Defence.
  Education and Training.
  Environment.
  Foreign Affairs and Trade.
  Immigration and Border Protection.
  Industry and Science.
  Infrastructure and Regional Development.
  Social Services.
  Treasury.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The PRESIDENT (20:31): Order! I propose the question: That the Senate do now adjourn.
I rise to speak today to commemorate the passing of Don Goninon, a long-time member of the Tasmanian Branch of the Australian Labor Party. He passed away on Anzac Day this year, aged 85. Don joined the Australia Labor Party when he began working, at the age of 14, thanks to the influence of his Uncle Cecil and much to the dismay of his father. Don was a strong trade unionist and a member of the Labor Party for a remarkable 70 years. As a branch member, he tirelessly campaigned for the Labor Party behind the scenes, never seeking any personal glory. Don had a hard childhood; his mother died when he was just nine months old. All photographs and other reminders of his mother were placed under the house, and Don and the other children were never allowed to mention her name. His father remarried when he was two, but it was his older siblings who provided the love and support he needed.

Don joined Charles Davis Limited, a Tasmanian hardware business, as an apprentice and spent six years there. However, Don understood the power of education and asked to train as a teacher—which he did by studying at night while still working during the day. As a teacher he spent over 40 years educating students in Hobart, primarily in woodwork, metalwork and technical drawing. Generations of students were taught by Don Goninon, and all were left with a lasting impression. For a large portion of his career he taught in Tasmanian state government schools, before becoming a senior master at the Hobart private school Hutchins.

Don was well known for having a beautiful singing voice, and he had a great love of music and singing. Unfortunately, due to family circumstances he never had the opportunity to take singing lessons and was unable to take up the offer made by a talent scout who recognised his natural ability at a young age. At home or in the car, he would often sing for the enjoyment of his children. He spread that enjoyment widely, often singing at weddings, funerals, birthdays and other special occasions. At the age of 80 he fulfilled a lifelong goal by recording a CD. Fittingly, the music at his memorial was a recording of Don singing—with Don's favourite singer, Frank Sinatra, providing a little help as well.

Don was a very giving man and sought to serve his community wherever he could. Despite having a hip operation at the age of 83, he returned to volunteering three days a week with the City Mission until just five weeks before his passing. Don had a lovely sense of humour. Fittingly, one of his favourite lines was: 'No-one gets out of life alive.' Don was a great inspiration to his children. Even after his death he continued his habit of giving to others by donating his body to science and requesting that, in lieu of flowers at the service, donations could be made to the Hobart City Mission. My condolences go to Don's wife, Marguerite; his children, Wayne, Karen, Paul, Catryna and Richard; and his many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was particularly proud of the contribution made in this place by his daughter, Senator Bilyk.

I now turn to the passing of Noreen Clarke, another life member of the Tasmanian Branch of the Australian Labor Party. Noreen was an outstanding contributor to the Tasmanian Branch of the Australian Labor Party. She held very strong and passionate views about equality and making sure that people who need a helping hand are given a strong voice. Noreen typified what a life member of a political party is all about. In her electorate of Lyons, no matter which candidate was running she was there to give some advice and support. Over
the many years I have known Noreen, I found her to be a charitable, giving and caring person. She was a credit to her family; she raised five children. One of Noreen's grandchildren, Adam Clarke, is sometimes a bit of a pain in the butt to me. Nevertheless, he is very politically motivated, and I am sure Noreen was very proud of the contribution he makes to the Tasmanian branch.

Noreen used to work on polling booths. In those days it was from 8 am to 8 pm, and at many elections she was the only person working on the booth. With her generosity, her inspiration and her openness to support any candidate who came forth and wanted her support, she was always there. She is going to be sadly missed by the West Tamar Branch and its members and indeed by all who knew her and loved her for the contribution she made to the great Australian Labor Party.

Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Services

Senator LINES (Western Australia) (20:37): I rise to speak about a conference I attended recently in Geraldton, hosted by the Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Services. But before I do that I want to put the conference in context—the context the Abbott government has created, particularly the Prime Minister, who said he would be the PM for Indigenous affairs, and that he would do things differently. He said:

I want a new engagement with engagement with Aboriginal people to be one of the hallmarks of an incoming Coalition government …

Well he sure has done things differently. I want to quote from an article by Larissa Behrendt and Andrew Meehan. The article said:

To an outsider, Indigenous affairs must look like a strange, logic-free zone right now. Over the past year we've seen the threat of remote community closures in Western Australia, the whole of portfolio Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) tendering process rolled out, attempts to weaken protection from racial vilification under the Racial Discrimination Act, significant federal budget cuts to Indigenous affairs, and a number of ill-considered comments from the prime minister that caused great offence to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In the last couple of weeks we have seen protestors across Australia and, indeed, across the world, protesting against the closure of 150 homeland communities in Western Australia. But why have we not listened and learnt from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? They have been telling us for generations that their wellbeing, their future and their interests are best represented when they lead, not us. Under the Abbott government, and the Western Australian Barnett government, their interests are still being determined by whitefellas and, in the case of Western Australia, there is no input, consultation nor regard for the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In April, I attended a two-day conference in Geraldton hosted by GRAMS, the Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service, an Aboriginal controlled health service. Its focus was on prison health—examining ways to ensure that Aboriginal people emerging from prison got the best possible support to try and prevent future incarceration and ensure that their health stayed on track. The conference was well attended. It was well attended by Aboriginal controlled organisations offering a range of services in the region, supporting their local communities. There were two homeland communities at the conference. Both are longstanding, thriving communities not in receipt of any government funding, and steadfast in their resolve that no government was going to move them on.
We heard shocking stories and statistics at this conference—high rates of Aboriginal incarceration, increasing rates of incarceration of Aboriginal women, and the over representation of Aboriginal young people in WA's juvenile justice centres. A 2014 report by the Inspector of Custodial Services described living conditions at Roebourne Regional Prison in Western Australia as 'intolerable and inhumane'. We met and heard from the health worker who works in Roebourne prison. She said that almost 100 per cent of the prisoners in the Roebourne jail were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The report from the inspector also said that living conditions—without air-conditioning, in a region known for its consecutive days of 40-plus degrees during the summer months—were intolerable. The overcrowding of cells—six people crammed into cells built for four—was intolerable. All of these issues have been reported since 2010, but no action has been taken by well-meaning white bureaucrats and well-meaning white government officials.

The GRAMS conference was outcomes focused, and many thanked the Abbott and Barnett governments, who have united Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a way that they had not been able to do themselves. So they thought that that was one achievement of the Abbott government!

I thank Sandy Davies, the conference organisers, the board of GRAMS and all who attended the GRAMS conference, and I wish them well in their endeavours. The conference determined to find its own solutions to its own issues, and has resolved to form a group of people from the Geraldton area to work with communities and organisations to develop Aboriginal controlled responses to prison health.

**Beef Australia 2015**

**Senator CANAVAN** (Queensland) (20:41): I would like to spend a short moment this evening to pay tribute to the organisers of Beef Australia 2015. This year it was held in Rockhampton, last week. It was clearly the best Beef Australia expo we have ever had. That has been the overwhelming feedback from all of those who attended. It is an event that has been going since 1988, and it continues to get better every three years, when it is held.

I want to pay tribute tonight to the organisers of Beef Australia 2015, particularly the chairman of Beef Australia, Blair Angus, and his hardworking wife, Josie Angus, and the CEO of Beef Australia, Denis Cox, and his hardworking team. They did work very hard for almost three years. I remember first meeting with them. It probably would have been almost three years ago while they were in the very initial stages of planning for the event. At that meeting, even at that stage, they had a vision for what they wanted to achieve. They wanted to showcase the beef industry to the world. They wanted to help facilitate trade and business with other nations. They wanted to make Australian consumers more aware of the beef industry. They wanted to provide an opportunity to educate other beef producers and share information among them.

They certainly did achieve all those things, particularly through the very successful global celebrity chef program, where they invited celebrity chefs from all around the world. Some of these chefs from the Middle East have hundreds of millions of viewers of their programs and most of us have probably never heard of them. They came out here and produced some wonderful beef-featured meals and have also recorded some shows which they will show back in their countries and promote Australian beef.
I must say, I did my bit to promote Australian beef. I have probably come back a little bit wider and more fulsome after last week. I certainly did not go hungry during Beef Australia week. I am based in Rockhampton, so I basically camped there the whole week. I suppose that I could say that my marble score after last week has certainly gone up after having some very nice Wagyu and other products! I did thoroughly enjoy it, and so did many people in Rockhampton and the wider region. More than 90,000 people attended Beef Australia, last week. The numbers were up from the previous expo. There were around 4,500 cattle that had been entered in the various competitions, from over 30 breeds all across the country. I would emphasise that they came from all across the country.

I was lucky enough to attend the carcass beef dinner and award ceremony last Tuesday night. I was disappointed that Queensland did not do as well as I had hoped in that competition. Tasmania and, I think, Western Australia—Senator Reynolds, through you, Mr Acting Deputy President—were very well represented in the winners list of that carcass competition based on MSA grading levels, but Queensland did have a few victories. We also won the best breed of bull, a Brahman breed, as you would expect in Rockhampton, so that was some consolation.

We also had representatives or visitors from 55 countries come to Beef Australia 2015. That is a remarkable achievement, double the number of countries that attended the 2012 expo, just three years ago. I want to particularly highlight that I think it is a great achievement of the committee to attract so much interest from 55 different countries. It is about one-third of the countries that exist in the world. When you think that the beef production sector is very concentrated in a few of those regions and countries, that is a remarkable achievement. Certainly the beef trade is not so concentrated. I want to pay tribute to our beef industry and the efforts they make on the front line of our diplomatic efforts. Often the beef industry have more people and more communication with the far-flung regions of our world than our diplomatic corps would—they are out there trying to sell beef to everybody because everybody eats beef.

I worked for a beef company for a time. I was not working in the sales team, but I went around to the sales team and asked them, 'Which countries of the world do we sell beef to?' I needed to know for some form or something. One of the salesman pointed to a map and said, 'We sell it everywhere except there,' indicating North Korea. That was a slight exaggeration, but it was not too much of an exaggeration. We do sell beef pretty much all around the world, including to Mongolia and many countries in the Middle East. We should cherish the work that our beef industry do to help our diplomatic efforts, because it is often them who are establishing very strong relationships in South-East Asia—in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia and Malaysia. They bring our countries and nations together more and establish the kinds of friendships that will help us get through more difficult times in those relationships.

Also, there was around a $32 million injection to the local economy thanks to Beef Australia 2015. It was a very well timed injection to our local economy. As some in this chamber would know, the Central Queensland region has been hit pretty hard in the last couple of years, firstly not by a natural disaster but by more of an economic disaster in the sense that the mining industry is a little bit down and something like 15,000 jobs have been lost in the black coal mining industry in the past two or three years. That has been very difficult for Central Queensland to adjust to. Of course, at the beginning of this year a
category 5 tropical cyclone hit the Central Queensland region and also did quite substantial
damage, particularly to the economy, to local farmers in the region and to local tourism assets.
It is great to see that the region has bounced back on its feet. There were many visitors over
the Easter period, and I hope there will be many more during the winter months. It is a great
place to visit during winter because it is much warmer than this place. Many people took that
opportunity during the Beef Australia event.

A $32 million injection was a great thing for our economy and it was showed the great
investment that this government made. I am very proud that this government promised at the
last election to invest $2.75 million to help Beef Australia to be conducted. We were true to
that promise and we helped the committee put on such a wonderful event. I remember helping
the committee achieve that funding commitment, and it is a great result for the whole of the
beef industry in Australia. I certainly hope that future governments support future events. As I
say, they occur every three years.

I want to finish on a couple of policy related matters. We were also lucky enough last week
to have great representation from all levels of government. The Queensland agriculture
minister was at the event earlier in the week, but we also had the Deputy Prime Minister on
Wednesday and the agriculture minister on Thursday, and, finally, on Friday the Prime
Minister came to visit Beef Australia 2015. I certainly thank him for making the time to come
up to the event. At that event, he made a very exciting announcement for the beef sector and
for northern Australia generally. He announced that the Commonwealth government will
invest $100 million into a new beef roads program. Some would remember that the Menzies
government invested in the first beef roads program in the 1960s. They developed roads like
the Burke Developmental Road and the Gregory Developmental Road. Many roads that still
exist across northern Australia are only there thanks to the investments made by the Menzies
government, and it is only because of those roads that we can eat cattle that are often bought
in northern Australia but sent down south to finally end up, through some process I will not
go into, on our plates for dinner. Those roads are the arteries that keep our beef industry alive
and pumping, and they certainly need further investment.

This $100 million is very exciting because it is going to also leverage a new tool that has
been developed by the CSIRO. I am excited about that tool; I do not know about others, but I
think the new transit tool that the CSIRO developed is a revolution for the beef sector. I will
briefly describe it for those who have not kept up to speed with the transit tool. The CSIRO
use NLIS data from the little ear tags that most cattle have in our country. They record when a
cow is sold and they have taken that information for 88,000 different transit points—that is
farms, feedlots and meatworks—all around the country. On a Google map, they can show you
how roads are used more by the cattle sector throughout the year. They can look at where the
pressure points are, and we are going to use that information to work out how best we can
spend that $100 million to alleviate the pressure on our road network and bring down costs for
cattle producers in our country, because often, particularly for our northern producers, the cost
of transporting a cow from the producer to a feedlot or a meatworks in the south can be
anywhere above $100 a head and sometimes it can even be up to one-quarter to one-third of
the final value of that beast. If we can make headway on those costs, we can do more to return
value to our beef producers and have a stronger beef sector for our nation.
Penguin District School

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (20:51):
Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting one of our great local schools on the north-west coast of Tasmania, the Penguin District School. I was there to meet with some very special young Tasmanians, who made the bold decision to step outside their Tasmanian lives and experience a slice of a very different sort of life—halfway across the globe—in Cambodia.

I was pleased to be able to contribute to the students’ successful fundraising efforts to send 16 students overseas on the trip of a lifetime. The trip was taken as part of an elective subject called Third-World Classroom. This subject gave students an insight into the experiences of other young people—who have a very different experience of growing up from the one experienced by young Australians. Students saw so much in their 10-day trip, including Tuol Sleng prison and the Killing Fields, which still signposts the location of mass graves where more than one million people lost their lives under the Khmer Rouge regime. They also had the chance to visit the grand palace and the temples of Siem Reap.

The highlight of the trip for many of the students was three days spent in a village called Treak, just outside Siem Reap. This is a typical Cambodian village but is nothing like the villages we know in Australia. Penguin District School students quickly discovered how different village life is in Treak. Most people there are subsistence farmers or fishermen. Fifty per cent of adults are illiterate. There is no piped water. All the water comes from wells, with many families sharing those wells, and the water has to be boiled or filtered before it is safe to drink. Half the residents do not have a toilet and for those who do there is no sewerage system. There is no gas supply, no tarmacked roads and no phone system.

One third of families in Treak earn less than 40c a day and almost 30 families are classed as living in extreme poverty, which means they have no land, no jobs, no savings and no support from family members. Families struggle to pay for education for their young people, which puts them at great risk of continuing the cycle of poverty.

I am told the students did their school—and their country—proud during their time in the village. They made a great contribution as they set about helping to build roofs, put in bamboo supports and build walls for the village classrooms. The students were particularly pleased that they could purchase new whiteboards for the village. Of course, it is always worthwhile to go to new places and get exposure to new things, but what I learnt when I met these students was that they had gained something even more valuable: they had developed the vital qualities of respect, gratitude and empathy.

When I visited the students after they got home I was struck most by the fact that they had been able to step outside their own experience and put it in a wider global context. It is something many young people never get the chance to do. I asked them a couple of questions to get a better idea of what they had learnt and how it made them feel about their lives back home in Australia. I could try to paraphrase the responses, but I think they tell the story so much better than I could. Jayden Van Essen spoke of his shock. He said:
Life in Australia is so different and now I see why people say we have it so lucky. Being in Cambodia for weeks, I really noticed the stench off the streets and how it was really dirty, and comparing that to Australia, it is just so weird even comparing them. They truly are two separate countries unfortunately.
Jorji Walker also thought about the difference between Australian and Cambodian lives. She said:

The most important thing I learnt would have to be from the local people. I loved how they were so happy with their lives even with so little surrounding them in their homes, streets and even lives. It has made me realise how much we take for granted and how privileged we are to have the things we have.

Jorji noted the change in herself as a result of the experience. She said:

I'm seeing that I automatically stick up for human rights, people in third-world countries, poverty, racism et cetera. I find myself wanting to help EVERYONE in any possible way I can.

Bravo, Jorji. What great words. Nicholas Canales also came away with a great appreciation for his life in Australia. He said:

I began to see really how privileged I am to have the life, family, home and above all education I have here in Australia. Because of this I found myself working harder at school and not taking things for granted in the slightest way.

What a great thing to take away from his experience. Kate Hall had a similar perspective. She said:

It woke me up in a sense, opened my eyes to what was really happening around me. Life isn't always a pleasant ride, reaching the odd ups and downs but quickly finding a solution with the support of friends and family. Our interpretation is paradise compared to some of the lives lived over in places like Cambodia. Yet when I compare which is happier, the people that have nothing are the ones who come out on top because they have learnt the most important lesson of all and that is to live your life while you can no matter what situation you are in. So rise above the things that bring you down and write your own story, follow your own path and be what you want to be.

Kate also said:

All the children over in places like Cambodia dream of is to have a life like ours, to know that for sure they will come home to dinner on the table, to know the family is safe and sound. Yet we hardly think nothing of it; we couldn't even put it into perspective. We are same, we are all equal, yet we don't have the equal amount of luck. We have no control over were we are born or what the weather will be tomorrow but we have a choice in who we are and what difference we make in the world.

What wise words, Kate—this is someone who is about 15. I am sure she will go on to make a positive difference. Ruby Williams said the most important thing she learnt from the trip was that we are so unaware of the world around us. She said:

There's so much more than our first world problems; there's people out there with very little and they're happy; we need to learn from them. The trip definitely made me see my life in Australia differently. We are so fortunate and show little gratitude for what we have while others would give up everything to live the way we do.

I would also like to mention Tyson de Groot, who said he learnt 'how much we have in Australia compared to Cambodia and how many little things they have'.

You can see that these young Tasmanians did not just have a great time and exciting new experiences, they also got the opportunity to grow and develop wonderful qualities that will stand them in good stead as exemplary community members. The families around Penguin District School are not rich; in fact, many live on incomes that are well below the Australian national average. But these students certainly got a first-hand understanding of what a rich nation Australia is in comparison to so many other countries. They also learnt the invaluable truth that your attitude has a lot to do with how rich you really are.
Sadly, there are many in Australia who do not have the benefit of this experience. There are many here who would begrudge the poorest nations in the world the support that wealthy countries like Australia can provide. We all too often think about ourselves and, in doing so, fail to understand the suffering that so many others go through on a daily basis. The attitudes of these enlightened young people gave me real hope for the future—hope for a society that is driven by compassion rather than greed and hope for a country that will support measures to give generously to support projects in developing countries. These projects can cost relatively little for a wealthy nation like Australia, but they can make such a difference to the ability of developing countries to meet their basic needs and chart a path toward sustainability.

It is timely that I am discussing this on a night when we have learnt what the savage foreign aid cuts will mean to so many countries around the world. It saddens me greatly that a rich country like Australia seems unwilling to take its responsibility as one of the richest members of the global community to help other countries to prosper too. One of the things that the students got involved in when they returned to their school was transforming many of the students by allowing them to live examples of experiences that the kids in Cambodia had. One of the things was taking the chairs away for a whole day so that the students could experience what it was like for students in Cambodia. They also painted a number of poles in one of the classrooms. They painted them with all sorts of messages like: how many countries around the world live well below the poverty line? They did this with symbols, which meant that other students had to ask the question: what does that actually mean? They poured their experiences out across the school by involving the students in living the experiences they had, even though they were not able to go on the trip.

I would certainly like to give thanks to the students and the Penguin District School for sharing their stories with me. I would also like to thank the students—who are, as I said, all aged between 14 and 16—for the wealth of compassion that they have brought back.

**Mental Health**

**Senator WRIGHT** (South Australia) (21:02): Tonight I would like to share some moving and fascinating accounts I have been privileged to hear about peer work and discuss the role and value of this unique style of work in assisting people who are recovering from mental ill-health. To quote from one peer worker I met: ‘We have the tools through our experience to support others who are suffering.’ In the mental health arena, a peer worker is a person who has lived experience of mental illness. Peer workers draw on knowledge and skills from their own experiences to help and support others who are on a similar journey. So an essential element of a peer worker’s job description is that they have experienced mental illness. But other aspects of their jobs and the skills they will need will vary, depending on the role that they are carrying out.

Over recent weeks I met with peer workers from a range of organisations in South Australia, including Mind Australia, Neami, Centacare and the Mental Illness Fellowship of South Australia. I also met with Sally Haskard and Shandy Arlidge who are conducting an 18-month project for the Mental Health Coalition of South Australia to support the development and growth of the lived experience workforce in the non-government mental health sector. Each of these meetings increased my understanding of the power and the potential of peer work and I came to understand what a variety of roles they may perform. I heard about one-on-one personalised support for someone embarking on a recovery journey, as is offered by
the PHaMs program—the Personal Helpers and Mentors program—and peer workers running support groups offering education, information and inspiration. I also heard about peer workers accompanying people to employment agencies and job interviews, offering immediate support in the emergency departments of hospitals, and working in clinical settings to help educate and inform their colleagues and to provide a bridge between consumer and clinician.

Why is peer work so powerful? Because clearly it is. Without exception, every person I met loved their work and lit up as they discussed their potential to help others. For some it is as simple as the fact that they 'get' the experience of mental illness. This is so important for the people that they work with. Through their own experience they can convey acceptance, understanding and empathy. I commonly heard that peer work dramatically undercuts stigma and changes the usual power imbalance experienced by people living with mental illness, from the helpless—or the helped—and the helper to one person walking alongside another, offering support and acceptance from a point of common understanding. Anne expressed to me that this as being able to relate to people on the same level. She described an unspoken 'knowing'—a conversation that asks, 'You get it?' with the answer being, 'Yes,' and no more needs to be said. Those of us who have not experienced the challenges or stigma associated with mental illness cannot imagine what a relief it must be to be working with someone who just 'gets it'. Robyn told me that peer work can yield amazing results because the client knows that you know what it is like and they also know you have their back.

A vital aspect of peer work is the modelling and the hope it conveys when a person who has experienced significant mental illness is able to work, function and effectively assist others. Mark, a peer worker at Neami, told me that his work shows that 'living with a mental illness and living a full life is possible'. Another worker told me they can encourage their clients to think beyond their current circumstances, especially if they are just starting out on their recovery. He said, 'They can dare to dream. There's more to life than what they're experiencing.' I heard how it is very important for peer workers to be there for people right at the start of their recovery journey and to help them take their first steps. They know the fundamental question for many people will be: 'Am I ever going to get better?' Through their work, some peer workers told me they can also show that failure can be okay, that there are various options or pathways to get where a person wants to go—that they, by doing what they are doing, can model: 'I don't feel very comfortable with this today, but it's okay. It won't kill me.'

In my meetings I was curious about the idea of disclosure. It became clear to me that it is one of the most powerful tools available to a peer worker: the sharing of personal experience. But important questions arise: when to do it; how to know if it is right; and what boundaries need to be in place? Without exception, I was impressed by the emotional intelligence and wisdom of the peer workers I met with, who have to constantly negotiate this balancing process. Nina has an ethic of sharing personal information when it is 'purposeful'. Another worker told me, 'If someone asks you a question, it's about being honest with them.' Another told me, 'It's about them, and you're guided by them. Some will welcome your experiences, but it's not about imposing your experience onto someone else.' Julie has a clear practice of using her lived experience in an intentional way, clear that it must only be when it will assist the other person.
As well as benefiting their clients, it is clear that peer work is also valuable for the workers. For some, it gives some meaning to their previous and ongoing challenging experiences, and can transform pain into good. Damian told me that sharing a dark past with others helps to shed a light on those areas. I was very moved when he told me, ‘I can use that to find out what helps to make a person's sun shine.’ There is also mounting and compelling evidence to show the value of peer work as a pathway for the workers into growth, education and further employment. Being paid for a job well done offers tangible and practical affirmation that painful life experiences can have a value, contributing to a person's capacity to offer something worthwhile.

Across Australia and internationally, the role of peer work is coming to be recognised, and best practices are being developed, with protocols around the integration of peer workers into workplaces—training at TAFE, supervision, qualifications, conditions and appropriate ways of making sure that the value of peer workers' experiences is understood and embraced by workplaces. I believe that it is absolutely crucial that clinicians and other mental-health practitioners embrace the amazing opportunities that peer work offers. I also believe that it must be supported by governments that are willing to assist with appropriate training and qualification, and then funded to ensure that peer workers are able to work their magic in the many areas where they can contribute a real value in terms of the mental-health sector—particularly the non-government sector but also in areas like emergency departments of hospitals and as bridges between clinicians and clients.

I am very grateful to the many peer workers who were willing to meet with me and share with me their insights, their stories and their wisdom. All of them had travelled a challenging path, with experiences of mental ill-health ranging from schizophrenia or bipolar disorder through to anxiety, depression, eating disorders or other conditions that had rocked their wellbeing and their sense of the world. But, without exception, I could see that through their employment they were able to make a positive of the attributes that they all had in common—emotional intelligence, compassion and wisdom—and could contribute to the wellbeing of others. So I say thank you to those people for their willingness to contribute and give back to those experiencing mental ill-health and for sharing their insights and very personal experiences with me. It is really important that they understand that the work that they do—and the work that peer workers do throughout Australia—is valuable and absolutely makes a difference.

**Housing Affordability**

Senator DAY (South Australia) (21:11): For the vast majority of Australians the prospect of owning their own homes remains a central ambition. Family First affirms home ownership as a symbol of equity, providing Australians the opportunity to have a tangible stake in the nation. Last week, a new report into housing affordability entitled Out of reach? was issued by the Senate Economics References Committee. As predictable as the sunrise, the report's recommendations focused on demand drivers rather than the true culprit—that is, lack of supply.

Like the Productivity Commission and the Reserve Bank before them, the report tackles the usual suspects—capital gains tax, negative gearing, readily accessible finance, rent-to-buy schemes, first-home buyers' grants and the phasing out of stamp duty. Moreover, solutions are not found in merely allocating more funds, adding more layers of bureaucracy or
commissioning more reviews into the housing sector. These proposals offer nothing more than bandaid relief, and fail to get to the heart of the issue.

Australia does not have a housing affordability problem. One can get a brand-new house built for around $100,000. What Australia has is a land affordability problem. For exactly 100 years, from 1900 to the year 2000, the average Australian was able to buy their first home on the average wage. Traditionally, the median house price was around three times the median household income. For example, when the median income was just $1,000 per annum—$20 a week—in the early 1960s, one could buy a basic house on a basic block for $3,000. That is three times. When the median income rose to $10,000 per annum in the 1970s, the median house price was $30,000—again, three times the median income. When the median income was $40,000 per annum in the early 1990s, the median house price in most capital cities was $120,000. Today, the median house price is closer to 10 times the median household income. At 10 times the median household income, a family will fork out approximately $500,000 more on mortgage payments—that is principal and interest—than they would have, had house prices remained at three times the median income. That is $500,000—half a million dollars—that they are not able to spend on their children's education or family comforts. It is $500,000 the parents did not need to earn but, instead, could have spent more time at home, instead of paying for child care.

The elephant in the room has been, and will continue to be, this: increases in median house prices are due to the skyrocketing price of land. Over the past 15 years the price of residential land across capital cities has increased nearly fivefold, from an average of $150 per square metre in 2001 to an average of $500 per square metre by 2013.

In the report released last week, the only submission that accurately approached this problem of land supply was one from a Professor Dalton of RMIT University. His concerns are focused on Victorian developers, who inflate the costs of land by preventing its timely release. To quote Professor Dalton:

We saw a policy initiative that started in the 1970s—the nationally supported land development companies run by state governments, some of which still exist in various forms—to challenge that oligopolistic behaviour on the fringes. I think that oligopoly still exists to some extent and needs investigation.

Let me start by emphasising what Professor Dalton gets right. Family First does acknowledge the need for small players to be encouraged back into the market by abolishing so-called compulsory 'master planning'. Too much land is exclusively released into the clutches of large developers and too little provided to smaller players. If large developers wish to initiate master planned communities, so be it. But state governments should not make them compulsory.

Also of great concern is the cosy relationship these developers have with state land management agencies. But what does Professor Dalton get wrong? Namely, it is the assumption that state land management agencies exist to challenge corporate developers and their monopolisation of land. As I stated in my own submission to the affordable housing inquiry, the land development agencies are in fact in cahoots with the larger developers. As indicated by Professor Dalton, when the South Australian land management agency was established by the state government in the early 1970s, its primary aim was to assist housing affordability. Let me quote from the land management act of 1973, when its mandate was 'the
provision of land to those members of the community who do not have large financial resources’. Further, the land commission was charged such that it ‘shall not conduct its business with a view to making a profit’.

By 1981, just eight years later, those noble motives were removed from the legislation and, lo and behold, replaced with the mandate to ‘maximize financial returns to government’. Note the blatant shift of emphasis from the original aim, from the interests of the buyer—‘those members of the community who do not have large financial resources’—to the interests of the seller, the land management agency, from ‘maximizing returns to government’. In 2013-14 alone, this unethical transition helped the state governments of Australia collect windfall profits of nearly $600 million. In effect, the Australian taxpayer is funding the very agencies that are hindering their ability to acquire affordable housing.

Family First's platform has been and always will be—or hopefully always will be; never say never—'every family, a job and a house'. The unaffordability of land is a grave injustice to all Australians who desire the moral, social and economic security of their own home. The Out of reach? report continues the narrow focus on demand-driven solutions and the promotion of bloated bureaucracies. Unless future committees choose to address the neglected issue of land supply, housing affordability for all Australians will continue to remain forever out of reach.

**Budget**

**Senator O’NEILL** (New South Wales) (21:19): Well, here we are, the second budget from this Liberal and National Party government. One full year, and the bad taste of the last budget is still in the mouths of so many Australians. Sadly, it looks like that taste is set to continue. The government is still trying to force some of the most unfair elements through this place, particularly the Senate. Despite every assurance before the election, despite every assurance after the election and despite every assurance before this budget, this year's deficit is now forecast to be $41.1 billion. The Liberals, the great economic managers of the nation: $41.1 billion. Never again can you claim any economic credibility.

It is up by another $5 billion next year above the projections. It is up by another $3 billion the year after, and all this adding up to $12.5 billion extra debt, from this government, over the forward estimates. As every day passes, the people of Australia are cottoning on to the fact that this government just cannot be trusted. It is a government that does not know what it is doing, and it is a government that fundamentally completely misunderstands the notion of fairness. It is an exploitative, divisive and deceptive government.

In the mother of all insults, this government is set to cut paid parental leave to around 80,000 Australian mums. And with a perfect sense of timing, it delivered this message to mums on Mother's Day. So insensitive is this government to the reality of family life and any understanding of the challenges that face young families that it went ahead and made that kind of announcement—a leak—as if it was a positive thing for the country.

Australian families know now, even more after tonight, that they cannot believe a word that Mr Abbott says on anything to do with parental leave. First he said that paid parental leave would be introduced over his dead body. Then he promised an extravagant $20 billion scheme that gave wealthy women $75,000 to take six months off and have a baby. Then, in
the face of Labor's campaign, he decided to scrap his so-called signature policy, despite declaring that it was his fundamental conviction.

Today, the Prime Minister has changed his mind. He wants to make savage cuts to parental leave, and that is going to leave almost half of new mothers worse off. This government's dishonesty and incompetence on paid parental leave is hurting Australians. It is hurting families. It is hurting the planning of families and it is damaging confidence in our community.

Not even the Nationals, their partners, trust Mr Abbott to do the right thing by Australian families. The coalition is divided because there is a small glimmer of conscience left in those benches just along there to the left, where the Nationals sit. They are trying to pipe up every now and then to say, 'You shouldn't really be doing this,' in their meek, mild-mannered way that Senator Cameron calls the doormat method of communication. Labor has been joined by the Nationals on this occasion to fight these short-sighted and cruel cuts to family payments. If Mr Morrison and Mr Abbott get their way, these cuts to family payments will leave a single-income family with two kids as much as $6,000 a year worse off. So when Mr Abbott tries to present this as a positive budget for families, Australians are awake to it. You cannot take $6,000 off an average Australian family and say you are doing anything good for them. Labor has been campaigning against these cuts for a year. Finally, it seems that the Nationals have caught on. Mr Abbott and Mr Morrison should be listening to Labor, or, at the very least, to their National Party colleagues and do the right thing by Australian families. Destroy those cuts. Get rid of the cuts that you have proposed in tonight's budget.

The fact is, this budget is not about the benefit of Australians, their families, their jobs or the economy. This budget is about one thing. It is about saving Mr Abbott's job. It is not about doing what is the right thing for Australia's future. When we see the programs that are being advertised and being pushed forward this evening we see a time frame of two years for so many of the funding commitments. Two years is not a wide-scoped or a visionary future being considered for this country.

This government promised to make things better, but they have made things so much worse. Labor has opposed much of what this government has tried to implement, and we will continue to oppose the government's cuts to family payments in the Senate until they are scrapped forever. Labor believes childcare should be accessible and affordable for parents, and we should support children's early education and development because it is an investment in those children and their futures and that of the nation. I am very concerned by reports that lower-income families will have their access to childcare cut in half, and others, the most vulnerable in many cases, will be pushed out of the system entirely. Meanwhile, under this Liberal-National Party government and the proposals that we have seen in the budget tonight, many wealthy families will see their assistance increased by a third. It is fundamentally unfair. This government does not understand the concept of fairness in the Australian nation.

I am also concerned that new childcare restrictions make it harder for families returning to work, and leave working parents, particularly those working casually or part time, with very much less support. Mr Abbott, in addition to putting these proposals forward, is holding families to ransom with cuts to the family tax benefit that would start now, if he had his way, leaving some families as much as $6,000 worse off. He needs to stop playing cynical politics.
and find a fair way to pay for these changes. Labor will fight the family tax benefit part B cuts that this government is proposing.

When it comes to jobs, the government has been asleep at the wheel for the last 18 months—over 500 days. Now, this government is spending $24.9 million over four years to ensure job seeker compliance. That is $24.9 million and the estimate that they think they are saving is $6.9 million. Did someone in the Treasurer's office lose their calculator? Spending $24.9 million to recoup just $6.9 million is just not good maths, and this is from the government who, in the very first acts of coming to power, trashed the Youth Connections program, a powerfully successful transformative program for young people. Labor established that program because we believe that government has a role to play in providing support for young people at risk of falling through the cracks.

This government has failed every test of fairness, and it has failed the tests it even set for itself: spending is up; tax is up; deficits are up; and unemployment is up. These are all the things that Mr Abbot said would be better under his government. The government has broken its promise to save as much as it spends—spending initiatives are greater than actual savings in this budget. Joe Hockey has achieved the incredible feat, almost unimaginable, of doubling the deficit in one year—from $17.1 billion to $35.1 billion. Tax is at its highest level since the last budget of the Howard government. Unemployment will be higher than expected next year and the year after.

The government's higher education funding is still inextricably linked to the legislation to deregulate university fees, which it assumes will pass through the Senate. That means $100,000 degrees are still very much on the agenda of Mr Abbott and his education minister, Mr Pyne. This would be a crippling imposition on a student, who would carry the debt long after their working career. By contrast, Labor set targets for boosting participation in tertiary education by 2025 with the aim of securing 40 per cent of all 25 to 34-year-olds a bachelor's degree or above, and 20 per cent of undergraduate enrolments coming from low-socioeconomic-status students.

What we are seeing is that the Liberal government has tried unsuccessfully to be all things to all people, and it has just cooked up a fiscal mess.

This is a budget of deceptions. While promising less tax, they have delivered 17 new taxes. While promising less debt, they have delivered $12.5 billion in new debt—$100,000 degrees remain, $57 billion in cuts to health remain and $30 billion in cuts to education remain. This budget is the worst of all worlds.

Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey have broken their promise to families, they have broken their promises to Australians and Australians will have a very long memory of this very bad budget. *(Time expired)*

**Centenary of Anzac**

Senator REYNOLDS (Western Australia) (21:29): I rise tonight with a great deal of pride and emotion to share my family's pilgrimage to Gallipoli for the Centenary of Anzac celebrations.

On Anzac Day this year hundreds of thousands of Australians and New Zealanders came together in Gallipoli, not to commemorate victories or defeats in war but to honour and
remember the courage and selfless sacrifice made by our service men and women, past and present.

My grandfather, Alfred George Reynolds, was one of the young soldiers who departed Albany in the first convoy, on 1 November 1914. He was a Third Field Ambulance medic, who, against all the odds, served not only throughout Gallipoli but throughout the Western Front, Fromelles, Somme, Pozieres, Ypres and Amiens.

Unlike so many of his mates, he did return alive. He returned home in good physical health but, mentally, terribly scarred. My grandfather rarely talked about his experiences and neither valued nor kept reminders of war. After the war, he went on to do many things in his long life in Western Australia. He married twice and had seven children. He was a wool classer, a sheep and wheat farmer in Mukinbudin, an accountant in Albany and even a politician—a Labor politician—in state parliament. His story is one of many now shared in the Albany Anzac Centre.

My Dad, Laith, and I were two of the very lucky 10,000 Australians and New Zealanders who were successful in the ballot for the opportunity to participate in the Gallipoli centenary commemorations. Joining us were my brothers Andrew and Cameron. It was my first organised tour and none of us were sure what to expect on an eight-day bus tour, finding out when we got there that we were four, along with 2,000 others, booked with this particular tour operator. They were up to the challenge and my family, and 20 other Aussies and Kiwis, became Bus A214 for the duration of the trip. We were a wonderfully mixed group who, over the course of the trip, shared our diverse and interesting family stories with not only each other but others whom we met.

After the official commemorations had concluded and the world's eyes had moved away from Gallipoli, my family and I continued to tour the battlefields and war cemeteries to gain a greater understanding of the Gallipoli campaign.

We were very fortunate on our bus to have the award-winning journalist and author Chris Masters as our historian. He skilfully brought the campaign to life with not only his own knowledge but the voices and stories of so many diggers. Our irrepressible local Turkish guide, Sukar, also provided us with thought-provoking and alternative points of view.

Many tears were shed by me and all others at the wonderful and moving ceremonies at Anzac Cove and Lone Pine. It was a trip that we as a family will always remember and cherish. It has also now given me much to reflect on as a senator.

As a family, we were hoping to gain a greater understanding while in Gallipoli of what my grandfather may have experienced and to fill in large gaps in our knowledge of his four years of war. We have fragments: his utter dismay at the Simpson legend and the mythology that arose; his extremely unfavourable impression of Pommy officers; his belief that shell shock was a medical condition, not cowardice; and his very keen appreciation of French women when he was on leave!

But, in retrospect, the most visible evidence of war, which bewildered his children, was his anger and lifelong battle with what today we call post-traumatic stress disorder.

My own memories of my grandfather are scant because he was already old when I was a child. Sadly, he passed away long before I was able to ask him questions that I had and now other family members have. But one of the most wonderful things I will always remember of
the trip is the stories that we shared with each other, not only of my own family but also of everybody else there whom we encountered.

Strangers shared their stories on aeroplanes, on the way there, in cafes, in hotel lobbies and on the grass at Anzac Cove and Lone Pine. It was evident that we all had a very strong and common bond and that our pride as descendants of ANZACs was very clear.

While many said that they made the pilgrimage to honour their own family members, others could not find the words to explain why they had felt so compelled to make the journey. They just knew that they had to be there.

The rows of heartbreaking messages, placed by grieving family members on gravestones of their loved ones, will stay with me forever. They paid a penny and a half, per line, to try to both capture the life and untimely death of their loved one and make sense of their loss. ‘Some day. Some time. We will understand. Mother,’ was just one of the many heartbreaking tributes.

 Sadly, the lives of so many of these men, who loved and who were loved, are already lost to time and their stories will not be remembered. While not all will be individually remembered, through the actions of an increasing number of family members and historians, many more will now be remembered and their stories passed on and I discovered not just in ways we would have anticipated.

I met two brothers at the Shrapnel Valley Cemetery, who were locating and individually dressing the gravestones of every single man whom their grandfather, a chaplain at Gallipoli, had buried. The efforts they went to to personalise each and every one of these gravestones and the respect that they showed these men were incredibly moving and will stay with me forever.

For 100 years we have said the words ‘Lest we forget’ at the end of the ode to remembrance. But I, and I am sure many others, have not always fully appreciated this solemn caution to us all—a caution not to forget the service and the sacrifice of all our returned service men and women, and also not to forget the lessons of war.

An anonymous Australian schoolchild’s note, left on the shrine at Lone Pine, poignantly captured ‘Lest we forget’ with the words:

To all the soldiers who's stories are untold (love heart) sending love and thoughts.

Whether by action or design, the centenary is not only providing an opportunity to collectively commemorate service to our nation but also encouraging families and historians to capture and preserve these individual stories. That was evident on Anzac Day, right across the world, with shrines, cenotaphs and war cemeteries filled with wreaths, photos, mementoes, newspaper articles and, sometimes, people’s handwritten notes to their own relatives.

None of us can ever truly understand what our returned service men and women experienced in war. That is reserved solely for those who have been to war. But hearing the voices and reading the stories of Gallipoli veterans while walking the ground with my father and my brothers—the same ground my grandfather walked 100 years ago—provided us with just a slightly greater insight into what he may have experienced.

On a very personal note, I hope that this has helped my father find a little bit more peace and understanding about his own father and the legacy that war had left him. The most
emotional image that I took away was observing my father's silent contemplations on his own father at the Beach Cemetery, where my grandfather first came ashore on that fateful first predawn morning.

My heartfelt thanks go to the hundreds of Australian and New Zealand staff and volunteers, the ministers, the ministers' staff, the War Memorial staff, and all the hundreds and hundreds of others who made this possible. You all did an extraordinary job in another country and delivered, to all of us who attended, an experience we will never, ever forget. And for that I thank you most sincerely.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission also does an amazing job. They quietly tend equally to all of those who will never return home.

The Turks' generosity of spirit in supporting our commemorations—of an invasion of their land—says so much about them as a nation and really brings to life Ataturk's famous words to Australian mothers whose sons lie forever in their soil.

So 'Lest we forget' means not only remembering the lessons of war, but also capturing and sharing the individual stories of those who served so that their families can individually remember and honour them all. And then, as a nation, we are able to commemorate them all. There is so much for me to reflect on. Lest we forget.

**Live Animal Exports**

**Western Australia: Kimberley Region**

*Senator SMITH (Western Australia) (21:39):* I am grateful for this brief opportunity this evening to speak about a couple of issues of crucial importance to regional Western Australia.

One of the best aspects of the five-week break in parliamentary sittings from which we have just returned was that it offered an opportunity to be out and about in regional Western Australia. For me, this included the chance to participate in the significant celebrations surrounding the Centenary of Anzac in Albany in Western Australia's Great Southern, and travelling with parliamentary colleagues to Western Australia's Pilbara region, to visit a number of significant mining operations and to discuss firsthand with those working on the ground the challenges facing this important sector, which is still of enormous significance to the health of the Australian economy.

This was followed by an enormously rewarding week spent traversing WA's vast Kimberley region, where I had the chance to meet with local residents, pastoralists, Aboriginal communities and business owners to focus on the issues that are of concern and importance to them. The remoteness of the Kimberley region can often mean it is overlooked in national political discussions. Certainly, it is not especially well understood by many on Australia's eastern seaboard.

Of course, 31 May will also mark the four-year anniversary of one of the darkest days for the Western Australian pastoral industry: the day when the Labor Party, with the full support of the Greens, turned their backs on the families, the Aboriginal stations and the communities of the Kimberley region. The knee-jerk decision to suspend live cattle exports to Indonesia—a decision made by a government that had no interest in regional Western Australia; a decision made by a government which saw Western Australia as nothing more than a cash cow to fund their mining and carbon taxes; a decision made by a government that had no respect for Western Australia's largest trading partner, Indonesia—ripped apart the social and economic
fabric of the Kimberley. The aftershocks of this poorly-thought-through, knee-jerk policy continue to be felt by many people across the Kimberley region today.

That is why, during my recent trip through the Kimberley, where I met with so many of those who had been so affected by this poor policy decision, it was refreshing to encounter the optimism of these citizens of Western Australia's far north—an optimism fuelled by the commitment of this Abbott government to the northern pastoral industry. It is because of the Abbott government's commitment to reducing trade barriers that Kimberley pastoralists have established new and emerging markets for the live export trade. It is because of the Abbott government's commitment to strengthening our trade relationship with Indonesia that Kimberley pastoralists have seen a relaxation in quotas and an increase in demand for their cattle. It is because of the government's commitment to foreign investment that the expansion of the Ord River irrigation project is providing much-needed jobs and infrastructure for the Kimberley, especially for Aboriginal workers. It is because of the Abbott government's commitment to infrastructure that we are seeing much-needed investment occur on cattle roads across the Kimberley. The Abbott government's removal of the mining tax and the carbon tax has resulted in a lowering of the costs of production, allowing pastoralists to once again be competitive in international marketplaces.

However, it is not just because of the policies of the Abbott government—policies which support live exports, support rural industries, support free trade, support investment and support jobs for Aboriginal workers—that there is now a new sense of optimism throughout the Kimberley. Part of this is due to Western Australia's Liberal Premier, Colin Barnett, and his visionary Water for Food initiative. This revolutionary program will, for the first time since the development of the Ord River irrigation project is providing much-needed jobs and infrastructure for the Kimberley, especially for Aboriginal workers. It is because of the Abbott government's commitment to infrastructure that we are seeing much-needed investment occur on cattle roads across the Kimberley. The Abbott government's removal of the mining tax and the carbon tax has resulted in a lowering of the costs of production, allowing pastoralists to once again be competitive in international marketplaces.

The flagship Mowanjum irrigation trial near Derby, located on the Mowanjum Aboriginal Corporation's pastoral lease, will use local groundwater and a centre pivot grazing and silage operation to support the community's vision to establish itself as a cattle fattening and breeding centre, and will serve as a model for other Aboriginal pastoral stations across the Kimberley. It will provide vocational training opportunities for Derby High School students and will assist Mowanjum to negotiate approvals for a more flexible form of tenure, which will attract important third-party investment. The Fitzroy Valley investigation project will, for the first time, confirm the groundwater capability of the Fitzroy Valley, and will increase confidence among pastoral station owners wanting to diversify their operations and lift productivity. The Knowsley agricultural area water investigation will define sustainable water supply options for future cropping programs outside of Derby, creating a new industry out of traditional grazing country.

But most importantly, Colin Barnett's Water for Food project will develop new land tenure options that will promote and support investment not just in the Kimberley, but throughout the West Australian pastoral industry. Water for Food is a bold and visionary initiative—one
that deserves the full support of all sides of the political spectrum. The Liberal Party has always been, and always will be, the strongest supporter of the West Australian pastoral industry. We recognise the value of the industry to the Australian economy. We appreciate the rewards that come from hard work and determination. We understand the devastating effect that results from having your industry stopped at the stroke of a ministerial pen and the flow-on effects for pastoral families, for regional communities and for the economy from damaging, short-sighted decisions like these. We recognise the challenges that lie ahead, and we look forward to ensuring the viability of this valuable industry, and in actually working with industry and their communities, not against them, to develop a strong and vibrant Northern Australia.

The announcement of a $5 billion Northern Australia infrastructure facility announced in the federal budget this evening delivers an important and significant marker on the road to realising the full economic potential of Australia's far north. I know it will be welcomed by the communities, particularly by those that make up the Kimberley region.

This is an exciting time for Northern Australia, and a particularly exciting time for WA's far north. This is a project and optimism that has been in the making for many, many years. After many years—some would say too many years—of talking, the region finally has governments in both Canberra and Perth that are committed to working with local residents, pastoralists, Aboriginal communities and businesses to unlock the region's economic potential, which has lay dormant for far too long.

Jackson, Mr Ray

Bahrain

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (21:47): Tonight I rise to speak about Ray Jackson, who was a remarkable man. He was a Wiradjuri man who, sadly, died on 23 April 2015, and I do send my condolences to all of his family—his children, his grandchildren, his great-grandchildren and his many friends and colleagues in Australia and around the world.

Ray was somebody that I came to know when I worked in the New South Wales parliament. He worked extensively not just in the Indigenous community but on a whole range of social justice issues, and he was a very powerful and moving speaker. We do need to give credit to Ray's work, because he exposed many of the crimes that continue to be perpetrated against Aboriginal communities around this country. Some of the campaigns he worked on include deaths in custody and the Northern Territory intervention, and just recently he was one of the people in Sydney who were instrumental in the protests against the forced closures of Aboriginal communities in Western Australia. Ray was prolific in so many ways—he produced newsletters, media releases and letters to the paper—and was active in many ways.

One campaign where I came to know him particularly well was to do with the tragic case of TJ Hickey, a young Aboriginal man in Redfern who met a very violent death. This caused great upset both in the Aboriginal community and much more widely. The young man, known as TJ, was being chased by a police car when he lost control of his bike and was impaled on an iron fence. The police denied that in any way they had caused his death, but Aboriginal people, particularly in Redfern, did not believe that and there was enormous upset and
disquiet. Every year to this day there are protests about that issue. Ray played a key role in pushing for a thorough investigation of the police activities on that night.

Sadly, Ray was part of the stolen generation; he was stolen from his mother at the age of two and went to a white family. Years later he spoke about this, and I would like to read this quote from Ray:

All I know is that my father was a soldier and he went up to Papua New Guinea. He was killed on the Kokoda Track and instead of giving his wife a war widow’s pension, the bloody government came and took his children away because of my mother's Aboriginality.

I also want to pay tribute to the work that Ray did around the issue of black deaths in custody. When the Howard government was in power, they removed funding from a whole number of Indigenous institutions. This is when Ray formed the Indigenous Social Justice Association—he was a founding a member and, I understand, its president until he died. It was a very active organisation in advocating around the issue of black deaths in custody and particularly in taking the up the cases—I mentioned TJ Hickey, but also Eddie Murray and Mark Mason were two of the other key cases that he took up. As we know, this work is incredibly vital. Australia continues to incarcerate black Australians at a higher rate than that of apartheid South Africa. We live in a country that is wonderful in so many ways, but the crimes against the original inhabitants remain so intense.

I do congratulate Ray for all he achieved. Certainly there is much work to be done, and what was very moving at the commemoration of his life was the number of people from his communities who got up and spoke of their commitment to continue his work.

I would also like to speak tonight about the situation in Bahrain. Bahrain's human rights situation continues to deteriorate, following the government crackdown against civil unrest that began in February 2011. Over three years ago the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry released its report detailing systematic torture, extrajudicial killing and other acts of violence. This violence has been committed by security forces against peaceful protesters. It is disturbing that since 2011 Bahrain has continued to receive support from Britain through defence ties and arms sales. The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy reports that over the past four years more than 130 individuals have been killed. Over 3,500 individuals have been arbitrarily detained as political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. Torture and enforced disappearance is on the rise, and prominent opposition members continue to serve arbitrary prison sentences. Children are also routinely detained and subjected to abuse and torture.

In Australia, this is an issue that we hear little about. Some former citizens of Bahrain came to speak to me about this situation and to really impress upon me, as a member of parliament, the importance of people in Australia understanding what is happening in their country. Freedom of expression and assembly have effectively been outlawed in the country. Following the implementation of decrees issued by the King of Bahrain, protests, rallies and sit-ins have been banned in the capital and routinely suppressed. New laws mean citizens can now be jailed for up to seven years for insulting the King, flag or national emblem.

Accountability is something the citizens of Bahrain raised with me very strongly. They set out how police officers and government officials accused of severe violations of human rights function within a culture of impunity. Some police officers accused of killing protesters in Bahrain have received only six-month sentences, and that becomes a suspended prison term,
while some protesters have received life in prison on freedom of expression charges. Activists continue to face harassment and intimidation, with no independent human rights organisations allowed to function freely in the country. International NGOs, media and other outside observers are routinely denied access into the country, with the UN Special Rapporteur on torture being denied access three times.

I understand that Australia has not spoken out on this issue, and I think that does need to change. I add my voice to the call of Bahrain's citizens living in Australia for Australian diplomatic pressure to call for the release of political prisoners and individuals arbitrarily detained on freedom of expression charges. They have appealed that our government and individual MPs work with Bahraini civil society organisations and human rights defenders to strengthen their capacity and advocacy efforts. There is much that we can do, and I believe we have a responsibility to act.

Senate adjourned at 21:55

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The following documents were tabled pursuant to standing order 61(1)(b):


Health Workforce Australia—Report for the period 1 July 2013 to 7 October 2014 [Final report].

Treaty—Bilateral—Protocol Establishing the Prolongation of the Treaty between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Australia on the Presence of Australian Personnel in the Netherlands for the Purpose of Responding to the Downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17—Text, together with national interest analysis.

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.]


Currency Act 1965—Currency (Perth Mint) Determination 2015 (No. 2) [F2015L00651].

Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986—

Statements of Principles concerning cerebrovascular accident—
No. 65 of 2015 [F2015L00652].
No. 66 of 2015 [F2015L00653].

Statements of Principles concerning gastric ulcer and duodenal ulcer—
No. 61 of 2015 [F2015L00657].
No. 62 of 2015 [F2015L00658].

Statements of Principles concerning malignant neoplasm of the bile duct—
No. 69 of 2015 [F2015L00654].
No. 70 of 2015 [F2015L00655].
Statements of Principles concerning spina bifida—
Instrument No. 61 of 2007 – Revocation [F2015L00659].

Tabling
The following documents were tabled by the Clerk pursuant to the order of the Senate of 25 June 2014:
Estimates hearings—Unanswered questions on notice—Additional estimates 2014-15—Statements—
Agriculture portfolio.
Employment portfolio.
Environment portfolio.
Office of National Assessments.