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SITTING DAYS—2016

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FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST 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 Susan Lines
Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. George Henry Brandis QC
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate—Senator Hon. Mathias Cormann
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator Hon. Penny Wong
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator Hon. Don Farrell
Manager of Government Business in the Senate—Senator Hon. Mitchell Peter Fifield
Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate—Senator Katy Gallagher

Senate Party Leaders and Whips
Leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate—Senator Hon. George Henry Brandis QC
Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in the Senate—Senator Hon. Mathias Cormann
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 Hon. Penny Wong
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate—Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Leader of the Australian Greens—Senator Richard Di Natale
Co-deputy Leaders of the Australian Greens in the Senate—Senators Scott Ludlam and Larissa Joy Waters
Chief Government Whip—Senator David Christopher Bushby
Deputy Government Whips—Senators David Julian Fawcett and Dean Anthony Smith
The Nationals Whip—Senator Matthew James Canavan
Chief Opposition Whip—Senator Anne Elizabeth Urquhart
Deputy Opposition Whips—Senators Catryna Louise Bilyk and Jennifer McAllister
Australian Greens Whip—Senator Rachel Siewert

Printed by authority of the Senate
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Pursuant to section 42 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, the terms of service of the following senators representing the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory expire at the close of the day immediately before the polling day for the next general election of members of the House of Representatives.

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Vacancy created by the resignation of Senator Stephen Conroy on 01 October 2016.

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party;
CLP—Country Liberal Party; DHJP—Derryn Hinch's Justice Party; FFP—Family First Party
IND—Independent; JLN—Jacqui Lambie Network; LDP—Liberal Democratic Party;
LNP—Liberal National Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia;
NATS—The Nationals; NXT—Nick Xenophon Team; PHON—Pauline Hanson's One Nation

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
# Turnbull Ministry

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<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter-Terrorism</td>
<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Scott Ryan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security</td>
<td>Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>Senator the Hon James McGrath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation</td>
<td>Hon Angus Taylor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</td>
<td>Hon Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
<td>Hon Steve Ciobo MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
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<td>Hon Keith Pitt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Minister for Local Government and Territories</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Assistant Minister for Rural Health</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Communications</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Regional Communications</strong></td>
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Each box represents a portfolio except for (1) which is in the Education portfolio, (2) which is in Treasury portfolio and (3) which is in the Health portfolio. Shadow Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.
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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. Lists are available from the Table Office or from the chamber attendants.  
Details of the documents also appear at the end of today's Hansard.

COMMITTEES  
Meeting  
The Clerk: Proposals to meet have been lodged as follows:  
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee—private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sitting of the Senate today, from 3 pm, for the committee’s inquiry into the planned acquisition of the Joint Strike Fighter.  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration—private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sitting of the Senate on Wednesday, 12 October 2016, from 10 am.  
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories—private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 13 October 2016.  
Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth—private meeting otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sitting of the Senate on Thursday, 13 October 2016, from 9.30 am.  
The PRESIDENT (12:31): Does any senator wish to have the question put on any of those motions? There being none, we will proceed.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Broadband Network  
Membership  
The PRESIDENT (12:31): Yesterday I informed the Senate that I had received letters from Senator Griff and Senator Hanson seeking appointment to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Broadband Network. There are two nominations for one position on the committee, the position to be nominated by any minority group or independent senators. In accordance with standing orders, a ballot will now be held to determine which of the two senators who have nominated is to be appointed. Before proceeding to the ballot, we will ring the bells for four minutes.  
The bells having been rung—

The PRESIDENT: The Senate will now proceed to ballot. Ballot papers will be distributed to each senator, and you are asked to write the name of the senator that you prefer for the committee position, being either Senator Griff or Senator Hanson. I invite Senator Kakoschke-Moore and Senator Burston to act as scrutineers.  
A ballot having been taken—
The PRESIDENT: The result of the ballot being 35 votes for Senator Griff and 30 votes for Senator Hanson, Senator Griff is therefore elected as a member of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Broadband Network, nominated by a minority group or independent senators.

BILLS

Treasury Laws Amendment (Income Tax Relief) Bill 2016
Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (12:47): I rise to speak in support of this bill. This bill amends the thresholds so that the rate of tax payable on taxable incomes from $80,001 to $87,000 for individuals is 32.5 per cent. The government announced this measure in the 2016-17 budget and Labor supported it. It means that individuals with taxable incomes from $80,001 and up to $87,000 will now be subject to the lower rate of tax of 32.5 per cent rather than the rate of tax of 37 per cent which currently applies to taxable income over $80,000. It will provide a maximum tax cut of $315 per annum on incomes of $87,000 and above.

With this bill, Labor is pleased to be supporting modest, sustainable tax relief for up to 3.1 million Australians and their families. However, despite bipartisan agreement, the Turnbull government has still managed to make a mess of its implementation. As David Crowe reported in The Australian on 2 September, millions of workers will have to wait until the middle of next year to receive all of the benefits. This is despite the government's assurances in May that workers would receive the gains far earlier. Mr Crowe reported that:

Workers will not see the lower rates applied to their salaries for at least another month, which means they will not collect the cut due to them for the first quarter of the financial year until they lodge their tax returns after July 2017.

Yet, on budget night, Mr Morrison proudly boasted he would deliver income tax cuts from 1 July this year. He said:

From 1 July this year, we will increase the upper limit for the middle income tax bracket from $80,000 to $87,000 per year.

Yet the government did not introduce legislation to ensure that the tax cuts would start from 1 July this year before the election.

When asked on ABC Radio how the tax cuts would be introduced by 1 July, given that the government was unlikely to be able to legislate them before prior to the election, the Prime Minister said that:

That is really up to the Labor Party whether it's legislated, but certainly it will be covered administratively after the election, we expect the Parliament to come back and ensure that all of the legislation supporting the Budget measures is passed.

Yet in the Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook, prepared by the Secretaries of the Departments of Treasury and Finance, it became clear that the tax cuts could not be delivered from 1 July as promised. Instead it said:
(T)he Commissioner has indicated that the Ten Year Enterprise Tax Plan — targeted personal income tax relief measure requires the relevant legislation to be passed before the change will be incorporated into the income tax withholding schedules.

We now have confirmation from the ATO that the income tax cuts scheduled for 1 July 2016 have only come into effect on October 1, and Australian taxpayers will have to wait until they lodge their tax return after 1 July 2017 for the extra tax they have paid for three months to be credited back to them. Labor immediately gave bipartisan support to these income tax cuts, so there was no excuse for the government not to legislate these straight after the budget in May this year. It took five months from when the Treasurer promised these income tax cuts in the budget for him to actually introduce the required legislation into the parliament.

This government is so incompetent that, even with clear and unambiguous Labor support on budget night for these tax cuts, the Prime Minister and Treasurer still manage to fail in the basic task of introducing and passing legislation through the parliament required for them to take effect before the election. The Tax Commissioner confirmed in the Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook, that these tax cuts would not be delivered from 1 July as promised by the Treasurer, but instead would only be implemented when the relevant legislation had passed the parliament.

Scott Morrison must outline when this same advice from the ATO was received by the Prime Minister, himself or his office. This advice goes to the very basis on which the Prime Minister and Treasurer continued to publicly argue, including throughout the election campaign that the income tax cuts would flow 'from 1 July'.

Instances of ineptness by this Treasurer and this government in undertaking their core responsibilities have regrettably not been rare. Other recent examples of the Treasurer's mishandling of policy include: presenting a bill to the parliament that miscounted the savings in the omnibus legislation after weeks of telling us it would be $6.5 billion in savings when in fact the savings were less than $6 billion; recent media reports exposing how he and the Prime Minister got rolled in cabinet by the conservatives in their own party on their desire to pursue reform of negative gearing; being forced to further delay the introduction of savings attached to the government's super package following an embarrassing stalemate, again, with his own backbenchers, and despite the government making an 'iron-clad' commitment to the electorate during the election.

We also need to remember the context in which these tax cuts are being prosecuted by the government. Scott Morrison has offered up this modest tax cut for those on incomes over $80,000 as a crude cover for his cuts that have affected the cost of living of every single low- and middle-income Australian. The government's double dealing in the budget cannot go unremarked upon. Yes, the government is seeking to provide some limited relief to Australian taxpayers, but this in no way makes up for the sustained assault of the Abbott-Turnbull government through its budgets on services Australian people rely upon. The government can try as it likes to provide a fig leaf for its regressive agenda—which has been consistent, irrespective of who happened to be Prime Minister at the time—but no sleight-of-hand tricks can conceal the essential truth of that broader agenda. The 2016 budget was merely the last confirmation of an approach unchanged since 2014. It contained the same $80 billion of cuts to schools and hospitals, the same cuts to working- and middle-class families, the same cuts to
Medicare, to child care, to aged care, to universities, to paid parental leave, to pensioners and to carers.

Labor does support the tax cut contained in this bill, but we acknowledge that three-quarters of Australian workers will receive no tax relief from the 2016 budget and that those same Australian workers who miss out will disproportionately bear the brunt of this government's cuts to schools, hospitals and Medicare and to the family supports they rely upon. It is a simple truth that you do not create the jobs of the future by cutting education, making health care inaccessible and unaffordable, underinvesting in infrastructure and making broadband slower.

Labor does believe in delivering a fair and sustainable tax system. We understand that this should provide incentives for all Australians to work and engage in productive enterprise. But it must also guarantee adequate revenue to fund the proper role of government, including quality public services that all Australians deserve.

Maintaining public confidence in Australia's tax system is critical and depends on simplicity, transparency and everyone paying their fair share—something this Treasurer and government have manifestly failed to grasp or deliver. In its recent publication Choosing opportunity, the McKell Institute outlines in a comprehensive fashion why, as policymakers, we must be concerned with the impact of tax and budgetary policy and what it can achieve. As the Choosing opportunity report makes clear, there are issues that demand our urgent attention. In Australia, inequality is on the rise. The middle class is being squeezed. Dignity in retirement is uncertain. The gender pay gap remains effectively unaltered since 1979. And, for a generation of young Australians, the dream of home ownership is simply way beyond reach.

Labor wants Australia to succeed. We want a tax system for a growing, job-creating, wealth-creating economy. As Bill Shorten said in his recent speech on inequality to the McKell Institute, Labor is concerned with issues such as reforming negative gearing, needs based funding for schools, affordable university and equality for women not just as totemic indicators but as economic levers. Used correctly, they are creators of growth, not programs paid for by forgoing growth. They are about investing in lifting people into work and in supporting their full participation in our society and our economy.

Labor supports tax relief for working Australians, but we will never walk away from properly funding schools or Medicare. Labor will never slash Australia's safety net in a misguided effort to provide tax cuts for big multinationals or fight tooth and nail to keep tax loopholes open. We are genuinely forced to ponder what could be achieved if Malcolm Turnbull stood up for everyday Australians instead of trying to implement reckless and unsustainable tax cuts for big business.

In saying that, Labor has and will work cooperatively with the government when what it proposes is reasonable. We have proven that with our principled negotiations on the omnibus savings bill, and we have taken the sensible approach of supporting other budget measures which merit support. This includes supporting the very welcome restoration of Labor's low-income superannuation contribution, an initiative to support low-income earners but particularly women, which the government has renamed but restored in the 2016 budget, three years after announcing its abolition.
Although I canvassed this at some time in the chamber during the last sitting, we are similarly pleased that the government has seen the light on our reforms to tobacco excise to combat the serious health and economic impact tobacco addiction has on the Australian community. With a significant fiscal challenge ahead of us, I invite the government to continue in this vein—to adopt more of our positive initiatives that deliver for ordinary Australians while fairly and sustainably improving the budget bottom line. I can even helpfully direct senators opposite to some other measures that they ought to be considering.

The government should take another look at and reconsider its position on our proposed reforms to negative gearing and capital gains tax. The careful, calibrated reforms to negative gearing and capital gains tax that we took to the election recognised that far too many working- and middle-class families are increasingly being priced out of the housing market. The negative impacts this circumstance has on intergenerational equity, economic growth and the Commonwealth's fiscal position require the urgent attention of this government. Labor's proposal ends what are poorly targeted and clearly unsustainable tax subsidies. By limiting negative gearing to new dwellings, we would help put the Australian dream of home ownership back within reach and simultaneously provide significant improvement, over the forward estimates and beyond, to the budget.

The other key measure that most evidently deserves the government's consideration is the package of superannuation reforms Labor took to the election. When the government's own Financial System Inquiry finds that 10 per cent of Australians receive 38 per cent of Australia's super tax concession, more than the combined benefit of the bottom 70 per cent of Australians, it is patently clear that the system is unbalanced and unviable. This is particularly evidenced when the same inquiry concedes that these tax concessions are unlikely to reduce future age pension expenditure significantly. Without action, the cost to the taxpayer of superannuation earnings tax concessions or forgone budget revenue will almost double over the next four years, from $11.8 billion in '14-15 to $22.4 billion in '17-18 and will continue to grow at a rate that is unsustainable. Labor has proposed a package of superannuation reforms which are fair. They deliver more budget repair than the government's current mess on superannuation and will go a long way towards stemming the ballooning cost to the budget of the existing concessions over the longer term.

In conclusion, I reconfirm to the government: you will have a willing and cooperative partner if you bring into the parliament proposals which meet the test of contributing to budget improvement while making our country a fairer place, and we are pleased to support this bill today.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (12:59): Every time we get up to speak in this place it is a privilege because our words and our actions can actually make a difference. They can make a difference on the issues that matter to us and to all Australians. The Treasury Laws Amendment (Income Tax Relief) Bill 2016, from my personal perspective, is one of the most important pieces of legislation that is going to come to the Senate this year. It is important because it symbolises something that is deeply meaningful to all Australians and in fact to many in the community around the world. It is deeply important because we are now voting on this bill today to sign over $4 billion of Australians' money to the wealthiest Australians in a tax cut.
If you earn over $80,000 in this country, which is 20 per cent of Australians, you are about to be given a tax cut. So 80 per cent of Australian taxpayers will not get the benefit of a tax cut. It is important because inequality and tackling inequality are the true moral challenges of our time. I remind senators that our actions, our voices and our vote in the Senate is what matters. Today itshamesmethat the Labor Party have joined with the Liberal Party to give a tax cut to the most wealthy Australians—Australians like myself who earn over $80,000 and who do not need $6 a week or $315 a year in a tax cut. That money is needed by less wealthy Australians, many of whom are on the breadline and are struggling.

I cannot fathom that Labor has only put up one speaker on this bill today—one speaker who did not even speak out her time. That equates to an allocation of $200 million a minute. How cavalier of Labor to take this issue so casually. We have had no inquiry through the Economics Committee and we have had a rushed process to get a report and a recommendation to pass this bill because Mr Bill Shorten and Mr Chris Bowen decided to side with the Liberal government during the election campaign.

So here we are at the beginning of the 45th Parliament and we have had two pieces of important legislation. Three weeks ago this Senate passed $5 billion in savings because this Prime Minister said that he believed the moral challenge of our time was budget repair and paying down debt. So Labor teamed up with the Liberal Party to take money off single parents, off students, off Newstart recipients and, sadly, off clean energy action in this country to raise $5 billion because they believed the government and they joined with the government in this bid to pay down debt. What are they doing today? Out of the $5 billion that they ripped off ordinary Australians, they are now giving $4 billion back to wealthy Australians. Out of the $5 billion of savings that we delivered three weeks ago we are now giving back $4 billion to the wealthiest Australians.

In the 1890s US economists first offered up what was called the horse and sparrow theory. It went along the lines: if you give a horse more oats then there will be more to pass through for the sparrows to enjoy. Give the horse more oats and there will be more to pass through for the sparrows to enjoy. Does that sound familiar? With different waves of enthusiasm across generations since, policymakers have been fed the same foodstuffs as the sparrows. Tax cuts to the wealthiest will trickle down to the benefit of the masses. Apparently, we all win if the richest have even more money to play with. But the evidence tells a different story and it leaves trickle-down economics exposed as a naked claim used to shore up the position of those already enjoying wealth and social position. History shows that the wealthiest do not tend to direct their newfound tax cuts into more consumption. Instead, they either increase savings or plough it into tax advantage investment vehicles like superannuation or negatively geared investment properties. There is an active and growing consensus around the world that the trickle-down theory should be expunged and never again exhumed. Yet that is exactly what we are doing here today. Not only are we standing up to fight inequality, we are actually adding to it by voting for this bill here today.

Let's look at the political winds that are blowing across this globe, including in this country. For those who saw the US presidential debate yesterday, all the commentary in the mainstream media and social media was about Donald Trump and the rise of the Trump phenomenon in the US. We have talked about the Brexit movement in the UK, and of course there has been a lot of speculation on the rise of my colleagues over here on the other side of
the chamber, One Nation. Let me tell you what the thread is that ties all these things together: that thread is inequality. People are feeling like they have been left behind. They are feeling that they have been ignored by their political system and their politicians because the gains and spoils of our economic system across decades of globalisation have not been shared evenly. That is why we are seeing such radical political movements around the world and that is actually what we need to act on. Our entire political system is now under a challenge because of rising inequality and our inability in a place like this to tackle this.

Martin Parkinson recently came out publicly and said that he believed one thing this government needed to do was to look at redistributive policies that help share the spoils of globalisation, especially trade deals. A first-year economic student will tell you about this. It is called the compensatory principles. In theory, the winners should compensate the losers, but that has not happened. In no world that I know have the winners—the big multinational corporations—compensated those workers you, Mr Acting Deputy President Marshall, talked about in this place who have been left behind. That does not happen. It is our role in government to make sure that it does happen. Professor Thomas Piketty, one of the world's most famous economists, is in Sydney this week to talk about inequality, which he sees as a severe challenge for Australia, and the need for new policies to tackle inequality. It is the true moral challenge of our time, and this consensus that we need to do something about it is lapping upon our political shores. The last few months have seen Labor MPs join with the Greens, at least in their public speeches, attacking trickle-down theory with gusto. I have heard this issue talked about during Senate debates in this chamber. We have seen economics spokespeople shifting from being past advocates of tax cuts to staying silent on who benefits from cutting taxes. It even culminated in the opposition leader, Mr Bill Shorten, claiming on the eve of the election that the Turnbull government:

… want Australians to embark upon a radical, expensive experiment in trickle-down economics.

We know how this story ends.

Reagan tried it. Thatcher tried it.

A generation later we got Trump and we got Brexit.

Correct. I totally agree with Mr Shorten. So why is Labor giving a tax cut to the most wealthy Australians today? Anyone who earns over $80,000 gets a measly $6 in their pocket per week—-$315. What economic benefit is that going to have in terms of increased consumption? It would be a lot more valuable for those on the breadline—-$6 a week would matter. But we are not giving them money. We are giving it to the most wealthy people in this country.

It is not just Mr Shorten who has had strong words on the subject. Mr Chris Bowen has recently given a number of speeches on the need to tackle inequality and trickle-down economics. Words are cheap if they are not backed up with actions. Senators from my home state of Tasmania have spoken about this. Senator Polley told the Senate on 4 May:

I rise to speak about the Turnbull government's budget that puts high-income earners and big business before families, students, patients, pensioners and low-income earners. This morning in my home state of Tasmania, four out of five workers who make less than $80,000 woke up to find out that they were getting nothing from Turnbull's government's budget. Eighty-two per cent of the working population in Bass have been left off the map and will not get a tax cut.

That is exactly what Senator Polley is going to vote for today. On the same day, Senator Singh said:
'Let's protect the higher income earners'—that is the mantra of the Turnbull Liberal government—'and let's do it at the expense of families …

Those who earn more than $80,000 may look forward to this tax cut, but if you look at Tasmania 80 per cent of its workforce earns less than $80,000. That is how out of touch the Turnbull government is with the states that it is supposed to be thinking about and providing for, as it was last night in its budget. Four out of five Tasmanians earn less than $80,000. They are the people who are going to be affected.

I know that Senator Singh is not here, but, if she were, either she would abstain from the vote in the chamber, as she often does on controversial votes, or she would also vote for this. On 9 May, Senator Carol Brown tweeted, 'More than 230,000 Tasmanians will not benefit from the government's tax cuts. This shows Turnbull is out of touch.' I have here a whole list of other MPs who have gone out in a similar vein.

**Senator Cameron interjecting—**

**Senator WHISH-WILSON:** Senator Cameron, let me finish with your leader, Mr Bill Shorten: 'This is a budget that favours millionaires over battlers, high-income earners over families.'

**Senator Cameron interjecting—**

**Senator WHISH-WILSON:** Well, Senator Cameron, guess who is going to get a tax cut today out of nurses, clerks, store people, aged and disability carers and millionaires. Millionaires—you are correct. Millionaires are going to get the tax cut today. Congratulations, Labor, and congratulations, Liberal Party.

I want to deal with a couple of specific issues that have gone unnoticed about this bill in terms of increasing inequality, gender inequality. Under this bill, women are half as likely to receive the benefits of a tax cut than male workers. Twenty-eight per cent of male workers in this country will receive a tax cut, but only 13 per cent of women will receive a tax cut. The Australia Institute did some fantastic work on whose electorates benefit from this tax cut. I do not know whether it is just a coincidence, but the first electorate in the top 10 electorates to benefit from this was Wentworth, the Prime Minister's electorate, where 34 per cent of people earn above the threshold. Sadly, the electorate of Lyons in my state of Tasmania is in the bottom 10 electorates, with only six per cent of people in Lyons earning above $80,000.

We can put these two measures side by side—the omnibus bill that was before us in the parliamentary sitting three weeks ago and the bill before us today, which will give $4 billion in tax cuts to Australia's highest income earners. It is going to cost us $4 billion in lost revenue. This paints a very dire picture for those of us in this place who care about tackling income inequality. The income tax cuts will put $315 into the pockets of each of us as members of parliament, and into the pockets of banking executives—I would have loved to have been involved with the banking inquiry last week, but it was only members of the other place. I would have dearly liked to have asked each CEO how they plan to spend the extra $6 a week they are going to be given by this government.

If this measure is truly targeted at bracket creep, we should be recouping revenue from those earning above $180,000. According to a number of submissions to the Senate Economics Committee, those in the tax bracket below $80,000 are the ones that most suffer from bracket creep. That is not part of this bill. I have written to Mr Chris Bowen, the shadow
Treasurer, asking him—if he is going to vote for this bill today—to at least consider maintaining the so-called deficit repair levy for high-income earners that was introduced in the 2014 budget. The Greens have always wanted to make that permanent so that high-income earners do not get their tax back from that measure.

These issues do not often get covered by the mainstream media if Labor or the government do not want them to be covered. But let us address the issue of this being a tax cut for middle-income earners or middle-income Australians. That is absolute claptrap. This is an income tax cut for the wealthiest Australians—the wealthiest 20 per cent of Australians.

The Australia Institute has looked at what constitutes middle-income earners. It is true that the average income in this country is around $80,000, but that is dragged up because it includes the multimillionaires and the CEOs who were at the banking inquiry last week, who are earning $8 to $10 million a year. That average income of $80,000 deals with full-time workers. If you include part-time and casual labour then that figure drops considerably.

The true measurement would be the median income earnings. According to the ABS, the median income in this country for 2014 was $69,000, while the average wage—average versus median—was nearly $80,000. Again, that is only for full-time workers. When we include all kinds of workers the average wage falls to $62,000 but the median income in this country falls to $52,000. So middle-income Australia, according to all the experts who use median income, is $52,000, which is way below the threshold of those who are going to get this tax cut above $80,000.

Whichever way you look at it this is a tax cut for high-income Australians. I think we in here can all agree that, on a personal level, we do not need the extra $6 a week. I do not think the economy is going to benefit from that either. But those who do need it are not going to get it. The savings that we booked three or four weeks ago—which we took off clean energy, which we took off tertiary education students and which we took of single parents—are nearly gone. Now we are there is another bill about to hit the Senate that will give businesses tax cuts. It will give big businesses tax cuts. This is ramping up trickle-down economics and it will make inequality worse.

We have an opportunity in our limited time—and in the scheme of things we all have limited time in this place—to make a difference, to make our vote count and make our words mean something, and that means voting against this bill today.

I do agree with some of the things Senator Gallagher said today. The big things we do need to tackle in this parliament, like concessions of negative gearing, capital gains tax and proper superannuation concessions, are things we should work at together with Labor and with the Liberals to get some real economic reform done in this country. That is what is going to raise revenue and tackle inequality. We can walk and chew gum at the same time.

Why is Labor going along with this neo-Liberal agenda of trickle-down economics? I do not understand. I genuinely do not understand it. Senator Cameron, because I always enjoy hearing you speak—that is the truth—I wish you were on the speakers list today so you could explain that to me—

Senator Cameron: I will see if I can get on.

Senator WHISH-WILSON: Please do. Through you, Acting Deputy President, I would very much enjoy your contribution. I move:
Omit all words after "That", substitute "this bill be withdrawn and redrafted so that bracket creep is addressed without further propagating income inequality in Australia on the flawed theory of trickle-down economics by providing a tax cut to the top 20 per cent of Australian taxpayers."

Now is not the time for tax cuts. Now is the time for the Labor opposition to match its media releases with its actions and stand against the expansion of income inequality and gender income inequality in Australia. Now is the time for our parliament to give momentum to the global discrediting of the horse and sparrow theory, which started nearly 100 years ago and continues to be propagated, which by any other name smells just as bad as the vision of that theory. I say to Labor: this is your last chance on this bill to make a difference. Please vote this down and work with the Greens and the crossbench on policies that tackle inequality.

Senator LEYONHJELM (New South Wales) (13:19): Today I vote for $4 billion of tax cuts over the next four years. I can do this and look the next generation in the eye because, in the previous sitting week, I voted to cut government spending by $5.9 billion over the next four years.

My position is clear and responsible: to reduce the tax burden, to reduce government spending by even more and to ease the burden of debt on future generations. There will be some who take a different position. Some, like the Greens, oppose both cuts to government spending and cuts to tax. Taking this position reveals a misguided faith in big government—dare I say 'social ownership, comrade'—but at least it would not be burying future generations in debt.

But there is another completely indefensible position. This is to oppose spending cuts, but to let tax cuts sail through without a whiff of opposition. Any party that takes this position has a lot of explaining to do, not just to the parliament and the people but to future generations. Those who voted against spending cuts in the previous sitting week were the Greens, the Nick Xenophon Team, Senator Lambie, and Senator Culleton, of Pauline Hanson's One Nation. I expect each of them to express their opposition to today's tax cuts. If they do not, then their position of opposing spending cuts but supporting tax cuts would represent a failure to have any regard for future generations—that spending by today's generation can be paid for by future generations.

Today's bill will reduce the income tax burden by up to $315 for Australians earning more than $80,000 a year. This is justified, given how huge the tax burden is for these Australians and how much more these Australians pay in tax compared with other Australians—for instance, even after the passage of this bill, Australians earning $87,000 a year will still pay $21,562 in income tax, including the Medicare levy. That is a quarter of their income. Even with the passage of this bill, middle- and upper-income Australians will still lose a much greater share of their income through taxation than lower-income Australians.

This is called progressive taxation, but it is really just gross discrimination against people who earn money. Even a flat tax would have high-income earners paying well in excess of the benefits they get from government spending, so I welcome this bill's slight reduction in the extent of discrimination.

We need to go further than this, by flattening our tax rates and winding back the welfare state. The combination of our welfare system and progressive income tax rates means 48 per cent of households pay no net tax. This cannot continue. It is unjust for high-income earners and promotes dependency for low-income earners.
Australia's tax burden is high, no matter how you look at it. It is high by historical standards—for instance, 50 years ago taxes averaged $5,000 per person in current dollar terms, in other words, after adjusting for inflation. This tax burden has grown consistently from decade to decade so that it now averages more than $18,000 per person, with middle- and upper-income Australians paying much more than this average, which, as I said, is in real terms.

Australia's tax burden is also high by international standards. Once you account for Australia's system of compulsory superannuation contributions and the system of social security contributions prevalent in Europe, our tax burden is higher than the weighted average for the OECD.

When we look outside the OECD, each country that is richer than us has a markedly lower tax burden than Australia—for instance, the tax burden in Hong Kong is around 15 per cent of GDP, which is around half the tax burden in Australia, and the tax burden in Singapore is even lower.

My position is clear. I commend the tax cuts in the bill we are currently debating, just as I commend the spending cuts that made them possible. I urge other senators to come in here and put their position on tax and spending cuts on the record.

(Quorum formed)

Senator DI NATALE (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Greens) (13:26): I rise today to speak against the Treasury Laws Amendment (Income Tax Relief) Bill 2016. Our political debate is often defined by where the parties stand when they oppose each other, when they have competing views on different pieces of legislation. But, actually, you get a lot more insight into Australian politics when the two parties that form the government and opposition in this place agree.

What we see are the Liberal Party and the Labor Party always agreeing to give tax cuts to the wealthy. We see them agreeing on areas of public policy like the brutal treatment of asylum seekers; the overreach in the approach to counterterrorism; going to war without parliament approving the committing of Australian troops; and, of course, on donations reform, where they both get a huge benefit.

Now, it is no surprise that the Liberal government are keen to give a tax cut to the wealthy. They represent themselves as the party of big business—as the party for the big end of town. So it is hardly surprising that the Liberal party, who have for many years now decried the state of revenue within the budget, would put a lie to their claim that we have a budget emergency and argue for a huge tax cut to the wealthy. We expect that from the Liberal Party.

But what makes this united support more interesting is that we have the Labor Party supporting it. When you consider the words of the shadow Treasurer, who has, indeed, begun to make a big deal out of the issue of rising inequality and the failure of trickle-down economics, it makes their support for this legislation much more interesting.

What it does is indicate that those words are just hollow words—that they are used in some political positioning opportunity to position the ALP as a party that is committed to fairness. Instead, the actions of the Labor Party now in supporting this government legislation prove that they are just hollow words.
You need to look at this piece of legislation against the recent omnibus bill from the last sitting weeks to show the bipartisan consensus between the Coles and Woolies of politics—the Labor and the Liberal parties—to support the big end of town and people on high incomes at the cost of the most vulnerable people in the Australian community. So let us remember that the omnibus bill that this party approved only a few weeks ago—indeed, during our last sitting week—cut billions of dollars from renewable energy, from families and from carers. It was a real attack on some of the most vulnerable people in the Australian community.

The impact of this bill is that 383,000 families with a household income of $80,000 lose around $730 per child. With the passage of this legislation, if you are a family earning $200,000 to $300,000 a year you will get a boost of about $630 each year. So just consider that. The omnibus legislation that took the knife to a whole lot of really critical family support payments and, indeed, other social supports and that passed in last week of parliament with the support of the Labor and Liberal parties means that families earning $80,000 are going to be worse off—383,000 families worse off to the tune of $730. With the passage of this legislation, if you are earning $200,000 or $300,000—that is, those of us in this chamber; many of us are earning well above the average wage—you will get a boost of $630 a year. We do not need it. Those families that are struggling and on the margins need the support more than we do.

So this is the government and the opposition—the Coles and Woolies of politics—working together over the last few weeks to grow the gap between the rich and poor at a time when rising inequality is something that the shadow Treasurer espouses is one of the great challenges before us as a nation. I simply do not understand the point of $6 billion of spending cuts on renewables and on carers when, in the next week, you wipe out those savings with $4 billion of tax cuts for the top 20 per cent. These are cuts to the people who need it most and a huge pay cheque for those of us who do not.

Shadow Treasurer Bowen made a speech recently. I will quote him because I agree with him. I think he was absolutely right. The case for the middle class was the speech. The sentiment was this:

... middle income earners are facing increased job insecurity as a result of the rise of technology and automation.

And together with increasing income inequality they are deciding that the system is no longer working for them.

Well, of course it is not when you have the two parties in this place ensuring that we provide tax cuts for the wealthy and cut services for those at the bottom. Of course, Labor will claim that this is targeted at everyday income earners. Let us actually have a look at that claim in more detail. Last week, the RBA released data that the average salary is $60,372. That is about $20,000 away from where this tax cut is targeted. The average wage is just over 60 grand. This tax cut kicks in for people earning over $80,000. So the tax data shows us that these tax cuts will go to the top 20 per cent of income earners. Let us again make that really clear: 80 per cent of people miss out; the top 20 per cent of income earners will benefit from this tax cut. Every single one of those banking executives that the Labor Party stood before the recent banking committee—those executives on multimillion dollar pays—are going to get a tax cut from this. Every one of us in this chamber will get a tax cut from this. Those top 20 per cent of income earners will get a tax cut, while real middle-class, ordinary, average
Australians will miss out. That is the impact of this legislation that has the support of both the Labor Party and the government.

The ostensible reason for the bill that has been given is that we have to assist people who are approaching $80,000 a year not to be in the second highest tax bracket—addressing so-called bracket creep. Yes, it is true: bracket creep can be a problem. We do not dispute that it needs to be mitigated where necessary. But, as Deloitte said in its submission, the group most adversely affected by bracket creep are people approaching $37,000 a year. Where is a solution for them? Rather than providing a solution, we saw the parliament a couple weeks ago make life harder for them. The government is looking in the wrong place. We expect this from the coalition; we expect this from the Liberal Party. But given the recent words of the shadow Treasurer, to have bipartisan support for tax cuts that go to the top 20 per cent of income earners is most disappointing.

So it does mean nothing for the average worker. This is a tax cut that provides little or no relief for the average worker. Based on the RBA's average income, what we do know is that the everyday worker—people on that average wage—will not be eligible for these tax cuts for the next 15 years. If you assume that wages growth hovers at about two per cent, it will be 2031 when the average worker starts to enjoy a small benefit from this legislation that we are passing today. For the richest 20 per cent of workers, who already earn over that 80k, the tax benefit is pretty instantaneous. This is bad policy because it drives the gap between the rich and poor faster and harder. At a time when we are looking to cut vital social services, what we should be doing is ensuring that our revenue base increases rather than shrinks.

One opportunity that was open to both the government and the opposition, if they were serious about addressing bracket creep and if they saw that this was the only option available to them, was to ensure that the $4 billion cost of this bill—let's remember this is $4 billion in lost revenue at a time when we are being told that we cannot afford to fund healthcare, we cannot afford to fund our schools and we cannot afford to fund vital social services—would not add to inequality. But this is $4 billion at a time when our budget is facing so-called structural challenges.

Rather than taking money out of the pockets of the most vulnerable and giving it to those people on high incomes, there are other solutions. If both the government and the opposition are intent on addressing bracket creep through this measure, why not recoup the $4 billion from the top three per cent of income earners in the top marginal rate by making the temporary two per cent levy on incomes over $180,000 permanent? Why not make it permanent and at least offset the $4 billion price tag that comes with this tax cut for the people who need it least? That is a policy that we Greens took to the election and one that Labor adopted. Here is an opportunity to take a stand and say to the government: if you want this, you have to make that two per cent levy on people with incomes of over $180,000 permanent. My colleague here Senator Whish-Wilson wrote to the shadow Treasurer seeking cooperation on this matter, but he refused. He was all the time citing increasing income inequality as a problem for the Australian community while refusing to work with the Greens on a measure that we know would address the issue of income inequality in a much fairer and more sustainable way.

So we Greens will not support this Treasury Laws Amendment (Income Tax Relief) Bill. We do not support it because it makes income inequality worse at a time when it is one of the
great challenges that lies before us as a nation. We will not support it because that $4 billion
could be spent on making Medicare more sustainable over the long term. That $4 billion
could make a contribution to Gonski funding so that we can provide an education on the basis
of need rather than who can afford to send their child to a wealthy private school. We will not
support it because we believe that carers and people on single incomes, particularly sole
parents, need support rather than having it stripped away. It is the Greens in this chamber who
will continue to advocate for a much fairer and more caring agenda. This bill works in
precisely the opposite direction to that agenda.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE (South Australia) (13:39): This is not my first speech.
When Treasurer Scott Morrison appeared at the National Press Club to sell the federal
government's plan to reduce the tax burden on Australians earning $80,000 or more he told
the country it was about tax relief. Hardworking Australians in the middle-income bracket
would be better off under the plan, the Treasurer said, and the move would help prevent
bracket creep for those moving into higher income brackets. I respect the Treasurer, and NXT
has had a constructive working relationship with him, but on this point we do disagree.

What the Treasury Laws Amendment (Income Tax Relief) Bill represents is a misguided
initiative from a government that has its priorities wrong and, while we must stress that those
who are benefiting from this tax cut are not undeserving of tax relief, our opposition to this
bill does not come from a place of hostility or antagonism but one of concern about how this
money could be better spent. All told, the measures proposed would cut almost $4 billion in
future revenue over the course of the next four years and, in turn, would only deliver a total
benefit of $315 a year to the top 20 per cent of income earners. I will say it again: the total
saving from this measure would equate to $315 a year or $6 a week for those among the top
20 per cent of income earners. In point of fact, those who are going to benefit do not represent
middle income earners. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as of May 2016 the
average income of the working Australian was $1,160 a week before tax. This equates to
$60,000 a year. Under the proposed change, those who fall into this category will see no
relief. Another study published by the Australia Institute counted those who did not file a tax
return and found that just 14 per cent of Australians earned $80,000 or more—the bulk of
whom are men. As the Age reported yesterday, the proposed cuts will help 28 per cent of male
taxpayers but only 13 per cent of female taxpayers—a point which my colleague Senator
Peter Whish-Wilson has discussed and with which the Nick Xenophon Team agrees. That
same article also broke down who would benefit from the proposed tax cut. One in nine
surgeons will benefit, so will eight in 10 mining engineers and seven out of every 10
psychiatrists. Among those who will miss out are 78 per cent of truck drivers and 70 per cent
of manufacturing workers. Of those who make our food, some 95 per cent of chefs will not
benefit from this tax cut, and 98 per cent of aged care and disabled workers, those who care
for our elderly and our vulnerable, will get nothing.

Earlier this year the Evatt Foundation examined wealth distribution across the country and
found that the top 10 per cent of Australian households have watched their earnings grow at
the expense of the middle 50 per cent of Australian households. That same report also found
that the bottom 40 per cent have either no or negative wealth due to high levels of personal
debt. The gap between Australians is growing, and it is against this backdrop that the
proposed tax cut to the top 20 per cent of income earners is proposed.
If Australia is to be considered a nation that pulls together, that chips in and that cooperates in the pursuit of a better tomorrow, offering this tax cut is going in the wrong direction. I am reminded of something former Treasurer Joe Hockey said once in talking about the Medicare co-payment when he described the $6 federal government plan to charge people to get Medicare advice as ‘just the price of two middies of beer’. For those earning over $80,000 or more, the $315 a year they may save on their tax bills is just the cost of a pizza delivered to their home once a month. For the bulk of Australians who fall outside of this income bracket, that money represents a lot more.

This tax cut is not the right priority for the government or the opposition, and the NXT is surprised that the Australian Labor Party has agreed to this measure given what could be done for the most vulnerable Australians or for our manufacturers, given all the other uses to which $4 billion could be put to use. It is not just that this money is not being spent better; the $4 billion that would be lost with this measure could be put to better use helping save Arrium from collapse—an event that would, as Professor John Spohr has described, constitute a Detroit level economic event. This money could help manufacturing communities across southern Australia facing the spectre of 200,000 job losses with the end of the Australian car industry in 2017 transition to a better future and save tens of thousands of jobs. It is money that could be better spent in our aged-care industry, which has endured $1.8 billion in savage cuts and which supports some of our most vulnerable Australians with complex healthcare needs.

This money could help alleviate the cuts made to parents living in the country's poorest households. These are the parents, as ACOSS described in its submission to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee, who are facing cuts to social security. The cuts mean a sole parent with two children and no private income is now $50 a week worse off. But they do not have to be. We could put this money to work where it is most needed. We, as responsible, elected representatives of the Australian people, should put this money to work where it is most needed, and that is why the Nick Xenophon Team opposes this legislation.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (13:45): This bill, if passed by the Senate, will deliver tax cuts for hardworking families across Australia. It will help provide an incentive for people across Australia to get ahead and to work harder and not be penalised by moving into the second-highest tax bracket while on a medium wage. I thank all the senators who have contributed to this debate and I commend the bill to the Senate.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Marshall) (13:50): The question is that the second reading amendment moved by Senator Whish-Wilson be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [13:50]

(ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT—Senator Marshall)

Ayes .................10
Noes ..................43
Majority..............33

AYES

Di Natale, R
Hanson-Young, SC
Lambie, J

Griff, S
Kakoschke-Moore, S
McKim, NJ
Question negatived.

The PRESIDENT (13:54): The question is that the bill be now read a second time.
The Senate divided. [13:56]

(The President—Senator Parry)

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

AYES

Back, CJ
Burston, B
Cameron, DN
Cash, MC
Collins, JMA
Culleton, RN
Duniam, J
Fawcett, DJ (teller)
Fifield, MP
Gallagher, KR
Hinch, D
Ketter, CR
Lines, S

NOES

Brown, CL
Bushby, DC
Canavan, MJ
Chisholm, A
Cormann, M
Culleton, RN
Duniam, J
Fawcett, DJ
Fierravanti-Wells, C
Gallagher, AM
Hinch, D
Ketter, CR
Lines, S
Marshall, GM
McAllister, J (teller)
McGrath, J
Moore, CM
O'Sullivan, B
Polley, H
Reynolds, L
Ryan, SM
Smith, D
Williams, JR

Rhiannon, L
Siewert, R (teller)
Rice, J
Whish-Wilson, PS

AYES

Back, CJ
Burston, B
Cameron, DN
Cash, MC
Cormann, M
Culleton, RN
Duniam, J
Fawcett, DJ
Fierravanti-Wells, C
Gallagher, AM
Hinch, D
Ketter, CR
Lines, S

NOES

Brown, CL
Bushby, DC
Canavan, MJ
Chisholm, A
Cormann, M
Culleton, RN
Duniam, J
Fawcett, DJ
Fierravanti-Wells, C
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Hinch, D
Ketter, CR
Lines, S
Marshall, GM
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Polley, H
Reynolds, L
Ryan, SM
Smith, D
Williams, JR

Rhiannon, L
Siewert, R (teller)
Rice, J
Whish-Wilson, PS

AYES

Back, CJ
Burston, B
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Gallagher, AM
Hinch, D
Ketter, CR
Lines, S

NOES

Brown, CL
Bushby, DC
Canavan, MJ
Chisholm, A
Cormann, M
Culleton, RN
Duniam, J
Fawcett, DJ
Fierravanti-Wells, C
Gallagher, AM
Hinch, D
Ketter, CR
Lines, S
Marshall, GM
McAllister, J (teller)
McGrath, J
Moore, CM
O'Sullivan, B
Polley, H
Reynolds, L
Ryan, SM
Smith, D
Williams, JR

Rhiannon, L
Siewert, R (teller)
Rice, J
Whish-Wilson, PS

AYES

Back, CJ
Burston, B
Cameron, DN
Cash, MC
Cormann, M
Culleton, RN
Duniam, J
Fawcett, DJ
Fi...
Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Ordered that consideration of this bill in Committee of the Whole be made an order of the day for a later hour.

**PARTY OFFICE HOLDERS**

**Australian Labor Party**

*Senator WONG* (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:00): by leave—I advise that, at the meeting of the federal parliamentary Labor Party this morning, Senator Farrell was elected unopposed as Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate. I congratulate him personally, and on behalf of all Labor senators, on his appointment. Senator Farrell has also been appointed to serve as shadow special minister of state and shadow minister for sport. We welcome Senator Farrell to the shadow ministry and to the deputy leadership.

With this appointment, there are some changes to the shadow ministerial representation arrangements in the Senate. I seek leave to table an updated shadow ministry list and have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

*The document read as follows—*

**SHADOW MINISTRY LIST**

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<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>SHADOW MINISTER</th>
<th>OTHER CHAMBER</th>
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<td>Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny</td>
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**AYES**

Marshall, GM                McAllister, J
McCarthy, M                 McGrath, J
McKenzie, B                 Moore, CM
Nash, F                     O'Neill, DM
O'Sullivan, B               Parry, S
Paterson, J                 Polley, H
Pratt, LC                   Reynolds, L
Roberts, M                  Ryan, SM
Sinodinos, A                Smith, D
Urquahart, AE               Watt, M
Williams, JR                Wong, P

**NOES**

Di Natale, R                Griff, S
Hanson-Young, SC            Kakoschke-Moore, S
Lambie, J                   McKim, NJ
Rhiannon, L                 Rice, J
Siewert, R (teller)         Whish-Wilson, PS
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<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Preventing Family Violence</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
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<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Schools</td>
<td>Andrew Giles MP</td>
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<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
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<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
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<td>Ed Husic MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education and</td>
<td>Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
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CHAMBER
Each box represents a portfolio except for (1) which is in the Education portfolio, (2) which is in Treasury portfolio and (3) which is in the Health portfolio. Shadow Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:01): by leave—On behalf of the government, I wish to congratulate Senator Farrell on his election as Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate. As would have been very apparent from the reaction of government senators, Senator Farrell, you are a very, very popular senator, at least on my side of the chamber!

I know that former Prime Minister the great John Howard had something of a monopoly on Lazarus references in his career, but your comeback really would have to be the greatest since Lazarus. Government senators look forward to working with you, and we wish you well.

While I am on my feet, I advise that Senator Scullion will be absent from question time today due to official business. In his absence, I will represent the Indigenous affairs portfolio.

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<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Mental Health</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley (Ageing)</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>Senator Deborah O'Neill (Mental Health)</td>
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QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Attorney-General

Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (14:03): Thank you, Senator Brandis, for those kind words. I am not sure how long it is going last—I will put the next question! I am pleased to say that, not only do I have friends on that side, I also have an awful lot of friends on this side.

My question is to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis. I refer to the Attorney-General's statement in the Senate on 1 December 2015, during the debate on the Australian Citizenship Amendment (Allegiance to Australia) Bill 2015, in which he said:

These changes have been reviewed by the Solicitor-General and he has now advised that they have a good prospect of being upheld by the High Court.

Does the Attorney-General agree that the assurance from him led senators in this place to believe that the bill, as introduced, has been reviewed by the Solicitor-General?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:03): Thank you, Senator Farrell. I do remember the statement and I stand by it. As you will recall, the bill went through many iterations. The Solicitor-General provided advice, both written and orally, at various times throughout and his views informed the drafting of the bill. As you know, the government does not release its legal advice. I did make the statement to the Senate that you have quoted and I stand by it.

Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (14:04): Mr President, I ask a supplementary question. I refer to the Solicitor-General's letter to the Attorney-General dated 12 November 2015, in which he said that the bill in question 'reflected new changes that were made without seeking my further advice' and, further, that the statements about the Solicitor-General having advised on the bill were inaccurate. How does the Attorney-General reconcile his unqualified assurance to the Senate with the written advice from the Solicitor-General 19 days earlier?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:04): As I said in answer to your primary question, this bill evolved through many iterations. The Solicitor-General was involved. From time to time during the course of those iterations, I was asked questions in relation to the Solicitor-General's involvement and I acquainted those who inquired of me what it was. That includes the statement that you have quoted, which I stand by.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Farrell, a final supplementary question.

Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (14:05): Senator Brandis, is this just another example of you being slippery with the facts?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:05): Senator Farrell, as you know, the government does not release legal advice. But I stand by every statement I have made in relation to the Solicitor-General's advice.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT (14:05): Order! I draw to the attention of the Senate the presence in the gallery of a delegation from the Federal Republic of Germany led by Ms Ingrid Fischbach,
Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Health of the German Bundestag. On behalf of all senators, I wish you a warm welcome to Australia and, in particular, to the Senate.

Honourable senators: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Country Fire Authority

Senator HUME (Victoria) (14:06): My question is to the Minister for Employment, Senator Cash. Can the minister update the Senate on the actions the government is taking to protect emergency services volunteers?

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Employment and Minister for Women) (14:06): I thank Senator Hume for her question. I am pleased to say that, last night, the government delivered on its election commitment to protect the volunteers in the Country Fire Authority from a hostile union takeover instigated by the Andrews Labor government in Victoria. This is a victory for the thousands and thousands of men and women who have fought tirelessly to defend the integrity, the autonomy and the authority of their CFA.

I would like to thank the Senate crossbench, including One Nation, the Nick Xenophon Team, the Liberal Democrats, Derryn Hinch's Justice Party and Family First, who all supported the CFA volunteers. Together we have ensured that this vital organisation will be autonomous and strong and will continue to keep Victorians safe. This has been a very long and a very sorry saga. The Country Fire Authority is one of the largest and the most effective volunteer based organisations in the world. It is something that Australians and in particular the Victorians in this place should be so very proud of.

As you know, Mr President, in particular over the past few months a dark cloud has been cast over the 60,000 volunteers. The proposed enterprise agreement, despite—Senator Cameron interjecting—

Senator CASH: the lack of respect being shown by Senator Cameron. This is how members of the Australian Labor Party under Bill Shorten treat volunteers. They show a complete lack of respect for them. On this side of the chamber we will continue to put volunteers first every day of the week.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hume, a supplementary question?

Senator HUME (Victoria) (14:08): Can the minister apprise the Senate of why this action was necessary and the consequences of not acting to protect volunteers?

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator CASH (Western Australia—Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Employment and Minister for Women) (14:08): Despite the interjections from those opposite, perhaps they would like to listen to former minister Jane Garrett and what she had to say about the proposed enterprise agreement. The last time I checked, she did not sit on this side of the chamber in Victoria. She did not sit on the Liberal government's side; she sat with the Labor government, those who are in power. She was so disgusted by what Daniel Andrews and Bill Shorten are endorsing in Victoria that she stepped aside. A senior minister was so disgusted with what she was being asked to do that she put her
principles first, unlike those on the other side, who are prepared to trample all over the 60,000 volunteer firefighters in Victoria. Quite frankly, shame on Mr Shorten. Mr Shorten is allegedly a member from Victoria. If I was a constituent in Victoria, I would be ashamed to have him as one of our members. *(Time expired)*

**The President:** Senator Hume, final supplementary question.

**Senator Hume (Victoria) (14:10):** Can the minister inform the Senate of any alternative approaches?

**Senator Cash (Western Australia—Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service, Minister for Employment and Minister for Women) (14:10):** Unfortunately, I can. What we have seen over the past few months in particular is a shameless power grab by the United Firefighters Union wholly endorsed by the Daniel Andrews Labor government. And, of course, last night we saw it on full display in the Senate when those opposite refused to support the 60,000 volunteers and instead were prepared to defend the actions of the United Firefighters Union every step of the way. You are talking about tens of thousands of Victorian men and women who selflessly put their lives on the line because they believe in their Victorian communities. The Labor Party have shown they do not care for volunteers and they will not show them respect, and shame on them.

**Attorney-General**

**Senator Gallagher (Australian Capital Territory—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (14:11):** My question is to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis. On what date was the Solicitor-General first made aware of the Attorney-General's intention to make the Legal Services Amendment (Solicitor-General Opinions) Direction 2016 and, specifically, when did the Attorney-General consult the Solicitor-General on inserting the new paragraph (10B)?

**Senator Brandis (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:11):** I would have to check the precise date, but it was, as I said in response to a question yesterday, in 2016. Senator Wong interjecting—

**Senator Brandis:** I said that yesterday, Senator Wong. It was in 2016. As I said to you yesterday, I was approached by the Solicitor-General at the end of 2015 for a meeting to discuss the issue. We had that meeting on 30 November, during the course of which I consulted the Solicitor-General and I also invited the Solicitor-General to put in writing his ideas, which he did some 14 weeks later in a document I received in March 2016. On the basis of both what had been said at the meeting of 30 November and what had been put to me in writing in the March 2016 document, I made certain decisions, I took certain advice from my department, an instrument was issued and the Solicitor-General was given a copy of it.

**The President:** Senator Gallagher, a supplementary question?

**Senator Gallagher (Australian Capital Territory—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (14:12):** I look forward to the Attorney-General coming back with that date. Was the Solicitor-General provided a copy of the direction before it was tabled in the Senate on 4 May 2016? If so, when? Was the Solicitor-General provided an opportunity to provide feedback and comment on that specific direction?
Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:13): I will check the date in response to your first question. In relation to the second question, I considered that, for reasons I have explained several times now and referred to at length in the statement that I have given the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee, I had thoroughly consulted the Solicitor-General at the time I made the instrument. That is what I told the Senate, and I think, Senator Gallagher, if I may say so, it is very obvious from the questions that were asked of me in this chamber yesterday and the question you have just asked that what this comes down to is a semantic argument about the meaning of the word 'consult'.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Gallagher, final supplementary question.

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (14:14): We now know that the Attorney-General did not discuss the making of the direction before it was made, did not provide a copy of the direction before it was made and did not allow an opportunity to provide feedback before it was made. Doesn't this prove that Australia has an Attorney-General who is slippery with the facts?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:14): My attention has been drawn to paragraph 24 of my written statement to the committee, so let me read it to you:

By 20 April 2016, I had concluded that the Guidance Note did require amendment and that a new Direction should also be issued to address the issues raised by the Solicitor-General. Two days previously, of course, it had become clear that both Houses of Parliament would be dissolved in early May, prior to the Solicitor-General's first available appointment time.

The previous paragraph of the statement indicates that in early April I approached the office of the Solicitor-General for another meeting.

Taking into account the Solicitor-General's proposals, draft versions of a new Guidance Note and corresponding Direction were prepared.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT (14:15): Before I call Senator Hanson-Young, could I just indicate to senators that we also have a delegation from the Australian Political Exchange Council's 10th delegation from the Republic of the Philippines in the Senate gallery. On behalf of all senators, I wish you a warm welcome to Australia and in particular to the Senate.

Honourable senators: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Oil Exploration

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (14:15): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for the Environment and Energy, Senator Birmingham. Senator, BP today announced that they will not pursue their plans to drill for oil in the Great Australian Bight Marine Park. Will you now join with the Greens and others in congratulating the South Australian community for standing up to this big oil company and making it clear that BP are not welcome in our spectacular marine environment?
Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Minister for Education and Training) (14:16): I cannot believe that a senator for South Australia would stand in this place and cheer the loss of investment and jobs in South Australia, as Senator Hanson-Young just did. I cannot believe that the invitation has been made for me to join her in congratulating people for deterring this investment and this creation of jobs in South Australia. This is a disappointing decision by BP. It is a disappointing decision that reduces the employment prospects for South Australians in the future. It is particularly disappointing for the communities of the west coast of South Australia who will lose out the most from investment that BP were planning to undertake as part of their continued exploration activities. I have been continually disappointed in this place by the fact that the Greens, in cooperation with other political parties, have sought to politicise BP's activities in relation to exploration and have sought to, indeed, create an environment where it is less attractive for somebody to actually proceed with a good, strong investment into the state of SA.

Of course, all of the usual environmental standards and procedures were being applied and NOPSEMA was doing its job in putting BP through all of the right assessments and conditions before final permits and approvals could be granted. But I cannot believe that we have a circumstance yet again where the Australian Greens seem to think it is appropriate to be a cheer squad for the loss of jobs and the loss of investment rather than actually recognising that this is another disappointing act in relation to investment in South Australia, which I am pleased that our government is working hard to try to rectify through programs like, of course, our record levels of defence industry investment. But also, as we have discussed previously, we need to continue to work—(Time expired)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Hanson-Young, a supplementary question.

Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (14:18): Thank you, Mr President. Of course, I will chalk this up as: community 1; big oil 0. I recognise that BP have said that they have pulled out of the bight because of financial reasons—they cannot make this project viable—but of course they were putting at risk the fishing and tourism industries. When will the government stand up for our tourism industry and our fishing industry and protect this area from big oil?

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Minister for Education and Training) (14:19): There is barely a question in that rant, but, nonetheless, in case Senator Hanson-Young missed it, NOPSEMA, the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority, was going through a very rigorous process in relation to BP—very rigorous. On 16 November 2015 and again on 16 May 2016, when the BP announced environmental plan for the proposed petroleum exploration was declared, it had not yet met the criteria under environmental regulations. It was completely appropriate for NOPSEMA to do so. BP went through the process of submitting a new environmental plan for NOPSEMA's assessment. That was on 12 August 2016. On 28 September 2016, NOPSEMA requested further information from BP, and on 11 October 2016—that is, of course, today—BP took the commercial decision and announced it would not proceed. But NOPSEMA and environmental approvals did exactly their job, and to denigrate them or anybody else in this process is ridiculous from Senator Hanson-Young while she cheers the loss of jobs. (Time expired)

The PRESIDENT: A final supplementary question, Senator Hanson-Young.
Senator HANSON-YOUNG (South Australia) (14:20): Thank you, Mr President. Will the government now move to give permanent protection to the Commonwealth marine park in the Great Australian Bight and remove the threat of exploration, rigs and oil spills for good?

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Minister for Education and Training) (14:20): There remain outstanding licences that the minister for resources, Senator Canavan, would be better to speak of, in terms of exploration licences that exist in the Great Australian Bight. The Commonwealth believes that we can effectively protect our marine parks and marine sanctuaries while also enabling economic activity to occur, that we can get the balance right from the Turnbull government to protect our environment through the high standards applied by agencies such as NOPSEMA while encouraging exploration and investment activity that can, of course, lead to the creation of greater wealth and further job opportunities. We will not be taking a backward step in relation to encouraging firms and others to undertake exploration activities that can lead to job creation, as long as they meet the tough environmental standards that are already in place, that BP was being held to and that any other investor or licence holder in this area will be equally held to in the future.

Marriage

Senator REYNOLDS (Western Australia) (14:21): I rise to ask my question to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis, and it is with some degree of sadness today that I actually have to ask this question. Can the Attorney-General comment on the consequences of Labor's decision this morning to deny Australians marriage equality?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:21): Thank you, Senator Reynolds, for that question. This morning, I am sorry to say, Senator Reynolds, the Labor Party has driven a stake through the heart of marriage equality, because, regardless of the pieties we hear coming from people like Senator Wong, who assert that they believe in this cause—

Senator Wong: It matters to me.

Senator BRANDIS: You say it matters to you, Senator Wong. Why won't you do something about it? Senator Wong, in 2004 you came into this chamber and voted against marriage equality, as the division list reveals. For six years, from 2007 to 2013, you were a senior minister in a—

The PRESIDENT: Order! A point of order from Senator Williams, who was on his feet first.

Senator Williams: Mr President, as you are aware, I spent some time in your position, as deputy chair. When I was in that position and Senator Wong was speaking, when people would interject she would stop and stare at the chair and demand silence.

Senator Wong: He was yelling at me!

Senator Williams: She is even interjecting at me now, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: Your point of order, Senator Williams?

Senator Williams: My point of order is: would you please bring her to order, remind her of standing order 197 and, if necessary, standing order 203.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Williams.

Senator Wong: If he's yelling at me, I'll yell back.
Senator Williams: You are a disgrace, you are!

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind all senators to curtail their interjections.

Senator Ian Macdonald: You are a disgrace, Penny!

The PRESIDENT: Senator Macdonald! In particular—and I am reluctant to do so—I will remind both leaders not to shout across the chamber, and I remind all senators not to interject.

Senator BRANDIS: Senator Wong, for six years, between 2007 and 2013, you were a senior minister in a government that did not one thing, not a single thing, to advance marriage equality. In July 2010 you said on the Ten Network that you were against marriage equality and today, this morning, you have been part of a caucus that has put a roadblock in front of the only feasible possibility of seeing marriage equality in Australia any time soon. In fact, Senator Wong, but for the decision you and your caucus made this morning within four months from today we could have had this outcome. Senator Wong, you have for years now said you believe in this. Why have you put a roadblock before it today?

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order on my left! Senator Reynolds, a supplementary question?

Senator REYNOLDS (Western Australia) (14:25): Clearly, Mr President, the truth hurts. Can the Attorney-General please explain, despite this, how the government is progressing this issue?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:25): Yes, Senator Reynolds, I can, and may I say how proud I am to be a minister in the first Australian government of either political persuasion to progress the issue of marriage equality, led by Mr Turnbull, the first Prime Minister, and to be the first Attorney-General in office to be progressing this issue.

We took a plebiscite proposal to the 2016 election and had it endorsed. We introduced a plebiscite bill into the parliament. In the meantime I attempted to negotiate in good faith with the shadow Attorney-General, Mr Dreyfus, and asked him whether he had any counterproposal—if there was any way that the government could amend the plebiscite bill so as to make it acceptable to the Labor Party—and he refused to say a word. Last night we— (Time expired)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Reynolds, a final supplementary question?

Senator REYNOLDS (Western Australia) (14:26): Can the Attorney-General advise the Senate how the government is honouring its commitment for a plebiscite?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:26): Well, Senator Reynolds, I had begun to tell you. We introduced a bill, we offered to negotiate with the Labor Party to accommodate any legitimate concerns they had—

Senator Cameron interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Cameron!

Senator BRANDIS: and they refused to engage in a good faith discussion with us. Last night the government authorised the release of an exposure draft of a marriage amendment
bill which will form the basis of a community discussion as to how, in the unlikely event that there is now a plebiscite, the matter would come before the parliament.

Can I, in closing, appeal to the crossbench. It is not too late, Senator Hinch and other members of the crossbench, to reconsider your position, to give Australians the marriage equality you say they deserve, and to give it to them within four months by supporting this bill.

**Senator Cameron:** Yes, throw a lifebelt to Malcolm Turnbull! Throw him a lifebelt!

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Senator Cameron, you have interjected on every question so far. Please desist.

**Attorney-General**

**Senator WATT** (Queensland) (14:28): My question is to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis. I refer to the evidence of the former Solicitor-General, Dr David Bennett, to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee inquiry into consultations prior to the making of directions concerning opinions of the Solicitor-General. Can the Attorney-General confirm that a member of his staff was dispatched to Sydney to sit next to Dr Bennett while he was giving evidence to the Senate committee via telephone?

**Senator BRANDIS** (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:28): Yes, that is right, Senator, and let me explain why. There were certain privileged documents that may have come into issue and it was necessary, therefore, for Dr Bennett to know when the government proposed to claim privilege in relation to the documents.

**The PRESIDENT:** Senator Watt, a supplementary question?

**Senator WATT** (Queensland) (14:29): Thank you, Mr President. Why did the Attorney-General feel it was necessary to have a member of his staff stand over Dr Bennett as he gave evidence to the Senate committee? What was the Attorney-General worried Dr Bennett would say?

**Senator BRANDIS** (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:29): Surely, Senator Watt, you can do better than that. A member of my staff was present when Dr Bennett gave evidence by teleconference for the reason I just explained: certain privilege documents were in issue and, in those circumstances, it was necessary for Dr Bennett to know if and when the government proposed to claim privilege in relation to any such document.

**The PRESIDENT:** Senator Watt, a final supplementary question?

**Senator WATT** (Queensland) (14:30): Can the Attorney-General assure the Senate that he has not sought to stand over other witnesses to the Senate inquiry, including the deputy secretary of his own department?

**Senator BRANDIS** (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:30): Senator Watt, I have been a barrister for 33 years and I have never stood over a witness in my life.

_Honourable senators interjecting—_

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Senator Carr and Senator Macdonald.
Defence Industry

Senator FAWCETT (South Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Finance, Senator Cormann. Can the minister update the Senate on how the structural reforms to ASC announced today will support Australia's record naval shipbuilding investment?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:30): I thank Senator Fawcett for that question. Before answering it, though, may I join with my good friend and valued colleague the Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator Brandis, in congratulating Senator Farrell on his elevation to the Deputy Leader in the Senate position in the Labor Party.

The government today announced that ASC will be structurally separated into individual shipbuilding, submarine sustainment and infrastructure businesses. This ensures that ASC has the best possible structure to pursue future shipbuilding opportunities and support the government's naval shipbuilding objectives. The infrastructure company will hold and manage significant upgrades of shipbuilding and infrastructure assets to support future shipbuilding and submarine programs. In this context the government recognises that the Adelaide shipyards are strategic national assets, including the South Australian government's Techport. The Osborne Precinct will play a key part in facilitating naval shipbuilding in Australia over the long term. Discussions with the South Australian government will ensure that both the state government and the Commonwealth government are aligned to ensure a cohesive approach to naval shipbuilding. This reflects a new approach to key elements of Australia's naval shipbuilding infrastructure to promote Australian capability and protect our national interests.

The shipbuilding company will employ the skilled shipbuilding workforce and complete the air warfare destroyer project, which is on track for delivery consistent with the timetable in the budget announced in December 2015, and the submarine sustainment company will employ the submarine sustainment workforce and sustain Collins class submarines. These structural changes will not impact ASC employees' terms and conditions and it will help ensure that ASC is in the best possible position to pursue future shipbuilding opportunities and support the government's long-term plans for the Australian naval shipbuilding industry.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Fawcett, a supplementary question?

Senator FAWCETT (South Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:33): Could the minister outline the next steps as part of the ASC restructure?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:33): I thank Senator Fawcett for his supplementary question. Along with the board and the executive of ASC the government will commence work immediately to begin the structural separation. The government will enter into discussions also with the South Australian government on the future of the common user facility at Techport to ensure a cohesive approach in support of future naval shipbuilding projects. The Minister for Defence Industry and I have written to the South Australian Premier on this matter and we look forward to productive and fruitful discussions between the Commonwealth and the South Australian government in the near future. The current board of ASC will continue to operate across the separated entities under the leadership of the ASC
chair, Mr Bruce Carter. Over time the corporate structures and governance arrangements will be aligned to the future requirements of the three individual business. The government expects the final separation to be completed in 2017.

**The PRESIDENT:** Senator Fawcett, a final supplementary question?

**Senator FAWCETT** (South Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (14:34): Can the minister outline how these changes will further support the improved performance of ASC with the maintenance of Collins and delivering the air warfare destroyers?

**Senator CORMANN** (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:34): Our government has worked closely with ASC since we were elected to get the air warfare destroyer project back on track. As a result of the government's reforms to the air warfare destroyer program it remains on schedule and on budget, as per previous announcements made by the government, and the program has seen significant improvements in terms of cost, performance and labour productivity. We expect delivery of the first ship by June 2017, delivery of the second ship by July 2018 and delivery of the third ship by December 2019. It is also worth noting that Collins class sustainment is going exceptional well, with submarine availability consistently exceeding the targets set by Navy. The ASC noted in a press release today that they had effectively been operating separate submarine and shipbuilding businesses for the last two years. The chair, Bruce Carter, commented that this operating model has been a major contributing factor in the company's turnaround in the Collins class submarine and Hobart class air warfare destroyer programs—*(Time expired)*.

**Illicit Drugs**

**Senator LAMBIE** (Tasmania) (14:35): My question without notice is to the Attorney-General. I refer the Attorney-General to two important facts regarding my proposal for involuntary medical detox treatment for children who are addicted to ice. Firstly, suitably qualified medical professionals, under our existing health laws, are able to authorise involuntary treatment for patients who suffer from damaged mental health and are subject to dangerous, uncontrollable and unpredictable behaviour. Secondly, people addicted to and using ice must also suffer damage to their mental health and are also subject to dangerous, uncontrollable and unpredictable behaviour. Given these obvious truths, can the Attorney-General explain why his government refuses to support my call for the same suitably qualified medical professionals, acting under new health laws, from authorising involuntary health treatment for ice addicts, especially those who are our children?

**Senator BRANDIS** (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:36): Thank you very much, Senator Lambie, for raising this issue in the chamber today—as we all know, this is a very important issue—and for giving me a little notice of the question so that I can put more-specific material before you. What the government has done in relation to this issue is to drive a national approach, through COAG, to combating Australia's ice problem. At the heart of that national approach led by the Commonwealth government lies the National Ice Action Strategy, which was agreed to by COAG in December last year and involves all nine Australian governments, together with community organisations, working together to tackle the ice problem.
It is a regrettable fact that proportionally Australians use more methamphetamine, including ice, than almost any other country. We have made significant investments in policing our borders and our streets to combat the supply of ice. We have been successful. We have had a number of significant arrests and significant seizures of ice. For example, we have invested $18 million from the proceeds of crime account—that is, from money actually taken from criminals—to enhance the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission's intelligence sharing with state and territory and international partners to stop the supply of ice at its source.

But, as I have said several times now, we cannot just arrest our way out of this problem. To break the drug dealers’ business model, we have to smash the demand for this drug. Senator Lambie, you have brought a proposal to the chamber, and the government will consider it very carefully. We want to work with all colleagues in this chamber, just as we work with state and territory governments of both political persuasions and with civil society organisations to assemble a— (Time expired)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Lambie, a supplementary question.

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (14:38): Does the Attorney-General concede that Australia has never seen a drug as addictive and as dangerous as ice? Combined with the unprecedented quantity of ice being consumed, lives lost and families ripped apart, will the Attorney-General acknowledge that Australia's laws have not kept up with this unprecedented health threat, and they prevent parents and family doctors from taking early medical intervention should they try to involuntarily detox their ice-addicted children?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:39): Senator Lambie, I agree with you as you acknowledge that this is a health problem. Whatever else it is, it is a health problem, and it needs a multidimensional response. It needs a law enforcement response—and I have explained to you some of the law enforcement initiatives the government has taken—and it also needs a health response. That is why, in response to the National Ice Taskforce report, the government announced $300 million of new money to combat the scourge of ice in communities across the country. Of that, $241.5 million will be invested through 31 Primary Health Networks, which will use their local knowledge to boost the alcohol and other drug treatment sector and reduce demand for ice. We will outlay $13 million to introduce new Medicare Benefits Schedule items for addiction medicine specialists to increase the availability of treatment. (Time expired)

The PRESIDENT: Final supplementary question, Senator Lambie.

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (14:40): I would suggest, before you go handing out that $300 million worth of money, you lay down the law with some of these states and put some intervention in yourself. Will the Attorney-General agree to work with all senators of this chamber and help draft new Commonwealth laws which finally acknowledge the highly addictive and dangerous nature of ice and the unprecedented health and social problems ice addiction causes, while giving Australian parents the right to involuntarily detox their drug-addicted children, before you go and pass out these millions of dollars worth of money? Lay down the law. (Time expired)
Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:40): The supply of prohibited drugs, including ice, and trafficking in prohibited drugs, including ice, and importing prohibited drugs, including ice, is already a crime against Australian law. Senator Lambie, I listened carefully to what you had to say, and I am very happy to engage with you in further conversation if you have specific proposals for law reform, but the point I make to you is that the supply, trafficking or importation of this particular drug is already a serious crime against Australian law. What we need is for that law to be enforced; for the suppliers, their financiers and the organised criminals who stand behind them to be caught; and for the quantities of the drug to be seized—and the Australian Federal Police have had some great success, as I have explained to you, in doing that. Also, we need the health response that I have also explained.

Attorney-General

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:42): My question is to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis, and I refer to statements made by Senator Macdonald in the Senate yesterday in relation to the Solicitor-General, where he stated, 'It makes his position subject to question.' Does the Attorney-General agree with Senator Macdonald that the Solicitor-General's position is 'subject to question'?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:42): I did not see or read Senator Macdonald's speech, and I do not comment, as a matter of practice, on speeches that I have not seen or read.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Wong, a supplementary question.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:42): I again refer to the statements made by Senator Macdonald in the Senate yesterday: … both the Human Rights Commissioner and the Solicitor-General have allowed themselves to be involved in the political games, and by doing that they have diminished the positions they hold and themselves. Does the Attorney-General agree with Senator Macdonald?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:43): Senator Lambie, as I told you, I have not read Senator Macdonald's speech.

Senator WONG (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (14:43): I am Senator Wong.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Wong, a final supplementary question.

Senator WONG: Given that the last statutory officer who stood up to the Attorney-General was offered an inducement to resign her position, will the Attorney-General assure the Senate that he has not offered and will not offer the Solicitor-General any inducements to resign his position?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:43): Senator Wong, yes, I can give you that assurance, but I also want to take the opportunity to correct what you asserted in your question. It was alleged against me at the time, concerning Professor Gillian Triggs, that I had
offered her an inducement, and that matter was, in fact, the subject of a reference—I think by the Labor Party—to the Australian Federal Police, who examined the matter and concluded that there was absolutely no basis to that allegation.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Order on my left!

Senator Jacinta Collins interjecting—

The PRESIDENT: Senator Collins, I need to hear Senator McKenzie.

Mental Health

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria) (14:44): My question is to the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Local Government and Territories, Minister for Regional Communications and Minister representing the Minister for Health and Aged Care, Senator Nash. With today marking the inaugural headspace day, can the minister inform the Senate of the work the government is doing to support youth mental health and, in particular, the important work that headspace is doing across our communities?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Local Government and Territories and Minister for Regional Communications) (14:44): I thank the Senator for her question and acknowledge her very real commitment to young people across this nation that have mental health issues.

Today marks 10 years since headspace was established by the Howard government. The member for Sturt, Minister Pyne, was the minister responsible for establishing the model back in 2006, and Ryan Stokes served as the then fledgling organisation's inaugural chair. Today we acknowledge their instrumental roles in setting up what has become such a successful national organisation.

As Senator McKenzie highlighted in her question, I am very pleased to inform the Senate that today marks the inaugural National headspace Day. Headspace Day, to be held on 11 October every year, will be a new national day of awareness to promote access to youth-friendly mental health services for all young Australians no matter where they live. I think that is something that will be welcomed by all across the chamber.

The headspace network is so important for our young people, because around 560,000 children and adolescents are estimated to have mental illness and one in four young Australians aged 16 to 24 years will experience mental illness in any given year. That is something of which we are all acutely aware. Three-quarters of all mental illness manifests itself in people under the age of 25, and intervention early in life and at an early stage of illness can reduce the duration and impact of mental illness—

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator NASH: I would suggest that rather than interject those opposite would be inclined to work with the government to ensure that we deliver mental health services across this country. I note again that it was a coalition government, under Prime Minister John Howard, that instigated this tremendous headspace program.

The PRESIDENT: Senator McKenzie, a supplementary question.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria) (14:46): Can the minister explain how successful the government's headspace model has been since it was established?
Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Local Government and Territories and Minister for Regional Communications) (14:47): I can indicate to the chamber that the model has been highly successful since it was first established, and it is something which we on this side of the chamber are very proud of.

The headspace network has grown significantly since the first centres in Adelaide and Darwin opened. Since 2006, headspace centres and eheadspace have provided 260,000 young people with support and advice. By February next year, 100 headspace centres will have be established and will assist up to 80,000 young Australians annually. Importantly for those in the bush, 46 of these centres are located in rural and regional areas.

Headspace is a great example of Australian innovation in mental health services. Online mental health services like ReachOut.com are providing mobile apps and tools to help young people do things such as monitor their heart rate and their stress levels.

The PRESIDENT: Senator McKenzie, a final supplementary question.

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria) (14:48): Can the minister outline the coalition government’s commitment to ensuring that headspace continues to deliver the mental health services that young Australians can rely on?

Senator NASH (New South Wales—Deputy Leader of The Nationals, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Local Government and Territories and Minister for Regional Communications) (14:48): The coalition government remains absolutely steadfast in its support for headspace as well as for youth mental health services more broadly.

During the election the government committed $20 million for an additional 10 headspace centres. This investment will bring the total number of headspace centres to 110 by 2019, with the aim of increasing service coverage, specifically in rural and regional areas. Again, it is something that I am very proud that this government has delivered. It will ensure that more young people can access youth-friendly mental health services when they need them.

The mental health reforms announced last year will make headspace services even more responsive to the needs of local communities.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator NASH: I can only guess from the interjections from those opposite that clearly they are well aware that they have not delivered these headspace centres; it is has been the coalition government that has.

Northern Territory: Juvenile Detention

Senator GALLACHER (South Australia) (14:49): My question is to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis. On 29 July 2016, when asked whether he had consulted with any Aboriginal groups about the terms of reference for the Royal Commission into the Child Protection and Youth Detention Systems of the Northern Territory, the Attorney-General stated:

As a matter of fact I did. I consulted Mick Gooda, who is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social justice commissioner.

Does the Attorney-General stand by this statement?
Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:50): I recall that when the Turnbull government decided very, very swiftly to establish the royal commission into the Don Dale youth detention centre and the child protection system of the Northern Territory I had a number of conversations with a number of individuals, including from members of the Indigenous leadership of the country, and Mr Gooda was one of them.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Gallacher, a supplementary question.

Senator GALLACHER (South Australia) (14:50): Can the Attorney-General confirm that he did not call the Torres Strait Islander social justice commissioner, but the commissioner in fact contacted the Attorney-General? Can the Attorney-General confirm that when he returned the commissioner's call he said he would think about consultation, but the commissioner never heard anything back? Are the Attorney-General's claims of consultation just as fictional as his claims of consultations with the Solicitor-General?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (14:51): Senator Gallacher, I do not remember precisely what was said between Mr Gooda and me, but you asked me whether I spoke to him and I have told you I did. In fact, as you know, I subsequently decided to appoint him as a royal commissioner.

I know Mr Gooda very, very well indeed. I speak to him quite often about issues of this kind, and I did speak to him at that time. I might say, Senator Gallacher, since you have sought to draw a comparison, when I consult people, do you know what I do? I ask them what they think about an issue. My view of what consultation means stands in stark contrast to the view of Mr Mark Dreyfus, who said on Sky News on 6 October, 'You can't consult with someone if you haven't told them what you're going to do.' Now, that is Mr Dreyfus's view of a consultation: you make up your mind first and then you tell somebody what you have already decided to do. My view is: you ask them for their view.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Gallacher, a final supplementary question.

Senator GALLACHER (South Australia) (14:52): Isn't this just another example, Senator Brandis, of you, as Attorney-General, being slippery with the facts and too arrogant to consult with those impacted by your decisions?

The PRESIDENT: Point of order, Senator O'Sullivan?

Senator O'Sullivan: Mr President, there is an obvious trend with the use of this word 'slippery' directed at the Attorney-General. It has a common and offensive connotation, and I believe they should withdraw the reference.

The PRESIDENT: On the point of order, Senator O'Sullivan: I have let the terminology be used in previous questions and commentary. It is borderline, but I will let it go on this occasion.

Senator BRANDIS: Senator Gallacher, I think I am known as somebody who is very, very careful in my use of language, unlike the shadow Attorney-General, who is very careless and reckless in his use of language. But I cannot miss the opportunity to dwell on the delightfulfulness of Mr Dreyfus's definition of consultation. Let me quote it to you again: 'You cannot consult with someone if you have not told them what you are going to do.'
Well, Senator Gallacher, the shadow Attorney said, 'You cannot consult with someone if you have not told them what you are going to do.' Mr Dreyfus thinks that consultation means making up your mind first and talking later—and telling someone what you are going to do. But when I consult people I ask them for their views, as I did with Mr Gooda and as I did with Mr Gleeson.

**Child Care**

**Senator WILLIAMS** (New South Wales—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (14:54): Mr President, my question is to the Minister for Education and Training, Senator Birmingham. Can the minister update the Senate on the Turnbull government's compliance measures to ensure that childcare providers manage federal subsidies responsibly?

**Senator BIRMINGHAM** (South Australia—Minister for Education and Training) (14:54): I thank Senator Williams for his question and his interest in ensuring that every dollar of Australian taxpayers' money is respected and directed towards the cause that it is intended for. That is why, in relation to the record levels of expenditure in child care and early education, the Turnbull government is making sure that we are applying scrutiny to every possible area of compliance to ensure spending is directed to support early education and childcare services that are genuine—because over the next four years we will be supporting around $40 billion worth of investment to help Australian families and to provide the best possible start for young Australian children.

One of the major changes we made, in terms of compliance measures, over the last year was to stop the practice of child swapping that was rife within certain family day care services—a practice that resulted in some family day care services claiming benefits for caring for children of another family day care service in operation at the same time. This measure is estimated to be saving around $421 million from going to people who were otherwise rorting childcare services.

But, importantly, our government has also stepped up compliance from around 500 compliance checks that were undertaken in 2012-13 to more than 3,100 compliance checks undertaken in 2015-16. This has resulted in the arrest of 16 people, the suspension or cancellation of over 30 services, the seizure of over $8 million, enforcement action taken against 109 services—all of this driven by a 500 per cent increase in compliance activities under our government. We are serious about making sure that finite taxpayer dollars that are determined to be used for early education or childcare services are used for genuine purposes, not by those who seek to rort the taxpayer.

**The PRESIDENT:** Senator Williams, a supplementary question.

**Senator WILLIAMS** (New South Wales—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (14:57): Well done, Minister. Can the minister outline what these changes will mean for families, and how they will prevent future fraudulent misuse of childcare funding?

**Senator BIRMINGHAM** (South Australia—Minister for Education and Training) (14:57): Hardworking families who depend on childcare services or who are accessing our world-class early education services have, of course, absolutely nothing to fear and will feel no impact from our increased compliance, because it is the rorters and those who are seeking to abuse our support for early education and child care who we are clamping down on.
But those hardworking families and all Australians can be confident that their hard-earned taxpayer dollars are being better protected from waste and misuse because of the efforts of our government. There are exemptions to some of the rules we brought in to make sure that we protect the very vulnerable, particular those who may disability.

Just yesterday, new measures, I am pleased to say, have come into effect, which will make sure that it is not acceptable to claim a session of care for only picking a child up from school and taking them home, that it is not acceptable to claim subsidies when care is provided where the parent and child actually reside, and that it is not acceptable for an operator to withhold key information about significant incidents that might make them unsuitable to look after children. (Time expired)

The PRESIDENT: Senator Williams, a final supplementary question.

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (14:58): Can the minister inform the Senate of what else the government is doing to tighten compliance in the childcare sector.

Senator BIRMINGHAM (South Australia—Minister for Education and Training) (14:58): In addition to the range of additional regulatory impacts we have brought in to make sure we tighten conditions and enhance compliance activities, we are also working as closely as we can with the states and territories—who have a key role to play, through enhanced data-sharing services with the states and territories—to make sure that we are better informed when their regulatory authorities identify services that may not have children in them and to make sure that those states and territories report that to us, so that we can take action to stop payments to those services.

I have urged state and territory ministers, who have the primary responsibility in relation to the regulation of childcare services and providers, to do more—to work with us. We have agreed to come back at the education council by the end of this year to assess what additionality can occur to make sure we further strengthen the measures the Turnbull government has already taken to save around half a billion dollars in otherwise wasted funding.

Attorney-General

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (14:59): My question is to the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis. Can the Attorney-General confirm that he sought advice in relation to the government's proposal for a marriage equality plebiscite from a lawyer external to the government? Was advice sought former Solicitor-General Dr David Bennett or someone else?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (15:00): Senator O'Neill, it is the established practice of Australian governments of both political persuasions that we do not comment on legal advice or the fact of legal advice. But I can tell you, Senator—and this is also an entirely common practice—that legal advice is sought for the Commonwealth government from a variety of sources.

The PRESIDENT: Senator O'Neill, a supplementary question.

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (15:00): Was advice also sought from the Solicitor-General in relation to the government's proposal for a marriage equality plebiscite?
And what was the cost of the Attorney-General choosing to shop around for legal advice? And on how many other occasions has external advice been sought?

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (15:00): The government did obtain from the Solicitor-General advice on the plebiscite proposal. In relation to the rest of your question, I refer you to my answer to your first question.

The PRESIDENT: Senator O'Neill, a final supplementary question.

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (15:01): I am assuming the Attorney-General will find that information for us.

I refer to the Law Officers Act of 1964 which states that the Solicitor-General 'shall be the second law officer of the Commonwealth'. Aside from the Attorney-General, who does the Attorney-General consider to be the primary legal adviser to the Commonwealth government? Does the Attorney-General agree with Associate Professor Gabrielle Appleby, who said there was a risk that governments seeking opinions from lawyers other than the Solicitor-General might be:

... shopping around for politically convenient opinions and not accepting the opinion of the statutorily independent, apolitical Solicitor-General.

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland—Attorney-General, Vice-President of the Executive Council and Leader of the Government in the Senate) (15:01): Senator O'Neill, although I have not read Professor Appleby's remarks, I am generally aware of what she has had to say because I saw her interview on the 7.30 program the other night.

Might I say, Senator O'Neill, that I am completely confident that any lawyer, barrister or solicitor, who advises the Commonwealth government does so with integrity. They do not give politically convenient advice; they give honest advice in relation to the law in accordance with their professional obligations, as they should. The Commonwealth of Australia is entitled to the best legal advice available. I have complete confidence in those, whether in my department or elsewhere, from whom the Commonwealth obtains legal advice—in their professionalism and in their integrity.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Attorney-General

Senator FARRELL (South Australia) (15:03): This is the first time I have had the opportunity to congratulate you in your new role, Madam Deputy President.

I move:

That the Senate take note of the answers given by the Attorney-General (Senator Brandis) to questions without notice asked by Opposition senators today relating to the Solicitor-General.

As you may well have noted, all of the questions from the opposition were to Senator Brandis. One of those questions, of course, was a question that I, in fact, asked. Because of the way we have to ask questions in this place, I did not get the opportunity to put both the statements of Senator Brandis about one particular matter directly with those of the Solicitor-General. But I would like to do that in the course of taking note.
I would like to go back to the quote that I made regarding Senator Brandis's comments on 1 December in respect of a citizenship bill that was passed in this parliament. He said:

These changes have been reviewed by the Solicitor-General and he has now advised that they have a good prospect of being upheld by the High Court.

I would like to juxtapose that to the advice that was given by the Solicitor-General 19 days earlier. He said: 'The bill in question reflected new changes that were made without seeking my further advice.' Putting those two statements together, both of them cannot, of course, be right. Both of those statements cannot be right. One of them has to be wrong.

In this place, it is true that we all have an obligation to tell the truth. That is the first obligation. Ministers, I would submit, have an even higher obligation to tell the truth and make sure that nothing they say seeks to mislead or is incorrect. The highest obligation, I would submit to you, Madam Deputy President, is on the Attorney-General—the first law officer of this country. Attorneys-General have special obligations as a result of their training. They have special obligations to this parliament and to the people of Australia. The reality is: both of those statements that I read out a moment ago cannot be correct. One of them has to be wrong. I think what this parliament and what this Senate wants to know is: who is not telling the truth about this matter? It is a very fundamental issue. We have, on the one hand, the first law officer of this country saying one thing about a set of events and, on the other hand, we have the No. 2 law officer, the Solicitor-General, saying something quite fundamentally different. Both of them cannot be right.

What this parliament needs an answer to—I would submit to you, Madam Acting Deputy President—is the answer to the question: who is telling the truth? In one of his answers Senator Brandis said: this is all semantics. It was not an answer to my question. He is saying it is all semantics. I would submit to you, Madam Acting Deputy President, this is not an argument about semantics. There is quite a fundamental difference here. I will just repeat what Senator Brandis said. He said: these changes have been reviewed by the Solicitor-General and he is now advised that they have a good prospect of being upheld by the High Court.

**Senator Brandis:** Identify the changes you are referring to.

**Senator FARRELL:** I have referred to it already.

**Senator Brandis:** Identify the changes.

**Senator Cameron:** You can't question him.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Senator Cameron:** He is not one of your lackeys.

**Senator FARRELL:** Thank you.

_Senator Brandis interjecting—_

**Senator FARRELL:** I am giving the speech, Senator Brandis.

**Senator Brandis:** I'm trying to help you.

**Senator FARRELL:** I know you are trying to help me, but I do not need your help, Senator Brandis. I do not need your help.

_Senator Brandis interjecting—_
Senator FARRELL: Senator Brandis, the person who needs some help in this debate is you. You are the person who needs some help. Senator Brandis, you are the person who needs some help in this debate. You need some help because—

Senator Cameron: He's slippery.

Senator FARRELL: That may be true. You need some help because there is a fundamental inconsistency between the proposition that you are putting to this Senate and the proposition that— (Time expired)

Senator PATERSON (Victoria) (15:09): Can I add the congratulations of my fellow government senators to the new Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator Farrell. He is an inspiration to us all. If anyone can come back in the way that he has there is hope yet for all of us. I will note that I hope that his contribution to the chamber today was just a reflection of his day one nerves and that his contributions will improve in quality and consistency from this day forward, as I am sure they will.

Before I address the direct point raised in questions today and take note of the answers given, I would just like to make a general observation, with the Senate's indulgence, on the topic chosen by those opposite to focus on yet again today in question time, as they did yesterday in question time, and that they have chosen to focus on yet again in their motions to take note of answers today, as they did yesterday. This is a parliament which deals with weighty issues. This is a parliament which deals with important issues. This may be an important issue but it is by no means the only important issue that we have been talking about today or that we will deal with this week. I note for the record that the opposition has asked no questions today on the government's legislation to protect volunteers, with the CFA bill that passed the Senate last night. They have obviously lost interest in that issue. I note that they have asked no questions about the government's announcement today of the structural separation of the Australian Submarine Corporation. The government announced reforms in that area today. I note that they have asked no questions about the important reforms that Senator Birmingham, the education minister, has announced to VET to ensure that taxpayers' money is being used as it was intended to be used, and that the best value for money is being sought. I note that they have a particular and special interest in this issue. They are entitled to follow it, and I realise it is not my role as a senator to give them tactical advice. But, I tell you, you are flogging a dead horse on this one, and it is becoming increasingly clear that you are.

One other general observation I would like to make about this issue is on the understanding of consultation. Even in my short time in the Senate, I am coming to realise that people in this place have a very different idea of what constitutes consultation. I will give one example without identifying the parties involved, because it is not fair to them. Last week in a Senate committee hearing, we had a lobby group come and give evidence about a change in the law which they had an interest in. They stated to the committee that they had participated in no consultation at all and that this was a great disappointment to them. They were probed with a few questions about this issue of consultation and they more or less came back to us and assured us that there had been no material consultation. Later on, the department itself appeared before the committee. We obviously sought to clarify this with them, because it would be a bad thing if the department had not done any consultation. The department—and I am paraphrasing; I do not have the exact details in front of me—was able to inform the
committee that they had in fact sent a letter to the group in question, that they had a direct meeting with the group in question about the issue in question and that one of the members of that group was on an advisory council that the government regularly seeks advice from on this issue. So they clarified for the committee that there was in fact consultation, even though the group in question did not feel that there had been sufficient the consultation. It is possible in this world that we have differing interpretations of what was said at a meeting and what exactly constitutes consultation, but from where I sit I am completely satisfied that the appropriate process was followed in this instance and that the Solicitor-General was appropriately consulted, as he is required to be.

As the Attorney-General has noted in his answers today and yesterday when this question has been raised, as well as in the media, the exact appropriate process was followed in this instance. The law does require that the Attorney-General consult the Solicitor-General in this instance, and he did so. Let me spell out some of the details of that in the remaining minute that I have. Over the years, a practice has developed contrary to the Law Officers Act that the Solicitor-General had been receiving briefs directly across government rather than through the Attorney-General, as it was intended when the office was established in 1916 for the purpose of assisting the Attorney-General in the performance of his duties. The new direction establishes a whole-of-government procedure that gives effect to section 12(b) of the Law Officers Act 1964. The guidance note is simply the document that is circulated within the Public Service to give effect to the legal services direction. These arrangements do not limit the independence of the Solicitor-General. They do nothing to change the effect of the Law Officers Act.

Senator GALLAGHER (Australian Capital Territory—Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate) (15:14): I thank Senator Paterson for his contribution and his advice and, in some sense, the permission that he has given us to pursue this issue. I am not sure we were seeking it, but it was given. It is no wonder that government members want this issue to go away and pretend that there is nothing to see here. I can see attempts to diminish this as an insignificant matter and that there are many more important matters—and, to some degree, that argument holds. There are many, many other important matters that the Senate will continue to discuss over this sitting week. But let's not pretend that the open disagreement and potential misleading of this chamber is not a significant matter that every senator in this place should be concerned about and should be wanting to pursue.

We know that on 4 May this year the Attorney-General issued a direction known as the Legal Services Amendment (Solicitor-General Opinions) Direction 2016. The substance of the actual direction is for a debate on another day. The issue that we have been pursuing and will continue to pursue is whether the statement by the Attorney-General that he consulted the Solicitor-General on this legal instrument is true. It is about whether the explanatory statement to that direction—which specifically confirms that the Attorney-General had consulted the Solicitor-General on the individual legal direction itself—issued in the name of the Attorney-General, signed off personally by him and tabled in this chamber, is actually correct. It is about whether information tabled in this chamber, the Australian Senate, by the Attorney-General of Australia can actually be believed.

What we have learnt in this extraordinary episode, which sees the first and second law officers of the country in open disagreement, is that we have a new standard being set by this
Attorney-General. For one, there is a brand-new legal definition of 'consultation.' Under the new 'Brandis standard', consultation is now defined as having a meeting about one subject and then trying to pass that meeting off six months later as consultation as defined by relevant legislation on a completely different subject altogether. What a ridiculous proposition to argue. No-one believes it, because it is simply unbelievable. Perhaps the only people that do believe it are the Attorney-General, himself, and those who occupy the parallel universe that he clearly exists in.

What we know is that the Solicitor-General sought a meeting with the Attorney-General to ensure that his advice was sought on matters of importance, to ensure that requests for advice were made in a timely fashion, to ensure that advice was sought in the case of legislation where further amendments were being made and to ensure that the Solicitor-General's advice was represented accurately in public. These are the issues that the Solicitor-General sought to prosecute in the November meeting. For the Attorney-General to pass off the November meeting as a consultation on the content of the legal direction, which was tabled in this place and which sought to significantly constrain the ability of the Solicitor-General as an independent officeholder, as being something that was discussed at that meeting is clearly incorrect. Indeed, the staff notes that have been released by the Attorney-General confirm that at that meeting no mention whatsoever was made of a legally binding direction which concerned the performance of the functions of the Solicitor-General or the requirement that the Attorney-General's advance approval must be granted before advice from the Solicitor-General could be sought.

It is very clear the direction was never mentioned, neither in the November meeting nor, indeed, in the meeting held on 23 March on other matters that were raised. There was no discussion of the direction. There was no discussion of the content of the direction. The Attorney-General's own letter on 4 May acknowledges this by mentioning the direction with the words, 'I have also issued an amendment to the Legal Services Direction 2005 and enclose a copy of the document.' It is clear from the letter that this is the very first time the Solicitor-General was made aware of it.

I asked that question in question time today. The Attorney-General has undertaken to come back with an answer, but, if you go on the facts as outlined in the submission from the Solicitor-General to the committee, it is very clear that the first time he was made aware of the legal direction was on 4 May—after it was tabled in this place—in a letter from the Attorney-General advising him that was the case. That is central to the problem that we have here with what Senator Brandis has said. (Time expired)

Senator SMITH (Western Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (15:19): Can I also add my congratulations to Senator Farrell on his election to the position of Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate. Indeed, Senator Farrell has a huge job ahead of him. It is worth reminding ourselves that at the most recent federal election the Australian Labor Party recorded its second-worst primary vote in its history. So by any measure, Senator Farrell and indeed the whole Senate Labor team here in the Australian Senate have a massive job ahead of them. Senator Gallagher has made a very, very important contribution, and senators might have missed it. She conceded Senator Paterson's point that there are more important issues to be talking about.

Senator Gallagher: No, I did not.
Senator SMITH: Yes you did, Senator Gallagher. You conceded Senator Paterson's very, very good point that there are more important issues to be making and to be talking about in the Australian Senate today, this whole week and into the future. I just wish you had embellished that admission and nominated some of them. Interestingly, in the Australian Senate today we had Senator Lambie talking about a very important issue—that is, the affliction of ice on young people in our community. That is a question Labor could have asked the government today. Senator Hanson-Young talked about job losses and lost investment opportunities in South Australia, taking a very different position to the one I would have taken but nonetheless bringing to the Senate issues around job opportunities and lost investment in South Australia. Labor spent its precious time in the Australian Senate gilding the lily. I will just explain that point briefly before I bore the Senate with the dry details of why there is no case for Senator Brandis to answer.

I say that Senator Gallagher is gilding the lily, because she is trying to suggest there was a six-month delay in correspondence in delivering on the meeting that was held on 30 November. In actual fact it is closer to four months. Indeed, in that four-month time period there was a delay of 14 weeks, because the Solicitor-General took 14 weeks to respond to the substance of the consultation he had with the Attorney-General.

I do not need to remind those listening today and, indeed, my Senate colleagues that the temptation in politics to embellish the facts, to gild the lily, is tempting. But at a time in our country's history—and I just want to come to what I think are some of the more important issues at the moment—when there are very real challenges facing young people afflicted with drugs, people addressing issues of lost investment and job growth opportunities in their home states, the Australian Labor Party in the Senate wants to spend its time gilding the lily, prosecuting a case against the Attorney-General where there is no case to answer. There is no conspiracy in this: on the record exists already a 32-page document that Senator Brandis, as the Attorney-General, has made publicly available to the Senate legal and constitutional affairs committee, which will spend Friday here in the Senate examining that evidence. There are no surprises, there is no conspiracy; but what we witnessed today was Labor's decision to spend its valuable time arguing issues where, to be frank, there is no case to answer and, to be more frank, are not the issues that are concerning Australians and Australian families at this important time.

Labor has cause for concern, because in that very prickly issue of industrial relations reform the coalition government achieved a sizeable victory last night in this Senate by securing the interests of volunteers in the country fire service in Victoria. Labor has a big challenge ahead of it in coming weeks as this Senate layers transparency and accountability over the trade union movement in a way that has not been done before, by debating the Australian—(Time expired)

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (15:24): Once again we have on display by Senator Brandis ample demonstration of what we have known for so long on this side of the house: that he does an awful lot of slippery talking, says nothing clearly and that this is a pattern that is repeated day after day. I did note today, however, that he has got himself into such a mess this week he began his answers with some discipline and a little reading from notes. The problem is the slippery story is getting so slippery now that even the enormous brain of Senator Brandis is having trouble hanging onto the storytelling that he is undertaking.
This slippery storytelling has now become a feature of what we expect from Senator Brandis every day.

He admits to absolutely never making a mistake. Even though he has actually been censured here by the Senate, no-one would know because we have this self-aggrandizing persona: 'I am perfect. This is the truth. You should never question me. Just trust me; it'll all be fine.' People are over the hubris and arrogance that is embedded in the kinds of answers that are being given to the Senate by the first law officer of the land. The Attorney-General is contemptuous in the way he has responded to questions that were put to him today—we could not call them answers.

I do note that at one point today Senator Brandis said, 'I am very careful in my use of language'. I believe that was in response to a question that was asked by Senator Gallagher regarding the Don Dale matter. 'Very careful in my use of language.' We also had him claim, once again, 'I have been a barrister for 33 years'. This appeal to the superiority of having such a wonderful education is not something that should be trotted out as a veil between him and the truth that the Senate deserves. 'Don't question me. I'm a barrister; I'm beyond reproach.'

The senator, by the quality—or lack of quality—of his responses to questions today reveals that he should not hide behind that sort of a defence in future, that he is bringing disrepute to that profession by the way he is contemptuously not responding to questions properly here in the Senate.

The only person, it seems to me, who is clearly communicating on the issue of advice and access is the person who has flatly rejected the claims of the Attorney-General—that is, the Solicitor-General. He has expressed concerns that are widely held now, and the level of these concerns continues to grow because of the sorts of answers we are getting from Senator Brandis. The Solicitor-General is very concerned that processes were not followed; that he was not consulted on what he has called 'matters of high legal importance'. Indeed the Attorney-General had a nonresponse to my question today where I cited Professor Gabrielle Appleby, who said it is possible that in not seeking the Solicitor-General's responses the Attorney-General is in fact:

... shopping around for politically convenient opinions and not accepting the opinion of the statutorily independent, apolitical Solicitor-General.

That is the concern that is alive and well right now amongst the legal fraternity, that this Attorney-General is changing legislation, which we have heard referred to by the new senator for the Liberal Party over on the other side, that parliament as long ago as 1916 set up, which, with some wisdom, allows people, senior ministers, to go and get advice from the Solicitor-General. But this Attorney-General has decided that he knows better, that he should put himself—his barrister's experience of 33 years, his hubris, arrogance and sense of ascendancy—between ministers of the Crown and the advice that, up until he decided to put this order in, they were entitled to have. That is what we are seeing on display every single day.

The Senate is told constantly by Senator Brandis: 'Leave it to me. There's no problem here.' But we are not getting detailed and proper answers. The Attorney-General's response to Senator Gallagher's question in particular was shameful: arrogant in tone, lacking in transparency and denying accountability. When he was simply asked for a date, he refused to give it. This Attorney-General— (Time expired)
Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (15:29): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answer given by the Attorney-General (Senator Brandis) to a question without notice asked by Senator Lambie today relating to policies concerning illicit drugs.

Today I gave Attorney-General Brandis notice of my questions without notice regarding law changes to tackle ice addiction. I wanted to give him sufficient time to properly consider his answers and think about my argument for giving Australian parents, along with their family doctors, the right to involuntarily detox their children should those young people became addicted to ice. I am encouraged that he has given a commitment to consider my proposal carefully, and I will follow that up with a letter and a request for meetings. However, I am disappointed that, for the majority of his answers, he chose to read a prepared script which boasted about his government's so-called achievements. And I am very disappointed that, on my third question, he deliberately twisted his answer to give the impression that I was seeking his support to change the laws relating to drug dealers. While I am happy to talk about that issue as well, at a later date, all my questions clearly addressed the fact that Australian parents and their family doctors do not have the right, under existing state and federal laws, to involuntarily detox their children should they become addicted to ice.

As soon as a legally trained person hears the words 'involuntary treatment', an alarm bell goes off in their poor little head and they reach for a copy of the UN human rights charter. Lawyers have become so lost in their fight to protect the UN human rights charter that they forget the right of parents and medical professionals to protect children from the effects of a highly dangerous and addictive drug the likes of which we have never seen before. Indeed, very few lawyers will acknowledge that, under our existing state laws, there are provisions for involuntary medical treatment for patients suffering from severe mental health illnesses. They are called 'involuntary mental health orders'—people deemed by qualified medical professionals to be suffering from a mental health injury, and who are a danger to themselves and others, can be taken by the authorities to a medical facility for compulsory mental health treatment. This can all take place within the law and without breaching any fundamental UN human rights.

So the point of my questioning to the Attorney-General this afternoon was to remind him, Labor, Greens and crossbench senators that an important legal precedent has already been established that allows involuntary medical treatment for people who are not in control of their actions and may be a danger to themselves, and certainly a danger to others. I think it is fair to compare the actions and symptoms of someone addicted to ice to the actions and symptoms of someone who may be subject to existing involuntary mental health orders.

I have only my personal experiences and feedback from hundreds and thousands of concerned Australians to go by. I am not medically trained but I do know that, when someone is addicted to and under the influence of ice, they are certainly not themselves; they are not sane; I am not talking to a loved one anymore; all I am doing is talking to a drug. When you are trying to reason with an unreasonable, unpredictable, powerful and dangerous thing, you are trying to influence a person whose loving, caring self has gone missing; it is no longer there. They are replaced by a being who will do and say anything to feed an insatiable addiction the likes of which, I argue, we have never seen before. So if our laws allow medical professionals to order involuntary mental health treatment for patients who suffer from damaged mental health and are subject to dangerous, uncontrollable and unpredictable...
behaviour, why can't those same laws and medical process apply to our children, our most vulnerable and precious, who become addicted to ice?

Even with all the publicity, average Australians and politicians still do not understand how addictive ice really is. This failure to understand how addictive ice is has led to a situation where we do not have enough rehabilitation services or facilities and we do not have strong enough laws to allow for early intervention. So even if we could, by some miracle, deliver enough affordable rehab beds for all of Australia's ice-addicted children, under the current laws, if those ice-addicted children said they did not want to remain in rehab, they can just walk straight back out the front door. So the solution is to provide, firstly, affordable rehab beds; and, secondly, law changes which give parents the right to place their drug-addicted children in involuntary detox.

Question agreed to.

NOTICES

Presentation

Senator Brandis to move:


Senator Brandis to move:

That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the Privacy Act 1988, and for related purposes. Privacy Amendment (Re-identification Offence) Bill 2016.

Senator Lambie to move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) clauses in trade agreements restrict Australia's sovereignty and ability to fairly regulate and legislate in the public interest,

(ii) ISDS clauses in trade agreements empower multi-national corporations to sue Governments for decisions which impede company profits,

(iii) approximately 52 per cent of ISDS claims were partly or fully successful in the multi-national corporations' favour, and 60 per cent of the cases decided on merits were won by investors,

(iv) ISDS clauses are a drain on the taxpayer and government resources,

(v) in 2009, Swedish energy company Vattenfall brought a successful ISDS claim against the German Government, for imposing quality controls for waste waters released from their power plant which supposedly made their investment project "unviable", and

(vi) in 2015, United States company Bilcon, brought a successful ISDS claim against the Canadian Government, for not allowing it to build a quarry and marine terminal in an ecologically sensitive coastal area in eastern Canada; and

(b) calls on the Government to ban Investor-State Dispute Settlement for all trade agreements.

Senator Lambie to move:

That—
(1) With regard to Indigenous recognition in Tasmania, the Senate notes that the Premier of Tasmania made an historic Australia Day speech on the 21 January 2016 where he disclosed that something was very wrong with Indigenous policy because:

(a) the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that, from 2014, there were 25,845 Indigenous people in Tasmania while yet the Tasmanian Government estimated that there were only 6,000 Indigenous Tasmanians;

(b) there are Tasmanian families who identify as Tasmanian Aboriginals, yet the official statistics indicate that, potentially, only one in three members are actually recognised as such by this state;

(c) Federal Government funding represents the greatest proportion of support received by Tasmanian Aboriginals, contributing almost half a billion dollars in funding to Aboriginal Tasmanians, compared to about $8 million from the state government; and

(d) Tasmania’s existing Indigenous policy is a long way from aligning with the Commonwealth’s process; this means Tasmanians can be recognised as an Aboriginal in a national context, but not in their own home state.

(2) That the Commonwealth funding of Indigenous Tasmanians be referred to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee for inquiry and report by 28 November 2016, with particular reference to whether hundreds of millions of dollars in Commonwealth funds over the last decade were unfairly, unjustly, or illegally allocated to, and spent on, only 6,000 Indigenous Tasmanians, rather than almost 26,000.

Senator Fifield to move:
That consideration of the business before the Senate on Thursday, 13 October 2016, be interrupted at approximately 4 pm, but not so as to interrupt a senator speaking, to enable Senator Griff to make his first speech without any question before the chair.

Senator Rhiannon to move:
That the Senate—

(a) notes that the National Bank of Australia has announced a voluntary ban on all political donations to avoid perceptions of impropriety or graft; and

(b) calls on all parties and members of Parliament to refuse political donations from all banks and financial institutions to avoid perceptions of impropriety or graft.

Senators Kakoschke-Moore, Xenophon, Griff and Hinch to move:
That the following bill be introduced: A Bill for an Act to amend the Criminal Code Act 1995, and for related purposes. Criminal Code Amendment (Misrepresentation of Age to a Minor) Bill 2016.

Senators Waters and Dastyari to move:
That the following matter be referred to the Environment and Communications References Committee for inquiry and interim report by 28 November 2016 and final report by 1 February 2017:

(a) the experience of unplanned mass closures of electricity generators and other large industrial assets on workers and communities, both in Australia and overseas;

(b) whether regulated planned closures can alleviate and minimise the economic, social and community costs of large electricity generation and other industrial asset closures, drawing on experiences in Australia and overseas;

(c) policy mechanisms for the planned and regulated retirement of coal-fired power stations from the National Electricity Market, having regard to:

(i) the 'Paris Agreement' to keep global warming below 2 degrees celsius, and ideally below 1.5 degrees celsius,
(ii) the state and expected life span of Australia’s coal-fired power plants,
(iii) the increasing amount of electricity generated by renewable energy and likely future electricity demand,
(iv) maintenance of electricity supply, affordability and security, and
(v) any other relevant matters;
(d) policy mechanisms to give effect to a just transition for affected workers and communities likely impacted by generator closures, as agreed in the ‘Paris Agreement’, including:
   (i) mechanisms to ensure minimal community and individual impact from closures, and
   (ii) mechanisms to attract new investment and jobs in affected regions and communities;
(e) the appropriate role for the Federal Government in respect of the above; and
(f) any other relevant matters.

Senator Siewert to move:

That the Senate—
(a) notes that the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recently called for Geraldton man, Mr Marlon Noble, to have the conditions of his release lifted after serving more than ten years in prison without a conviction;
(b) acknowledges that people with cognitive impairment or intellectual disability are being incarcerated for an indefinite period without conviction; and
(c) calls on the Western Australian Government to commit to implementing the CRPD recommendation to lift the conditions on Mr Marlon Noble’s release.

Senator Hanson-Young to move:

That the Senate—
(a) welcomes the decision by BP to withdraw its application to drill for oil in the Great Australian Bight; and
(b) calls on the Turnbull Government to permanently ban all oil exploration and drilling in the Great Australian Bight.

Senator Burston to move:

That the Senate—
(a) supports the efforts of the Department of Defence to deal with health issues arising out of the firefighting foam contamination at Williamtown Air Base in New South Wales and Oakey Army Aviation Centre in Queensland, including engaging the University of Newcastle Family Action Centre (UNFAC) to develop and deliver mental health awareness and stress management activities in the Williamtown area;
(b) notes that:
   (i) landholders in the immediate vicinity of Williamtown Air Base and Oakey Army Aviation Centre are facing uncertainty due to the adverse impact on land values of the firefighting foam contamination,
   (ii) landholders have lost equity in their properties to the point where they cannot borrow against reduced property valuations to undertake soil remediation and they cannot sell the land at reduced values in order to purchase new properties,
   (iii) the Department of Defence has met with a number of lending institutions and the Australian Property Institute to discuss property lending policies and practices and how valuations are conducted in the Williamtown area, and
(iv) the Department of Defence has committed to review the issue of property acquisition once detailed environmental investigations at the RAAF Base Williamtown and the Army Aviation Centre at Oakey have been concluded; and

(c) calls on the Government to expedite environmental investigations of the impact of firefighting foam contamination at Williamtown and Oakey to enable landholders to address the dilemma of land remediation or relocation, and move on with their lives and deal with issues of mental health and stress management.

Senator Lambie to move:

That—

(a) the Senate notes various media and other reports which indicate:

(i) China claims almost all of the South China Sea and has sought to bolster its case by building a series of artificial islands capable of supporting military facilities,

(ii) a United Nations-backed tribunal ruled in July, in a case brought by the Philippines, that any extensive claims to the sea had no legal basis and that China's construction of artificial islands in disputed waters was illegal,

(iii) Beijing has reacted furiously, with foreign ministry spokesman, Lu Kang, implicitly threatening military action and a "decisive response" if anyone took "any provocative action against China's security interests based on the award",

(iv) China and Russia have recently staged war games in the South China Sea, in a show of force after an international tribunal invalidated the Chinese Communist Government's extensive claims in the area,

(v) Australian warships, planes and soldiers have begun annual joint military exercises with four strategic allies in the sensitive South China Sea region involving around 400 Australia ADF personnel,

(vi) those 400 Australian Defence and thousands of our allies military personnel's lives are now at serious risk from a hostile Communist Government threatening military action, while we exercise a right of freedom of navigation in international waters, and

(vii) according to research undertaken by the Department of the Parliamentary Library, the same Communist Government have been allowed to spend tens of billions of dollars and buy into major Australian infrastructure critical to our national security, including Port Melbourne, Darwin Port and Hydro Tasmania; and

(b) taking into the above facts, a resolution be placed before the next joint sitting of Parliament which calls on the Australian Government to ban all sales of major Australian infrastructure to the Chinese Communist Government and its various associated investment companies while ever a military threat exists to Australian Defence Personnel who abide by international laws and United Nations Tribunals' rulings.

Senators Cameron, Xenophon, Rhiannon and Lambie to move:

That the following matter be referred to the Education and Employment References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 November 2016:

The impact of the Government's Workplace Bargaining Policy and approach to Commonwealth public sector bargaining, with particular reference to:

(a) the failure of the Abbott and Turnbull Governments to conclude workplace bargaining across the Australian Public Service almost three years after the process began – a process that has impacted on more than 150,000 staff nationally and 115 agencies in this time;

(b) the impact of the protracted dispute on service provision, particularly in regional Australia, and for vulnerable and elderly people;
(c) the impact on Australia's tourism industry and international reputation as a result of ongoing international port and airport strikes;

(d) the impact on agency productivity and staff morale of the delay in resolving enterprise agreements across the Australian Public Service;

(e) the effect of the implementation of the Workplace Bargaining Policy on workplace relations in the Commonwealth public sector;

(f) the effect of the implementation of the Workplace Bargaining Policy on the working conditions and industrial rights of Commonwealth public sector employees;

(g) the extent to which the implementation of the Workplace Bargaining Policy impacts on employee access to workplace flexibility, and with particular regard to flexibility for employees with family or caring responsibilities;

(h) whether the Workplace Bargaining Policy and changes or reductions in employees' working conditions and industrial rights, including access to enforceable domestic and family violence leave, are a factor in the protracted delay in resolving enterprise agreements;

(i) the failure of Ministers Abetz and Cash, as Ministers Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service, to assume their responsibility and discharge their obligations as an employing authority in the Public Service; and

(j) any other related matter.

Senator Hanson-Young to move:

(1) That a select committee, to be known as the Select Committee into the Resilience of Electricity Infrastructure in a Warming World, be established to inquire into and report on, by 10 February 2017, the following matters:

(a) the role of storage technologies and localised, distributed generation to provide Australia's electricity networks with the resilience to withstand the increasing severity and frequency of extreme weather events driven by global warming;

(b) recommend measures that should be taken by federal, state and local governments to hasten the rollout of such technologies in order to:

(i) create jobs in installation, manufacture and research of storage and distribution technologies,

(ii) stimulate household and business demand for storage technologies,

(iii) anticipate the rapid deployment of localised distributed generation through changes to market rules,

(iv) drive the reduction in technology costs through economies of scale, and

(v) seize on the opportunities to be a global leader in deploying storage technologies because of Australia's high fixed electricity tariffs and significant penetration of rooftop solar; and

(c) any other relevant matters.

(2) That the committee consist of 7 senators, 2 nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 3 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, 1 nominated by the Leader of the Australian Greens and 1 nominated by minority groups and independent senators.

(3) That:

(a) participating members may be appointed to the committee on the nomination of the Leader of the Government in the Senate, the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, the Leader of the Australian Greens or any minority party or independent senator;
(b) participating members may participate in hearings of evidence and deliberations of the committee, and have all the rights of members of the committee, but may not vote on any questions before the committee; and

(c) a participating member shall be taken to be a member of the committee for the purpose of forming a quorum of the committee if a majority of members of the committee is not present.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Postponement**

The Clerk: Postponement notifications have been lodged in respect of the following:

Business of the Senate notice of motion no. 1 standing in the name of Senator Xenophon for today, proposing the disallowance of the Civil Aviation Legislation Amendment (Part 101) Regulation 2016, postponed till 21 November 2016.

General business notice of motion no. 69 standing in the name of Senator Ludlam for today, proposing an order for the production of documents by the Minister for the Arts, postponed till 12 October 2016.

**BUSINESS**

**Leave of Absence**

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (15:36): by leave—I move:

That leave of absence be granted to the following senators:

(a) Senator Ludlam for 10 October 2016, for personal reasons; and

(b) Senator Waters for 10 October 2016, for personal reasons.

Question agreed to.
Rearrangement

Senator McGrath (Queensland—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister) (15:37): I move:

That, on Wednesday, 12 October 2016 the sitting of the Senate shall be suspended at 10.30 am to noon to enable senators to attend the address by His Excellency Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore.

Question agreed to.

Rearrangement

Senator McGrath (Queensland—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister) (15:37): I move:

That consideration of the business before the Senate on the following days be interrupted at approximately 5 pm, but not so as to interrupt a senator speaking, to enable senators to make their first speeches without any question before the chair, as follows:

(a) Tuesday, 11 October 2016—Senator Burston; and
(b) Wednesday, 12 October 2016—Senator Culleton.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Law Enforcement Committee

Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity Committee

Public Accounts and Audit Committee

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

Meeting

Senator Bushby (Tasmania—Chief Government Whip in the Senate) (15:38): I seek leave to move general business notices of motion Nos 70 to 73, relating to committee meetings, together.

Leave granted.

Senator Bushby: I move:

(70) That the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement be authorised to hold private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1), during the sittings of the Senate, from 5 pm, as follows:

(a) Wednesday, 12 October 2016;
(b) Wednesday, 9 November 2016; and
(c) Wednesday, 23 November 2016.

(71) That the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity be authorised to hold private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1), during the sittings of the Senate, from 1 pm, as follows:

(a) Tuesday, 8 November 2016; and
(b) Tuesday, 22 November 2016.

(72) That the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit be authorised to hold private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sittings of the Senate, as follows:
(a) Thursday, 13 October 2016, from 10.30 am; and
(b) Wednesday, 9 November 2016, from 9.30 am.

(73) That the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters be authorised to hold private meetings otherwise than in accordance with standing order 33(1) during the sittings of the Senate, from 9.40 am, as follows:
(a) Wednesday, 12 October 2016;
(b) Wednesday, 9 November 2016, followed by a public meeting;
(c) Wednesday, 23 November 2016, followed by a public meeting; and
(d) Wednesday, 30 November 2016, followed by a public meeting.

Question agreed to.

**MOTIONS**

Wilson, Ms Rebecca

**Senator MOORE** (Queensland) (15:39): I, and also on behalf of Senator Hinch, move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes the recent death of Rebecca Wilson and expresses its sympathy to her family and many friends on this loss;
(b) acknowledges her significant contribution to sports journalism, nationally and internationally in this industry; and
(c) celebrates her inspiration and support for women in this industry, and in sport.

**Senator LEYONHJELM** (New South Wales) (15:39): I seek leave to make a brief statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator LEYONHJELM: On 21 November 2015, Rebecca Wilson wrote a story in *The Sunday Telegraph* in which she purported to name and shame fans of the Western Sydney Wanderers who she claimed to have been banned by the Football Federation Australia for loutish behaviour. This was accompanied by photographs of the individuals. In fact some of the people named had never been banned, some had been banned on spurious grounds and some were under 18 and should never have been named irrespective. Some suffered material harm, particularly affecting employment. I acknowledge her contribution to journalism and promotion of women, but this was something nobody should be proud of. We are all responsible for the harm we cause to others, and death does not absolve us of what we did when we were alive.

**Senator HINCH** (Victoria) (15:41): I seek leave to make a brief statement of one minute.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator HINCH: Rebecca Wilson, who was Bec to her friends, was a trailblazer for female journalists—and not only sports journalists—where those early female reporters were regarded as interlopers in a predominantly male and often chauvinistic world. To Rebecca Wilson that just added another challenge. And it was fitting that her namesake, Caroline Wilson, another fearless female sports commentator, would pay tribute to her on radio 774 in Melbourne.
Rebecca Wilson came from a classy media family. You would watch her and her brother Jim, often in a war of words on Channel Seven, on the Sky News sports panel or on radio, and they gave sibling rivalry a new meaning. And their father, Bruce Wilson, was a renowned foreign correspondent for the Murdoch papers, especially the old Sun News-Pictorial in Melbourne. His kids, with ink in their veins, would lap up his war stories and big sports events like Wimbledon.

Now Bruce Wilson is gone and Rebecca has tragically gone at 54 years of age. Our thoughts are with her sons; her husband, John Hartigan—Harto, who is himself a legendary newspaper editor—and Jim, who lost his own little boy, Sam, to cancer. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

World Day Against the Death Penalty

Senator SMITH (Western Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (15:42):
I, and also on behalf of Senators Rhiannon, Brown, Moore, Rice, Siewert, Paterson, Hume, Canavan, Duniam, Bushby, Birmingham, Sinodinos, Whish-Wilson and Singh, move:

That the Senate—
(a) notes:
(i) the strong multi-party commitment in Australia to see an end to the death penalty worldwide,
(ii) that 10 October is World Day Against the Death Penalty, an important moment to mark our resolve to end capital punishment around the world,
(iii) that the evidence overwhelmingly shows that the death penalty is not an effective deterrent to crime,
(iv) that the death penalty is the ultimate cruel and inhumane punishment and Australia opposes its use in all cases,
(v) that the international trend shows the world moving away from the death penalty—in 1977, only 16 countries had abolished the death penalty, now 140 nations have abolished capital punishment in law or practice,
(vi) that despite this overwhelming trend, 2015 saw more people executed than in any year in the past quarter century, with executions carried out by several of Australia's neighbours and allies, and
(vii) that Australia has the opportunity to influence progress towards the worldwide abolition of the death penalty in its relationships with key regional and global partners;
(b) acknowledges the efforts of all Australian governments to:
(i) continue to strengthen efforts to advocate for an end to the death penalty wherever it still occurs,
(ii) support civil society efforts to advocate for an end to the death penalty, particularly in retentionist countries, and
(iii) encourage other United Nations member states to support a global moratorium on the death penalty at upcoming United Nations General Assembly negotiations on a moratorium resolution; and
(c) welcomes the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into Australia's Advocacy for the Abolition of the Death Penalty, and looks forward to the Government's response to the recommendations of the inquiry.

Question agreed to.
Indigenous Artefacts

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (15:43): I, and also on behalf of Senator Rhiannon, move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) in 1770, two members of the Gweagal people stood on the shore of the place now called Botany Bay, as a boat containing James Cook and some of his crew approached the shore,

(ii) the Gweagal men were holding spears and a shield and they attempted to warn off the interlopers, an action that was responded to with gunfire,

(iii) one of the men, Cooman, was shot in the leg and he ran for cover, dropping his shield,

(iv) this shield and a number of spears and other artefacts from their camp were taken by James Cook and given to the British Museum when he returned there, and the shield and a number of the spears remain in the Museum's collection, and

(v) a significant number of the spears taken are now also held by the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology;

(b) acknowledges that:

(i) it is a core part of Aboriginal belief that artefacts must be kept on the country they came from, as they form a part of the ongoing story of that place,

(ii) laws covering Aboriginal cultural heritage in New South Wales recognise the strong connection between Aboriginal people, their land and their artefacts, and

(iii) the Gweagal people and their descendants are the rightful and lawful owners of all artefacts produced on their territory, including the shield and spears held in the British Museum and the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology;

(c) recognises the work done by Cooman's descendant Mr Rodney Kelly to push for the repatriation of these important artefacts;

(d) supports the repatriation of these important artefacts to the Gweagal people; and

(e) requests the Australian Government extend diplomatic assistance to Mr Rodney Kelly while he is in the United Kingdom seeking the return of the artefacts.

Senator McGrath (Queensland—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister) (15:43): I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator McGrath: The government recognises and acknowledges the strong connection of these artefacts to the Gweagal people of New South Wales. Australian law recognises the legal title of the British Museum and Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology to these artefacts. Therefore, the government cannot agree to the motion's assertion that the Gweagal people are the legal owners of the artefacts.

It is encouraging to see institutions such as the National Museum of Australia working with UK museums to create new opportunities for access to the significant Indigenous objects held in these collections. The government understands that the British Museum has agreed to meet with Mr Kelly to discuss his claims, and it is important that these discussions occur.

Question agreed to.
National Headspace Day

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE (South Australia) (15:45): I move:

That the Senate—

(a) supports the first National Headspace Day on 11 October 2016 as part of National Mental Health Week;

(b) notes that:

(i) one in four young people have experienced a mental health issue in the past 12 months - a higher prevalence than all other age groups,

(ii) suicide remains the leading cause of death of young people, accounting for one-third of all deaths,

(iii) young Australians with mental health issues are putting themselves in serious danger by waiting months before seeking help,

(iv) research from Headspace and Orygen shows that 50 per cent of 12 to 25 year olds are waiting six months before reaching out for help,

(v) close to 50 per cent of young people said financial cost was a barrier preventing them from getting treatment,

(vi) research shows that 75 per cent of mental health issues emerge before the age of 25 – by treating these issues early and providing a holistic model of support, the risk of them developing into more serious problems is greatly decreased, and

(vii) over the past ten years, more than 260,000 young people have sought help and advice through Headspace centres or online and over the phone;

(c) recognises the work of Headspace in making a substantial difference in communities across the nation and transforming services for young people living with mental illness; and

(d) calls on the Government to continue funding Headspace and rolling out Headspace centres in regional Australia as part of the Government’s commitment to tackling mental health issues among young Australians.

Question agreed to.

Human Trafficking

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE (South Australia) (15:45): I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) human trafficking and slavery are serious and often transnational crimes encompassing a wide range of exploitative practices with almost every country affected as a point of origin, transit or destination for victims,

(ii) on 4 August 2016, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Attorney-General’s Department (AGD) co-hosted a whole-of-government event to mark the United Nations World Day Against Trafficking in Persons which is commemorated on 30 July each year,

(iii) the event was an important opportunity for DFAT and AGD to strengthen relationships with key stakeholders in the human trafficking space including Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH),

(iv) the event followed the Senior Officials Meeting of the Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, also attended by ACRATH, which provided key stakeholders to reflect on the issues impacting on people trafficked into Australia,
(v) ACRATH continues to make a significant contribution to the work of anti-trafficking initiatives in Australia,

(vi) in the last twelve months ACRATH has undertaken 132 presentations across Australia, assisted 22 trafficked women and 13 children and devoted 7,267 hours of volunteer time spent in raising awareness of, and advocating against, human trafficking in Australia, and

(vii) funding for ACRATH will expire in 2017; and

(b) calls on the Government to adequately resource appropriate programs on the eradication of slavery and human trafficking.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Red Tape Committee

Appointment

Senator LEYONHJELM (New South Wales) (15:46): I move:

(1) That a select committee, to be known as the Red Tape Committee, be established to inquire into and report on, by 1 December 2017, the effect of restrictions and prohibitions on business (red tape) on the economy and community, with particular reference to:

(a) the effects on compliance costs (in hours and money), economic output, employment and government revenue, with particular attention to industries, such as mining, manufacturing, tourism and agriculture, and small business;

(b) any specific areas of red tape that are particularly burdensome, complex, redundant or duplicated across jurisdictions;

(c) the impact on health, safety and economic opportunity, particularly for the low-skilled and disadvantaged;

(d) the effectiveness of the Abbott, Turnbull and previous governments' efforts to reduce red tape;

(e) the adequacy of current institutional structures (such as Regulation Impact Statements, the Office of Best Practice Regulation and red tape repeal days) for achieving genuine and permanent reductions to red tape;

(f) alternative institutional arrangements to reduce red tape, including providing subsidies or tax concessions to businesses to achieve outcomes currently achieved through regulation;

(g) how different jurisdictions in Australia and internationally have attempted to reduce red tape; and

(h) any related matters.

(2) That the committee consist of 7 senators, 2 nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 1 nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, 1 nominated by the Leader of the Australian Greens, and 3 to be nominated by other parties and independent senators.

(3) That:

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

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

(c) a participating member shall be taken to be a member of the committee for the purpose of forming a quorum of the committee.
(4) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee.

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

(6) That the committee elect as chair and deputy chair a member nominated by the aforementioned other parties and independent senators.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Philippines

Senator DI NATALE (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Greens) (15:46): I ask that general business notice of motion No. 78, standing in my name for today, relating to extrajudicial killings in the Philippines, be taken as a formal motion.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Is there any objection to this motion being taken as formal?

Senator McGrath: Yes.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: There is an objection.


The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator GALLAGHER: Labor is deeply concerned at the loss of life and human rights abuse reported in the Philippines and we are closely monitoring the situation. The extrajudicial killings in the Philippines must end and authorities should ensure those accused of crimes are dealt with by the criminal justice system. Labor is committed to promoting awareness and understanding of human rights and supporting the international human rights instruments to which Australia is a signatory. Labor considers access to justice to be integral to the enjoyment of basic human rights and a critical element of a well-functioning democracy. Labor has been a strong advocate for human rights and civil liberties, both in Australia and on the international stage, and we will continue to pursue effective human rights diplomacy that supports international and regional security.
Senator McGrath (Queensland—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister) (15:47): I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator McGrath: The government is deeply concerned about reports of human rights violations in the Philippines arising from the administration's campaign against drugs. The foreign minister, Julie Bishop, has urged the Philippines government to ensure the cessation of extrajudicial killings and offer all Filipino citizens their rights according to the country's criminal justice system. Australia is willing to provide practical assistance to help the Philippines government address the drug problem, including through rehabilitation programs. The Greens' motion is counterproductive and will do nothing to end extrajudicial killings.


The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator Di Natale: Given that what we are witnessing in the Philippines is unprecedented—we have seen now over 3,000 people killed as a result of extrajudicial killings authorised by the President of the Philippines—it is remarkable that a motion that does nothing other than call for the end to these extrajudicial killings would be denied formality by the government. If the government were true to its word in saying that it is calling for an end to these extrajudicial killings through the foreign minister, then why doesn't it support a motion that gives, effectively, force to those words? What we are witnessing in the Philippines, as I said, is unprecedented. These are people who are being killed with no trial—people who have not benefited from a fair trial—and are being killed for doing nothing other than, in the words of the President, potentially using illicit drugs. There are much more effective ways of dealing with this. (Time expired)

Australian Statistician

Senator Xenophon (South Australia) (15:49): I move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) on 12 September 2016 the Senate agreed to an order for production of documents directed at the Minister representing the Minister for Small Business for the legal advice referred to by the Australian Statistician during his appearance on 7.30 on 3 August 2016,

(ii) on 14 September 2016 the Minister representing the Minister for Small Business advanced a public interest immunity claim that the longstanding practice of successive governments has been not to disclose privileged legal advice to conserve the Commonwealth's legal and constitutional interest,

(iii) the Senate has not accepted that there is a general public interest immunity that allows ministers or departments to withhold legal advice, but rather that each claim of public interest immunity is assessable by the Senate and that information of the particular potential harm should be provided to the Senate to make this assessment,

(iv) on 16 July 1975 the Senate laid out by resolution its position with respect to public interest immunity claims - paragraph 4 of that resolution makes it clear that, while the Senate may permit claims of public interest immunity to be advanced, it reserves the right to determine whether a particular claim will be accepted, and
(v) Australian courts have acknowledged that for the Parliament to undertake its duties it must be able to require the Executive to produce documents, and that the justification for legal professional privilege does not apply; and

(b) does not accept the public interest immunity claim made by the Minister representing the Minister for Small Business in relation to the order for production of documents of 12 September 2016, and orders that there be laid on the table by the Minister representing the Minister for Small Business, by the start of business on the next day of sitting, the legal advice referred to by the Australian Statistician during his appearance on 7.30 on 3 August 2016.

Question agreed to.

Ministerial Standards

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (15:50): I, and also on behalf of Senator Waters, move:
That the Senate—
(1) notes that:
(a) the statement of ministerial standards stipulates that “Ministers are required to undertake that, for an eighteen month period after ceasing to be a Minister, they will not lobby, advocate or have business meetings with members of the government, parliament, public service or defence force on any matters on which they have had official dealings as Minister in their last eighteen months in office”;
(b) Mr Ian Macfarlane held the Resources portfolio for the Coalition for thirteen years, including nine years as Minister, most recently the period of 18 September 2013 until 21 September 2015;
(c) on 26 September 2016, approximately twelve months after he ceased to be a Minister, it was reported that Mr Macfarlane had been appointed as CEO of the Queensland Resources Council; and
(d) it was also reported that Prime Minister Turnbull’s office gave approval for Mr Macfarlane’s appointment;
(2) calls on all federal Ministers to rule out meeting with Mr Macfarlane in his capacity as CEO of the Queensland Resources Council until 21 March 2017 when eighteen months will have elapsed after he ceased to hold his ministerial portfolios; and
(3) calls on Prime Minister Turnbull to clarify whether he or his office endorsed Mr Macfarlane’s disregard for the statement of ministerial standards.

Senator McGrath (Queensland—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister) (15:50): I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator McGrath: The government does not support this motion. Mr Macfarlane is well aware of his responsibilities as a former minister and the government is confident he will abide by the statement of ministerial standards in his new role. There has been a history of former ministers from both sides of politics taking jobs in sectors related to their previous portfolios shortly after leaving parliament. It is up to each minister to ensure they abide by the statement of ministerial standards when they leave parliament.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question is that general business motion No. 67, moved by Senators Rhiannon and Waters, be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [15:55]

(The Deputy President—Senator Lines)

Ayes ..................31
Question agreed to.

Senator Macdonald did not vote, to compensate for the vacancy caused by the resignation of Senator Conroy.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (15:58): Senators, there is more general business to come, so if you are not staying in the chamber please leave quietly. There may be more divisions and the bell will be rung for only one minute.
Housing Affordability

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (15:58): I, and also on behalf of Senator Cameron, move:

That the Senate—

(a) notes that:

(i) Australian dwellings increased in price by 10 per cent in 2015-16, indicating a clear national housing affordability crisis, with Sydney prices increasing by 13 per cent and Melbourne by 13.9 per cent, and

(ii) significant causes of these price increases include distortionary negative gearing and capital gains tax discount policies; and

(b) calls on the Federal Government to significantly reform negative gearing and the capital gains tax discount to ensure housing is more affordable for first home buyers.

Senator McGRATH (Queensland—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister) (15:58): I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator McGRATH: The government does not support this motion. By far, the majority of those who negatively gear properties are middle-income Australians. The government believes negative gearing gives people like nurses, teachers, police and emergency service workers a chance to get ahead and provide for their future. Many factors affect housing affordability. One of the key drivers is the supply of land and housing. The states and territories hold the major levers to improving housing supply, through removing regulatory impediments imposed by planning, land use and housing infrastructure policies. We will continue to work with the states and territories to improve the responsiveness of housing supply.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion moved by Senators Rhiannon and Cameron be agreed to.

The Senate divided. [16:00]

(The Deputy President—Senator Lines)

Ayes ...................... 28
Noes ...................... 29
Majority .............. 1

AYES

Bilyk, CL  Brown, CL
Cameron, DN  Carr, KJ
Chisholm, A  Collins, JMA
Di Natale, R  Dodson, P
Gallacher, AM  Gallagher, KR
Hanson-Young, SC  Ketter, CR
Lambie, J  Marshall, GM
McAllister, J  McCarthy, M
McKim, NJ  Moore, CM
O'Neill, DM  Polley, H
Pratt, LC  Rhiannon, L
Rice, J  Siewert, R
Sterle, G  Urquhart, AE (teller)
AYES
Watt, M
Whish-Wilson, PS

NOES
Abetz, E
Birmingham, SJ
Bushby, DC (teller)
Cash, MC
Duniam, J
Ferravanti-Wells, C
Hanson, P
Hume, J
McGrath, J
Nash, F
Paterson, J
Reynolds, L
Ruston, A
Scullion, NG
Williams, JR
Back, CJ
Burston, B
Canavan, MJ
Culleton, RN
Fawcett, DJ
Fifield, MP
Hinch, D
Leyonhjelm, DE
McKenzie, B
O'Sullivan, B
Payne, MA
Roberts, M
Ryan, SM
Smith, D

PAIRS
Dastyari, S
Farrell, D
Ludlam, S
Singh, LM
Waters, LJ
Wong, P
Seselja, Z
Sinodinos, A
Day, RJ
Bernardi, C
Cormann, M
Brandis, GH

Question negatived.
Senator Macdonald did not vote, to compensate for the vacancy caused by the resignation of Senator Conroy.

United States Presidential Election

Senator DI NATALE (Victoria—Leader of the Australian Greens) (16:03): I move:
That the Senate—
(a) condemns the misogynistic, hateful comments made by the Republican candidate for President of the United States of America, Mr Donald Trump, about women and minorities, including the remarks revealed over the weekend that clearly describe sexual assault;
(b) reflects on the divisive, destructive impact that hate speech from political candidates and members of elected office has on our community;
(c) requests that every member of the Senate refrain from making racist, sexist comments, both in this chamber and outside it; and
(d) calls on the Government to join the Senate in its condemnation of both Mr Donald Trump and hate speech in all its forms.
I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.
Senator DI NATALE: What we are talking about here is a motion that decries the sexist language—and, in many cases, racist language—that has been used during the American presidential debate. I do not think there should be any debate about whether the Australian Senate should condemn that language; of course it should—it is unacceptable, it is vile, it is vulgar, it is misogynist and it has no place in modern society. The pattern emerging from the coalition—that it refuses to engage in debating or discussing any motions that have a foreign policy element—is one that we are deeply concerned about. This is a chamber where these issues need to be raised. We quietly raise with the coalition that, in future, we will be using the opportunity to suspend standing orders if they continue to deny leave on these sorts of motions.

Senator McGrath (Queensland—Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister) (16:04): I seek leave to make a short statement.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator McGrath: The government did not support this motion being taken as formal as it is not the role of the Australian Senate to provide a running commentary on the United States presidential election. Mr Trump's comments from 2005 have been condemned in the strongest terms. He has apologised for his remarks and acknowledged that they were inappropriate. The election in the United States is a matter for the people of the United States of America. We respect their democratic process. The Australian government will seek to work constructively with whoever is elected President of the United States.


The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Leave is granted for one minute.

Senator Gallagher: The comments made by Donald Trump, which are addressed in this motion, are repugnant and should be condemned. These comments cannot be excused or dismissed. It should be noted that Donald Trump's comments have not gone unchallenged publicly by the American people, by the media and by his own Republican colleagues. Labor will speak out against all forms of discrimination, vilification and harassment. Labor stands for equality. We pursue tolerance and respect and oppose all attempts to divide Australians by pandering to prejudice. Labor will act against all forms of discrimination and exploitation, including sexual exploitation of women and children. It should be noted the Australia-US alliance is incredibly strong and will remain so regardless of the outcome of the US election.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Medicare

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (16:06): The President has received the following letter from Senator Gallagher.

Dear Mr President

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

The Government's refusal to heed the lessons from the election and stand up for Medicare.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Is the proposal supported?
More than the number of senators required by the standing orders having risen in their places—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you. 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 BILYK (Tasmania—Deputy Opposition Whip in the Senate) (16:06): Today's matter of public importance is 'the government's refusal to learn the lessons of the election and stand up for Medicare', and this is a really important issue. The Australian people have a right to be disappointed in this leaderless, directionless government. They have a right to feel betrayed. Mr Turnbull is looking after his big business mates and not the real concerns of the Australian people.

As demonstrated in the election, the health care that Australians and their loved ones receive is an issue of immense importance—possibly even the most important. During the election campaign, the government failed to convince the Australian people that they were committed to public health care—and, after the government delivered $50 billion in savage cuts to the health system, no wonder Australian voters were sceptical. The government hysterically claimed that Labor's campaign to protect Australia's healthcare system was a Mediscare campaign and that they, the Liberals and Nationals, were fully committed to the Australian healthcare system. At least 27 times during the election campaign, Mr Turnbull said that he would never outsource Medicare.

That is why, yesterday over in the House, Labor gave the government the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to a strong, public Australian healthcare system. But unfortunately the Liberal and National party members, including Mr Turnbull, voted against Labor's motion, which supported a guarantee to keep Medicare in public hands as a universal health insurance scheme for all Australians; to protect bulk-billing so that every Australian can see their doctor when they need to and not only when they can afford it; to reverse the government's harmful cuts to Medicare by unfreezing the indexation of the Medicare Benefits Schedule; to reverse the government's cuts to pathology that will mean Australians with cancer will pay more for blood tests; to reverse the government's cuts to pathology that will mean Australians will pay more for vital scans; to abandon the plans to make all Australians, even pensioners, pay more for vital medicines; and to develop a long-term agreement to properly fund our public hospitals so Australians do not languish in our emergency departments or on long waiting lists for important surgery.

So it is absolutely obvious: Mr Turnbull and the government members have failed to stand up for Medicare in the parliament. In the days after the election Mr Turnbull said:

We have to do more to reaffirm the faith of the Australian people in our commitment to health and to Medicare.

He went on:

We will work harder, much harder … I would like Australians to believe that commitment to Medicare is completely bipartisan.
But, yesterday, only 100 days after the election, Labor gave him the opportunity and he failed—absolutely failed—to commit to protecting Medicare. It would appear Mr Turnbull just does not care about ensuring all Australians have access to health care.

Australians did not trust the Liberals with their health care before the election, and they sure do not trust them now. The Prime Minister has admitted he has a problem with Medicare, but he has shown no interest in fixing it, with not one change of policy and not a single dollar of cuts undone—not one in 100 days. He has backflipped on the backpacker tax and he has backflipped on his ironclad changes to superannuation but, when it comes to cutting Medicare, he knows which side he is on. What else would we expect from a Liberal Party that is ideologically opposed to universal health care? It has always championed a two-tier American style healthcare system. This is a government which, for three years, has done everything it can to push the price of health care back onto Australian families.

Australians are proud of their healthcare system and the idea at the core of Medicare: that every Australian can get the care that they need when they need it. Medicare speaks for our distinctive Australian character and our egalitarian tradition of the fair go. But if the Liberals have spent the last three years trying to hollow out Medicare, taxing it, cutting it, eating away at its very foundations, then we are in trouble. They have been seeking to tear Medicare down, brick by brick, piece by piece.

The government's record on Medicare speaks for itself: cutting bulk-billing so 14.5 million patients pay more to see a GP. That is 14.5 million Australians who will have to pay more to see a GP because of the Turnbull government. The College of GPs recently found one in three GPs are already revising their business models because they cannot stay viable under the Medicare freeze, with out-of-pocket health costs increasing by 19 per cent under this government. I am from Tasmania, as are two of my Senate colleagues here in the chamber, Senator Brown and Senator Polley, and we know and have met with a number of doctors in Tasmania who now no longer bulk-bill due to the cuts by this government. This government's cuts are directly hurting Tasmanians in need, and those opposite should be ashamed of supporting them, especially the Tasmanian senators opposite.

The cuts the government have made to health have cut across all parts of the sector: bulk-billing, hospitals, pathology, dental and palliative care, amongst many other areas. Just last night I spoke in this place about the government's unwillingness to fund Palliative Care Tasmania, and on 12 September I wrote to the Prime Minister explaining the importance of the work that Palliative Care Tasmania does, urging him to fully fund it into the future or at least provide interim funding to cover it until the review of the Better Access to Palliative Care program. But, of course, I do not hold out much hope for that, because I know that those opposite do not care about the health of Australians, and they certainly do not care about the dying of Australians and making sure that Australians can have a good death.

The government are happy to pretend that they care about the healthcare system, but they have failed to convince the Australian people, because their actions show that they do not really care. We know that the government established a 20-person $5 million Medicare privatisation task force, and we also know that this government told the Productivity Commission to investigate privatising all human services, including Medicare. And we know that the government's decision to award the contract for the National Cancer Screening
Register to Telstra adds to a string of evidence that they cannot be trusted to keep Medicare in public hands.

We have seen government cuts to pathology as well. During the election, the Liberals engineered a short-term political stunt to hide their pathology cuts until the polls closed. But rest assured: Mr Turnbull is as committed as ever to making Australians pay more for their vital tests, with confirmation his massive cuts to pathology remain a ticking time bomb. It is just not good enough.

This government remains determined to make cancer patients, and others with chronic health conditions, pay more for their vital tests, and the cuts could come into effect in only a month or two. It is my view, and the view of those on this side, that Mr Turnbull needs to drop these cuts entirely.

The government's cuts to bulk-billing incentives will impact vital pathology tests—including blood tests, urine tests, swabs such as pap smears, and biopsies. Combined with his cuts to diagnostic imaging, patients could be left with hundreds and possibly thousands of dollars in up-front costs simply for vital scans and tests. Australians should be able to have the blood tests they need without being left hundreds of dollars out of pocket.

Mr Turnbull claimed to have learnt a lesson at the election, but the fact is he has not reversed a single one of his health cuts—not one. He has had 100 days; he has not reversed one. He will keep attacking bulk-billing and increasing out-of-pocket costs. It is about time that Mr Turnbull got his priorities right and started caring about the health of all Australians. He should stop making Australians feel that they were betrayed at the last election. He is so busy looking after his big business mates and not the real concerns of the Australian people.

As I said, the health care that Australians and their loved ones receive is of immense importance—possibly even the most important thing we could be talking about. During the election campaign the government failed miserably to convince Australian people that it was committed to public health care. Let's remember that it delivered $50 billion in savage cuts to the health system—no wonder most people are sceptical—and the government hysterically claimed that Labor's campaign to protect Australia's healthcare system was a 'Medicare' campaign. They went absolutely troppo—I presume it is parliamentary to use the word 'troppo'.

So many times during the election campaign did they point out how they are fully committed to the Australian healthcare system. They are committed to 'an' Australian healthcare system but, unfortunately, it is more like the American healthcare system. At least 27 times during the election campaign Mr Turnbull said he would 'never outsource Medicare'. But do not be mistaken, Mr Turnbull will outsource Medicare at the drop of a hat. At the drop of his top hat he will outsource Medicare. (Time expired)

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (16:17): I am absolutely amazed that the Labor Party would raise for debate the issue of Medicare, after the disgraceful lying campaign conducted by the Labor Party and their union mates at the last election when union thugs were standing at the pre-poll queues. They picked their mark—older people, frail ladies. They would rush up to them and say, 'The Liberals are going to abandon Medicare.' This continued on and on. It is an outright and complete and absolute lie that the Labor Party will forever stand condemned for.
Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator IAN MACDONALD: I stood next to a CPSU lady who was doing this, after she had threatened an elderly person. When I said to the elderly person: 'Excuse me madam, what you've just heard is a complete fabrication. The government is not selling Medicare,' the CPSU lady said to me, 'You're bullying me.' I say this because of those opposite now. I said, 'Hang on, I'm bullying you? I am simply talking to this lady and telling her the truth.' The CPSU lady said, 'You're bullying me. You're standing in my space.' I assume that is the new union way. If someone challenges them, particularly if they happen to be a female, the retort is: 'You're bullying me.' In this case, the bullying was being done by this CPSU lady picking on vulnerable frail people and telling them abject and absolute lies.

In debates such as this it is always useful to have a little bit of fact. What you heard from the previous Labor Party speaker, Senator Bilyk, was a congregation of lies, mistruths and misinformation. Let me give you the real facts. The coalition government is investing $22 billion in Medicare, which is over a billion dollars more than last year. That will increase to nearly $26 billion additional in 2019-20. Again to put the lie to the comments made by the previous speaker, bulk-billing rates are the highest they have ever been ever. GP bulk-billing rates are at over 85 per cent compared to when Labor was in power—the people who proposed this MPI. When they were in power the average rate was 79 per cent. I will repeat those: under the coalition we have an GP bulk-billing rate of 85 per cent and under Labor it was 79 per cent.

In the last financial year, across Australia there were 17 million more bulk-billed GP attendances than in Labor's last year in office. I will repeat that because those listening to this broadcast might want to have the facts rather than the lies that were told by earlier speakers: there were 17 million more bulk-billed GP attendances compared to Labor's last full year in office. More people than ever are seeing a general practitioner, a doctor, without having to pay anything.

To continue with some factual input into this debate, I will talk about the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which was mentioned by the previous speaker. I mention that because I am particularly proud of the way our government has listed new medicines for cancer, including melanoma, for cystic fibrosis and for a cure for hepatitis C. Many of these medicines would have cost people tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars a year, but we have been able to list them, so now they cost only $38, or $6 for a concession script.

I was particularly involved in the hepatitis C campaign, as was my colleague Senator Dean Smith, who took a lead in it. I have a relative who had hepatitis C who went through 48 weeks of sheer agony in an old form of possible treatment. For him, I am pleased to say, it did work. But he went through agony—he and his family and his children. The government has since allowed onto the PBS this new treatment, where you take one pill for 12 weeks, and it is almost a guaranteed cure.

I was told, when the pharmaceutical companies were coming to me, lobbying to get this onto the PBS, that the treatment would have cost—they were a bit coy about the actual cost—somewhere between $70,000 and $100,000. That was the cost of this drug. You can now get it, thanks to the coalition government, for just $38, and for those with hepatitis C it is almost a cure.
In addition to that, in the coalition government’s first three years, 1,000 new medicines were approved for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and that is worth some $4.4 billion. Can I just compare this—I remind you: 1,000 in three years under the coalition—with Labor’s last three years, when there were 331 new medicines on the PBS.

If you had taken any notice—and I am sure not many people did—of the previous speaker, you would think that the health system was in chaos. But, there we are: under Labor, 331 new medicines in three years on the PBS; under the coalition, three times that.

Not only are more medicines available; they are now cheaper. In an Australian first, the price of a large proportion of expensive combination medicines and patent-protected drugs on the PBS have reduced by as much as $20 under the coalition. On 1 October this year more than 2,000 medicine brands treating common conditions dropped in price for millions of Australians.

I have to say: the Liberal and National parties are the only political parties with a plan. Our economic plan will enable us to pay for Medicare, so that Australians can continue to receive the health care they do now and into the future. Can I just emphasise that. Labor will talk about these things. They will throw promises around, as they are good at doing, but they never have any concept of how they are going to pay for it.

Under Labor—and this is a historic fact—the economy goes backwards. Taxes go upwards, and Australians suffer. You have to have a change of government every now and again to get the economy back on track. Why do we want the economy back on track? We want it back on track so that government can be in surplus and can spend money on what Australians want—and that is, a decent health system, which they never got under Labor. All congratulations go to the Minister for Health and Aged Care, Sussan Ley. She has done a wonderful job.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator IAN MACDONALD: These members of the Labor Party are arguing with me—1,000 new medicines under the coalition, 300 under Labor. Come on! Let me have the argument. There are 17 million more people getting GP services free under the coalition than under the last year of Labor. Argue with those facts, and see where they go.

Under this government we care about health. We care about Medicare. We will continue to invest in Medicare to the benefit of all Australians, and we will do that because we are getting the economy back on track and can afford it as a nation.

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (16:26): Well, let's really put some facts on the table. We know that the coalition government have a record that will never be beaten—as a government that historically have always made cuts to health. Going right back to the Howard era, one of Tony Abbott's last acts, when he was the Minister for Health, was to cut $1 billion out of health.

What do we have now? We have the worst health minister that this country has ever seen—the worst health minister. We have a health minister who sits in cabinet with no authority. She is a minister for health and a minister for ageing, and what has she done? Absolutely nothing. They went to the last election with not one ounce of credible policy when it comes to ageing. But let's stick with the issues that are before us now.

We can look at Medicare. Yesterday marked 100 days—100 long days—since this government was elected, and they have neither stopped nor dropped any of their cuts to health
and to Medicare, further highlighting their inability to have learnt anything at all from the federal election.

The Liberals in my home state of Tasmania are still in shock because they lost the federal seat of Bass. It was won by Ross Hart, the new Labor member for Bass. Why did he win? He won because the Australian people, in particular the Tasmanian people, understood that Malcolm Turnbull and his government cannot be trusted when it comes to health. Ross Hart won that seat from a member who had continually voted against the interests of his constituents.

We went out and campaigned on the issues that matter to the people of Bass and to the people of Tasmania. They know, first hand, that we have the oldest population, the quickest ageing population and, unfortunately, in Tasmania, some of the worst chronic illnesses affecting our people. So we value Medicare.

But we know that those on that side of the chamber want to undermine Medicare. It is in their DNA. It is in their core belief system. They do not support a universal healthcare system. If they had their way, we would go down the same trail as the Americans, where only those who can afford it have access to good health care. Those on that side of the chamber have always had the view that your credit card should determine whether or not you get good health care in this country.

We have seen, under this government, an increase in the cost of private health insurance. It is getting to the point where there are more people dropping out of private health care because they cannot afford it. Unfortunately, people need that care the most as they get older. The problem is: as you approach retirement age, if you are on the Australian pension you cannot afford to take out private health insurance. Those in this country who are most vulnerable deserve the protection of the Commonwealth government. That is the very least that they should be able to rely on this government for—to provide them with the best health care possible.

We know that those on that side cannot be trusted. They have learnt nothing at all from the results in Tasmania where we took three seats from the Liberals. The three amigos had to leave town, as I have spoken about many times before in this chamber. We have also seen that this is a government which refuses to listen to the community. We know that it is going to cost all Australians more money to have a pathology test. For those people who are living with and fighting cancer, it is going to cost them more to have their pathology tests. For myself and my colleagues Senators Brown, Urquhart and Bilyk, we know, coming from Tasmania, what Medicare means to our people. It is shameful that the Liberal senators in this chamber from Tasmania will not stand up, cross the floor and support the Tasmanian community to ensure that it has the health care that it deserves.

As Senator Bilyk said previously, why should somebody have to pay $300 up-front to have an MRI? This is someone who has already had brain tumours. That is a burden. We need to ensure that people get the best care that they can as soon as they can. A parent should not have to choose between whether a mother can go and have her Pap smears or put food on the table, or pay the school fees. These are fundamental rights of all Australians. We know on this side that Mr Turnbull has not been the Prime Minister that the Australian people thought they were voting for. In fact, I think he is best known in the community—from the conversations that I have on a regular basis—as the 'Prime Minister for thought bubbles'. If he
sees an idea floating through the sky in a bubble, he will grab it and have a go at it. That is not the sort of leadership that we need in this country. Why should Australian pensioners and those who are most vulnerable have to pay more for vital medications?

We had Senator Macdonald here with his usual ramblings and babbling on that he does, accusing people of bullying people at polling booths. He ought to have a look at his own backyard first. He is one of the worst culprits in this chamber of bullying other senators, particularly women on this side of the chamber. We know, as I said before, that it is in the belief system of those opposite—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Back): Senator Smith, on a point of order?

Senator Smith: I understand that it is the custom and the tradition to make—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Your point of order?

Senator Smith: Senator Polley should remove those remarks that she has made about Senator Macdonald bullying women. They are untrue.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Polley, can I invite you to withdraw that comment and then continue your remarks.

Senator POLLEY: I will continue my remarks.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Would you withdraw that comment?

Senator POLLEY: I am not going to withdraw the remarks because he does come into this chamber and bully women.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Polley, with respect, you did reflect on a colleague in the Senate.

Senator Carol Brown: Withdraw.

Senator POLLEY: I withdraw.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you very much.

Senator POLLEY: Let us get back to the real issue before the chamber—that is, as the Australian people know, the Turnbull government cannot be trusted when it comes to our health system. We know that Medicare is fundamental to ensuring that all Australians have access to the best health care possible. We have been envied around the world for our health system. Whether you look at the United Kingdom, the United States or Canada, we have always been up there as the world leader. That is under threat because, as we know, the Turnbull government will do all that they can to undermine Medicare. We know their agenda is to privatise Medicare—we know that. That is why we will always stand up and protect Medicare. We know that those in the other place had the opportunity yesterday to support the position that Labor put before the House to ensure that Medicare could never ever be privatised. But what did we see? We saw the government members vote against that.

Senator Macdonald made a contribution that claimed that we were over here scaring people into believing that the health system was in crisis. Well, that is exactly what is happening in the Royal Hobart Hospital today. That is exactly what is facing the people at the Launceston General Hospital in my home state. They are in crisis. Leading into the federal election, we had numerous doctors at the Launceston General Hospital threatening to walk out. We had
them reducing their hours. They are in crisis. We have an incompetent minister in the state parliament, Mr Ferguson, who has no idea how to resolve the health issues that are confronting the Tasmanian community.

So it is the responsibility of Minister Ley and Minister Ferguson to ensure that our hospitals are functioning and are provided with the resources that they need to deliver the best outcome for all Tasmanians. We should not have 92-year-old women dying in a storeroom. We should not have 91-year-old men on the floor because there are no beds. We should not have our elderly Australians not being treated with respect and not having access to the best health system that we can provide. It is an indictment on the Turnbull government. It is a disgrace for the Turnbull government. It is a disgrace that the minister responsible for this area, Minister Ley, does not have the capacity to deliver what they went to the election with to ensure that Australians have the health system that we can all be proud of. It is damning on this government.

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (16:36): I rise to speak to the matter of public importance and the government's refusal to heed the lessons from the election and stand up for Medicare. On 9 July one of the world's oldest and most respected current affairs and news magazines published an article which talked about the Turnbull government's performance and the mandate it had won at the last double dissolution election. Senators—especially government senators—may like to reflect on what the Economist had to say:

When Malcolm Turnbull sought a second term for his conservative Liberal-National coalition government by calling an early general election, he promised Australians a break from nearly a decade of dysfunctional politics and short-lived national leaders. The prime minister—Australia’s sixth in a decade—asked voters to deliver a mandate for “strong, stable majority government” so that he could take them to the “greatest years in our history”.

Instead, on July 2nd, they delivered a humiliating verdict. As the Economist indicates, this government does not have a mandate for their policies from the Australian people, because this government was delivered a humiliating verdict by the Australian people on 2 July. And one of the main reasons why the government barely managed to maintain control of the treasury bench in the lower house after their majority melted from 15 to 1 is, as this MPI suggests, the government's refusal to heed the lessons from the election and stand up for Medicare.

How could we forget that the Turnbull Liberal government, over the 2015-16 Xmas-New Year holiday break, promised to make changes to Australia's Medicare bulk-billing rebate. The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia said at the time that the Liberal's changes to bulk-billing would result in an extra patient fee of at least $30 for women's pap smears alone. Our Medicare system, just like our public health system, is under terrible pressure. And, as we have already heard, in Tasmania, we are suffering from the effects of bad health management from not just the federal Liberal Party but also the state Liberal Party and the state minister in Tasmania. Our public hospital system is overloaded and failing patients because of underresourcing and pressure from the federal government on the Medicare bulk-billing system. Our public health system is in severe crisis, with Launceston and Hobart hospitals absolutely overflowing. They are 100 per cent choked up. Tasmanians are dying while waiting for life-saving surgery. There are 4,000 Tasmanians on a 12-month waiting list for a simple procedure like a colonoscopy, which can prevent cancer. Yet, over the next 10 years,
Australia will borrow between $50 billion and $70 billion to give away in foreign aid. Both state and federal governments have clearly failed homeless and sick Tasmanians, yet the same politicians have said that, over and above our normal refugee intake, an extra 500 people will be housed, fed and cared for in Tasmania. Will those people go to the front of the queue for public housing and medical treatment? Before we take any more refugees, I am calling on the politicians who have created our public housing and health crises to prevent Tasmanians from becoming homeless and dying unnecessarily on public health waiting lists.

There is no long-term public health plan in place to look after residents of the North and North West of Tasmania. For North West patients to have equity of access and continuity of quality health care, the North West Coast should have one centralised regional hospital, based between Devonport and Burnie. This, of course, will not occur overnight; however, it would be visionary to commence planning for its construction now. We need to think long term for the betterment of our children and our region—not for one election cycle or from one election cycle to another.

There are of course many complexities involved in providing health services, especially in Tasmania, with its geographical disadvantages, weather and decentralised population. It is even more complex when you have two medium-sized, competing hospitals within 45 minutes of each other, with both suffering from being dependent on expensive professional locums. Having one centralised regional hospital would promote sustainability of health services on the North West Coast, increase the chance of recruiting and keeping specialists and staff; benefit from a critical mass of patients; and boost opportunity for funding. To avoid wasteful spending on infrastructure, planning on a new greenfield hospital site should commence as soon as possible, with the realisation that funding may not be available for 10 years or more. (Time expired)

Senator SMITH (Western Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (16:41):

It pains me to admit it, but there are days when I admire the Australian Labor Party in this Senate, certainly for their cheek and disregard for the evidence. Let's look at the wording of this motion from Senator Gallagher:

The Government's refusal to heed the lessons of the election and stand up for Medicare. Well, let's take that accusation in two parts, because I think senators opposite will find that, if there is anyone in this building who is refusing to heed the lessons of the most recent federal election, it is not the coalition; it is indeed the Labor Party. I think it is important to get on the record very early, right here, right now, that, on 2 July this year at the federal election, the Australian Labor Party received the second-lowest primary vote in its history. The lessons of the election that was just held was that the Australian Labor Party received the second-lowest primary vote in its history. The lessons of the election that was just held was that the Australian Labor Party received the second-lowest primary vote in its history. I would have thought that was something not to boast about. I wouldn't have thought that achieving the second-worst primary vote result your party has received was something to be proud of. That is doubly the case when your campaign ran the most cynical and dishonest campaign I have seen in what will next year be 30 years as a member of the Liberal Party. I have not seen a more dishonest campaign.

Senator Carol Brown interjecting—

Senator SMITH: I was there in 1993 when you tried to do a similar exercise with regard to Medicare. In its desperation, the Australian Labor Party threw everything at its Medicare
campaign—a campaign based on the completely false, illogical and utterly unsustainable charge that the government was planning to ‘privatise’ Medicare.

Senator McKim: Children overboard.

Senator SMITH: If I get to the end of my contribution, Senator, I am going to put some facts on the table that Tasmanian senators—you, Senator Brown, Senator Polley, Senator Bilyk and Senator Lambie—will find most revealing about what has happened to bulk-billing rates in your state.

Senator Carol Brown interjecting—

Senator SMITH: If you knew them, Senator Brown, you might have revisited your contribution. You will have a chance to adjust your contribution, because I am going to give you the evidence before you speak. I would have thought the lesson of this election was that, ultimately, the Australian public does not reward dishonesty. Whatever momentary political success, the sorts of tactics Labor deployed may bring you in the short term are, in the end, not the things that will be rewarded by voters.

If there are lessons to be drawn from the election campaign, I argue that one of them is that the opposition needs to spend more time developing serious, credible, economic policies instead of resorting to cheap and dishonest tactics to try and win the day. Looking at the state of Victoria, I would argue that one of the lessons of the election campaign is that, when Labor chose militant unions over community volunteers, voters did not reward Labor. The passage through the parliament just yesterday of the government's laws that protect Victoria's CFA volunteers was a seminal moment. It was a victory for volunteers and for integrity, in the face of a shameless union power grab that was supported by the Australian Labor Party.

I would also add that another of the lessons from the election is that the people of Australia want a restoration of integrity and the rule of law to our construction sector, which this government is seeking to achieve with its commitments to re-establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission and bring its registered organisations bill to the parliament.

If collapsing union membership was not enough of a lesson for the Australian Labor Party, then surely the fact that they, the party of trade unions, came out of the election with the second-lowest primary vote they have received is a clear sign that something is wrong with their approach. Something is wrong with Labor's approach. Of course, you do not have to take my word for it, not surprisingly. Let us defer to John Black, a former Labor Senator for Queensland, who wrote in *The Australian* at the end of August this year:

Poor little Bill Shorten. Like the preppies at my kids' school, he got a nice congratulatory encouragement sticker just for finishing the race and, like a few of the preppies, he thinks that means he won.

His point is well made. For all the bravado and carry-on we hear from Labor senators in this place, particularly from Tasmania, you would think that they had won the election outcome. They did not win the election, and the reason they did not is that voters correctly saw that what the Labor Party of 2016 represents is no different to what the Labor Party of 2013 represented: a political party still beholden to trade unions, a party that has no credible plan for the future of this country and a party that is more interested in the quick headline than in serious policy reform.
That brings me, neatly, to the issue of Medicare, which is also the other focus of the motion moved this afternoon by Senator Gallagher. It used to be said, by former Prime Minister John Howard, that his government was the best friend of Medicare. I think that that was something of a boast at the time. However, that has now been overtaken. Let's have a look at Medicare evidence. You will see that it is the current government which provides the best support and protection for Medicare.

Let me pepper the debate with some evidence—some statistics—that have been missing from the contributions of Labor senators. An additional 17 million GP services were bulk-billed last year under the Turnbull coalition government, when measured against Labor's last full year in office under Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd. Now, I would have thought that if you were trying to destroy Medicare, which is the claim Labor senators are trying to make this afternoon, providing an additional 17 million GP services is not what you would be doing. Last year, the Turnbull government—which the Labor Party says wants to destroy Medicare—invested around $21 billion in Medicare. That represents an investment of about $60 million every day—not the action of people who want to destroy Medicare. In fact, no government has invested more in Medicare than the present Turnbull-coalition government. To give you a point of comparison, Labor invested an average of $17.7 billion in Medicare during their six years in government. That is $3.3 billion less than the Turnbull government has invested in just the last year. It is a shame that the Hansard does not record silence, because I notice Labor senators have fallen silent.

_Senator Reynolds interjecting—_

_Senator SMITH:_ Senator Reynolds, I haven't even got to the bulk-billing statistics for Tasmania yet. Another one of Labor's favourite—(Time expired)

_Senator CAROL BROWN_ (Tasmania) (16:50): I rise to speak on the matter of public importance, submitted by Senator Gallagher, on the government's refusal to heed the lessons from the election and stand up for Medicare. We have had some contributions from government senators here today, and they certainly have supported Senator Gallagher's motion by the fact that they have failed to heed the lessons.

Before I go on to some of the substantive issues that have been raised—not so much by the previous speaker, Senator Smith, who ranged all over the place—let's have a look at what the federal government's record on health has been. Mr Turnbull's record includes extending the freeze on Medicare rebates to six years, which is forcing out-of-pocket costs up. In my home state of Tasmania, during the election campaign, if you went to any of the GP surgeries or any of the clinics that people came to see me and talk to me about—I went to a GP surgery as well—there you could see in black and white in the surgery's or clinic's reception area a letter advising their patients that their fees would be going up because of the freeze. That is what it said, in every GP clinic that my constituents came to talk to me about. That is fact. It is not made up but fact.

Another thing the Turnbull government tried to do was abolish the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. If it is abolished it would push five million children onto a very, very long public dental waiting list. And that is still on the books with this government. They tried it before, in the omnibus bill, and it had to be taken out after pressure from the Labor Party. That is another fact. That is what this government are trying to do.
They also ripped $650 million out of Medicare by slashing bulk-billing incentives for diagnostic imaging and pathology. Do not take my word for it that that is what they are doing; let us look at the facts. That is why the pathology companies were running a campaign during the election. That is why the radiology officers were running a campaign throughout the election. That is why Mr Turnbull, during the election, backed down on it, but he certainly has not taken it off the table—his actions in recent times tell us that it is well and truly coming back. We heard from Senator Polley and Senator Lambie about what that will do to costs for people who are seeking those services. Thirty extra dollars for a pap smear. That is what your government is pushing onto the Australian community.

By all means do not accept that people out there in the community are awake to what you are doing to Medicare and with the cuts to health—don't accept it; I know you have an inability to accept that—but you should go back and talk to your constituencies. In my home state of Tasmania we saw Medicare as one of the biggest issues that people were talking to us about in terms of how they were going to vote. It was based on the freeze and the extra charges, the out-of-pocket costs, that would be coming through GP clinics. It was about the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. It was about the slashing of bulk-billing incentives for diagnostic imaging and pathology. And it was also about the other cuts to health programs that this government has inflicted on the Australian community.

Senator Polley talked about the fact that in my home state of Tasmania voters in Lyons, Bass and Braddon elected three very, very good, outstanding members of the Labor Party as their new representatives. They did that, and one of the main reasons they did that was because they wanted to see Medicare protected. So what have we seen in the last few days? Only yesterday we saw Mr Turnbull vote against a guarantee to keep Medicare in public hands as the universal health insurance scheme for all Australians, vote against a guarantee to protect bulk-billing so that every Australian can see their doctor when they need to and not only when they can afford it, and also vote against reversing the harmful cuts to Medicare by unfreezing the indexation of the Medicare benefits scheme.

Senator Smith talked about scare campaigns. It is a 'give me'—I know you quite like me, Senator Smith, but it is a 'give me'. I will not even mention $100 legs of lamb. I will not even mention Whyalla. But I will mention this: just recently we had the power outage situation in South Australia—very sad to see that happen—and what did we see? Straight away Mr Turnbull was in there blaming renewables, trying to start a huge scare campaign on renewables. And what did we then have? Dr Hewson—do you remember him, Senator Smith; I am sure you do—who said, 'Australia needs more renewables, not less.' I do digress, but these people are the kings of scare campaigns.

The matter of health and the matter of Medicare are far too important to let this government get away with what they are doing: bit by bit stripping away measures to support people when they need medical assistance. In my home state of Tasmania just recently we had an emergency in the Royal Hobart Hospital. It was an emergency that was a level 3 red status, which is the highest that it can go. It basically meant that there was a lack of beds at Tasmania's main public hospital. This is because more and more people are turning up to emergency services because of the pressure that they are under regarding the cost of going to the doctor. This government should not be let off the hook. (Time expired)
Senator REYNOLDS (Western Australia) (16:58): I too rise to speak in relation to this matter of public importance with respect to the government's alleged 'refusal to heed the lessons from the election and stand up for Medicare'. In politics, if you tell a lie often enough and you tell it loudly enough, eventually it will be believed—particularly when it is designed to evoke fear in the most vulnerable of our society. Senator Gallagher in this chamber today stated that the Turnbull government has made Medicare inaccessible and unaffordable—a big fat demonstrable lie designed to scare and mislead.

In WA on 20 June this year, Bill Shorten stated, 'If you want to protect Medicare, you vote for Labor in this election'—a big fat lie told often enough and loud enough to eventually be believed by Australia's most vulnerable. These are two big fat lies, but they are actually more than that. Instead of campaigning, and still keeping the lie going forward, on their own 'positive policies' for this nation, Labor continue to rely on scaring and misleading the Australian public and scaring the most vulnerable in our society. Mr Shorten's Medicare lie was simply that; but it was a lie so big, and told so frequently to the most vulnerable, that it ended up being believed.


Senator Marshall: Mr Acting Deputy President, I rise on a point of order. Senator Reynolds knows that she cannot say that about the Leader of the Opposition. She needs to withdraw.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I invite you to withdraw, Senator Reynolds.

Senator REYNOLDS: I withdraw.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Please continue, Senator Reynolds.

Senator REYNOLDS: These comments were clearly untrue. This message from the Labor Party about Medicare was so untrue and told so frequently to the most vulnerable people—


Senator Marshall: Mr Acting Deputy President, on the same point of order: Senator Reynolds cannot simply repackage the same message and pretend she is not saying the same unparliamentary words. She must withdraw.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Marshall, you have made your point. Senator Reynolds, would you please desist, and continue with your remarks.

Senator REYNOLDS: I will. Thank you very much.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Reynolds, please resume your seat. Senator Gallacher.

Senator Gallacher: Mr Acting Deputy President, on a point of order: I draw your attention to standing order 187 with respect to speeches not being read.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Gallacher, you will resume your seat. Senator Reynolds, I invite you to continue—without interruption.

Senator Smith interjecting—
Senator REYNOLDS: Yes, they might not like to hear what I have to say, but I have plenty of facts. Those opposite have spent the last half an hour or so making egregious allegations about those on my side and about our policies. One thing we did not hear from those opposite were the facts. Senator Lambie asked: 'What has this government actually done?' Listening to you speak, I was reminded of Monty Python's Life of Brian—'What have the Romans ever done for us?' in health, education and everything else.

Opposition senators interjecting—

Senator REYNOLDS: You have not provided any facts and figures. Let me provide the facts and figures that you have steadfastly refused to provide to this chamber.

Opposition senators interjecting—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Through the chair, thank you, Senator Reynolds.

Senator REYNOLDS: Through the chair, let me provide some of the facts and figures for you. The Turnbull government will increase Medicare funding by a further $2 billion this financial year alone—from $21 billion this year to $26 billion in four years. This is more funding in real terms than the previous Labor government ever provided. That is a fact. Let those opposite come back into this chamber and deny that is a fact. We talked about GP clinic visits in Tasmania. Well, let me tell you that, under this government, bulk-billing rates are the highest they have ever been in this nation. GP bulk-billing is now at 85 per cent, compared to an average of 79 per cent under Labor. This means that now, across Australia, more people than ever are not paying anything to go to see their GP. In fact, there are 17 million more bulk-billed services than there were under Labor. We were asked what it was in Tasmania. In Tasmania alone there are now 150,000 more bulk-billed services under this government than there were under those opposite.

This year, we are investing more than $22 billion in Medicare, which is $1 billion more than last year. More than that, we are the only party that is also increasing the PBS. Under this government, over 1,000 new medicines have been approved for subsidisation for all Australians, including those in Tasmania, Senator Lambie—through you, Chair. That compares to the 333 new drugs placed on the PBS under the entire six years of the previous Labor government. We are providing more of the newer drugs not only for average Australians but also for those with serious and chronic health conditions. We have also announced revolutionary reforms on how we deliver Medicare in the community. Our Health Care Homes policy gives GPs and their teams the flexibility to coordinate, manage and support patients with chronic illness with the aim of keeping them healthier at home and with the doctor of their choice.

I challenge those opposite that they have not used any figures to challenge their assertion that we are spending less and doing less. The big difference is that we on this side know that, to spend it, we have to earn it. We are the only ones with the economic plan to actually deliver the expanded health services that we are delivering today. Those opposite should hang their heads in shame for propagating big fat lies about Medicare not only in the campaign but also in here.

Medicare is a government service that is here to stay. We on this side have never suggested that Medicare would go. In fact, the facts show that we have done everything we can to
strengthen it. During the campaign, in the eastern suburbs of Perth, rather than hearing the Labor Party’s positive policies for the election I had old ladies in nursing homes scared out of their wits from phone call after phone call from ‘Medicare’ and other people telling them that they were going to lose their Medicare and be kicked out of their aged-care facilities. If you are proud of your record of propagating these big fat lies and scaring the bejeebers out of the most vulnerable in this society, you should hang your heads in shame. After scaring the most vulnerable in our society with this, as Senator Smith said, you got your lowest primary vote ever. If that does not give you pause to come out with positive policies to inspire the electorate and not scare them, I do not know what will.

Senator Bilyk: What is the majority you have?

Senator REYNOLDS: You want priorities? Senator Bilyk, would you like me to go through some more of the statistics, the actual facts?

Senator Bilyk: You have a majority of one.

Senator REYNOLDS: On 1 October this year more than 2,000 medicine brands, treating common conditions, dropped in price for all Australians. That is 2,000 different medicine brands dropped in price for all Australians.

Senator Bilyk interjecting—

Senator REYNOLDS: You want examples? I have plenty of examples for you. What else have we got? We have listed new medicines for melanoma, cancer and cystic fibrosis, and a cure for hepatitis C.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Senator Bilyk, a point of order?

Senator Bilyk: Mr President, I have been misrepresented by the senator.

The PRESIDENT: That is not a point of order.

Senator Bilyk: I said ‘majority’, not ‘priority’.

The PRESIDENT: That is a debating point. There is no point of order. I remind senators to address their comments to the chair.

Senator REYNOLDS: This government has listed new medicines for melanoma, cancer and cystic fibrosis, and a cure for hepatitis C. Many of these medicines would have cost people tens of thousands of dollars and would only have been available to the most well off, but we have been able to list them so that they only cost around $38, or just over $6 for a concessional script. This government is spending more on health in real terms than ever before. No matter how much those opposite keep bringing out and peddling this big fat lie, it is simply not true. Given all of the statistics, facts and figures from me and those on my side, I challenge anybody on that side to actually tell us where our numbers are incorrect. We have not been spending more? We have not increased the PBS? We have not put more money into health, into hospitals, into GP services? If those opposite can come back and actually tell us where we are cutting Medicare or where we are cutting spending in real terms, in total terms, let them come back and challenge any of the figures we have provided. They have not so far in this debate because they simply cannot.

In relation to the Medicare payments system, which has been the subject of so much discussion and so much misinformation by those opposite, the government is looking at ways to take the health and aged-care payment system into the 21st century, making it better for
both patients and clinicians. That is not scrapping Medicare; that is bringing it into the 21st century so we do not waste money on old, outdated systems which do not serve patients or the doctors. It is bringing it into the 21st century and saving taxpayer money so more money is available to put into the forefront of health services.

In conclusion, the Prime Minister and all on this side have stated time after time that every single aspect of Medicare which is currently operated by government, including the process of Medicare rebates, will continue to be operated by government. Medicare is and always will be a core government service. I think those opposite should hang their heads in shame at resorting to scaring the Australian public that somehow this side of the chamber will be getting rid of Medicare. You should be ashamed of scaring the most vulnerable in our society, because they were scared, and there is no excuse for doing that. I think Australians everywhere deserve much better than that.

FIRST SPEECH

The PRESIDENT (17:09): Pursuant to order, we now move to first speeches. I remind senators to extend the normal courtesies that we do to first speeches to those giving those speeches.

Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE (South Australia) (17:09): It is with a huge amount of respect and gratitude that I rise tonight and say that this is my first speech. Many of my colleagues in this place knew me as Nick Xenophon's adviser before I joined them on the other side of that brass rail. I have been asked often why I chose to become a candidate for the Nick Xenophon Team, and I can now tell you it was a phone call.

The call itself was not unusual. I and the other staff at Nick's office had taken hundreds of them. The caller's husband was addicted to online sports betting. She had just discovered they had lost hundreds of thousands of dollars and in the coming weeks they would also lose their home. She was desperate and she did not know where else to go for help. I stayed on the phone with her while she cried. I would meet her and her husband in person soon after, and with Nick we worked to do what we could to help them try to rebuild their lives. But, when I hung up the phone that day, I could not stop thinking about that call, about the hundreds of other people in similar circumstances I had spoken to and met and tried to help in my five years in the electorate office, about how many times we at the office had asked each other when the government and the opposition would do something, anything to fix such an easily solved problem—and how it was my turn to step up and do what I could to make a difference not for a party but for the people who put their faith in it. I am not someone driven by politics, but through politics I have the opportunity to drive change.

I would like to point out that I do not come from any kind of political pedigree. In fact, when I was growing up there was an unwritten rule in my home that one should never discuss religion, politics or money in front of company and especially in front of children. But, as with all young minds, when information is not handed to you, you use what resources you can to piece things together. And so it was that my political education began with the ABC comedy series The Late Show. Because of The Late Show I knew in 1993 our Prime Minister was Paul Keating. Because of The Late Show I also knew that politicians described riding around in a car with the flags on the bonnet as the best part of the job. And because of The Late Show I was quite disturbed to find out that, when politicians fought, they said it was like
they were being flogged with wet newspaper. Needless to say, I was suspicious of politicians from a very early age!

And so, with my dubious understanding of Australian politics, my family packed up our little cottage in Burra, South Australia, to move halfway around the world. On 31 December 1994, my dad, mum, younger sister and I landed in Muscat, the capital city of the Sultanate of Oman. I had just celebrated my ninth birthday. At that time there was no internet. There was no Google. And so the only thing I thought I knew about the Middle East was that something called the Gulf War had happened there. I imagined we would be moving to a desert where no-one would be able to speak English, that all of our shopping would have to be done in sandy, windswept markets and that we would be living in huts with no air conditioning.

You can imagine my relief, then, when I found that Muscat was a beautiful and modern city. What is more, the local Omanis were so incredibly friendly and welcoming to the expats who were coming to their country in ever-increasing numbers.

I went to an international school where from reception to year 12 there were only 600 students. But these 600 students represented more than 40 nationalities. There was a running joke that, if you took a picture of any four of the students at my school, we looked like an advert for United Colors of Benetton!

From a very early age the benefits of multiculturalism were instilled in me and the other students. We learned that we were richer for our diversity. We learned that multiculturalism gives you pause to reflect on your values and how many of our values are shared by other cultures and religions. Above all, we learned that respect for one another was the key to living peacefully. And all of this was learned while living in a Muslim country where I had many Muslim friends.

That is why the hatred and the wilful ignorance of some Australians towards Islam and multiculturalism cuts me so deep. It does not and it should not matter what god you worship—or if you do not worship a god, for that matter. What matters is your respect for others, your desire to live a peaceful life and your willingness to contribute positively to society. To see one group of people branded as incapable of having those attributes is not just immature and ignorant; it is plain wrong.

I imagine what it would have been like for me and my family if the people in Oman shunned, rejected and vilified us not because of anything we had done but because of where we came from and our beliefs—how it would have felt to be in a minority in a country that we called home and yet we were constantly being asked to defend ourselves because of the actions of a few. I ask each of you in this place to think for a moment what that would be like. Imagine it was you.

When I came back to Australia in 2004, one of the things that struck me was our right to have a free and frank debate about our country's leadership. I had spent 10 years living in a country whose ruler, Sultan Qaboos bin Said, was revered by his people. The sultan overthrew his father in a palace coup in 1970. He embarked on a bold mission to modernise the country, which at the time had a single paved road and gates to the capital city which were literally closed each night. The sultan built roads, schools and hospitals. He opened the country up to international trade and his people loved him for it. However, things could have
been very different for Oman and its people if a less-progressive ruler taken over all those years ago, and Oman's people would have been powerless to do anything about it.

Democracy is easy to take for granted in a country like Australia. The concept that we as citizens determine who leads our nation is a given with us. While we do get a choice about who represents us, if our general population were reflected by who gets elected, one would be forgiven for thinking that Australia was made up of mostly middle-aged white men. And, as I say this, perhaps it is fitting to note that today is International Day of the Girl. A survey by Plan International Australia and Our Watch found that 69 per cent of girls they surveyed believed gender inequality was a problem in Australia. Only one in six girls said they were given the same opportunities to succeed as boys.

There are many talented young women who are more than capable of being elected into parliament. The drive, the passion and the talent is there. What is missing is the will to preselect women into winnable seats. Decision-making bodies with gender diversity make better decisions. It is that simple. And I say to any young women considering a career in politics: speak up and do something about it; do not be left silent and wondering 'what if'. If serving the people and bringing about change through parliament is your dream, then you should pursue it fearlessly.

When I realised I could be more than an observer of politics—that I could one day, maybe, be a politician myself—my life changed. It all began when I responded to a job ad for Nick's office, which was six years ago exactly this Saturday just past. I only recently told Nick this, but I can remember clearly the first time I heard of him. It was the winter of 2005. I was sitting in my second-ever law exam. I told myself I was only shaking because it was freezing cold in that hall at Flinders University and not because I was so nervous. One of the questions in the exam mentioned Nick Xenophon, the 'No Pokies MP'. 'Xenophon,' I thought. 'Hmm. Strange name. Good platform.' And so that politician with the strange name stayed in the back of my mind over the course of my degree. The more I learn about him, the more he did not seem to be the type of politician who enjoyed riding around in cars with flags on their bonnets or flogging other politicians with wet newspapers, for that matter, unless the wet newspaper was involved in some sort of stunt! In any case, it was the 'No Pokies MP' who made me rethink my early political education and put politicians in a positive light for me for the first time. Fortunately for me, I got the job he advertised and I was brought into his team to manage constituent issues. Later, I would help with Senate committee work, before eventually assisting with legislation and policy.

Finally, I took the step to apply to be a candidate for the Nick Xenophon Team. That was more than 18 months ago, and now I am honoured to be a senator for South Australia in a true centrist party. We are a team that is driven not by left or right but by what is right and wrong. We will be fearless watchdogs, especially on issues that major parties shy away from—issues like predatory gambling.

The slow progress of reform is a sad reflection of the lack of political will by major parties to tackle an industry that has caused immense harm to thousands of Australian families. In 2010, the Productivity Commission reported that some 40 per cent of gambling losses on poker machines came from problem gamblers. Across Australia, over $13 billion was lost on poker machines in 2014-15. That is over $5 billion lost by problem gamblers on poker machines which are designed to addict. The documentary Ka-Ching revealed the cunning
manipulation that goes into designing these machines, from the lights and the music to the near misses that make players think: 'I was so close. I'll get that jackpot next time.'

The billions of dollars lost on pokies could have been spent in local businesses. And, before the Australian Hotels Association and other defenders of pokies try to argue the job benefits of these machines, let's reflect on research conducted by the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies. This research showed that for every million dollars lost on pokies a mere three jobs are created, but a million dollars spent in retail creates six jobs, and a million dollars spent in a small hospitality business can create 18 jobs. Pokies are a job killer, not a job creator. The harm caused by pokies is clear. So too is the solution.

The time is now to implement the Productivity Commission's recommendations of $1-maximum bets and $120-maximum hourly losses. But pokies are only half the battle. Our laws have failed to keep pace with the emergence of online gambling and, in particular, online sports betting. The most recent Australian Gambling Statistics report shows that Australians lost $815 million through legal sports betting between 2014 and 2015. This figure does not include potentially hundreds of millions more lost on illegal online wagering and online casinos.

I have sat down and spoken with individuals who have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in online sports betting through legal sites in Australia. These are not wealthy individuals. They are everyday people who were able to lose nearly everything they had just by tapping their phone screen. Back in 2000, Tim Costello warned that with online gambling it is possible for a person to lose their home without even having to leave it. Sadly, this statement is not just as true today as it was 16 years ago but it is happening in ever-increasing numbers.

Why then have successive governments failed to act? If the major parties would take the time to meet with gambling addicts and their families instead of courting donors from the gambling industry, perhaps then there may be a change of heart, because I cannot understand how someone can look a person in the eye when that person has lost a house, a relationship, their children or, even worse, a loved one, all because of a gambling addiction and not be moved into action.

I am an eternal optimist and, together with Nick, Stirling and Rebekha in this parliament and John Darley in the South Australian parliament, we will never give up the fight for sensible and desperately needed gambling reform. Similarly, I will never give up the fight for our veterans and ex-service personnel, particularly those who suffered abuse—in many instances horrific physical and sexual abuse—while they served our nation. We must have a permanent Defence abuse response task force. A permanent task force will mean victims of abuse in Defence can receive acknowledgement of suffering, ongoing counselling, reparation payments and also a mechanism for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. It is unacceptable that abuse victims have been separated into two groups by our government: those who could submit claims to the task force and those who could not, all because arbitrary deadlines for submitting claims were imposed. There are many reasons why a victim might not have submitted a claim. Maybe they were not even aware the task force existed because it was so poorly advertised, especially in regional and remote areas. There is no cut-off date for the pain and the suffering that abuse victims continue to bear. I would like to thank Barry Heffernan for his tireless work advocating for abuse victims and acknowledge the forensic
and considered professionalism of Dr Gary Rumble, who led the DLA Piper review into Defence abuse.

Another person I would like to pay tribute to today is Sonya Ryan, whose daughter Carly Ryan was murdered by an online predator in 2007, when she was just 15 years old—the first murder of its type in Australia. The predator had groomed Carly, pretending he was an 18-year-old drummer. In reality, he was a 50-year-old paedophile. When police arrested this monster, they found him masquerading as the 18-year-old drummer online again, this time talking to a 14-year-old girl in Perth.

A lot of people are surprised to discover that it is not an offence for an adult to lie about their age online to a child and then attempt to meet that child. If 'Carly's law' were passed it would be an offence, and I will do all I can to make sure it becomes law. This place will be given the opportunity to debate Carly's law next month, and I urge all of you here to support the bill.

Another bill I will introduce into this place would require government boards to have a 40-40 gender split, with the remaining 20 per cent to be of either gender. Any boards who did not reach this target would be required to table a statement of reasons as to why. By doing so, these boards will be able to reflect on any barriers to greater participation by women at a senior level and then take steps to address those barriers. As I said earlier, gender diversity results in better decisions. It is that simple.

As a senator for South Australia, it is my duty to ensure that I make the best decisions possible for SA, which I believe are also in the national interest. We were, and still are, a proud manufacturing state. Millions of us have driven in cars that rolled out of the Chrysler, Mitsubishi and Holden factories in South Australia. Sadly, we are witnessing the end of car making in our country. The associated loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs is a crisis we did not need to have with Australia-wide shock waves. These job losses were not inevitable. Our manufacturing industry is being driven out of existence by reckless policies and an approach to government procurement that, with its focus on so-called value for money, fails to recognise the economic and social multiplier effects that come from local procurement. To borrow a quote from Oscar Wilde, it seems current, narrowly focused procurement policies know the price of everything and the value of nothing. My colleagues and I will fight to ensure that government does not take a sledgehammer to manufacturing and jobs across the country, and in particular in South Australia.

To close, I would like to acknowledge the people who have fought for and supported me. I would not be here today without the support of my incredible husband, Simon. Your love, patience and unwavering belief in me have given me the strength to achieve more than I ever thought possible. I made the best decision of my life when I married you nearly 10 years ago.

To my mum, Sharon: you never gave up on me, even when I was being a very difficult teenager who thought she could live life without you. Thank you for always being here for me and showing what it means to be a brave and resilient woman.

To my dad, Bart, who has travelled from Muscat, Oman, to be here today: it must not have been easy raising two teenage girls on your own in a foreign country with no family to support you. I appreciate everything you have done for me. Thank you for giving me two great gifts: never being scared to try something new and the ability to keep a sense of
humour—or at least try to—in even the hardest of situations. Thank you for having the trust in me to allow me to grow into an independent woman even when you probably thought I was trying to grow up too fast.

To my brothers and sisters, Brad, Hayley, Jen, Amani and Malaika: while we may not get to see each other as much or as often as we would like, you are never far from my thoughts. I am proud of each and every one of you and love you with all my heart.

To my dearest friends: you know who you are. Some of these friends are even here today. Your encouraging words and your humour have seen me through the good, the bad and the ugly. Thank you.

And to our wonderful teams in the NXT’s electorate offices, in particular my own electorate office: thank you. I have been in your shoes and I know the ups and downs that come with being a staffer. Please know that I appreciate everything you do to help not only me but the people of South Australia who we represent.

And thank you to the people of South Australia for putting your trust in the Nick Xenophon Team and electing three senators and one MP to this parliament. Thank you to our tireless volunteers who helped during the campaign, including handing out how-to-vote cards in the cold and the rain. We could not have done this without you.

Thank you to the Nick Xenophon Team. Nick, Stirling, Rebekha and John: we are a team in every sense of the word. I thoroughly enjoy working with you and I hope we will be joined by others after the next election.

And a special thank you to Nick. I promised you I would not cry and I hope I am not letting you down now! You have shown an incredible amount of trust in me, and for that I will be forever grateful. I have heard you use this Ralph Nader quote many times before and I think it is a fitting message on this occasion: 'The function of genuine leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers.'

When I think about the reason I stand here today, it is not the many hours of policy work, legislative negotiations or political machinations that come to mind. Instead, I see my high school friends in Oman, sharing their culture and beliefs without fear of judgement or reprisal and accepting my differences as I accepted theirs. I see the people who asked for help for themselves or others in the face of gambling addiction. I see the brave individuals who only wanted to serve their country and were rewarded with humiliation, abuse and pain. And I see the fearless colleagues and advocates who speak for those with no voice and fight for those with no courage left for battle. If we do not consider the impact of our actions on the people we are elected to represent, we risk losing our humanity. As I said earlier, I am not driven by politics. I am not. I am driven by people. And I will not risk losing my humanity by forgetting that.

FIRST SPEECH

The PRESIDENT (17:33): Order! Before I call Senator Burston, I remind honourable senators that this is his first speech; therefore, I ask that the usual courtesies be extended to him.

Senator BURSTON (New South Wales) (17:33): I acknowledge Australia’s historic nation, foraged by Christian explorers and pioneers from Britain and other European lands who created the federal Commonwealth under the Crown, and I acknowledge Australia’s first
peoples, the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, who have become valued members of our nation.

I was born and raised in Cessnock, in the fertile hinterland of the Hunter Valley, occupied since time immemorial by the Wonnarua people, first sighted by British explorers in 1797 and settled in the 1820s by British pioneers coming up from the new colony at Sydney.

My parents were battlers, who at that time lived with three sons in a converted garage measuring six metres by three metres with no electricity, lit by a kerosene lamp, with an outhouse for a toilet. Circumstances put us there but hard work allowed us to take the opportunities offered by Australia and we moved forward, as did other Australians.

My brothers and I attended Bellbird Primary School and Cessnock High School. At age 15, I began a five-year apprenticeship with BHP to become a boilermaker, then trained with Australia Post to became a draftsman. In my time, I have taught engineering drawing at TAFE and lectured in teacher education at Newcastle University. It has been my privilege to have designed some of the wineries that distinguish the Hunter region.

I say to those who have aspirations: whatever your background, you can reach your full potential with hard work. In the past, Australia made that possible with minimal social barriers, equal access to quality public schooling and the political culture inherited and adopted from our British founders. We all have a stake in holding onto that Australia.

My life has been a journey from poverty to politics. My family was poor, but free public schooling was open to all—perhaps the most essential of the public goods in a democracy.

That was in the 1950s, when identity politics was almost unknown except for the schools promoting national pride and an unspoken assumption that Australia is special, worth defending. There was no doubt about who we are as a nation or about the rightness of the nation's possession of the continent. Schools flew only one flag—Australia's. Even the ABC was then gently supportive of one national identity.

In 1987, I was elected to Cessnock City Council, serving a term as deputy mayor. In 1997, I joined Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party and have remained a member to this day. How better to fight for Australia's way of life? How better to preserve our freedoms national and civic?

How things have changed since the 1950s and 1960s. Back then we were poor but we knew implicitly that Australia belonged to us—though the 'us' was not at the forefront of our minds most of the time. We, the people, were casually united. Despite that Australian casualness, we were truly a nation state, with all the social benefits that flow from that rare condition.

Most states are too diverse to be gently united. Now, in Australia, ethnic and religious identities are at the forefront of politics, part of an aggressive multiculturalism. It seems that every group pride is promoted in the media and schools except ours, the nation's. The ABC long ago abandoned any semblance of patriotism, or even balance. Other taxpayer-funded media—SBS and NITV—serve immigrants and Indigenous Australians. The national flag is often ignored or dishonoured in schools, while multiculturalism and Indigenous issues are now part of the curriculum. The majority of students are not supported in their Anglo-Australian identity but are made to feel guilty for supposed historical injustices committed by their ancestors. The acknowledgment of country ceremony, recited in school assemblies across Australia, finds no place of honour for the British and other European explorers and
pioneers or the nation they created. That first nation founded the Commonwealth and served the country in two world wars. Our nation is still at the heart of Australia's economy, culture and identity but is routinely dishonoured in schools and the media. Soon that injustice could be thrust into our Constitution, if the referendum on constitutional recognition succeeds.

The political establishment has abandoned the nation in favour of any minority it can find. As a result, both major parties are in long-term decline. One point nine million voters deserted the major parties in the 2016 election. Of those, 32 per cent voted for Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party—or more particularly Pauline Hanson. They are disconnected with the lack of political choices and the worsening conditions evident in their neighbourhoods and reported in the evening news. The majority have rights too. Australians have a legitimate interest in retaining their nation's identity and the cohesion it brings.

Our political class—and that includes the educational and media establishments—is too often hostile to ordinary Australians, to the people whose ancestors forged this nation. Why that is so, I do not know. A case in point, one that shook my confidence in our democracy, occurred when establishment figures who were losing votes to Pauline Hanson moved to destroy her as a person. They established a fighting fund to pay for legal challenges. At the time I was working as a research officer in Parliament House in Sydney for a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council. Several times in 2001 I observed him provide lengthy interviews to a detective, who subsequently laid charges against Pauline, resulting in her imprisonment. In addition, the Queensland state government refused to repay $500,000 in electoral funding for the 1997 state elections, despite her conviction being quashed. This could have bankrupted her. I call for a Senate inquiry into the jailing of Pauline Hanson to identity the individuals responsible for the assault upon her. We need an independent and authoritative assessment of the propriety of the decision to withhold the electoral funding.

Another example of disconnect between rulers and ruled in Australia is the Defence bureaucracy's treatment of communities adversely affected by Defence Force contamination of their groundwater by toxic fire-fighting foam. Groundwater has been poisoned at bases in Williamtown in New South Wales and Oakey in Queensland, as well as another 16 sites around Australia. Residents are desperate. They cannot sell their properties as they are now worthless. They are exposed to potential severe medical complaints. And the Defence authorities? They do not listen. Reports show that the ADF knew of the problem as early as 2003 and failed to act. Its statements on the matter express more concern about bad press than about the health of local residents, who are unable to eat locally grown produce or use bore water. Why this indifference? One Nation will act to secure just compensation for those adversely affected.

A further example of elite contempt for ordinary Australians is public broadcasting. The cultural Marxist takeover of the ABC began in the late 1960s when Allan Ashbolt stacked the current affairs department. Ashbolt introduced the radical critique of mainstream Australia that had become fashionable in university departments of humanities and social science. Almost 50 years later, there is not one conservative program or anchor on the ABC—not one, in a billion-dollar enterprise. The ABC's oppositional stance to traditional Australia has grown to include the two other taxpayer-funded public broadcasters, the Special Broadcasting Service, SBS, whose explicitly ethnic mission is to cater to the identity and interests of the multicultural community, and most recently the National Indigenous Television network,

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**CHAMBER**
NITV, created to represent the identity and interests of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. For budgetary reasons, NITV is now within the SBS stable. All three broadcasters are biased against mainstream Australia. They distort Australian political culture and support aggressive political multiculturalism. The systemic bias of public broadcasting is one of the clearest manifestations of a hostile cultural establishment. This bias has been known for decades but the conservative side of mainstream politics has failed to correct the situation. The time for complaint and diagnosis is over. It is time for the nation to break the bias of public broadcasting before that bias breaks the nation.

How might this be done? The main proposals have been to defund and privatise the ABC. But the country needs public broadcasters. Despite or perhaps because of their biases, the ABC, SBS and NITV have constituents who benefit from their services. It would be sad to throw the babies out with the bathwater. Might not balance be achieved between channels? A fair balance might be struck by leaving the minority ethnic channels intact while transferring funding from the ABC to establish a new channel that might be called the Patriotic Broadcasting Corporation, whose explicit mission would be to represent the identity and interests of mainstream Australia. It would present news and current affairs from the perspective of the historic Australian nation. Stripped of its mainstream content, the remaining ABC structure would receive funding commensurate with the size of its inner city, Greens-voting constituency. Australia needs more diverse public broadcasting in keeping with the growing diversity of the population.

The saddest, most consequential failure of the establishment parties to serve the national interest involves education. In recent months the public learnt of the cultural Marxist assault on the sexual identity of schoolchildren by the so-called Safe Schools program. Equally poisonous indoctrination of students has been a growing problem since the cultural revolution of the 1960s. The patriotic curriculum of my childhood has been replaced by the full gamut of political correctness.

The black armband version of history is firmly in the curriculum, playing on the sensitivities of children and young adults unable to defend themselves. An understandable concern for Indigenous children has been allowed to crowd out the needs of others. Children are subjected to wrenching images of the stolen generation. At school assemblies the acknowledgment of country ritual tells them, again and again, that their land belongs to Aborigines, whose flag is often flown with equal or superior prominence to the national flag. Likewise, multicultural civics training does little to support Anglo-Australian identity. There is little or no balancing celebration of the remarkable achievement of the First Fleet or our pioneers or the rise of a self-consciously British nation that went on to unite the six colonies into a federal Commonwealth.

It is understandable that children from all backgrounds should have their identities, their ancestors, affirmed. But Australia's majority has the same need. And everyone has a stake in national identity and cohesion. If school assemblies are to acknowledge the first peoples and the role of recent immigrants, they should also acknowledge Australia's first nation and its origins in Britain and Europe.

The political class's coldness towards the nation is also evident in the connected issues of immigration and multiculturalism. One Nation's policy is zero net immigration, meaning that
our annual intake should be regulated to roughly match the number of Australians who choose to leave. We believe that our country needs to stabilise its population.

The mainstream parties approve of massive and permanent immigration. What is their logic? Assessing the costs and benefits of mass immigration is complex, as it involves economic and social factors. But Liberal and Labor sell it to the public using relatively simple propositions—firstly, that large-scale immigration boosts our economy qualitatively by providing needed expertise and entrepreneurial zeal and capital, which benefits most Australians; and, secondly, that it grows our economy quantitatively, building a larger domestic market and in time of war providing the population base from which to raise armies to defend against aggressive regional neighbours. This is the old ‘populate or perish’ adage.

Those arguments are not proclaimed during elections as the major parties do not contest core immigration policies. Permanent mass immigration is bipartisan policy because it is treated as sacred by the multicultural establishment. Both sides of mainstream politics are too entangled to see through multicultural dogma, or too intimidated to question it. In fact, both the qualitative and quantitative arguments are largely false. Recent data from the Productivity Commission shows that over the last 45 years immigration has added just seven per cent to GDP, an average of 0.15 per cent per annum. It is a gain, but only just.

The failure of the quantitative argument is largely due to the international scope of Australia's markets. The market for Australian produce and manufactures has for decades included Japan, Indonesia, China and other countries in our region, not to mention the US and places further afield. Likewise, we form part of their markets. Australia's economy is largely integrated into these regional and global markets.

Australia could double or triple its population overnight and our export market would not grow at all. Nor would our resources. The rise in population would be good for some areas of the national economy, such as the building trade, real estate and retail, but that would not improve most Australians' incomes. Profits from resource exports would be spread thinner.

What about the emotional argument for a 'Big Australia'—that bigger means safer? Well, Australia's population is now one-eleventh of Indonesia's, one fifty-fifth of India's, and one fifty-sixth that of China's. If we continue to grow our population at breakneck speed—among the highest rates of OECD countries—cramming ever more people into already congested cities, we might reach 48 million by 2061. Our population would still be mere fractions of those of potential aggressors—perhaps one-fifth of Indonesia's and one twenty-eighth of both India's and China's.

This is not some academic exercise. China is flexing its muscles, militarily, financially, and ethnically, as it translates economic power into regional influence. Falling under Chinese dominance would cost us our sovereignty but also our democracy. We would be another Hong Kong. Australia must understand the geopolitical realities of our region if we are to navigate them safely, avoiding shoals and occasional storms.

A population race with regional neighbours does not, it cannot, determine our national security. Our armed forces can be equipped to deal with moderate threats, including border security. To avoid these and larger conflicts we should rely, firstly, on diplomacy, including international law. Australia has built up a fine diplomatic corps. But should full-scale warfare eventuate, involving the region's major powers, we shall be forced to rely on strong allies,
primarily the United States. Having a few million extra in population will not increase our security. It could reduce it.

Now let us consider the costs of pump-priming our population through immigration. Australians can see with their own eyes the congestion on our roads, the urban creep, the pressure on our environment and the sky-high housing market that has priced homes beyond the hopes of young families. The opening of the new real estate market to foreigners does not help—an outrageous exposure of citizens to global demand. Australians can see the rise of high-density housing degrading the architectural identity and amenity of their neighbourhoods. They can see the failure of infrastructure of all kinds to keep up. It is no wonder, when basic infrastructure costs about $100,000 per extra person. They are less equipped to detect the impact on public debt.

Infrastructure costs are only part of the story. The Productivity Commission estimates that each parent visa holder costs taxpayers $335,000 to $410,000 in government services over their remaining lifetime. Imagine the infrastructure that could be built or maintained with the money spent on 18,500 refugees who are to be forced on the nation every year by our establishment parties. Experience tells us that many of these refugees will be unemployed for extended periods, as will their children, and impact negatively on our society. How can this be portrayed as a humanitarian gesture when it takes funding away from needy Australians and undermines social harmony? A genuine humanitarian program would take into account the welfare of the most vulnerable Australians and the welfare of the next generation, and focus instead on helping refugees overseas.

Australia’s refugee intake is so large that it surpasses many countries' immigration programs. Nevertheless, we do not select the intake for employability or cultural compatibility. The result is too often havoc in Australian society: carjackings, home invasions, flash riots and drive-by shootings. And, of course, when citizens object, there are endless complaints under section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, administered by the ethnocentric Human Rights Commission. The refugee intake should be subject to the same basic criteria applied to immigrants, otherwise we continue to wound our own society. The precedent for selecting refugees responsibly was the very large intake following the Second World War, which had positive results. But refugees were selected according to the same criteria applied to immigrants.

Australians also see the transformation of their neighbourhoods due to rising ethno-cultural diversity. The official view, from both sides of politics, is that rising diversity is a boon. We hear again and again that Australia is among the most successful multicultural societies in the world, whose boring white-bread culture has been enlivened by immigrants and refugees from around the world. Well, let me cite some figures from the Scanlon surveys of social cohesion, conducted by Monash University since 2006. The Scanlon Foundation is strongly supportive of multiculturalism and diverse immigration, but their data tells a different story. It shows steep declines in social cohesion affecting long-term Australians, those whose grandparents were born in Australia before the recent waves of immigration.

There has been a general decline in the overall Scanlon index of social cohesion since it began in 2007, corresponding to the rise in ethno-cultural diversity. The index fell 10 points between 2007 and 2014. In the same period, Australians' sense of belonging declined from 77 per cent to 66 per cent. Trust in the federal government has also declined. Although Australia
still rates well in overall cohesion compared to other Western societies, the decline in social cohesion is concerning, because we all rely on social cohesion and trust to keep us a united peaceful nation.

The situation is much worse in suburbs of heavy migrant settlement, where many more people are afraid to walk alone at night. Many are worried about becoming victims of crime and have lost confidence that ethnic and religious groups can get along. Many have lost faith in neighbours' willingness to help each other. Support for immigration and refugee intakes is down. Other findings show that Australians are fleeing the rising diversity, taking their children from schools whose identity has been transformed. Sydney and Melbourne are patch quilts of ethnic and religious groups as people choose to live among their own kind. These findings confirm research conducted overseas indicating that rising ethno-cultural diversity depresses social cohesion and leads to self-segregation. The Scanlon survey of 2012 acknowledged that its findings also showed that diversity depresses cohesion.

Muslim settlement is having a much greater impact. The 2014 Scanlon survey asked respondents to express personal attitudes towards two non-Christian religious groups, Muslims and Buddhists. Respondents were five times more likely to express negative views towards Muslims than towards Buddhists. Among supporters of multiculturalism, who are generally positive towards minorities, the difference was much stronger. The 2007 Scanlon survey found that the strongest opposition to immigration was directed at intakes from the Middle East and Muslim countries. Other research confirms these findings. A recent Essential poll found that 49 per cent of respondents opposed further Muslim immigration, with only 40 per cent in favour. Sixty per cent of those opposed were not primarily concerned about terrorism but about Islamic cultural and religious values they saw as incompatible with Australia.

There is more evidence that converges on these findings—organised crime, patterns of antisocial behaviour, especially among young men, welfare dependency, imprisonment rates almost three times the national average, the long-term threat of terrorism, and questionable loyalty. More Muslim-Australians have joined, or attempted to join, terrorist Islamist forces in the Middle East than have joined the Australian Armed Forces. All these lines of evidence indicate that Australia's bold experiment with mass Islamic immigration has failed. But the Prime Minister and the Immigration Minister tell us that Australia is a successful multicultural society. If this is success, what does failure look like?

There are standards of social impact assessment that help us discern what a successful society should look like. The Planning Institute of Australia explains that good social impacts improve a community's way of life, life chances, health, culture and capacity to sustain these.' The International Association of Impact Assessment lays down guidelines that identify loss of identity and cohesion as negative social impacts. These guidelines help judge the impact of diversity and Islam on Australian neighbourhoods. The guidelines state that the following changes can cause negative social impacts: firstly, changes to people's way of life—how they live, work, play and interact with one another; secondly, changes to their culture—their shared beliefs, customs, values and language or dialect; thirdly, changes to their community—its cohesion, stability, character, services and facilities; fourthly, changes to their level of hazard or risk—their physical safety; and, finally, changes to their fears and aspirations—their perceptions about their safety, their fears about the future of their community. Notice that the
impacts include objective changes as well as changes to psychological wellbeing. Government should protect people from living in fear.

How can both major parties tell us that Australia is a successful multicultural society? Based on international standards of social impact assessment, the survey data I summarised earlier indicates that indiscriminate immigration is destroying social cohesion suburb by suburb, town by town. We are being swamped. Even supporters of open-ended immigration are noticing the transformation. Senior journalist Greg Sheridan likens it to the 'benign cultural genocide' of Anglo Australia. Around the country, residents are fighting back as best they can, opposing the construction of mosques in neighbourhoods with few Muslims, pleading with councils and state governments to spare their communities. But their real enemy is the federal government, Liberal and Labor, which keeps the immigration door wide open. This crisis is not caused by white racism. It is not caused by Christian intolerance. It is caused by Liberal and Labor governments colonising Australia, aided and abetted by political correctness.

The ugly reality of Australia's oppressive multiculturalism is beginning to shock even the Left. An example is the Hon. Peter Baldwin, one time member of this parliament, who commented recently: The de facto alliance that has developed between the Left and militant Islam, the most reactionary force in the world today, is the strangest and most disconcerting political development in my lifetime. He adds that political correctness is a system of thought control that serves this alliance. He is correct. But as the political scientist David Brown explains, this was true from the earliest days of multiculturalism, when the Left began using its cultural dominance to license minority tribalism, while denying that licence to the majority. Minorities are allowed to openly pursue group interests, for example in demanding generous immigration, while the majority is discouraged from talking about its interests, let alone openly pursuing them.

Combining the two insights, it seems that multiculturalism is an ethnic hierarchy, based on a coalition between minority activists and the Left, despite the latter presenting itself as anti-racist. This unholy alliance is united by shared opposition to traditional Australia, the core identity of the Australian nation. An example is the defeat of the Abbott government's policy of reforming Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, a form of political censorship.

Of course progressives do not directly support the reactionary components of Islam. But they abet Islam's demographic advance by opposing restrictive immigration and using political correctness to suppress critics. This oppressive system needs to be dismantled or reformed to make multiculturalism democratic, by ensuring that Anglo-Australians are allowed to join in as respected participants.

One Nation is the only party promising to democratise multiculturalism and restore the traditional policies that forged this nation. This was the original Australian settlement incubated during the 19th century and born in the first decade of Federation under the stewardship of Alfred Deakin. Those policies included: restrictive immigration and industry protection.

Immigration restriction is a principle wider than the White Australia Policy. The motivation for the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 was threefold: to maintain high wages, preserve social cohesion and protect national identity. British and European immigration was
thought to meet all criteria, not without reason. Immigrants from Anglophone countries continue to assimilate most quickly.

One Nation does not advocate racially selective immigration but does seek to minimise cultural incompatibility, evident in the case of Islamic immigration. A predictable objection from Liberals and Labor is that they are opposed to selecting immigrants on the basis of identity. What immoral nonsense.

The PRESIDENT: Senator Burston, I am reluctant to interrupt you but we have been fairly generous with you. You have extended the normal 20 minutes. So I will just give you an indication that maybe you need to wind up shortly. Thank you, Senator.

Senator BURSTON: It is the government's duty to discriminate at the borders to ensure that newcomers are compatible. External discrimination reduces the need for citizens to discriminate internally—for example, in choosing where to live and which schools to send their children to. That preserves domestic peace.

That is why One Nation promises to discriminate by cultural and religious identity in selecting migrants and refugees, because any country that does not restrict immigration, to preserve its identity and thus social cohesion, will lose it sooner or later, sooner if it is a country as attractive as Australia.

Unfortunately and finally I must pay tribute to my leader, Pauline Hanson. Her courage and tenacity are legend. The political establishment have sought to destroy her and bring her down. Many have tried, but all have failed because of her resilience and continued belief in Australia and our way of life. I thank my colleagues and friends in the gallery for their love and support, particularly my beautiful wife, Rosalyn.

I look forward to working with all of you in the Senate for the benefit of New South Wales and Australia.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Consideration**

The government documents tabled today and general business orders of the day Nos 1 to 4 relating to government documents were called on but no motion was moved.

The following documents tabled earlier today were considered:


Attorney-General's Department—Report for 2015-16. Motion to take note of document moved by Senator McKim. On the motion of Senator Macdonald the debate was adjourned till Thursday at general business.

**Attorney-General's Department**

**Consideration**

Senator McKIM (Tasmania) (18:06): I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

Obviously the seeking of legal advice has been quite topical this week, and it will continue to be topical up until and beyond Friday this week. So it was quite striking when, on a very preliminary examination of the *Annual report 2015-16* of the Attorney-General's Department,
we found that the total of legal services expenditure in 2014-15 was $33 million. It has come down in 2015-16 to $26 million. They are totals. They are broken down into subtotals: of total external legal services expenditure—in 2014-15 that was just under $31 million, and in '15-16 was $24.3 million—and of total internal legal services expenditure, which was $2.15 million approximately in 2014-15 and just over $2.5 million in 2015-16. These figures, at least on my preliminary examination, have not been broken down by the Attorney-General's Department. But, boy, will it be a fertile avenue of questioning once we get into the estimates process because of course the total for internal legal services expenditure has increased reasonably significantly, from $2.1 million to $2.6 million, from 2014-15 to 2015-16.

What we know, thanks to the submission from the Solicitor-General to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, is actually that this Attorney-General is starting, more and more—or at least in certain circumstances—to work around the Solicitor-General, presumably because he thinks he is going to get advice from the Solicitor-General that he does not like, and instead is going to the Australian Government Solicitor.

The Australian Government Solicitor is housed within the Attorney-General's Department. Let us be clear: it is not the Australian Government Solicitor's job to give constitutional advice to the government. That is the job of the Solicitor-General, and it is one of the jobs of the Solicitor-General that this parliament had in mind when it created the office of the Solicitor-General.

So the question for the Attorney is this. That is a relatively significant increase—about 20 per cent in broad terms—in the amount of money expended on internal legal services. They are, presumably, services internal to the department. Is that increase a numerical reflection of his increasing habit of working around the Solicitor-General and actually going to the Australian Government Solicitor for legal advice that properly he should be getting from the Solicitor-General?

There is no problem with the Attorney-General deciding that the advice he gets from the Solicitor-General is not the advice he wants to present to government. There is no problem there at all. And there are also circumstances that we could all envisage where it would not be appropriate for the Attorney to seek advice from the Solicitor-General—for example, if he thought, reasonably, that the Solicitor-General was conflicted on a matter or there was a significant perception of a conflict of interest in relation to the Solicitor-General.

Senator Ian Macdonald: Or because he was wrong.

Senator McKIM: But not because, Senator Macdonald, he thinks he might not like the advice that he is going to get from the Solicitor-General. But I would bet my bottom dollar that is why this Attorney is shopping around for legal advice, not only to the AGS but out to the private bar as well: because he thinks he is not going to like the advice he gets from the Solicitor-General. That is not good enough, from the first law officer of this country. It is not good enough by any stretch. And we will be prosecuting this matter at length next week in Senate estimates, to get to the bottom of whether this numerical increase—this increase in expenditure on total internal legal services in the Attorney-General's Department—is actually a reflection of a pattern of behaviour by this Attorney-General, who not only has, arguably, misled this Senate, but is presiding over a disturbing pattern of working around the Solicitor-General and shopping out requests for legal advice to try to find the advice that will be politically palatable to the government. (Time expired)
Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (18:11): I would like to respond at length to some of that misinformation, but there are more important things coming before the chamber, so I will simply seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted.

COMMITTEES

Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

Additional Information


Economics Legislation Committee

Economics References Committee

Report

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (18:12): At the request of the chairs of the respective committees, I present reports of the Economics Legislation Committee and Economics References Committee on matters referred to the committees during the previous parliament, and I move:

That the reports be adopted.

Question agreed to.

Senators' Interests Committee

Report

Senator URQUHART (Tasmania—Opposition Whip in the Senate) (18:13): At the request of Senator Bilyk, I present the register of senators' interests incorporating statements of registrable interests and notifications of alterations lodged between 30 August and 7 October 2016.

Community Affairs Legislation Committee

Report

Senator WILLIAMS (New South Wales—Nationals Whip in the Senate) (18:13): At the request of the Chair of the Community Affairs Legislation Committee, Senator Duniam, I present the report of the committee on the provisions of the National Cancer Screening Register Bill 2016 and the National Cancer Screening Register (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2016, together with the Hansard record of proceedings and documents presented to the committee.

Ordered that the report be printed.

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

Government Response to Report

Senator RUSTON (South Australia—Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (18:14): I present the government's response to the report of the Joint Committee

CHAMBER
of Public Accounts and Audit on its inquiry into the development of the Commonwealth performance framework. I seek leave to have the document incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The documents read as follows—

Government response to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit Report 453:
Development of the Commonwealth Performance Framework

SEPTEMBER 2016

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that relevant Resource Management Guidance issued by the Department of Finance demonstrates, via better practice examples, how a 'clear read' of performance information might be achieved—throughout an entity's annual performance reporting cycle and for joined-up programs.

The Government agrees

The Finance Secretary's direction, issued under subsection 36(3) of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act), sets out the mandatory minimum requirements for the provision of performance information in Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS). The requirements provide for a clear read throughout an entity's annual performance reporting cycle and for joined-up programs. In particular, the direction requires entities to:

Map outcomes, programs and performance criteria to the entity's purpose as expressed in its corporate plan—this provides for a clear read from documents and papers relating to the Budget and an entity's performance cycle documents.

For new, or materially changed existing programs, outline all performance criteria, targets and expected dates of achievement—this provides a clear read in respect to new measures from Budget documents to the PBS, and through the mapping described above, to an entity's performance cycle documents.

Report links with the programs and outcomes of other entities—this provides a clear read for joined-up programs across entities.

2016-17 PBS guidance reflects the requirements of the Finance Secretary's Direction. In addition, Resource Management Guidance related to the enhanced Commonwealth performance framework is being updated where relevant.

In respect to better practice examples, these will emerge over the next two to three reporting cycles with improved performance information included in PBS, corporate plans and annual performance statements. As better practice examples emerge, they will be provided to all entities through Finance communication channels including the Community of Practice networks and activities, Lessons
Learned papers and where appropriate, in written guidance itself.

**Recommendation 2**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Finance consults with the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) and other stakeholders to establish clear criteria that performance information should satisfy within the Commonwealth Performance Framework and Portfolio Budget Statements, and that these criteria are included in relevant Resource Management Guidelines.

*The Government agrees*

Finance, in consultation with the ANAO, is developing clear criteria that performance information should satisfy within PBSs, corporate plans, and annual performance statements.

The draft criteria reflect the principles of being "Relevant, Reliable and Complete", as identified by the Committee in its Report 453. They are built on principles developed by the Productivity Commission for use with inter-jurisdictional performance assessments for the Report on Government Services.

Finance is currently finalising the development of the criteria in consultation with stakeholders. The criteria will be included in relevant Resource Management Guidelines.

**Recommendation 3**

The Committee recommends that the Department of Finance commit to an ongoing monitoring, reporting and evaluation initiative for the Commonwealth Performance Framework, performance information in Portfolio Budget Statements and the broader Public Management Reform Agenda. Summary results from this initiative should be publicly reported and submitted to the Committee.

Further, the Committee requests that the Department of Finance consider how it might implement this initiative — including providing details on what may be monitored and included or excluded from summary reports — and inform the Committee of its preferred approach in time for its next meeting with the Committee in February 2016.

*The Government agrees*

Finance will continue to monitor the implementation of the enhanced Commonwealth performance framework. Finance will also continue supporting entities to help them improve performance reporting. These support activities include providing information and networking opportunities through the Community of Practice, producing Lessons Learned papers and refining and enhancing guidance.

It is noted that the ANAO is undertaking an audit of the implementation of the enhanced Commonwealth performance framework, including an assessment of the corporate planning process of a number of entities. The audit findings will be presented to Parliament in the near future. It is understood that the ANAO intends to undertake further audits of the implementation of the framework, including an audit of the first round of Annual Performance Statements.

It is a requirement of section 112 of the PGPA Act that the Finance Minister must, in consultation with the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, cause an independent review of the operation of the PGPA Act and the rules. This review must be conducted as soon as practicable after the end of 3 years after this section commences (1 July 2017). It is expected that this review, of which the report is to be tabled in each House of Parliament, would comment on the ongoing monitoring, reporting and
Recommendation 4
That the Department of Finance Direction issuing requirements for performance information in Portfolio Budget Statements (PBSs) include a minimum requirement or explicit statement that a performance criterion within PBSs must state the target to be achieved (the expected achievement) for the relevant appropriation wherever possible and the date by which the target is intended to be achieved.

The Finance Secretary's direction includes the requirement that an entity must state targets to be achieved and expected dates of achievement in their PBS. The 2016-17 PBS guidance reflects the requirements of the Finance Secretary's Direction.

Recommendation 5
That the Department of Finance Direction issuing requirements for performance information in Portfolio Budget Statements include a minimum requirement that the most recent Annual Performance Statement for an entity must be included in the entity's Portfolio Budget Statement, and that related guidance continue to request entities to include more up to date performance information in the PBS wherever practicable.

The Finance Secretary's direction includes the requirement that an entity's most recent Annual Performance Statement (APS) be included in the entity's PBS.

As the first set of APSs are to be included in 2015-16 Annual Reports, which are to be published during October 2016, this requirement does not apply to the 2016-17 PBS. Entities 2015-16 APS will be included in their 2017-18 PBS.

Early consultations have indicated that the inclusion of the APS in the PBS has the potential to increase the size of PBSs significantly, affecting accessibility and readability. This is particularly the case for large portfolios that have a number of portfolio entities, or a large number of programs.

Finance may discuss this requirement with the Committee following the production of the 2015-16 Annual Performance Statements.

Recommendation 6
That the Department of Finance consider amending the Direction issuing requirements for performance information in Portfolio Budget Statements to include a minimum requirement or explicit statement that entities must update their corporate plans as soon as practicable following relevant appropriations being approved by Parliament.

Further, the Committee requests that the Department of Finance consider and report on ways in which draft updates to entity corporate plans — conditional on budget appropriation — might be provided for Senate Estimates scrutiny following the tabling of budget proposals.

It is agreed that, where relevant, an entity's corporate plan should be updated as soon as practicable following relevant appropriations being approved by Parliament.

The Finance Secretary's direction requires entities to report all performance criteria, targets and expected dates of achievement in their PBS where there are new programs, or material changes to existing programs as a result of budget measures. This will allow for Senate Estimates scrutiny of the performance information of all new or materially changed programs following the tabling of budget proposals.

As a result of this requirement, there may be no need for draft updates to corporate plans to be provided.
by leave—I am very proud as the Minister for Resources and Northern Australia to present this first report on our progress implementing the white paper on developing northern Australia: Our North, Our Future.

Our great nation is a country of contrasts and diversity, and this government is determined to ensure we reach the full potential inherent in all parts of Australia. Our northern development agenda is a nation-building agenda. Northern Australia is already an economic powerhouse for Australia. Our government believes that the North's proximity to world economic growth has created an unprecedented opportunity to invest in the North, and by doing so make returns for all Australians. That is why we have released the first ever white paper to develop northern Australia.

While I have the great honour of delivering this first update, I only have that honour thanks to the drive and determination of others. I especially want to credit Senator Ian Macdonald, who is here in the chamber at the moment, for his tireless and successful efforts to put northern development on the nation's agenda. Also to Mr Warren Entsch and the members of his parliamentary committee whose report, Pivot North, helped guide the policies in our white paper.

Today I want to talk mainly about what we are doing because we have made significant achievements over the past year and the people of the North want action not just talk. Twenty-one of our policy initiatives are complete and much progress has been made on others. We are taking action and we are on track.

I am pleased to report we are building roads and major economic infrastructure in the North. Our plan helps the North unlock its inherent advantages in land, water and people by building infrastructure and supporting business development. On launching the white paper last year we announced more than $6 billion worth of investment. Over the past year we have begun allocating that to specific projects that have begun. We have announced funding for projects worth more than $350 million as part of the Northern Australia Roads Program. This includes investments to better connect Kununurra to its closest port at Wyndham, which will help support the development of the Ord irrigation scheme and also help to facilitate more than $1 billion worth of proposed investments in aquaculture in the Northern Territory nearby. Other road projects include upgrading the Barkly, Flinders and Capricorn highways in Queensland—key freight routes linking important inland resources and agriculture areas with coastal ports; sealing the Hann Highway in Queensland to create a more reliable inland route from Cairns to Melbourne; realignment at Coongan Gorge on the Marble Bar Road in Western Australia; and flood immunity improvements at the Adelaide River Floodplain on the Arnhem Highway in the Northern Territory. We have announced that we will continue the sealing of the Outback Way, which runs from Winton in Queensland to Laverton in Western Australia, to help establish another east-west link across our nation. We do need to begin thinking more 'east-west', not just 'north-south' when we develop our country.
We have been working hard to identify investment priorities to improve the northern beef industry's productivity and resilience through the $100 million Northern Australia Beef Roads Program, with three successful round table meetings of key representatives from the cattle and transport industries in Rockhampton, Kununurra and Darwin. Sixty per cent of Australia's rainfall falls on the 40 per cent of our land mass that represents northern Australia. Yet only around two per cent of that water is used at the moment. We have a great opportunity to expand food production in Australia and that opportunity will be concentrated in the North, given that many of the more fertile areas in southern Australia have already been developed. That is why we have committed $174 million already to specific water projects in the North. This includes $130 million to co-fund the Rookwood Weir on the Fitzroy River, a project that could kick-start an agricultural boom in Central Queensland in a water catchment that is the second largest in Australia, behind only the Murray-Darling. The CSIRO is leading work on foundational land and water resources assessments in the Mitchell River catchment in Queensland, in the Fitzroy River catchment in Western Australia, and in the Darwin region in the Northern Territory. This follows assessments completed on the North Queensland rivers Flinders and Gilbert in 2014.

This government's direct investments in infrastructure in the North will be complemented through the $5 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility. I recently launched that facility in Cairns a couple of months ago. The board held its second meeting in Western Australia just last week. The NAIF is one of the white paper's long term initiatives and it is now open for business. The NAIF will offer up to $5 billion in concessional finance to encourage and complement private sector investment across northern Australia. The independent NAIF board is responsible for implementing the mandate that we have given them. The board is chaired by Ms Sharon Warburton, who is joined by six other directors with extensive experience across a range of sectors, including infrastructure, government, finance, construction and law. So far, the NAIF has received numerous applications, and of these, one project is already undertaking due diligence and another 13 are working towards a formal investment proposal. These projects already represent a total investment of over $10 billion. Earlier today I announced the appointment of Ms Laurie Walker as CEO of the NAIF. Ms Walker is highly experienced. She understands the challenges facing infrastructure investment in this country. She will relocate and live in the Cairns region for this role. She will be based at the NAIF headquarters in Cairns and we are bringing a whole new industry to North Queensland by doing so.

Along with the NAIF we are working hard to attract interest in the North from major investors. Last year we held the first Northern Australian Economic Forum in Darwin. The forum opened a window on the scope and scale of opportunities for investment, particularly in agribusiness and food, resources and energy, infrastructure, tropical medicine and education. Since the forum, several international investors have made return on-site visits.

Northern Australia's unique position also gives it advantages when it comes to education and research. We are investing $75 million in a Cooperative Research Centre to conduct research and development with a focus on agriculture, food and tropical medicine. The government will provide $2 million over the next two years for the Tropical Disease Research Regional Collaboration Initiative. Just last Friday, we announced that Darwin's Menzies
School of Health Research has been selected to advance research into the prevention, detection and treatment of multi-drug resistant malaria and TB.

The north will only truly achieve its true potential with the participation of all its people, including Indigenous Australians. Northern Australia is home to 30 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population. So any plan to develop the North must involve our first Australians. The government is supporting a number of land tenure pilots that broaden economic activity on land and demonstrate the benefits of reform to investors, Indigenous peoples and other stakeholders. Five pilot projects across the three northern jurisdictions have already been funded. We have also invested $12.4 million in an Indigenous ranger program for the North.

Tourism is a strong industry for northern Australia and it is experiencing a resurgence thanks to a lower dollar and more flights to Asia. We have established a $13.6 million Northern Australia Tourism Initiative to help small and medium businesses in the tourism sector take their next steps in their business development.

With the release of the white paper, the government made a real commitment towards developing northern Australia, and since that time we have developed further our policies for the north. Our first ever City Deal will be in Townsville, the biggest city in northern Australia. We have announced $100 million for more research into exploration for minerals and resources in northern Australia. This is of special importance given that the economy of northern Australia is more than half made up by our resources sector.

These investments we are making are building on an already successful, thriving and productive northern Australia. Too often people assume that northern development has failed in the past. That is bunkum. Cairns, Darwin, Townsville, Kununurra, Broome, Mackay, Rockhampton and the regions in between are all testament to the development we have already made in the north. As a nation, we should be proud of this progress, because we benefit from what we have already achieved there. Around five per cent of our population live in the north, but it generates nearly 12 per cent of our economic output. Our plan builds on this success and re-invests in a part of our nation that is already punching above its economic weight.

More than in the past, northern Australia now has the proximity to economic growth that creates opportunity for even bigger things for our north. By 2030, more than two-thirds of the world's middle class will be in Asia. This growth in our region promises to deliver dividends for all Australians. More than half of our exports leave from ports in northern Australia. We all have a stake in seeing the successful development of the North.

Our northern policy is an unashamedly regional development policy. Through developing the regions of our north, we can take pressure off the development of our major southern cities, while giving young Australians new opportunities for making a living and raising a family in northern Australia. The success of our policy will not be delivered by the government here in Canberra alone but by the people who live and work in northern Australia. Our policies aim to attract investment, invest in infrastructure and unlock the potential of the north's abundant land and water resources. It will be the dynamic people of northern Australia that create jobs, found businesses, start families and nurture their communities. As a government we can only create the foundation. It will be the more than one million people of northern Australia who build the house.
That is our vision for northern Australia—that, through our focus and our policies, we provide the tools to our north to make it a magnet for the entire country. Our goal is that, in the future, people will be attracted to stay in northern Australia and to move to northern Australia because of the opportunity that it manifestly presents. If we are successful at that, it will benefit all Australians.

We have made a good start, but there is much more to do. I thank the people of northern Australia for their continuing support and involvement in this nation-building endeavour. The white paper is the catalyst to help build the foundations to make the most of that hardworking, determined and optimistic outlook, which will ultimately enhance the north. All Australians will be more prosperous as a result.

I table the ministerial statement and seek leave to incorporate it in Hansard.

Leave granted.

The statement read as follows—

I’m very proud as the Minister for Resources and Northern Australia to give this first report on our progress implementing the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia: Our North, Our Future.

Our great nation is a country of contrasts and diversity, and this Government is determined to ensure we reach the full potential inherent in all parts of Australia. Our northern development agenda is a nation building project.

Northern Australia is already an economic powerhouse for Australia. Our Government believes that the north’s proximity to world economic growth has created an unprecedented opportunity to invest in the north, and by doing so make returns for all Australians. That is why we have released the first ever White Paper to develop Northern Australia.

While I have the great honour of delivering this first update, I only have that honour thanks to the drive and determination of others. I especially want to credit Senator Ian Macdonald for his tireless and successful efforts to put northern development on the nation’s agenda. Also to Warren Entsch and the members of his Parliamentary Committee whose report, Pivot North helped guide the policies in our White Paper.

Today I want to talk mainly about what we are doing because we have made significant achievements and the people of the north want action not just talk. Twenty-one of our policy initiatives are complete and much progress has been made on many others. We are taking action and we are on track.

I am pleased to report we are building roads and major economic infrastructure in the north. Our plan helps the north unlock its inherent advantages in land, water and people by building infrastructure and supporting business development.

On launching the White Paper last year we announced more than $6 billion worth of investment. Over the past year we have begun allocating that to specific projects that have begun.

We have announced funding for specific projects worth more than $350 million as part of the Northern Australia Roads Programme. This includes road investments to better connect Kununurra to its closest port at Wyndham, supporting the Ord irrigation scheme and helping to facilitate more than $1 billion worth of investments in aquaculture in the Northern Territory.

Other road projects include upgrading the Barkly, Flinders and Capricorn Highways in Queensland—key freight routes linking important inland resources and agriculture areas with coastal ports; sealing the Hann Highway in Queensland to create a more reliable inland route from Cairns to Melbourne; realignment at Coongan Gorge on the Marble Bar Road in Western Australia; and flood immunity improvements at the Adelaide River Floodplain on the Arnhem Highway in the Northern Territory.
We have announced that we will continue the sealing of the Outback Way which runs from Winton in Queensland to Laverton in Western Australia, establishing an east-west link across our nation. This decision is emblematic of our need to think more "east-west" while developing the north, not just "north-south".

We've been working hard to identify investment priorities to improve the northern beef industry’s productivity and resilience through the $100 million Northern Australia Beef Roads Programme, with three successful round table meetings of key representatives from the cattle and transport industries in Rockhampton, Kununurra and Darwin.

The CSIRO's innovative Transport Network Strategic Investment Tool, TraNSIT, has modelled more than 60 proposals submitted by stakeholders. I am looking forward to the announcement of successful projects very shortly.

Sixty per cent of Australia's rainfall falls on the 40 per cent of our land mass that represents northern Australia. Yet only around 2 per cent of that water is used at the moment. We have a great opportunity to expand food production in Australia and that opportunity will be concentrated in the north, given that many of the more fertile areas in southern Australia have already been developed.

That is why we have committed $174 million to invest in specific water projects in the north. This includes our 2016 election commitment of $130 million to co-fund the building of the Rookwood Weir on the Fitzroy River, a project that could kick-start an agricultural boom in Central Queensland in a water catchment that is the second largest in Australia - behind only the Murray-Darling.

We have committed other funding towards the planning that is needed to build more water investments. This includes the Lakelands Irrigation project, the Nullinga Dam near Cairns, the Hells Gate Dam and Burdekin Falls Dam wall raising near Townsville and Urannah Dam. It also covers funding to explore water development options in the Northern Territory and expansion of the Ord scheme through the raising of the Lake Argyle spillway and development of irrigated agriculture on the Keep River plain.

The CSIRO is leading work on foundational land and water resources assessments in the Mitchell River catchment in Queensland, in the Fitzroy River catchment in Western Australia, and in the Darwin region using $15 million from the Australian Government. This follows assessments completed on North Queensland's Flinders and Gilbert Rivers in 2014.

This Government's direct investments in infrastructure in the north will be complemented through the $5 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility. I recently had the pleasure of formally launching the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, or NAIF, in Cairns, coinciding with the first meeting of the NAIF Board. The Board held its second meeting in Western Australia just last week.

The NAIF is one of the White Paper's long term initiatives and it's now open for business.

The NAIF will offer up to $5 billion in concessional finance to encourage and complement private sector investment in economic infrastructure that benefits northern Australia. Investment will be spread across the three jurisdictions in northern Australia.

The independent NAIF Board is responsible for determining eligibility of projects under the NAIF, guided by an Investment Mandate.

The board is chaired by Ms Sharon Warburton, who is joined by six other directors with extensive experience and expertise across a range of sectors, including infrastructure, government, finance, construction and law, and who are passionate about the development of northern Australia.

So far, the NAIF has received numerous enquiries about project funding, and of these, one project is undertaking due diligence and another 13 working towards a formal investment proposal. These projects represent a total investment of over $10 billion.
Not all will receive assistance, so I encourage others to bring forward their ideas for vital Northern Australia infrastructure projects.

It was also my pleasure earlier today to announce the appointment of Ms Laurie Walker as CEO of the NAIF. Ms Walker is highly experienced, with key leadership experience in banking and finance organisations including ANZ and the Commonwealth Bank.

Ms Walker understands the challenges facing infrastructure investment and is committed to supporting economic growth across northern Australia. She will relocate and live in the Cairns region for this role. She will be based at the NAIF headquarters in Cairns but will work with stakeholders across the north.

Along with the NAIF we are working to attract interest in the north from major investors. Last year we held the first Northern Australian Economic Forum in Darwin. The forum opened a window on the scope and scale of opportunities for investment, particularly in agribusiness and food, resources and energy, infrastructure, tropical medicine and education – all areas where Australia can excel.

Since the forum, several international investors have made return on-site visits.

We have established a Major Projects Approval Agency in Darwin to create a 'single point of entry' for investors dealing with regulatory requirements. We have also shifted the Office of Northern Australia from Canberra to Darwin.

The Australian Government is committed to advancing research and science in Australia and bolstering our health security.

Northern Australia's unique position also gives it natural advantages when it comes to education and research. We are investing $75 million in a Cooperative Research Centre to conduct research and development with a focus on agriculture, food and tropical medicine. The CRC will be based in Townsville and further details about its governance will be released shortly.

The Government will provide $2 million over two years for the Tropical Disease Research Regional Collaboration Initiative. Just last Friday, we announced that Darwin's Menzies School of Health Research has been selected to advance research into the prevention, detection and treatment of multi-drug resistant malaria and TB. The Menzies School will work with the Burnet Institute as well as partners in Indonesia, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea.

The north will only truly achieve its potential with the participation of all its people, including Indigenous Australians. Northern Australia is home to 30 per cent of Australia's Indigenous population. So any plan to develop the north must also create opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

The Government is supporting a small number of land tenure pilots that broaden economic activity on land and demonstrate the benefits of reform to investors, Indigenous peoples and other stakeholders. Five pilot projects across the three northern jurisdictions have already been funded.

We have also invested $12.4 million in an Indigenous Ranger program for the north.

Tourism is a strong industry for northern Australia and it is experiencing a resurgence thanks to a lower dollar and more flights to Asia. We have established a new $13.6 million Northern Australia Tourism Initiative under the Entrepreneurs' Programme to help small and medium businesses in the tourism sector take the next step in their business plans.

Northern Australia is also important to the ongoing development of our defence partnerships. Military exchanges and postings between Singapore and Australia are important to both nations and to the local economies of the north.

In May 2016 the Government announced Australia and Singapore will jointly develop military training areas and facilities in Australia, enhancing Singapore's training opportunities.

The total outlay from Singapore is up to $2.25 billion, with approximately $1 billion to be invested at each Shoalwater Bay Training Area and the Townsville Field Training Area and environs.
Changes to Australia's Work and Holiday visas are also helping the tourism, hospitality and agriculture industries in northern Australia achieve greater access to work and holiday visa holders, thus reducing labour shortages and the cost of seasonal labour in northern Australia.

With the release of the White Paper the Government made a real commitment towards developing northern Australia; and since that time we have developed further our policies for the north.

The Government's first ever City Deal under its Smart Cities Plan has been announced with Townsville, the largest city in northern Australia.

We have also announced $100 million to increase exploration for minerals and resources in northern Australia. Geoscience Australia estimates that around 80 per cent of Australia remains under-explored for minerals and most of this in northern Australia.

This is of special importance for the north given that more than 50 per cent of its economic output is thanks to the resources sector. We need a strong mining sector for a strong northern Australia.

These investments we are making are building on an already successful, thriving and productive northern Australia. Too often people assume that northern development has failed in the past. That is bunkum. Cairns, Darwin, Townsville, Kununurra, Broome, Mackay, Rockhampton and the regions in between are all testament to what we have already built in the north.

As a nation we should be proud of this progress because we benefit from what has already been achieved. The north is home to just over 5 per cent of our population but accounts for almost 12 per cent of our economic output.

Our plan builds on this success, and re-invests in a part of our nation that is already punching above its economic weight.

More than in the past, however, northern Australia now has the proximity to economic growth that creates opportunity for even bigger things for our north.

By 2030 more than two-thirds of the world's middle class will be in Asia. And, even more relevant for the north, the percentage of the world's population living in the tropical region is expected to grow from 40 per cent today to 50 per cent by 2050. Northern Australia's time has come.

This growth in our region promises to deliver dividends for all Australians. More than half of Australian exports leave from ports in northern Australia. We all own a stake in seeing the successful development of northern Australia.

Our northern policy is an unashamedly regional development policy. Through developing the regions of our north, we can take pressure off the development of our major southern cities, while giving young Australians new opportunities for making a living and raising a family in northern Australia.

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The success of our policy will not be delivered by the Government in Canberra but by the people who live and work in northern Australia. Our policies aim to attract investment, invest in infrastructure and unlock the potential of the north's abundant land and water resources.

It will be the dynamic people of northern Australia that create jobs, found businesses, start families and nurture communities. As a government we can only create the foundation. It will be the more than one million people of northern Australia who build the house.

That is our vision for northern Australia - that through our focus and our policies we provide the tools to our north to make it a magnet for the entire country. Our goal is that in the future people will be attracted to stay in northern Australia and move to northern Australia because of the opportunity that it manifestly presents.

If we are successful at that, it will benefit all Australians.

We have made a good start, but there is much more to do.
I thank the people of northern Australia for their continuing support and involvement in this nation-building endeavour. The White Paper is the catalyst to help build the foundations to make the most of that hard-working, determined and optimistic outlook, which will ultimately enhance the north.

All Australians will be more prosperous as a result.

Senator IAN MACDONALD (Queensland) (18:25): I move:

That the Senate take note of the document.

I congratulate Senator Canavan on a wonderful statement and a wonderful job in advancing the interests of the development of northern Australia since he has been appointed the minister. It is not an easy portfolio, and there are a lot of people watching with keen interest. Senator Canavan, I have to say that you have done a wonderful job and made a wonderful start on the ongoing development of the North. I also pay tribute to Mr Andrew Robb, who was very much instrumental in the formulation of the white paper, and also the previous minister for northern Australia, Mr Josh Frydenberg, who took the white paper from its inception to a very good start.

As I have said for as long as I have been in this chamber, northern Australia has only five per cent of Australia’s population, but it produces something like 50 per cent of its export earnings. As Senator Canavan has said, northern Australia has always punched well above its weight when it comes to the economic interests of Australia. The further development of northern Australia is not just about northern Australians; it is about all Australians and it is about making sure that the potential of the north is captured and turned into benefit for every single Australian. Senator Canavan mentioned at some length in his statement some of the advances that have been made.

A small government committee which I chair, made up of all the northern Australia members and senators, has been part of an oversight committee which keeps an eye on what is proposed in the white paper and on what action happens. The oversight committee's assessment is that, of the over 102 significant commitments made in the white paper a year ago, some 19 have already been completed—and I understand from the minister that may now be 21. Further, 51 of the 102 commitments in the white paper are in progress or pending; 30 of them have not yet been actioned; and two of them, of a relatively minor nature, have been abandoned. That is a pretty good start, after just one year, on a major white paper on the development of the North.

I want to pay tribute to all of the ministers and departments involved. While Senator Canavan is the Minister for Resources and Northern Australia, there are many other ministers and departments who have jobs to do in relation to the white paper. Indeed, there are 16 different federal government ministers who have a role and whose responsibilities are mentioned in the white paper. They and their departments have acted enthusiastically in conjunction to play their part in implementing the significant interests of the white paper.

Senator Canavan rightly referred to the connection between northern Australia and Asia. We expect up to 50 per cent of the world's population will be living between the tropics in the not too distant future. Over a third of the world's middle classes are living in that tropical area. That gives great opportunity for Australia to be a world leader on what can be done in the tropics in so many areas, particularly in the area of health.
I am very proud that last Friday I, together with the Premier of Queensland, officially opened the Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine at James Cook University in Townsville. The universities will play a very big role in the development of northern Australia. JCU, who I have just mentioned, are even more advantaged in that they are the one Australian university, indeed the one foreign university, with an accredited university on the island nation of Singapore. With the Singapore defence deal to be, I hope and assume, announced tomorrow when the Prime Minister of Singapore is here, it will bring an even greater connection between northern Australia, and Townsville in particular, and Asia—and, so far as the defence deal is concerned, Singapore.

Senator Canavan also mentioned some other highlight achievements of the government in the white paper. The Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility is a wonderful facility which will provide cheap loans for those wishing to develop the north. It will be a wonderful initiative for further investment and further developments in the north.

Senator Canavan mentioned water, which is so very essential to the north. I am delighted that a number of the projects that were committed to have received funding. We only need the relevant state governments—who control rivers, streams and water—to get on board. We also need to make sure that the money that the Commonwealth has made available is able to be used to develop water storage facilities in northern Australia, which are so very essential.

The Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia—Mr Pyne's department—is underway with a $75 million non-competitive investment there. Even the Bruce Highway in the north is benefitting from the investment of the government there.

This white paper is not a one-year document. It is a five-, 10-, 30-year document, so it will be a long time in its full implementation. As I said, Senator Canavan and his fellow ministers have made a very good start in the implementation of those commitments, but this white paper is only the start of the further development of the north. All of us who live in the north, and those of us in parliament who come from the north, will be keen to work with the minister and with the government not only to implement the white paper but to look further beyond the white paper and always keep in mind the additional areas that have to be developed.

Senator Canavan mentioned the city deals project. To some in Townsville that would read 'stadium', but it is more than a stadium, it is a whole new concept of all levels of government working together to make particular cities better places to live. I am very pleased and excited about that.

Many of the commitments are underway and some have been completed. We have been a bit slow on some things and some things are very, very difficult. One of the real problems holding up development of the north is the land title situation—who owns what and what sort of tenure you have in land titles. The white paper had a lot of comment about Indigenous lands and Indigenous people. Some of the benefits for Indigenous people are underway and are being actioned, as the minister mentioned in his statement. The issue of land titles is a very, very complex one and certainly will not be fixed in a 20-minute speech nor in the immediate future. But it is something that, for everybody's benefit, really needs to be addressed. If we can address the issues of who owns what and what land is available then you will see a huge explosion, an even bigger explosion, in development projects in the north.
It is a wonderful start. Congratulations to the minister, to all of the ministers involved and to all of the departments involved in this white paper. It is a great initiative for Australia. It is something that will benefit all Australians.

I will conclude by saying that I look forward to the day when I say that it is not five per cent of Australia's population producing 50 per cent of its export earnings but something like 20 per cent of Australia's population producing something like 80 per cent of its export earnings. I think both figures are possible and doable, and I look forward to that day.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Macdonald. I note that you sought leave. I did not see Senator Moore. She popped up before you.

Senator IAN MACDONALD: I want to seek leave to continue my remarks.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Yes, I know you want to do that. I want to go to Senator Moore, with the indulgence of the Senate, seeing as I missed her when she stood.

Senator MOORE (Queensland) (18:36): I will seek leave to continue remarks at the end of my contribution, so we will not need to rely on Senator Macdonald.

I also seek to take note of the minister's statement. I thank the minister for his first update to the Senate on the current process of the northern Australia white paper. We know that the white paper is part of a compilation of existing government programs and initiatives sprinkled with new spending commitments.

The minister's statement highlights a number of important milestones. We are pleased to finally welcome the appointment of Ms Laurie Walker as the CEO of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility. The Northern Australia Tourism Initiative, which provides $13.6 million for small and medium tourism businesses to get one-on-one business advice, combines the Entrepreneurs' Program—which was formerly known as the Entrepreneurs' Infrastructure Program—with the Australian Small Business Advisory Services program. This is a welcome initiative, but we believe it does not go far enough.

The government has also committed $75 million over the next 10 years to establish a new cooperative research centre in Townsville, and we welcome that in the wonderful northern city of Townsville. The idea to establish a CRC responsible for developing northern Australia is not new. It was first flagged in the coalition's June 2013 election policy, The Coalition's 2030 Vision for Developing Northern Australia. It was apparently on Mr Ian Macfarlane's desk for sign-off before Mr Turnbull replaced Mr Abbott in September last year.

Then, in November last year, John Wharton was appointed to run consultations with stakeholders and participants again on the direction and research agenda for the CRC, and it was supposed to commence in the middle of this year. But like some of the initiatives—indeed, most of them—included in the white paper, we are still waiting.

It has also been more than a year since the Abbott-Turnbull government first announced the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility—NAIF—and still no funds have been allocated to projects in the region. In fact, only one formal application for funding has progressed to due-diligence stage. When asked last month whether funding would flow before the end of this year, the minister could offer no guarantee.
After rushing legislation through this parliament in the last sitting week before calling the election, Mr Turnbull spent the election campaign in northern Queensland promoting the NAIF. In May the Prime Minister said:

… the commitment to Northern Australia from our national economic plan is enormous. We have a $5 billion, Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund that will be providing loans across Northern Australia …

Then, in June 2016, he also said:

Well our focus is on jobs, jobs and growth and particularly in Northern Australia. As you know, we have massive investment in the Northern Australia infrastructure fund …

It was the same talk about jobs—jobs and investment in the north. Residents and businesses are tired of a Prime Minister who talks a lot about this but who has not delivered on it. With high unemployment across northern Australia, the Turnbull government must begin to invest and create the sustainable jobs that the locals need and have heard so much about.

The minister mentioned tourism in his statement. We all know that tourism is one of the biggest employers in northern Australia. But a lack of high-quality facilities and tourism infrastructure limit our ability to increase our share of the growing Asian tourism market. Tourism is our third biggest export in value terms behind iron ore and coal. It accounts for one in every twenty export dollars. But the World Economic Forum's latest travel and tourism competitiveness index ranked Australia seventh for overall competitiveness and 20th for tourism infrastructure.

We have some of the world's most amazing natural environment experiences, but we risk being dragged down by substandard tourism infrastructure. The government has a key role to play here in supporting investment in world-class infrastructure which underpins a world-class tourism experience.

By 2030 there will be more than three billion middle-class people in Asia looking for tourism opportunities in our region and beyond. We want them to choose Australia. Cruise tourism, also, is growing 20 per cent a year, creating more demand. Airports in the north are also seeking to expand to meet expected demand. Without world-class facilities, we are not going to be able to compete, sending our necessary jobs overseas.

At the last election we made the commitment to allocate $1 billion from the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility to a Northern Australia Tourism Infrastructure Fund to boost partnerships with the tourism sector and to provide incentives for investment in new and upgraded tourism infrastructure across the north. The government could do this, but they have not. They did not even take a tourism policy to the last federal election.

To make matters worse, since the coalition government announced its flawed review into the backpacker tax, both the number of backpacker visitors to northern Australia and the number of nights they stay have seriously declined. In fact, lodgements for working holiday visa applications have fallen 10 per cent under the coalition. There were 24,000 fewer backpackers present in Australia at the end of 2015 compared to the same time in 2013.

We know that the backpacker tax has been a mess from day one. In fact, in many ways the backpacker tax tells you everything that is wrong with the Turnbull government. After more than a year of unnecessary pain and uncertainty for agriculture and tourism, the Turnbull government has now finally backflipped after pressure from the northern Australian George Christensen and the right wing of the party, who are really running the government. Labor
will carefully examine backpacker tax mark 2, but one thing is for sure: decisions like the backpacker tax show the government takes northern Australia for granted.

The government's plan to develop northern Australia also largely ignores its most important resource—its people, in particular its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We heard from the minister that there are programs in train into the future. We also know that 30 per cent of the population of northern Australia is made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A critical part of unlocking the potential of northern Australia is increasing the capacity of the Indigenous population to contribute to the development of the region.

This involves building more than just hard infrastructure. It also means building skills and tackling chronic problems related to housing and health. However, the white paper says very little about that. In fact, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of northern Australia seems to have not been really consulted in the development of the white paper.

During the question and answer session at a recent CEDA event the minister told the audience that native title is one of the biggest barriers to growing agriculture and crops. Comments like this create the impression that the government sees Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander landowners and custodians as an obstacle to the development of the north, rather than, in fact, the key.

Native title is of particular importance to northern Australia, as the majority of determinations and current native title claimant applications are in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. Roughly 80 per cent of northern Australia is directly or indirectly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land. The government needs to stop viewing Indigenous land rights as an impediment to development and embrace native title and traditional land ownership as cultural, social and economic assets.

One of the Indigenous leaders who has been very critical of the white paper process and the lack of consultation is Peter Yu. In June of this year he spoke at the developing Northern Australia conference in Darwin and said there that there had been no formal engagement between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the government over the future development of northern Australia.

The Prime Minister has failed to reverse a single dollar of the $500 million in cuts that Mr Abbott, as leader, made to Indigenous programs and frontline services. Despite a promise that there would be no jobs or services lost, in fact, the opposite is true. At the last election Labor committed to doubling the number of Indigenous rangers employed under the working on country indigenous ranger program. The Turnbull government is refusing to give Indigenous rangers the long-term job certainty they deserve. Indigenous rangers are role models in their communities, with the program providing a pathway to work and a profession that has been shown to improve Indigenous health, incomes, crime rates and incarceration rates. That is how we can meaningfully close the gap: practically—one step at a time.

As the minister's report shows, there is still much work to do to, we hope, translate those big expectations into concrete, deliverable outcomes that will have a lasting impact. Labor looks forward to continuing to work with the government to actually achieve those outcomes, and we look forward to further reports to the Senate on progress towards implementing the northern Australia white paper. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted.
COMMITTEES

Membership

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (18:45): Order! The President has received letters requesting changes in the membership of various committees.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (18:45): by leave—move:

That senators be discharged from and appointed to committees as follows:

Environment and Communications References Committee—

Appointed—

Substitute members: Senators Fawcett and Back to replace Senators Bushby and Duniam for the committee’s inquiry into oil or gas production in the Great Australian Bight on 16 November 2016

Participating members: Senators Bushby and Duniam.

National Broadband Network—Joint Standing Committee—

Discharged—Senator Williams

Appointed—Senator Hanson

National Disability Insurance Scheme—Joint Standing Committee—

Discharged—Senator McCarthy

Appointed—Senator Brown

Trade and Investment Growth—Joint Standing Committee—

Discharged—Senator Lines

Appointed—Senator Watt.

A message from the House of Representatives was reported informing the Senate of appointment of members of the House of Representatives to the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library, as follows:

Message no. 32, dated 10 October 2016—Mr Broadbent, Mr Ramsey, Mr van Manen and Mr Zimmerman.

Question agreed to.

Parliamentary Library Committee

Membership

Message received from the House of Representatives notifying the Senate of the appointment of Mr Broadbent, Mr Ramsey, Mr van Manen and Mr Zimmerman to the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library.

BILLS

Treasury Laws Amendment (Income Tax Relief) Bill 2016

In Committee

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (18:47): I ask Senator Cormann, acting for the Treasurer, my first question: why did the Treasurer choose to use male full-time average earnings instead of total average earnings or even median income in the Bills Digest and, I
Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (18:48): The government has used average Australian earnings because, in our judgement, that is the most appropriate measure for the purpose of estimating the relevant impact of this personal income tax cut. The government has used the average full-time wage as calculated using the average weekly ordinary time earnings determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This measures the average wage of a full-time worker. In 2014-15, it was $77,200 per annum and was forecast to exceed $80,000 in 2016-17. The Australian Bureau of Statistics classifies earnings as pre-tax earnings payable to award standard or agreed hours worked. It is calculated before deductions such as superannuation have been made. It does not include amounts that are salary sacrificed, overtime payments, bonuses not attributable to the reference period, government payments and reimbursements for travel and entertainment.

Conversely, the average wage measures both part-time and full-time average incomes. The average weekly earning in 2014-15 was $59,100 per annum. The Australian Bureau of Statistics classifies an employee as being full-time where they ordinarily work 35 hours or more per week. As I have indicated, in the government's judgement this is the most appropriate measure.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (18:49): If you said $59,000, Senator Cormann—that includes, I understand, full-time and part-time earnings—how is that middle-class or middle-income Australia when your tax cut is $80,000, which is significantly above that number?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (18:50): I suspect that the coalition government and the Greens would have to agree to disagree here as to what is good public policy. The whole purpose of this personal income tax cut for hardworking families is to encourage people to work more and to not get penalised by getting into the second highest income tax bracket by making additional effort. The reason it is appropriate for us to use the average earnings measure—the average full-time wage measure that we are using—is because the whole purpose is to provide an incentive for people to work more and earn more without getting penalised by a higher tax rate.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (18:51): I still do not understand, Senator Cormann, why you did not use median income—why the Treasurer did not use median incomes. I am sure you understand; you have a good grasp of numbers and finance, and you have some very good people working for you who are around you today. Most experts would agree that median income is actually a better representation of the middle class in terms of groupings. Averages can be distorted by very large numbers. Of course, there are a large number of high-income earners in this country—all who, I may say, are going to receive this tax cut—that distort the numbers. I am going. I must admit, on 2014-15 figures. So, if you have other numbers there, I would certainly be interested to see those. All that was available to me were the ABS numbers from 2014-15. You may not be aware, Senator Cormann, that the average income for a full-time wage was $80,000 and $69,000, including part-time, where
the median income was significantly lower. Why wouldn't you use median income as a better indicator for middle-income Australians?

**Senator CORMANN** (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (18:52): I do not agree it is a better indicator. I do believe that Senator Whish-Wilson well understands the reason why the government has chosen the measure that it has chosen. It is just that we have a difference of opinion here. The government has put forward these personal income tax cuts. It is there for all to see what the effects of this measure is, if the Senate passes it, and obviously we commend it to the Senate.

**Senator WHISH-WILSON** (Tasmania) (18:52): Just to give you the quantum difference: the ABS median full-time income in Australia based on 2014-15 numbers was $69,000, while the average wage was $79,000. That is a $10,000 difference because that was skewed by high-income earners. I am still not convinced that you have provided an argument as to why median income would not be a better indicator of middle-class or middle-income earnings in this country. When you incorporate part-time earnings into those figures, they drop even lower. The median income in this country is $52,000—30-40 per cent below the bracket of tax that you are giving tax cuts to. Does the Treasurer agree that, even on your own numbers of $59,000, which includes full-time and part-time earnings, as your average income—$80,000 is significantly higher than that—you are actually giving a tax cut to high-income Australians, not to middle-income Australians?

**Senator CORMANN** (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (18:54): No.

**Senator WHISH-WILSON** (Tasmania) (18:54): Can I ask Senator Cormann whether Treasury has done any modelling on the household impact on Australians based on the family tax cuts from the omnibus bill and the tax cuts from this bill to determine the impact of inequality in Australia?

**Senator CORMANN** (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (18:54): Treasury modelled the long-term economic effect of the government's tax and superannuation plan announced in the 2016-17 budget, which included the personal income tax rate changes, as well as changes to superannuation. In the proposal to lower the company tax rate, Treasury also separately modelled the long-term economic effect of lowering the company tax rate to 25 per cent. The modelling suggests that the effect of our overall proposal would improve the growth friendliness of our tax system and it would increase the level of GDP by around one per cent over the long term, which of course will help generate better opportunities for people across Australia to get ahead, to get better jobs and better paying jobs. The modelling also suggested the overall tax and superannuation plan raises the long-term level of GDP by a similar amount. Treasury released results of this modelling exercise to the public on 3 May 2016 via its website. The economy-wide model examined how significant tax changes affect key income indicators, taking into account interactions between different taxes and second-round effects on incentives. The general point I would make is that, of course, all measures in the budget are modelled in terms of their fiscal impact, and that is reflected in the budget papers.

**Senator WHISH-WILSON** (Tasmania) (18:56): Senator Cormann, what economic stimulus have you modelled for the $6-a-week tax cut that you are giving to the 20 per cent of
the highest paid Australians? What is the economic stimulus that you forecasted? Let's annualise it at $315 or $6 a week.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (18:56): I do not agree with your characterisation of our measures. What is in front of the Senate is a proposal to increase the threshold for the relevant marginal tax rate from $80,000 to $87,000. The purpose here is to ensure that the average full-time wages of Australians will not move into the second-highest marginal tax rate. This is all part of an incentive for people to work harder and earn more, without being penalised by an increased overall tax burden. This is part of our broader tax reform agenda, which is designed to strengthen growth and create more jobs.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (18:57): Could I perhaps rephrase that question and put it to you in a different way. Can you confirm the numbers? We are using numbers, as are other people, including the media, that equate to roughly a $6-a-week tax cut or a $315-a-year tax cut for all income earners above $80,000. Are those numbers correct?

The CHAIR: Senator Whish-Wilson.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (18:58): I will ask again, Senator Cormann. I am just asking for confirmation on whether those numbers are correct. You did not answer my question. Six dollars a week is enough for a takeaway coffee and maybe a bite out of a muffin. For us in here who earn significant salaries compared to your average Australian on a median income or an average income that is not a lot of money. I am very interested in what your modelling shows you. You are doing this for a reason. You are giving a tax cut to Australians earning over $80,000 for a reason, presumably. I do not quite understand what that reason is. You have given us some spin and rhetoric around the tax and superannuation plan—the government's plan to give hardworking Australians an incentive to work harder and save more. So the very logic of what you have told us here tonight is that a $6-a-week tax cut to the most wealthy Australians is going to make a difference to our economy. I do not understand what economic stimulus that is going to have on our economy. So, Senator Cormann, I am disappointed that you cannot at least confirm that number. Could I try again? Could you confirm that those numbers are correct or that we are in the basic ballpark?

Senator RICE (Victoria) (18:59): Continuing on this theme of tax cuts going to higher-income earners rather than to the people who would really benefit from an increase in their disposable income, we are in an era of increasing casualisation and increasing part-time work, so fewer and fewer people are in the range the tax cuts that you are offering. In particular, we are in an era where women, more so than men, tend to be in part-time or casualised work. Have you done any modelling on the different impacts on women compared to men? Does the government concede that, by using full-time average wages as its basis for these tax cuts, it is creating tax cuts that are going to benefit men more than women? Because it is women who are much more likely to be working part-time or in casual employment.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (19:00): We are going round and round in circles. It seems like the Greens are interested in running a bit of a filibuster to keep income tax cuts away from hardworking families. So what I say to the Greens is to confirm again information that has previously been made public, so you are well aware of it. This bill will provide a tax cut to around 3.1 million hardworking Australians in 2016-17 and beyond. The Australian Taxation
Office, of course, has already issued new withholding schedules giving effect to these tax cuts. The bill will keep 500,000 taxpayers out of the second-highest tax bracket in 2016-17, compared to current rates and thresholds, and all taxpayers with taxable incomes above $80,001 will receive yearly tax cuts. Those with taxable incomes above $87,000 will receive the maximum tax cut of $315 per annum, or $6 a week, compared to the current rates of thresholds which have previously been put on the public record.

Senator RICE (Victoria) (19:01): The issue, which I think is very pertinent and that Australians need to know, is how are these tax cuts going to differentially impact and benefit some parts of the Australian workforce compared with others? Has the government done any modelling to look at that differentiation by comparing the impact on women compared with men?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (19:02): We will just have to agree to disagree on the desirability of this measure. This is a measure that does not discriminate between men and women. It does not discriminate at all. It seeks to provide the same incentive to both men and women when it comes to working harder and earning more and not being penalised by a higher tax rate. This measure, which was announced in the 2016-17 budget, is specifically targeted, because without action the average full-time wage earner in Australia would face the 37 per cent marginal tax rate this year. As the government works to improve Australia's fiscal settings it will look for further opportunities to extend further tax relief to working Australians. The government, of course, has maintained the carbon tax compensation after the removal of the carbon tax, which means that the tax-free threshold increase from $6,000 to $18,200 has been maintained, providing a reduction in the average tax rate for taxpayers, but, most notably, for low-income earners. You have got look at all of this in context.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (19:03): I have always thought you were one of the government's better performers in here, especially in the role you are currently playing, but it is only five or 10 minutes into the committee stage and you are refusing to answer questions. We cannot agree to disagree with you until you can provide some kind of confirmation to us about what we are asking you. Let me give you the figures that we got from the ATO. Our analysis based on recent tax office data finds that the cut will help 28 per cent of male taxpayers but only 13 per cent of female taxpayers. So less than half of female taxpayers, versus male taxpayers, in this country are going to benefit. Can you please confirm if that number is accurate or in the ballpark?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (19:04): It is not accurate, because, with all due respect, Senator Whish-Wilson is making an assumption of future behaviour. More-attractive tax policy settings will provide an incentive for Australians to work harder without being penalised and with a higher marginal tax rate. The measure applies equally to male and female Australian workers.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (19:05): That is very tricky, Senator Cormann. Nevertheless, the numbers as they stand now, based on the reported taxable incomes, suggest to us that this tax cut will significantly benefit male earnings over female earnings. Of course, apart from a broader economic inequality that is growing rapidly in Australia, as it is in many other countries around the world—which Professor Thomas Piketty is here to talk about this
week—we know that gender pay, gender income equality, is a significant issue and one we need to deal with. So I presume that when the Treasury or the Treasurer—I am not exactly quite sure how the process goes—decides at election time to bring in a $4 billion tax cut, these issues are factored into your decision making. For $80,000 and above you raise a tax bracket threshold to $87,000 and that benefits anyone who earns over $80,000—$8 million, $10 million, $100,000. All I want you to do is confirm to us here tonight that these tax cuts that you are bringing in will benefit male earnings over female earnings. I will read it to you again: the tax office data finds that the cut will help 28 per cent of male taxpayers but only 13 per cent of female taxpayers. Is that number correct?

Another issue: could you tell me whether wages are growing faster for those in the $80,000-to-$87,000 range than those on lower incomes. I must say on record that the Senate Economics Legislation Committee did not have an inquiry into this. There was a very short submission period and then the committee wrote up the report. Even in the limited feedback the committee did receive, in the limited number of submissions that were put to us, it was suggested that if any income bracket needed a bracket creep adjustment, it was the bracket directly below $80,000. Could the Treasurer please answer that question?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (19:07): We have not undertaken the sort of modelling that Senator Whish-Wilson is asking about. Let me just remind him though that every Australian earning up to $18,200 pays no tax on those earnings, and any earnings above $18,200 are taxed at 19 per cent. Obviously, as the saying goes, you cannot give a tax cut to somebody who pays low tax; that is somewhat difficult. Obviously a range of Australians go through the very low income ranges for a range of reasons, including during their studies, at the beginning of their career and working their way through their career. The whole purpose here is to target an income tax cut towards Australian workers on average full-time wages; the whole purpose here is to provide an incentive and to make sure they are protected from the increase to the 37 per cent marginal tax rate.

I know that the Greens hate tax cuts. I know the Greens are the high-taxing party of Australia. The Greens are worse than the Labor Party when it comes to the level of taxation. We can debate this for the next five weeks, and we will still need to agree to disagree. You are not pursuing these questions because you will genuinely change your mind at the end of the answers that you receive, you are trying to prosecute a political case because you are against tax cuts for hard-working Australian families. Let us not try and play a game here. Let us not try to pretend that you are genuinely seeking information so that you can then go to your leader, Senator Di Natale, and say: 'I got it all wrong. I never meant to recommend to you that we should oppose these tax cuts. I never meant to recommend that the Greens vote against lower taxes. I actually change my mind because the answers I've received have helped ensure that I see the light.' We all know that is not true, that is not the case. You are running through a political exercise. You are wasting the Senate's time. You know where this will end up, because there is no support in this chamber for your proposition. There is no majority support in this chamber for your proposition.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (19:10): I am here to hold you to account, Senator Cormann. I am here told you to account for handing out $4 billion of taxpayers money willingly, seemingly with no economic imperative—
Senator Rice: No modelling!

Senator WHISH-WILSON: no modelling, no consultation, no committee hearing process and almost no time for submissions. It is ridiculous. We are here to hold you to account, so we are asking perfectly valid questions. It is our job; the Senate is a house of review. We are elected to this place to hold the executive and the government of the day to account, and that is exactly what my colleague Senator Rice and I are doing tonight. And the questions we have asked you—many of which you have not been able to answer or have simply refused to answer—do not look good for you. You either do not know the answers or the answers will embarrass you. Let us be very clear: this is very serious. This is not just serious because it is $4 billion; this is serious because it is going against the grain of what we need to do in this place—that is, tackle rising inequality: economic inequality across the board and inequality in terms of gender pay. That is why this is a very important debate and a very important piece of legislation. With my next question, if you would please answer it, I would like to know: is it true that the decision to have the benefits of this tax cut flowing to high-income earners on 1 October, ahead of its passage through parliament, is unprecedented? Is it unprecedented that the tax office or the tax commissioner has allowed you to do this? When has this occurred before?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (19:12): I am advised that this is quite common, that this is quite commonly the way that tax measures are implemented.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (19:12): Peter Martin reported in his paper that he contacted the ATO, and he quotes an ATO spokeswoman who said she could find no precedent for this having occurred before. Can you give us an example tonight of where there has been a precedent of this occurring without legislation?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (19:12): Again, I have just relied on advice from the officials here in the chamber, who have confirmed for me that this is the way relevant tax changes are routinely implemented on the basis of certain conditions having been fulfilled.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (19:13): Is it true that the tax commissioner, Chris Jordan, at first refused a request from Treasurer Scott Morrison to bring in the cut on 1 July, the cut we are discussing here tonight, saying he was only able to adjust tax scales in accordance with enacted law? Is that correct?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (19:13): Let me just add to my previous answer, just to give you an example. The penalties, for example, under the multinational anti-avoidance legislation came into effect prior to the legislation having passed the Senate. That is just one example. I am led to believe that there are others, but obviously that is a matter that we can explore further down the track.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (19:14): Thank you, but you did not address my last question about the tax commissioner, Chris Jordan. Did he at first refuse a request from Scott Morrison, the Treasurer, to bring in the cut on 1 July, saying he was only able to adjust tax scales in accordance with enacted law? To save time, I will ask you the second question on that. It was reported that he did back down in September, saying public statements by both...
Labor and the coalition had given him confidence that this bill was likely to pass with amendments—is that correct?

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (19:14): Senator Whish-Wilson is somewhat misrepresenting what Mr Jordan has said. Mr Jordan indicated that he would be able to make relevant adjustments to the tax scales once he had sufficient confidence that the law would pass. As you would be aware—again, it is a matter of public record—the Labor opposition, through their relevant spokespeople, indicated some time ago that Labor would support this tax cut for hardworking families. As such, it was evident that there was broad bipartisan support for this tax cut in this parliament—which meant that the tax commissioner had great confidence that the tax cut would pass the Senate, irrespective of the solitary filibuster that you are seeking to run here tonight.

It is noted in the Treasurer's media release dated 2 September 2016 that the ATO confirmed it would issue a new PAYG withholding tax schedule in the week commencing 5 September 2016. Taxpayers have started to receive the benefits of this measure in their pay packets from 1 October 2016. Any tax overpaid beforehand will be refunded by the ATO on assessment.

Senator WHISH-WILSON (Tasmania) (19:16): The quotes in the same article by Peter Martin—which were direct quotes—said that the tax commissioner was only able to adjust tax scales in accordance with enacted law. But he changed his position. That was the question I was asking you. You have said that was false, or that I was misrepresenting his position. So I will go away and see if I can find those direct quotes myself and let you know if I have misrepresented his position. But that was quoted in The Age and in The Sydney Morning Herald by Peter Martin, who, as you know, has been an economics correspondent in this place for a very long time.

I suppose we are not going to have time to finish this tonight, Senator Cormann, but it was only three weeks ago, in here, when the omnibus bill passed with the support of Labor, that we talked about budget repair and the budget deficit. That was only two weeks after the Prime Minister had said in the papers that budget repair and debt reduction were 'a moral challenge of our generation'. Now is giving $4 billion in seemingly 'unguided missile' form, without any modelling to support it, to the highest income earners in this country—a coffee and a bite of a muffin every week—helping your case of budget repair? If you do not want to answer that in broad terms, I would be very interested in following up with you when time permits tomorrow the budget impact of this bill out beyond the forward estimates and whether you have done any 10-year forecasts.

Senator CORMANN (Western Australia—Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate) (19:18): Firstly, I completely reject the Greens proposition that hardworking Australians earning between $80,000 and $87,000 a year are high-income earners. I completely reject that proposition. Secondly—and this just proves that we are going around and around in circles—the senator wrongly asserted again that no modelling had been done. That is wrong. I explicitly put on the record the modelling that had been done in terms of the economic impact of our tax reform package. The reason we pursue this particular tax cut for hardworking families—incidentally funded by a crackdown on, among other things, multinational tax avoidance—is we know that providing an incentive for Australians to work more, by ensuring that they are not penalised with higher marginal tax rates, will help growth.
An important way of repairing the budget is to increase the level of revenue that is generated by government and stronger growth. As we all know, stronger economic growth helps to deliver among other things stronger revenue flows to government. It gives people across Australia better opportunities to get ahead and it gives them opportunities to pursue better-paid jobs, which means that over time they will pay more tax. But, of course, you are the Greens—people often say that the Greens are really just the old communists in green cloaks—and we understand that you are the ultimate high-taxing party of Australia. We understand that you do not agree with tax cuts for hardworking families. We do. On this side of the chamber we are all in favour of giving hardworking Australians a fair go. We believe in providing incentives for people to work harder, to get ahead and to pursue opportunities to improve their quality of life— *(Time expired)*

Progress reported.

**ADJOURNMENT**

*The DEPUTY PRESIDENT* (19:20): Order! I propose the question:

That the Senate do now adjourn.

*Knight, Mrs Annette AM*

*Senator SMITH* (Western Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (19:20):

Those of us who are fortunate enough to have involvement with, and represent, regional communities in this place understand that there is something very special about them. Of course, each local community has particular defining characteristics be they in the city or in regional areas. But regional communities face particular challenges that often flow from the tyranny of distance—and this is doubly the case in Western Australia, which encompasses such a vast physical distance.

In order to thrive, our regional communities need strong, dedicated and energetic local leaders who will go above and beyond the call of duty, consistently putting the needs of their community first. Tonight, I rise to pay tribute to one such leader, Mrs Annette Knight AM of Albany, Western Australia, who sadly passed away in late August this year. The word 'stalwart' is much used in our public life, but if anyone ever earned the right to be referred to as a stalwart in relation their own local community it was Annette Knight. She was also an embodiment of the tried and tested rule that if you want to get something done you ask a busy person. Annette developed a special bond with the people of Albany and surrounding regions during a distinguished 27-year career as a broadcaster with ABC regional radio. She was, in fact, the first female ABC newsreader in regional Western Australia.

As Australians living in regional centres will understand, the local radio station plays a vital role as a community hub and source of news and information. And those who read the news and host programmes on these stations have a very important and powerful way of becoming part of the family for many in regional communities. The fond rapport that Annette Knight established with local people during her time in radio, coupled with her dedication to improving economic and cultural opportunities in the Albany region, meant that service in local government was a logical place for her to apply her talents.

Ultimately, Annette served three terms as Mayor of Albany, from 1988 until her retirement from that role in 1998. Her time as mayor is still fondly recalled by many residents and
council employees alike as a time of both significant change and excitement in the City of Albany.

In fact, it was during her time as mayor in 1996 that Annette Knight was made a Member of the Order of Australia for her services to local government and to her local community. Much later, in 2012, she received the highest honour the City of Albany could bestow when she was made a Freeman of the City—one of only three people ever to receive this accolade. She was also recognised as a WA Citizen of the Year in 1997, when she was awarded the Governor's Award for Regional Development. This award recognises the recipient's outstanding contribution to the growth, development and prosperity of regional Western Australia.

Of course, Annette's contribution was not limited to her own region. She was in fact a delegate to the constitutional convention held here in Canberra in 1998, at which she reflected eloquently on the important role the Governor-General plays, saying that the term Governor-General itself 'reflects the position of guardian of the Constitution and of people's rights'.

Annette Knight was made a commissioner of the WA tourism commission in 1995 and was appointed as deputy chairperson of the commission's board in 1998. In 2001 she was awarded the Centenary Medal—awarded on the centenary of the Federation of Australia—for her service to the community of Albany and in March of this year was inducted into the WA Women's Hall of Fame. Speaking about that latter honour this year, Annette was typically practical, saying: 'If you wanted to do something, it didn't matter whether you were a male or female, you just got on with the job and did it. We all worked together because we all had a common cause … if they want to do something, well get in there and darn well do it.'

Annette Knight recognised very early on that Albany's ongoing success and contribution to WA would depend heavily on being able to provide quality educational opportunities locally. Thus, she worked tirelessly with other local families to establish the Great Sothern Grammar school and was also instrumental in the setting up of the University of Western Australia's Albany Centre.

My sincere condolences go to Annette's husband, the Hon. Tom Knight, and her family and friends. (Time expired)

Child Care

Senator HINCH (Victoria) (19:25): Members of the chamber are aware of my passionate support for a national public register of convicted sex offenders. It was one of the main policies of the Justice Party in the July federal election. We have more than 160,000 signatures on our petition, and I hope to garner Senate support for a committee of inquiry.

Such a register would make it easier for authorities, businesses and sporting organisations to ensure that convicted paedophiles are not working with children and to make sure that child molesters do not get blue cards—do not get working with children permits. In the meantime, I have discovered terrible discrepancies in the granting of permits across the country—dangerous flaws in the blue card system in most states. Did you know that in Queensland and Victoria you can start working with vulnerable children the minute you post off an application for a working with children permit even if it takes four to six weeks for your application to be processed. Once your application has been sent off and you have your postal receipt, that is it. You are in.
One constituent wrote to me and said: 'I went through the necessary process and firstly was astounded when I was told that, so long as the application has been sent away, I can now legally work with children. Are you for real? So I could be a sex offender and, while my application is being processed and background checks are being made, I could be around kids.'

That could not be true, right? Well, we checked with the Queensland government and, according to their website, paid employees who require a blue card or exemption card can commence regulated child related work once they have lodged an application with Blue Card Services and while their application is being processed.

I was telling this to a lawyer friend of mine in Melbourne. It is no different in my own state of Victoria. My lawyer friend has just taken up an honorary position with the Variety Club, the best children's charity in the world. He applied for a police check and a working with children permit and was told he could start as soon as he produced his post office receipt showing his application had been sent off. We checked the Victorian government's website for its official policy. And it says most people can work with children while their application is processed. It only states that a person must not work if they have previously been charged, convicted or found guilty of a serious sexual, violent or drug offence.

This is madness. This is Noddyland. You reckon a convicted sex offender is going to tell you the truth? To me, this is a bit like the old McDonald's job application form which asked if you had a criminal history or not. You simply said no and you were in—until we got that one changed last month.

In Western Australia, according to that government's official working with children website, your application receipt is proof that you have a pending application and they will let you start work or continue your child related work. It's a little bit different and a bit better in the Northern Territory. It is not automatic that you can work with children once the application is in. The employer must apply on the applicant's behalf for a short-term exemption which is processed by SAFE NT.

It astounds me that anybody could be permitted to work with children for an hour, for a day, for even one moment without first having a full working with children check. When a colleague worked for the Department of Justice and Regulation in Victoria, he was unable to even start until all criminal background checks were completed, and he was not even working with kids.

Finally, I will give you another shocking example which shows why our national public register is vital. I am indebted to FACAA for bringing this up. They are the children's support group Fighters Against Child Abuse Australia. Let me introduce you to a scumbag named Mick Aboud, a child rapist. Somehow he managed to hold a working with children permit at a surf club in Queensland even though he had been charged and convicted of sex offences against kids in New South Wales. When Aboud was being charged and convicted in NSW, over the border in Queensland at the Tugun Surf Life Saving Club he was in charge of kids lifesaving activities. He was even elected to the surf club committee after the charges were laid. He was sentenced to seven years jail recently, but that was the first the surf club had ever heard about the charges.
This is a man who supervised kids at a surf club, prowled the internet for vulnerable young girls, used the White Pages to find home numbers and threatened to tell the kids' parents about their sexualised conversations if they did not provide him with 'sexy' and 'naughty' photos. He called one young victim—excuse me—a cunt and a whore when she threatened to go to police. He sent another girl a photo of his penis. One victim was so distraught that she threatened self-harm if he did not stop. And this man was still supervising young girls at a surf club in Queensland, just across the border.

FACAA is calling for a national supervision committee on blue card registrations. While we have to wait for that national register, it is a good idea. As I used to say on radio: 'Who's looking after the children?'

Working Holiday Maker Program

Senator O’SULLIVAN (Queensland) (19:30): Might I just start by attaching myself to the submission that Senator Hinch has made in this place. He will enjoy my support of any measures, and I am sure he will enjoy the support of most of the people in this chamber.

Senator Hinch: Thank you.

Senator O’SULLIVAN: On Thursday, a bill is intended to be brought before the House of Representatives. It has been given the name: Working Holiday Maker Reform Package. I think there is no need for me to spend much time in particularising the issues around horticulture, rural industries and tourism in relation to this matter because they have been well publicised. The bill makes the best attempt it can to rectify some of the issues that have presented in this space with the intention of restoring certainty back to the tourism and agricultural sectors as a result of the toing and froing that has gone on with respect to this matter for many months—in fact, for far too long. I do not want to seem critical of my own government, but I think this whole exercise could well have been managed better and more promptly. All the information available to us to resolve the issues that presented to those sectors has been at our disposal for a significant period of time.

At the heart of this is a tax rate that was proposed to be applied to backpackers, many of whom provide very valuable labour forces in this country, particularly in my home state of Queensland in horticulture, the banana industry, the beef processing sector and tourism. There has been massive uncertainty. Now there is data to show that some of the choices being made by potential visiting backpackers has been influenced by the uncertainty that has existed in these sectors.

I want to make a plea because, on reports that have been made publicly, I understand that the Labor caucus voted on Tuesday to allow the legislation to go through the Lower House but has subsequently announced that it will move that this legislative package be referred to the Senate Economics Legislative Committee for an inquiry and to report back on 7 November. That will be the fourth inquiry undertaken by the government of Australia. I do not mean 'the government' as in us versus the other side; I mean the institution that is meant to make decisions on behalf of Australians. They simply do not understand the measures that are being proposed. We have just completed an inquiry that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. It took no less than 1,760 submissions from around the country. Those submissions were considered and, in fact, many of the changes in the legislation are reflective of the submissions that were made. In particular, the reforms in this package were widely received.
across industries. The National Farmers Federation has come out today to again criticise the government. It does not matter—they are not reflecting on the government of the day; they are reflecting on the institution of this parliament and the Senate, which seems to be continuing this in one form or another, or by one of us or the other. We all have a part to play in this and we all have to shoulder some of the responsibility for where we find ourselves.

I just want to make a plea to my Senate colleagues on the other side to revisit their decision to have this pushed off until 7 November, because the uncertainty will continue in the sector. A quarter of the workforce in agriculture comes from the backpackers. They are a vital source of labour. They are jobs that, it would seem, some of our young Australian men and women are not attracted to. Those who have seasonal considerations coming up later this year and in the early part of next year are going to be left with a diminished workforce unless we make this decision and restore stability out there because people making their travel plans and decisions about coming to Australia—why they might do that and when they might do that—will be affected. So I just urge my Labor colleagues to revisit this and see if we can pick a date for this to come before the Senate. *(Time expired)*

**Western Sydney Airport**

*Senator CAMERON* (New South Wales) (19:35): I wish to speak tonight on an issue that is of significant concern to my community in Blaxland, in the Blue Mountains, and to all of the surrounding communities, including Penrith, St Marys, Mt Druitt, St Clair and Erskine Park, and that is the negative impact that could be foisted upon Western Sydney due to the building of Western Sydney Airport. This is a massive development and it has massive implications for Western Sydney, but my community do not feel as though they have been consulted properly. My community feel as though they are being ignored with their genuine concerns. There is increasing concern around the area about this airport. There is no faith in the consultative process that has been undertaken by the federal government in relation to the airport. There is no faith in the assumptions that underpin the supposed jobs that will be created or the environmental impacts from the EIS statements that have been made so far.

There was a recent meeting in Springwood where between 450 and 500 residents came along to express their concerns to the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten. The concerns would be widely known to people who live near airports anywhere. People were concerned about the noise. People were concerned about disruption. People up there were concerned about the World Heritage listing of the Greater Blue Mountains. People were concerned that there will be no curfew for the Western Sydney airport whereas if you live in the eastern suburbs, the inner west or the North Shore of Sydney you have a curfew. Why, they say to me, are Western Sydney residents being treated as second-class citizens? If it is good enough for the east to have a curfew, it is good enough for the west to have a curfew.

They are very concerned that the transport issues that will surround this airport are horrendous. You cannot imagine a modern airport being built with no pipeline to the airport for fuel. All of the fuel for the airport will be trucked in. All of the fuel for massive jets will be trucked into Western Sydney. It does not make any sense.

Aboriginal heritage issues have been ignored. The effect on schools has simply been dismissed. The need for a rail link has been dismissed. This really is about profit before people. People of Western Sydney are waking up that the bureaucracy are treating them with contempt. I personally raised 25 issues in a public submission to the original EIS and in the
second EIS 20 of those issues were ignored. These were issues that my community were raising with me and asking me to raise within the EIS process to get answers. They were ignored.

The mantra about jobs and growth arising from the airport seems to me to be a problem, because the EIS says that manufacturing jobs will decline as part of this airport build. The agricultural jobs will decline. In my view, they will be crowded out by lower paid jobs at the airport.

They are also saying that we have to wait till the airport is being built for the flight paths to be determined—that we have to accept the concept of the airport and, once we agree to the airport, they might look at flight paths. When I questioned the department about this, they said flight paths would be determined purely on a commercial basis. It will depend what the airlines and the airport want for maximum profitability.

I say that if an airport is built in Western Sydney it has to be done in a better, more consultative manner than this. What has been foisted on Western Sydney is unacceptable. We should not be treated as second-class citizens in Western Sydney. If the east is good enough for a curfew, the west is good enough for a curfew.

S Kidman & Co.

Senator PATERSON (Victoria) (19:40): I rise tonight to contribute to a public debate which has arisen today about the purchase of Kidman & Co., the cattle empire and significant rural landholding.

When recently I saw the news that Gina Rinehart had put together a consortium to make an offer to buy Kidman & Co., I was not planning to contribute to the public debate on it. I do not think it is necessary for members and senators to express a view about the ordinary goings-on of businesspeople and their investment decisions. But today I was motivated to make a contribution to the debate after I saw a media statement on this topic by a member of the other place, the member for Kennedy, Bob Katter. Mr Katter issued a media release today in which, in his own words, he described himself as 'incredulous of Gina Rinehart's intentions to buy the Kidman cattle empire with the Chinese company Shanghai Cred'. He made a number of statements about the offer and other possible offers and went on to say:

To my knowledge Gina has no experience in cattle. Her father owned a cattle station but that was a long time ago and why has she suddenly this great interest in cattle and come forward with a Chinese partner?

I would have thought that the member for Kennedy, like all members and senators, would welcome it when an Australian businesswoman, like Gina Rinehart, proposes to make a significant investment in another Australian business and, hopefully, through that process create jobs and prosperity and pay taxes.

Hancock Prospecting a few days ago very helpfully put out a media release about this offer, in which it detailed the long connection of the Hancock company with the cattle industry and rural landholdings. Garry Korte, the CEO of Hancock, said:

The quality of the Kidman herd and channel country properties complement Hancock's existing northern cattle properties, and align well with Mrs Rinehart’s plans to build a diversified cattle holding in Australia, taking advantage of integration opportunities.
The Hancock family started their first cattle station in North West Australia, and founded the first port in the area at Cossack on the West Pilbara Coast to enable the cattle trade. Since then Mrs Rinehart has extensively grown the Hancock portfolio of cattle stations.

Terry McCrann wrote an excellent article in the *Herald Sun* today. All of Mr McCrann's articles are excellent but this one I thought was particularly good. He writes about this proposed deal:

More importantly, Rinehart’s deal provides Morrison—

the Treasurer—

with something of a template for handling a critical part of what is going to be our most dominant, most challenging and most complex relationship with any country over the next half-century at least.

If only we had ‘half-a-dozen Rineharts’, able and prepared to do the same thing. Obviously, we don’t: we’ll need to promote ‘synthetic Rineharts’ to do what she’s done, from among the ranks of mainstream institutional investors instead.

He goes on to say:

In using minerals-generated wealth to buy control of—and keep under Australian control—one of the great pastoral companies, Rinehart has imprinted her unifying vision on the next stage of our economic history. She has blended past and present to build new dynamic foundations for the future.

Like Terry McCrann, I welcome it when an Australian investor partners with a foreign investor, in this case a Chinese one, for a two-thirds/one-third investment in an Australian company and business. I think that is a very exciting thing. As the Treasurer said on 2GB this morning:

The good news is that there are Australians with means who want to invest in Australia’s agricultural sector.

He went on to say:

I hope that others will follow a similar course of investing in Australian agriculture. Let's remind ourselves that less than one-half of one per cent of all Australia’s agricultural land is owned by Chinese. Only 13 per cent or thereabouts is owned by foreigners as well, so they’re the actual statistics. These companies investing in Australian agriculture improves those operations. It creates jobs whether it’s in Tasmania or Western Australia or anywhere else.

There is a pretty fundamental wider point here: Australian entrepreneurs and business people are often attacked—unfairly, in my view—by politicians in the political class when instead they should be congratulated, rewarded and encouraged for the great work they do. We will be a much more prosperous country if we have a culture that rewards investors, innovators and business people—people who create wealth, employ people, pay taxes, take risks with their own money and choose to invest in Australia. If we continue to demonise these people then maybe one day they will choose to invest elsewhere. Maybe they will choose to invest the wealth that they have gained overseas, and that will not benefit Australia and Australians in the same way that their powerful investments in Australia can. So I, for one, welcome this proposed offer for S Kidman & Co. Of course, it will have to follow the appropriate safeguards and checks with the Foreign Investment Review Board; but, presuming it is ticked off, I think this would be something that all parliamentarians should welcome.
Manufacturing

Senator MARSHALL (Victoria) (19:45): Last Friday was a very sad day in Australia's manufacturing history. Ninety-one years of Ford manufacturing in Australia ended and 633 workers in Broadmeadows and Geelong lost their jobs. A total of 1,216 workers have been affected by this decision and 122 additional workers will be unemployed by next June. From other manufacturing closures, we know that about one-third of those who became unemployed on Friday will be re-employed within Ford—that is the fortunate bit. Unfortunately, we know that around one-third of those who became unemployed on Friday will now depend on casual and insecure work—and, even worse, around one-third will probably never work again.

The terrible tragedy is that this did not have to happen. This is not an inevitable outcome or a fait accompli. It was this Liberal government that pushed car manufacturers into leaving. They killed our $21.5 billion industry. First, they cut $500 million assistance in the industry; and then they closed the door on any future discussions with Holden or Toyota. By the end of 2017, 2,900 Holden jobs in Victoria and South Australia will also go. In Victoria alone, 3½ thousand Toyota workers are set to lose their jobs. But in this trail of destruction that is symbolic of this Liberal government, the destruction does not stop here. The real cost is to the supply chain—$2.25 billion is spent by car manufacturers every year in auto supply companies and they in turn employ 18,000 full-time workers. It is estimated that around 30,000 people Australia-wide work to supply parts to the car industry.

Allen Consulting Group, using economic analysis from Monash University, found that, when Australia loses its car industry, our GDP will be $7.3 billion smaller by 2018, a mere two years away. This is shameful from a government that claims to be all about jobs and growth, because nothing could be further from the truth. Where are the jobs and growth in Broadmeadows and Geelong? What does the Prime Minister intend to do to support those workers that are being unemployed. Or does he intend to leave it up to the Andrews government, which seems to be the only government interested in defending and working out re-employment strategies for those workers?

It is a huge social and economic mistake to force our car manufacturers to leave in the name of global competition. With the end of the automotive industry, our knowledge of metals casting will dissipate and the skilled workers at Toyota and Holden will have no equivalent to take their skills. Our skills in robotics, and our ability to keep those skills, may well also disappear. The end of the automotive industry will mean the end of so many workers’ livelihoods—families who for generations have worked at Ford and some of the other car manufacturing companies. This is a very sad time for Victorians: thanks to the Liberal Party here in Canberra, they have been beset by this tragedy when it did not need to happen.

Mental Health

Senator SIEWERT (Western Australia—Australian Greens Whip) (19:49): I rise tonight to speak of an issue of critical importance to all Australians, and that is mental health. This week is Mental Health Week, yesterday was World Mental Day and today is headspace day. Obviously, the focus is on mental health this week. The purpose of this week and these days is to draw attention to the issues of mental health in our community and society. Also, it is particularly important to help reduce the stigma that still surrounds mental ill health. But there
is growing concern in the mental health sector that the current raft of changes, and the uncertainty that goes along with those changes, may lead to the unintentional removal of access to services for some customers and carers.

There is also particular concern about services and supports for people with mental ill health through the process of the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The National Disability Insurance Scheme receives multi-party support in this place and in the other place. It continues to enjoy that multi-party support—and I, for one, am on the record for my support for the NDIS. However, it is also the role of this place to make sure that with policies such as the NDIS, where we see major reforms, there are not unintentional consequences and we learn as these programs of reform are rolled out. And that is what we need to be doing with the NDIS.

I am also aware—because I was part of that discussion, because I filled this portfolio for quite a while, so I was actively engaged in the Senate inquiries into the NDIS and the debate in this chamber and, in fact, ensured that there were some amendments to the legislation—that during that time there was a debate about whether mental health should be in the NDIS or not, because of the focus on recovery from mental ill health. However, it was agreed that it go in, and it is in, and its going in was strongly supported by many in the community as well, I have to say. There was debate about it, but the overall recognition was that it should be in, so it went in. But we need to make sure that there are not unintended consequences from that process.

What is being reported back to us is that, while people with mental illness are getting some packages, it was always recognised that not everybody with mental health issues would be covered by the NDIS, and it was expected that there would be some supports coming from what was then known as tier 2, which is now the ILC, the information, linkages and capacity part of the NDIS. However, a number of people that need support will not receive that support through the ILC, because there are simply not enough resources in that program. So there is a concern, first, for what happens to those people that do not receive a package and support through the ILC either. Also, the nature of the ILC has changed somewhat since the discussion about tier 2 was first on the boards.

Then you have the states and territories that are pulling back from services, including mental health services, because they think that, for everything they are saving, the things are being covered by the NDIS. The Commonwealth is also rolling back very important programs, so you have this process where funding for very good programs is starting to be rolled back and cut and programs are being closed at the Commonwealth level and the state and territory level. So there are very strong concerns, particularly around community mental health, that in fact what is going to happen is that there will be less services and supports and more people are going to fall through the gaps, when there is supposed to be a commitment across the board to address issues of mental ill health. That is why groups and people in the sector are now starting to worry about, as I said, the unintentional removal of access to services for some consumers and carers. We are deeply concerned that these issues are not being recognised quickly enough. I acknowledge the additional funding that has been put into PHNs, but again that is not going to be enough to address the closure of these programs and the removal of support by some state and territory governments.
The reason I want to raise this here is that we will continue to pursue this issue. We need to make sure that nobody is left behind. That is why I asked Minister Nash about mental health yesterday, because this issue needs to be very firmly on the agenda. We need to make sure that we are addressing any gaps now, before people start falling through those gaps. Addressing issues around mental health is not just about the provision of services and support. That is really important—do not get me wrong; that is why I just made that statement—but we also need to make sure that policies and programs that are in place do not damage people's mental health. Unfortunately, there are a number of programs that have the potential to damage people's mental health in Australia.

One of the ones that we are very actively discussing at the moment is the proposed marriage equality plebiscite. The approach that the government is taking to marriage equality and the plebiscite is deeply concerning, and the Greens are well on the record about that. The proposed marriage equality plebiscite will be detrimental to the mental wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in this country. Over the weekend, we just saw further evidence: a report on the experiences of the LGBTI community in Ireland, which talked about the impact on people's mental health. Already we are seeing harmful actions in the marriage equality debate that will no doubt affect people's mental health. Only last week, in fact, my office received a report by a young lesbian woman in Western Australia who was directing traffic at the Perth Royal Show when she noticed a sticker on one of the signs visible as people went into the Perth Royal Show. The sticker was calling on people not to support marriage equality, and she was devastated by that. This was at a family event. This is before the money that the coalition wants to hand over to fund, basically, a discriminatory campaign—because that is what it will degenerate into—to oppose marriage equality. Before that has even started, we are seeing these materials that are already damaging people and causing people distress. That will only be magnified very significantly by the funding the government wants to funnel into the case against marriage equality, and we are deeply concerned about the impact any such plebiscite would have on people's mental health.

Then you have other policies, for example, with the government continuing to pursue people on income support and denigrating people on 'welfare'—I hate that term. One example is trying to force young people to live on nothing for five weeks. That will have a significant impact on people's mental health, and particularly the mental health of young people who, at the same time they are being denied income support, will still be expected to go and look for 20 jobs and make 20 applications a month. They will still be expected to do that. The government is pursuing the so-called social investment policies of New Zealand, but one thing that came clearly out of the New Zealand example was the impact on people's mental health from job application rejections. They found that seven major rejections impacted on people's mental health, and here is the government saying, 'You need to do 20 applications at the same time we are not going to pay you any income support,' which in itself is going to have a significant impact on young people's mental health and ability to find work. So there are a range of other programs that this government wants to put in place that will affect people's mental health.

**Carers**

*Senator CAROL BROWN (Tasmania) (19:59): As we prepare to celebrate National Carers Week, I rise to say thank you and pay tribute to Australia's family and friend carers.*
National Carers Week, marked from 16 to 22 October this year, offers us all the chance to thank carers and show them how much they count and are valued.

Any one of us at any time could become a carer. A sudden and debilitating illness, a road accident or an injury at work could mean a relative or friend needs part-time or full-time care. Carers may also support and provide around-the-clock care for children with additional needs, sick or elderly family members and people with a disability or mental illness. It is estimated that 2.8 million Australians provide unpaid care and work tirelessly every day, often putting their own lives on hold to care for a loved one. They are extraordinary people. I know this from personal experience and also from hearing from carers in my role as shadow minister for disability and carers.

Last week, I was fortunate enough to meet a group of young carers in Tasmania. Like so many young carers they showed maturity beyond their years. They are articulate and resilient and are trying to plan future lives outside their caring roles. They work hard to balance their caring role with any work or school they can fit in. For example, one 17-year-old has been caring for his mother, who has a chronic health condition, for the past three years. He left school in grade 8. He said he thought his teachers assumed that he had a drug or alcohol problem, but the reality was he had to stay home to care for his mother. He was too exhausted to go to school. However, he has returned to studying, and despite long hours caring for his mother, who has just had surgery, he is achieving excellent results in his two diploma areas. It is important that this Carers Week, and every week, carers like this young Tasmanian know that they count.

Another young carer I met, a young refugee, was thrust into a significant caring role at the age of 15. Now 19, she cares for both parents and her grandmother, who are all ill with a range of conditions, as well looking after her two younger siblings—a significant role for anyone, regardless of their age.

Carers Week reminds us how important it is to let these young carers, and all carers, know that they are valued. Young carers, like the ones I have met, do an incredible job, but they face extraordinary challenges in balancing their caring role, their education and trying to find a job. I stand here to recognise the contribution that they make. This includes openly acknowledging the challenges and the obstacles that they face. When asked about the challenges of the caring role, one carer stated:

My greatest challenges have been the acceptance of giving up a business, my lifestyle, selling my home, losing my financial independence and moving across the world. Being a carer is so unpredictable that trying to rebuild a professional life is very difficult, if not impossible.

Others wrote of their social isolation and the strain on family relationships. While caring can be challenging it does have its rewards. A man who cares for his partner, who has a variety of mental health conditions, said:

When she is happy and stays happy for more than a few hours I feel elated. My goal is to provide the care she needs and our children need to be happy for the rest of our lives. She is a loving, dynamic and highly complex person and our lives are never boring or routine.

These carers make an enormous contribution to our communities and to the national economy, and they make a huge difference in somebody's life every day. As part of this year's Carers Week we can all make a small difference in their lives. We can make a difference by
simply saying thank you. So thank you to the hundreds of thousands of carers who contribute so much every day.

Women in Sport

Senator McKENZIE (Victoria) (20:04): I would like to seek the indulgence of the Senate to give a brief update on the latest sporting foray between us and our great rivals New Zealand. And, no, it is not the rugby, it is not the Constellation Cup and it is not the Olympics. It is indeed between the parliamentary netball team of New Zealand, known locally as the 'Parli Ferns', and our own iconic netball team. It is great to see one of my fabulous team members, Senator McAllister, in the Senate chamber tonight. We call ourselves the Owls. We are very clever—the collective noun for owls is a parliament.

Lisa Alexander, the Australian Diamonds head coach, said: Netball has given me the structure, discipline, role models and self-confidence to be the coach and leader I am today. It has tested me and given me the place to apply my drive and passion for excellence and continuous learning.

Her players displayed all that and more during Sunday's Constellation Cup and, indeed, did our players during our participation with the New Zealand parliamentary team.

In Australia, not all girls get the chance to participate in sports such as netball. Approximately 17 per cent of all children live below the poverty line, and that particular fact directly impacts on young women's ability to play sport. Their families cannot afford the sports fees, to buy uniforms and to travel to and from competition.

We know that participating in sport breaks down barriers, challenges us as individuals and teaches us many lessons. We know that research shows that participating in sport ensures that people, particularly young women, build their self-confidence and their resilience. So the lack of engagement has a significant impact on young women's growth and development.

Netball Australia, cognisant of that, has developed a program to engage participation in sport, particularly netball, from that low socioeconomic group. It is called the Confident Girls program. It is a grassroots fundraising campaign of the Netball Foundation, which aims to help women and girls achieve their full potential both on and off the netball court. It has already supported 10,000 girls through community netball programs since it was founded in 2015.

The program seeks to raise a significant amount of money to do exactly what we were talking about—purchasing uniforms, paying the local sporting club fees et cetera—to connect these young women to not only the sport itself but other young women, so that they can develop friendships. As we know, sport is a powerful vehicle for social inclusion, addresses at-risk behaviour, obesity, self-confidence et cetera and develops friendships.

I just want to mention our parliamentary netball team. We have become friends. For one hour a week we come together from across the Senate, across the House of Representatives and across parties. We yell; we scream; and we become very, very human on the netball court—and I hope we take out the press gallery tomorrow morning, but we will leave that for tomorrow morning.

We are not from the Greens. We are not Liberals. We are not the ALP. We are not the Nationals. We are just women coming together for one hour a week to enjoy something we love.
But, in the spirit of our Anzacs, last year we instigated a program with the parliamentary team from New Zealand to play for what is known as the Diggeress Cup. It is actually this massive silver cup. The Parly Ferns bring it over every year; they take it back, unfortunately, every year. We do have to work a bit on our skills. We went down 18-7. Maybe, we need to get some Diamonds on our team—and some Diamonds into our parliament, seeing what they have been able to do with their Ferns!

The highlight, though, I must say, was beating the New South Wales parliamentarians. Losing to them would have been too much to bear.

But what we did do—and this is the more powerful thing, I think, that we have been able to achieve through the relationships that we have built through sport in our own parliament but also across the Tasman with the New Zealand parliamentary team—is decide to focus on using our sport and our participation to help disadvantaged women in both of our countries and, indeed, in the South Pacific. We have donated money and, importantly, committed individually and as teams to use our roles as leaders and as those who love netball to encourage more participants over coming years.

I would like to thank my team—my co-captain, Jo Ryan, Jenny McAllister, Sharon Claydon, Sarah Hanson-Young and Nicolle Flint for showing up and doing our very, very best for our parliament and for our country. I would also like to thank our sponsors and the New Zealand team, led by Minister Louise Upston and the Labour Party's Louisa Wall. We are very much looking forward to a rematch.

Definium Technologies

Senator POLLEY (Tasmania) (20:09): I rise tonight to speak about the issue of economic development in my home state of Tasmania in the area of information technology, in particular, to outline the successful story of Definium Technologies. Definium Technologies is a Launceston-based company that continues to represent Tasmania on the world stage and is going from strength to strength.

Over the last 12 months I have been tracking the success of the technology company known as Definium Technologies. Definium Technologies designs, manufactures and programs custom devices and technological solutions to help industry and academics save resources and work smarter. The company is a proudly Australian-owned, Tasmania-based technology solutions provider and specialist hardware producer that is exporting its expertise and products globally.

With proven hardware and software development capabilities, it is a versatile company. I recently visited the factory, which has just taken ownership of its latest 6,000 kilogram piece of hardware, which can produce up to 1,000 electronic boards on a very sophisticated assembly line. This piece of highly advanced equipment represents just one of three machines in Australia—and the only one in Tasmania. It is a truly exciting time.

The trajectory of this company continues to excite and inspire me about what my great state has the capacity to do now and into the future. The company has had much success, in particular in the production of state-of-the art electronic power boards used in a number of applications, including sensors which monitor temperature and other forms of measurement in the production of food and water resources.
The company, headed up by its managing director, Mike Cruse, is working with a passionate team and is diversifying the company, which is now specialising in research and development, contract manufacturing, systems integration and educational outreach. But just on Mr Cruse himself: he had the vision, the passion and the creativity to take the risk to move out of his garage. He relocated back from the United States, settled again in Launceston in Tasmania, started working on his vision in his garage, took the gamble, got himself a premises—and history has now been written for the first 12 months.

Already, Definium has partnered with the University of Tasmania. The sky really is the limit for young people who are focused on technology. Jobs growth in this area is a certainty. I have just come from a function with the University of Tasmania. We have had the vice-chancellor and Professor Brigid Heywood here. She has confirmed that that partnership between Definium Technologies and the university has now been signed.

I must say Professor Heywood's enthusiasm can only be matched by my own, because we are both very excited about the prospects. She described Mike Cruse as the pinup boy of technology in Tasmania. We are very proud of this company. We are very proud of the innovation. We are very proud that this has now become an icon for what else can be achieved in our home city.

Last Friday, I was at the opening in Launceston of Enterprize, which is headed up by James Riggall from Bitlink. It is a pop-up innovation hub that is bringing together information technology and software entrepreneurs, and Definium was displaying some of its applications there. It was very exciting to be introduced to Wayne Turner, who is based in the US and who is also partnering with Definium in the development of sensors for crop solutions to ensure more efficient farming techniques, in particular for prawn farming.

Definium already has a proud record of problem solving and creating more opportunities for businesses and communities. The electronic board sensors developed by Mr Cruse are not only being used for local applications, such as pumping stations at a dairy farm in Bridport. The technological expertise of the company has allowed for the exporting of their product to other parts of the world, including Bangladesh, the United States and the UK, ensuring food security for locals.

Recently, I also had the pleasure of meeting with Verne Mackey, Managing Director of Aerus Technologies, which is also looking to partner with Definium Technologies. This company is looking to create fit-for-purpose applications for the health and aged-care sectors. It is also based in Tasmania. This is really exciting. This is a company that we can use as an icon to attract other bright, like-minded, creative people to our city. What it is saying to the broader community is: you can do it in Tasmania. The tyranny of distance has no bearing when we are looking at technology and what can be achieved with some vision and, of course, with support.

Not only will these applications—which, as I said, are being looked at and developed by Aerus Technologies and Definium Technologies—allow for better patient care and better efficiency in the delivery of services. The applications will allow for tailored health treatment for individual patients and residents. One application described to me included a software system which will ensure the monitoring of people from their homes and a messaging system. If you live in a remote area and cannot access a medical professional, it can take place from your home through the use of many types of technology, including the monitoring of blood
pressure, which is sent directly to your doctor. Systems which allow for tailor-made health care is the future. It will allow for better health outcomes to ensure that people receive the health care that they deserve. Individual choice is key to the delivery of health and aged-care services of the future.

The digital revolution in Australia is here. It is here now. The opportunities it presents are boundless. Definium Technologies is a beacon for opportunities when it comes to IT in my home state of Tasmania. It is looking to expand its operations into the future and employ another 10 to 12 people. The exciting thing, in addition to this, is the partnership that has now been entered into with the University of Tasmania. It means that the opportunities for young Tasmanians and for those students who are choosing to come and study in Tasmania are also boundless. Definium is just one company in my home state with a wonderful story to tell. It is a story of triumph through vision, creativity, hard work and entrepreneurship. It truly is an exciting time to work, live and create in Tasmania. I am extremely optimistic for the future. This is a testament to what can be achieved. As I said, the opportunities are clearly boundless in the age of innovation and technology.

I have to give credit to Mike Cruse for the fact that he is ready to be a mentor to other creative, innovative young people and people who have ideas. Irrespective of whether they are young, old or middle aged, he is there. He is demonstrating what can be achieved at a time when, sometimes, we can lose sight of what can be achieved if we just think of things in the way that I think we should think of life—that is, the glass is always half full. Tasmania is a small state in Australia. We have a small university compared to other campuses. But I believe the relationship between business and the university is the future of prosperity and a strong economy for the Tasmanian community, and is a doorway to a bright, prosperous future for all.

Western Bulldogs Football Club

Senator RICE (Victoria) (20:19): I seek indulgence—

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Reynolds): Senator Rice, I remind you that your clothing is not appropriate for the chamber.

Senator RICE: I was going to seek the indulgence of the chamber to wear my scarf because of its relevance for the speech I am about to give. I seek leave to do so.

Leave granted.

When the Western Bulldogs beat Greater Western Sydney in the AFL preliminary final a fortnight ago, my partner, Penny, and I were on the other side of the world walking in a remote river valley. The mobile phone reception was patchy, but it was enough for text updates from our son to create a tenuous link between ourselves and home to keep us in touch with the excitement of the game. When the Dogs won, we went wild, because we were in the grand final. The last time that was the case I was 10 months old. This was the day that the west had been waiting for.

I am a proud westie. I was born and bred in Altona. I have called Footscray my home for over 25 years. Footscray the suburb has been the underdog just as much as Footscray the footy team. It has always had a reputation—rough, unsafe, polluted. Of course, this reputation ignores the amazing place that Footscray really is. It is close-knit, it is down to earth, it is full
of interest and diversity, it is full of people from all over the world—rich and poor, artists and lawyers, young and old, gay and straight, out and proud.

Footscray people walk down the street past shops and restaurants that seem to have been directly transplanted from Saigon, Addis Ababa or Delhi. We revel in the diversity. We are used to—and, in fact, even enjoy—not understanding a word that is being spoken around us. Our kids are friends with kids whose families have come from all over the world. So we know what a vibrant and healthy multicultural society really is. In particular, the people who live in the western suburbs hang together. We talk to our neighbours, we look out for each other and we support each other in tackling discrimination and in our various struggles. The footy team reflects this. It is has ever been the underdog. There have never been enough resources. It has always been a struggle. It knows that it lives or dies from the support it gets from the community it is part of.

It is very easy to be a tribe, a family, to have a sense of belonging when that tribe is homogenous and successful. It is much more difficult when your tribe is made up of all sorts and you are always battling to survive. The strength of the Bulldogs and, indeed, the wider western suburbs is that our tribe is expansive, welcoming and encouraging of all comers. That is why even making the grand final was so special. Almost everyone across the west feels part of a team. We have that sense of belonging. We felt that the win was ours.

I have been a Bulldogs member for 20 years or so. I have tried to get to as many home games as I can, but my diary has meant that I have missed a lot this year. I have to admit that, while I am passionate enough to have proudly worn my red, white and blue scarf all day after their magnificent win over Hawthorn the week prior to the GWS win, I am not so much of a believer that I was prompted by that win to reorganise our planned fortnight's holiday. I suppose I did not think that they would really be able to do it. Like many other Bulldog supporters, I had come to terms with that feeling of coming so close but not quite close enough.

After the preliminary final win, my rational self said: 'It's such a pity I wasn't going to be home to see the dogs play in their first grand final in 55 years. Penny and I would find somewhere to watch the game and enjoy it vicariously.' Then how much it meant really hit home. My social media feeds were swamped with news of our community across the west being more Bulldog, being joyously, wildly more Bulldog. And the prospect of a fabulous grand final, involving my beloved Bulldogs, would have in the end probably been enough for my emotional self to overrule my rational self and for me to reorganise my flights and to come home early. But it was the realisation of just how much this game meant to our community, how much it was bringing us together and how much I just had to be part of it that made my mind up.

So I arrived back in Melbourne at 10 pm, Friday night. I was up early grand final day and spent the morning catching up with friends and fellow supporters. Then, like so many of my fellow Bulldog supporters, I got to the MCG for my first ever grand final. Average footy followers like me do not go to a grand final unless our team is playing. Of course, an awful lot of them still do not get to go, and I feel very privileged for being able to get a ticket. As everyone now knows, the match was exceptional. The Swans put up a gallant fight but the Bulldogs were dogged, determined and, putting it simply, just awesome. Even so, it was not
until the last few minutes of the game that it became clear that they were going to make history and win their first premiership in 62 years.

I congratulate everyone at the club for this incredible achievement. I thank them for the extraordinary joy they have brought to so many people, but I congratulate them even more on the incredible role they play in bringing people together—people of incredible diversity who feel part of the family, people who range from the old bloke I met years ago when I was on Maribyrnong council, who had no family, no friends and no community connections other than the footy club. He lived for the footy club. Whether the Bulldogs won or lost each week really mattered to him, and the hope of 'there's always next week; there's always next year' kept him going. There are people like my neighbours who save the coverage in the Sunday Herald Sun the day after, just in case we have not seen it. And then there are the interwoven friends, families, neighbours, colleagues, small business owners, political friends and foes, professors, childcare workers, truck drivers, public servants, Vietnamese families, African families, Indigenous families and Muslim families, with the women wearing red, white and blue hijabs. This is multicultural Australia. This is belonging. This is family. It gives me hope that, despite the racism that is alight in our community, we will be able to rise above it, to share and celebrate our common humanity, to have our family, our tribe, our circle of care extend to all, regardless of race, gender identity and sexuality.

The Bulldogs are leading the way in women's football. They have had two premierships this year—Footscray in the VFL, as well as the big AFL grand final win. Let's go for three next year, when the women's league is up and running, and cement the role of women in Australian Rules as being so much more than just wives and girlfriends.

Finally, I am so impressed with the brilliant but humble coaching of Luke Beveridge, and the wisdom, care and spiritual leadership of Bob Murphy. They are so removed from the caricature of aggressive, arrogant, alpha males who are so often associated with AFL success. They are role models of different ways of relating, connecting, collaborating and winning. I would be so pleased if it were at the Western Bulldogs that gay players had the courage to come out. There are hundreds of AFL players every season. It is inconceivable that none of them are gay. Maybe it will be easier for a past player to come out, to open the floodgates, to build on the incredible courage of Jason Ball and to feel supported by initiatives like the Pride Game launched this season. It is going to be at a club like the Western Bulldogs, where everyone is family, everyone is accepted for who they are and where everyone belongs that the breakthrough is likely to occur.

The big question, of course, is: what is it going to mean to my beloved western suburbs? Will it change our collective mindset? As we stand taller on the shoulders of our premiership winning team, will we also feel that we are ready to cast off all that has been thrown at us all these years and to fully accept that we too can be winners, that we do not need to accept second best, that we are not going to take second best anymore and that we will support and encourage those amongst us who are doing it tough to find their way to be able to contribute, to belong, to join us in striving for greatness. Here's to the Bulldogs, here's to footy and here's to a community where we celebrate all and share our wins with each other!

Domestic and Family Violence

Senator McCARTHY (Northern Territory) (20:29): I spent the last week in central Australia, and I had the opportunity to speak with women from the Tangentyere Council, the
women's council. These women represent 16 town camps. I had the opportunity to listen to them talk to me about family violence and the concerns that they face day in, day out, in terms of their families around the town camps of Alice Springs and the process of getting their children to school. In particular, I listened to the stories of two women. One was Shirleen Campbell, who spoke about the impact of her aunt's death on her and her family, and also on the courage that it has taken for her to go along in life and say, 'No more violence. This has to stop.' It has to stop amongst the families and the different clan groups that she lives amongst in central Australia.

There was also Helen Gillen, who is a proud, lifelong town camper. Helen has raised her family there. Her extended family lives on the camps and in communities around central Australia and are often assumed to not have a voice. But Helen does have a voice, and she is not afraid to use it. Here is what she had to say, if you have not seen my social media page:

Hello, I'm from Alice Springs. I'm in the domestic violence group, family safety group, and we'd like the Prime Minister to come and see what's happening here. With his own eyes he can see what's going on with the women's group

Helen said this after the head of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council, Warren Mundine, was in the national media saying that Indigenous people and leaders were silent on family violence. This was incredibly hurtful for these women in particular, because they had been working consistently in the program in the last year or two. This should not be about who cares the most in family violence. This should be about how we can harness the hearts of all Australians and, indeed, the leaders at the highest levels to acknowledge the scourge of something that impacts on many families across Australia, not just Indigenous families. Yes, of course, Indigenous women are unfortunately at the forefront of this horrible, abusive behaviour, but we know many stories across the country, and it has to stop.

The Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group that Helen talked about is one of the strong grassroots programs that are making a real difference in Indigenous communities. I have mentioned only one, although I know that there are many others. I would like to concentrate on Tangentyere for now. I am certainly going to be visiting other women's services around the Northern Territory over the coming months. The family safety group, all of whom are women from town camps in Alice Springs, runs programs that train women to identify family violence and its associated risks. They have developed all the support materials. More than 50 women have now been trained in a program that is less than two years old and receives minimal funding. First funded in late 2014, the program started in February 2015.

Helen Gillen was one of the original group, and she and other women now form the governance body for the program. They mentor the younger women and have set up other programs that cater to them, teaching young women that they do not have to live lives marred by violence. The family safety program also oversees the Men's Behaviour Change Program, and, in fact, men are now asking to do similar training in combatting and identifying family violence that the women do. There is also the Domestic Violence Children Specialist Service, which provides support to young people living with family violence. And there are many programs out there on the ground developed and run by Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women.
I would like to make a special mention in here of programs run by the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Women’s Council, whose CEO, Andrea Mason, has just been awarded the Telstra Northern Territory Business Woman of the Year award in recognition of the council's achievements. I say a huge congratulations to Andrea Mason and to all at NPY—that recognition is a real credit to you, and I look forward to spending some time with you coming up soon.

I would also like to say that I spent time with the CEO of the women's shelter in Alice Springs, Di Gippy. I commend Di and her staff for the work that they are trying to do. Di took me through the woman's shelter and told me the rough statistics that speak for themselves, as she was expressing the many stories of women there: around 400 women and around 500 children go through the shelter in Alice Springs over 12 months. Those women and children are not all from Alice Springs or central Australia—they do come from many other states and communities—but it is clearly a strong insight into a major tragedy that is continuing to unfold.

These programs are funded by the Northern Territory government. The experience of the new minister for families and children, Dale Wakefield, at the women's shelter in Alice Springs will be an absolutely pivotal and important part of the Northern Territory cabinet's dealing with that scourge.

The police commissioner has said that there have been 75,000 victims of domestic violence over the past three years and that a child a day is a victim of domestic violence in the Northern Territory. It is not on. Programs like Charlie King's NO MORE—programs that work with men—are important programs that need to be supported continually and funded appropriately so that the men of the Northern Territory and, indeed, of Australia, are also supported in this family violence situation, so that we can lessen the issue of family violence for our children.

I would like to finish by saying that I am aware that the royal commission into youth detention had a hearing in Darwin today. I have certainly been questioned in relation to my previous time as a minister in the Northern Territory government. I would like to commend the royal commission, because I do believe this is an important step to identify past issues and present issues and to improve the lives of children and their families going forward. I look forward to being able to address any of these issues before the royal commission and the royal commissioners if and when I am called to do so. I think it is incredibly appropriate to do that in that form. I would also like to add here that I always have and always will stand up for women and children against family violence, and I urge the royal commission to really look at the kind of future we want to create for future generations in the Northern Territory.

New South Wales Government

Senator RHIANNON (New South Wales) (20:38): New South Wales Premier, Mike Baird, was once a very popular politician. 'Teflon Mike' and 'Mr Untouchable' were nicknames that reflected his sky-high popularity and perceived ability to dodge scandals. Many will point to the greyhound racing ban as the tipping point in Mr Baird's popularity drop. But the rot was apparent well before that announcement in July, and I am betting it will continue despite today's cowardly backflip. The reality of a neoliberal coalition government has set in, and public opinion is turning further against Mr Baird. The increasing privatisation
of education, health care, energy and housing have earned the Premier a couple of new nicknames: 'Casino Mike' and 'Bulldozer Baird'.

'Stop the privatisation' is a common call heard at community meetings and rallies across the state. But in July we also heard it come from the chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Rod Sims. He said:

I've been a very strong advocate of privatisation for probably 30 years; I believe it enhances economic efficiency …

I'm now almost at the point of opposing privatisation because it's been done to boost proceeds … and I think it's severely damaging our economy.

He went on to say:

When you meet people in the street and they say 'I don't want privatisation because it boosts prices' and you dismiss them … recent examples suggest they're right …

I think a sharp uppercut is necessary and that's why I'm saying: stop the privatisation …

They are Mr Sims's words.

What is being increasingly recognised is that privatisation is about the transfer of power and wealth from the public into a few private hands. Some get very rich but most of us get poorer. We lose control over essential services and are forced to pay higher prices for lower quality. Nowhere has the contradiction between prices and quality been more apparent in recent times than in the privatisation of vocational education. The gutting of TAFE, an institution that has given so many second chances to people, in New South Wales is a classic privatisation disaster. A recent report shows that 10 private colleges received $900 million in taxpayer funding despite those colleges graduating only 4,200 students in 2014. That equals about $237,000 per qualification.

One college in Sydney, the Empower Institute, had a completion rate of just 0.12 per cent and earned $46 million—graduating just five students at a cost of $46 million to the taxpayer. That equals about $9.2 million per qualification.

Just like in education, cold market logic has little place when it comes to our health system. Someone who is in need of health care does not go around shopping for the best discounts. Getting an urgent operation is not like buying a car. Yet the privatisation of health care is gaining pace in New South Wales. Last month the Baird government announced the partial privatisation of five major regional public hospitals: Maitland, Wyong, Goulburn, Shellharbour and Bowral. Brett Holmes, General Secretary of the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association, reacted to the announcement with a scathing indictment of the profit motive in health care:

There is a high risk of mismanagement at facilities that are out of government hands. Private operators rely on shareholders, so are more concerned with profits than standards of care. We're extremely concerned about patient care in the long run, as no large private hospital operator has been prepared to agree to nurse to patient ratios anywhere in NSW. Without these, patient safety is dependent upon budget, and now profit, to determine staffing levels …

The sell-off of energy and electricity also continues in New South Wales. This is particularly damaging at a time when governments need to transform this sector for the sake of jobs and action on global warming. Again, the public sector is the loser. In Victoria, 17 years of privatised electricity has led to nearly a 1,000 per cent increase in complaints about service;
8,000 jobs have been lost; blackouts have increased by 32 per cent. And who are the winners? The buyers of this monopoly infrastructure. They will soak up the $1.7 billion in profit that the asset currently generates. Instead of that money going to needy schools, hospitals and public transport, it will line the pockets of investors and executives.

The onslaught of privatisation of public assets is also clear in the housing sector. Our housing market is one of the most unregulated in the world and we are now seeing the consequences of inaction. Little effort is being made to replace our public housing supply, much less to increase it to meet growing demand. In fact, state governments are selling off an unprecedented amount of public housing as waiting lists blow out to 10 years or more. Almost 200,000 people are on waiting lists across the country. As a result, homelessness is on the rise while thousands of investment properties remain vacant in capital cities around the country—one of the most sickening aspects of privatisation.

Given the state of the private housing market, selling off public housing to private developers is a deeply worrying trend. House prices have skyrocketed while wages have stagnated, making home ownership out of reach for many low- and middle-income earners. More people than ever before have been pushed into insecure renting where they face high costs and the threat of no-grounds evictions. Developers have no interest in catering to the needs of middle Australia, and they certainly cannot be trusted to cater to those most in need.

Mike Baird is attempting to sell-off public housing in the inner city, including Millers Point, Waterloo and the iconic Sirius building in The Rocks. These historical working-class areas have become the target of big developers wanting to capitalise on million-dollar views.

Grassroots campaigns have been launched by affected communities, including Save Millers Point and Save Our Sirius. I congratulate the communities in these areas for standing up for their right to the city. Greens MP Jamie Parker and Sydney City mayor Clover Moore are doing great work with these communities to protect their homes. And the CFMEU has continued a 40-year tradition of social justice by placing a green ban on the demolition of the Sirius building in The Rocks where the famous green bans were put all those years ago. Green bans were a common tactic in the 1970s and the green ban on the Sirius building is an incredible show of solidarity with these communities.

It is high time that we re-evaluate housing policy in this country and acknowledge that outsourcing our responsibilities to the private market has been disastrous. In our current environment, one would be excused for thinking that, above all else, housing is a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder even if the bidder already owns three homes or twenty homes or never intends for anyone to live there. How disgraceful it is that the primary purpose of housing in Australia is to act as a tax shelter for investors while, at the same time, ordinary people are in deep housing stress and face a lifetime of insecure renting. This is deeply wrong.

A house is not just a commodity or a tax haven. It is not an asset to exploit low capital gains taxes. A house should be, above all, someone's home. It situates people in their community, so crucial for work and recreation. A home links people to support from family, friends and neighbours. A home provides safety and a sense of belonging. Yet the private market's drive for profit actually works against houses becoming homes. The Greens believe it is time for governments to step in to ensure everyone has a place to call home. Privatisation is causing hardship. Things need to change. We turn a blind eye to the young family turfed out of yet another home because the landlord wants to realise a capital gain. Will we sit back
when our neighbours get sick and cannot afford treatment? What about students loaded up with debt for a useless qualification? No, people in New South Wales see that this Liberal-National selfish society is no society at all. People realise that privatisation is wrong. There are more powerful motivators than individual gain and profit. It is called the public good, it is called solidarity and it is called community—and no matter how hard Premier Baird tries he cannot sell that off.

Acting Deputy President, I actually put my name down for 20 minutes. I notice that the clock has just timed out at 10 minutes. Can I continue my speech please, or do I have to wait?

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Gallacher): Senator Rhiannon, I am advised that there have been eight iterations of the adjournment list and on all eight iterations you have been down for 10 minutes, and you have had the allotted time.

Senator RHIANNON: My whip spoke to the other whips and we asked for that change to be made. So it had been made earlier. I came here expecting it had been made. That is why I thought I waited until the end of all the 10-minute speeches.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The whips will need to confirm that. You may need to wait for that.

Healthy Welfare Card

Bass Strait Fast Cat Feasibility Study

Aged Care

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (20:48): Mr Acting Deputy President, Senator Rhiannon stood aside for me and, as far as I am concerned, she had 20 minutes allotted.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Lambie, you have 20 minutes.

Senator LAMBIE: I recently returned from Ceduna, South Australia, where the Healthy Welfare Card is undergoing trials and turning up some interesting results. The feedback I have received from the community indicates that alcohol consumption is down and gambling is down, and the community seemed happy with the results when I visited recently. However, if the rollout for the Healthy Welfare Card is not managed well, the potential for harmful unintended consequences is great, which is why I have made my support conditional.

This is something Tasmania could really benefit from, but I will support the rollout of the Healthy Welfare Card if the following five conditions are agreed to by the federal government. First, I want to introduce laws that give parents the right to detox their children if they become hooked on ice or other drugs. We also must back up law changes with more resourced and funded rehabilitation facilities and medical professionals. Second, I want to establish a special economic zone, with zero payroll tax, which would encourage our existing Tasmanian employers to create more jobs in the areas covered by the Healthy Welfare Card. Third, I want to reform and revolutionise TAFE so that trade apprenticeships and traineeships are awarded and trades are taught to young Tasmanians who are not yet employed. Fourth, I want the federal government to waive Tasmania's $200 million public housing debt. Fifth, I want a $200,000 fast cat feasibility study for Bass Strait.

I met with Andrew 'Twiggy' Forrest this morning, the driver behind the Healthy Welfare Card. He listened and paid attention to my views. I cannot say that he agreed with all of them, but we have started an important conversation where I feel he is listening to my ideas. After
all, these five conditions only complement and improve the lives of those people who are forced to depend on welfare. I understand that Twiggy has invested a lot of time and money into creating the system around the Healthy Welfare Card. I also understand that, even though he is a famous Australian businessman, his motivation for this investment is not money. Like every supporter of the Healthy Welfare Card, it is my observation that Andrew's motivation is to genuinely improve the lives of people stuck in the welfare trap—and, given my experiences with famous Australian businessmen, I think that is a rare quality in billionaires.

I hope both the Liberal state and federal governments will take on board my ideas—which are really from the community—because we will be able to take something from good to absolutely great. I believe in the Healthy Welfare Card, but without my five conditions it is likely to have a negative impact on Tasmania because we need to quickly create real jobs, sustainable full-time jobs, for those who can work and want to get off welfare. We also need to provide medical treatment and rehab to addicts who are funding their drug habits with taxpayer generosity.

I made the fast cat feasibility study a condition of the healthy welfare card because of its job and apprenticeship creating capacity. We need a carrot at the end of the stick if we want to break the pattern of welfare dependency. We need to create meaningful employment for Tasmanians. Tasmania is in the midst of an unemployment crisis. Northern Tasmania in particular has an unemployment rate of 7.7 per cent. The ongoing employment created by a fast cat ferry service would go a long way in bringing that unemployment rate down.

I understand there are some concerns regarding the use of catamarans as ferries across the Bass Strait, and these concerns were warranted 25 years ago, when the fast cat was dubbed the 'spew cat', but technology—my word—has come a long, long way in 25 years, and I am confident a feasibility study will show this nickname is no longer true. Instead I expect a feasibility study to show a significant reduction in the cost of travelling across the Bass Strait, especially for those with a car or caravan and for Tasmanian producers. It would drastically reduce the travel time and it would certainly give SeaRoad and Toll a run for their freight charges. If the outcome of the feasibility study is as I expect, a fast cat would supercharge Tasmania's tourism industry and certainly our economy.

I commend opposition leader Bill Shorten for the courage and curiosity he displayed when he promised to support my vision and fund a feasibility study to the tune of $200,000. I again invite Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to match Mr Shorten's offer to fast-track economic and job growth within Tasmania. The build alone would create 500 jobs over two years, and I would like to see the thousands of jobs and the wealth it could create just from the extra visitors and increased exports which will no doubt come as a result of quicker and more frequent crossings of the Bass Strait.

The wealth would not be isolated to Tasmania either; Victorians would also reap the benefits of a fast cat service, and I invite Victorian senators and federal members to take up my vision for a fast cat service across the Bass Strait and begin lobbying the government on this important issue. I have consulted with catamaran manufacturer Incat's Richard Lowrie, who said that a fast cat service has the capacity to increase visitors to Tasmania by 3,000 a day. This is the antidote to Tasmania's ailing economy. A fast cat addresses the cost of freight, which is the main concern of Tasmanian producers and exporters; it increases accessibility for tourists with Tasmania as a destination; and Incat's catamarans are highly sought after right
across the world: the US military and Denmark are already using these intricately designed and well-built catamarans. It is a shame Incat does not have the support of its own state.

In a few years the state government will have to spend $150 million to $200 million replacing the Spirit of Tasmania ferries. Before this happens, a fast cat feasibility study should be complete to ensure the state government is making an informed decision which will support Tasmania's own world-class shipbuilding industry and its workers.

Did you know there is $37 a week between the pension and the poverty line? A recent OECD report showed that 36 per cent of Australian pensioners lived below the poverty line, making Australia's pensioners some of the poorest in the OECD. In response to that report, ACOSS released a document which identified that the poverty line in Australia is $400 a week and the average pension is $437 a week. So our pensioners are making decisions to freeze in the winter and boil in the summer because they cannot afford the power required for heaters and air conditioners. They are pureeing their meals because they cannot afford dental work if they break a tooth—a choice between medical treatment and meals. They face social isolation because they cannot afford the fuel for their car, fare for the bus or to get a cab.

A couple of weeks ago I posted a meme on my Facebook page, with the message, 'The pension isn't welfare; it's a reward for 40 years of working hard and paying taxes.' That meme has been viewed more than 17 million times. When you consider there are 15 million Australians using Facebook, this number is extraordinary. It is absolutely mind-blowing, and it has all happened within a week. This reaction tells me that mistreatment of pensioners resonates with Australian people from all walks of life and that they have had a gutful. They are fed up.

The Liberal government's attempts to, firstly, push out the qualifying age for the pension and, secondly, change asset testing and the adverse defined benefit scheme are a kick in the guts for a group of people who have worked damn hard and paid their taxes all their lives. Many pensioners continue to contribute to their community by volunteering in their retirement, and many take on childcare duties because Mum and Dad cannot afford childcare fees. And what is their reward? There is no reward from either side of this parliament—just cuts and continuous changes to the retirement goalposts.

This year the government is attacking the aged-care sector with a proposed $1.2 billion worth of cuts to the sector over the forward estimates that in reality is expected to actually be about $3 billion. These cuts mean that the people who need the greatest care will not receive it. Instead they will be shoved to the public hospitals, where it costs four times as much just to look after them.

Essentially, the cuts to the aged-care sector are a cost shift from the federal government to the state government in the name of a supposed crackdown on claiming rorts. Minister for Health and Aged Care Sussan Ley explained in a speech to the National Aged Care Alliance that she did not believe the funding blow-out which led to these cuts had anything to do with 'increased frailty', stating that one in eight claims to the aged-care funding instrument is a rort.

But the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare identified 3.5 million Australians aged 65 and older in 2014, which is expected to more than double to 8.4 million by 2050. The honourable minister is naive to expect aged-care funding to remain the same as our ageing population grows.
The aged-care sector accepts that the aged-care funding instrument is outdated and unnecessarily complex, calling for the government to replace it. I support their call and offer the suggestion that a new funding instrument be much simpler and easier to navigate, ensuring fewer mistakes and less time and money wasted on administrative tasks. Perhaps then Minister Ley's one-in-eight statistic will start to disappear.

I also challenge the state governments, especially the Tasmanian state government, to stand up to their federal counterparts on this issue, as the Tasmanian aged-care sector—one of the state's biggest employers—is expected to lose $40 million and cut 750 jobs over the next four years, and that is being conservative. The impact on the already ailing public hospital system in Tasmania is unquantified but imminent. This is a situation where Premier Will Hodgman must put aside party politics, come out and stand up for Tasmanians.

Following the announcement of a long-overdue backflip on the backpacker tax by Treasurer Morrison, I have called on the federal government and the Labor opposition to both support a new backpacker tax which at least matches that of New Zealand's backpacker tax, at 10.5 per cent. I and many Tasmanian farmers would like the backpacker rate to remain unchanged at zero per cent. However, we are happy to meet the government and the Labor opposition half way, at 10.5 per cent. By fixing the rate at 10.5 per cent instead of the government's new rate of 19 per cent, the government's $10 million tourism-backpacker advertising campaign is guaranteed to work and the unnecessary damage that the Liberal government has already caused to our farming and tourism sectors will be more quickly repaired. As its stand now with the government's proposed 19 per cent backpacker tax, the backpackers are bypassing Tasmanian farms. And, while certainty is what our farmers want, they are still facing significant financial loss and uncertainty, even if this parliament passes a 19 per cent backpacker tax. Just when farmers—especially Tasmanian farmers—thought it could not get any worse after being subjected to shameful and incompetent treatment from this government, media reports this afternoon indicate that Labor is choosing to delay the passage of the backpacker tax.

National Farmers Federation president, Brent Finlay, says Labor have walked away from farmers by refusing to support a compromise on the destructive backpacker tax. There are a couple of things I have to say about this turn of events to Labor members of the chamber and to Mr Finlay from the National Farmers Federation and other representatives of peak farmer organisations. Firstly, I am going to address Labor senators, who I hope are listening very carefully to me. There are about 10,000 Tasmanian rural workers and hundreds of farming livelihoods which depend on the passage of this bill in a timely manner.

Senator Carol Brown: It doesn't come into effect until 1 January.

Senator LAMBIE: I know that Labor is not to blame for the terrible harm that is being caused to Tasmanian farmers over this issue, but, even if it comes in on 1 January, I can assure you it is too late. They need some certainty. The whole rotting backpacker mess has been caused by the gutless and dysfunctional Liberal Party and National Party, and their leaders should be publically flogged for what they have done to my Tasmanian farmers, let alone what they have done to the mainland farmers. However, I want the Labor members of this place to know that I will be very, very upset if you unnecessarily delay the passage of this backpacker legislation. Our farmers need certainty and they need it very quickly.
I have presented to your shadow minister, whom I happen to like a lot—this is a decent man and I could have a beer with him, no problem—a compromise plan that strikes the right balance between the government's 19 per cent and the Greens zero per cent. To resolve this problem, I have placed a call to Bill Shorten's office and asked for a meeting. He has agreed to a meeting with me on Thursday and also wants to talk about Labor's position on banks, which at the moment I am happy to listen to. Secondly, I am going to address Mr Finlay from the National Farmers Federation and other representatives of peak farming organisations, who I hope are listening to me very carefully. Just after the square is cleared of Liberal and National Party members who have been horsewhipped because of their criminally negligent behaviour in the management of this backpacker tax matter, Mr Finlay from the National Farmers Federation and other representatives of peak farming organisations should be also horsewhipped because they have betrayed their own farmers. Because of their continual brown-nosing to the coalition, they also have ensured that their members will lose millions of dollars and face unnecessary financial hardships.

My message is: do not catch the Barnaby disease. Grow a backbone, at least have half a brain and start standing up for your damn farmers! It should not take me in here to do your job! Do not act as though you fell out of the stupid tree and hit every branch on the way down. If you stood up in front of a camera, did the job you were paid to do and told the media that the government's 19 per cent is not going to fix the problem, and at 10.5 per cent a new backpacker tax has half a chance of remedying the long-term damage the Libs and Nats have already caused, then maybe you deserve to keep your jobs and avoid that public flogging. The National Farmers Federation has been a training and recruiting ground for the conservative side of politics in Australia. Well, now is the time for the NFF executive to forget about their budding conservative political futures and put their farmers first. The next time you get a phone call from the Deputy Prime Minister and back him up, tell him about the hardship of your farmers, especially the young ones out there, instead of jumping and asking how high. Better still, tell him not to cause the problem in the first bloody place!

Turning to a different matter, I have been approached by a private in the Australian Army. I will not disclose his name tonight. Indeed, I hope I never have to disclose his name. He has a protected identity and is still technically serving in the military. The majority of his service had been fulfilled as a Green Beret in the Commando Regiment. Since joining the Army directly after high school, he has conducted one tour of East Timor and four tours of Afghanistan. Other areas of his service include duties as a shooter on the federal domestic counterterrorism team and close personal protection for members of parliament throughout the Middle East area of operations. Unfortunately, in his service he has seen many of his close friends killed on duty. He tells me that, after being diagnosed with lower spinal injuries, PTSD and major depression in late 2011, he was told by his senior commanders to 'F off and go home before anyone else gets sick.' At the time, the commanders were concerned that mental health issues were a sign of weakness, and they were also greatly concerned about the effect that mental health cases would have on their ability to conduct future operations. I have been told that at a military welfare board the soldier was put though appalling treatment by senior members of the military, whose actions give me the impression that they think they are untouchable.
I have to thank the Minister for Defence. She has agreed to meet with this veteran and me this week. We are going to get to the bottom of what is happening in the Army's military welfare boards, because what I am hearing is that welfare is the last thing they are delivering to our diggers. Based on the defence minister's care and consideration with other matters I have brought before her, I expect to see a dramatic improvement in the way the Army are conducting their welfare boards.

Health Funding
Mental Health

Tesch, Ms Liesl, AM
Druery, Mr Frank

Senator O'NEILL (New South Wales) (21:08): I rise in the adjournment debate tonight—and it has been some time since I have been able to speak in the adjournment—to address a number of matters that are of great interest to the people of New South Wales, in particular to regional New South Wales and the area in which I live, the Central Coast.

I acknowledge Senator Lambie's contribution about mental health, a very important one in this week of mental health awareness. The delivery of the response to mental health issues in our community comes within a framework of access to health care, and something we are seeing in report after report is that access to mental health services is compromised. It is more and more compromised under the control of this government, and that has been exacerbated in New South Wales by the Liberal government's cuts to health.

Yesterday in the other place, the House of Representatives here in Canberra, Labor called on the government to stand up and vote to keep Medicare in public hands, but not a single Liberal MP was prepared to vote for Labor's motion. So let's get on the record exactly what it was that the Liberal-National Party coalition, who indicate they support mental health and access in health, voted against yesterday in the parliament. They voted against a guarantee to keep Medicare in public hands as a universal health insurance scheme for all Australians. They voted against a guarantee to protect bulk-billing so that every Australian can see their doctor when they need to and not only when they can afford to. The Liberal-National Party voted against reversing harmful cuts to Medicare by unfreezing the indexation of the Medicare Benefits Schedule. The Liberal-National Party voted against reversing cuts to breast screening, MRIs, X-rays and other diagnostic imaging, which means that Australians will pay more for vital scans. They voted against abandoning their plans to make all Australians, including pensioners, pay more for vital medicines. And the Liberal-National Party yesterday—despite their intense protestation that they were misrepresented in a 'Mediscare' campaign, as they call it—voted against developing a long-term agreement to properly fund our public hospitals so that Australians do not languish in emergency departments, on long waiting lists for important surgery. Let us put it on the record that in the opening weeks of this Liberal-National Party government under the leadership of Malcolm Turnbull, when they have come to the Australian capital to legislate for this country—claiming that they have learnt their lesson from the election, which reduced their majority to one—they have not reversed a single cut to health that they took to the election.

In that context, I want to compare and contrast the wonderful speech that I heard this afternoon from Emma McBride, Labor's new representative in the electorate of Dobell. Emma
has already given 20 years of service in the health sector as a pharmacist. Indeed, she is the only pharmacist here in the parliament, a health professional dedicated to service in the health sector more broadly and in particular at Wyong Hospital. This is her description of Wyong Hospital—and it will become apparent shortly why this is so important. Wyong Hospital is, she says:

… a public hospital in a low-socioeconomic area that provides quality care to thousands of locals. Today, Wyong Hospital, which was built by our community for our community and belongs to our community, is slated for privatisation by the New South Wales Liberal government …

In the 1950s, the community got together, fundraised, created a community solution and established the Wyong Hospital committee, and they got on with the job of making sure that there was healthcare access in their community.

Ms McBride, the new member for Dobell, quoted the former Labor member for Peats, Keith O'Connell, who said the dedication of locals to that hospital demonstrated that 'when we work for the community, we should not be daunted by delays, frustrations or obstacles placed in our path, as tenacity and determination will overcome such problems'. And that is the spirit in which I urge the people of the Central Coast—the people of Wyong in particular but right along the coast, all the way down to the peninsula—to stand up and fight for our local hospital, to fight against Mike Baird's privatisation, because this will be a tragic loss for our community if what he proposes goes ahead. I encourage those who are listening, as well as those from other parts of the great state of New South Wales who might be interested in supporting the community to keep this vital service, to go to Morrie Breen Oval at Wallarah Road, Kanwal at 11 am on Sunday, 16 October to tell Mike Baird to keep his hands off Wyong Hospital.

Sadly, this Americanised privatisation model, which is a disease well and truly out of control at both federal and state level with Liberal-National Party governments, is not confined just to Wyong Hospital. When he lands on what he thinks is a good idea, Mr Baird is not too shy to roll it out far and wide. We have seen him peel back today on greyhounds after huge attack, and sadly it looks like that is what we are going to have to do to keep these hospitals, because it is not just Wyong Hospital in New South Wales that Mr Baird wants to get his hands on and privatise. He is also after Maitland, Goulburn, Shellharbour and Bowral hospitals in toto. These are five important community access points to health care, vital to those communities, which Mr Baird wants to privatise. Well, it is too much. And people in the great state of New South Wales, having seen what happens when a decent amount of pressure is applied on Mr Baird, might have him give away some of his hubris and arrogance and actually listen and give them what they need and deserve—access to their local hospital.

The very hardworking member for Wyong indicated in a media release he put out on 15 September that we have to watch these Liberal Party and National Party members and these governments who simply do not tell the electorate what they are going to do before they come into power. He points out that in 2015, at the state election, the Liberals certainly did not admit that Wyong Hospital would be privatised. That failure to communicate what they are actually doing with health, and their determination to spin another story about caring about health, is on display here every single day. We know that we need to stand up for these five hospitals in New South Wales, and I urge the people of New South Wales to show incredible determination to make sure that things are not taken away from our community. I honour and
acknowledge the hard work of, in particular, David Harris, the member for Wyong; David Meehan, the member for The Entrance; and Yasmin Catley, the member for Swansea. As Yasmin Catley said, the Liberal government seems addicted to privatisation and I think they might need some treatment to get rid of their addiction.

I would like to turn now to some matters of mental health, particularly in this week where mental health is the focus of much attention. World Mental Health Day was recognised here in Australia on 10 October, and it falls in this period of Mental Health Week from 9 to 15 October. It is a very important time to reinvest in community awareness so that the momentum generated this week can be carried through every day of the year, bearing in mind that the most recent research suggests that one in four Australians will experience a mental health issue at some point in their lives.

This week provides a chance to redouble efforts to encourage people who are experiencing difficulties to actually seek help—to call a family member, friend or workmate or seek more professional care if they feel that they need to do that—or to recommend that somebody you know seek that care. It is a chance to reaffirm the goal of reducing the stigma associated with mental health issues and foster connections through communities such as those facing challenges in our rural sector, isolated regions and those with high youth suicides—and sadly the Central Coast is one of those areas that has very alarming figures, particularly with regard to young people. Of course, mental illness is way over-represented among our Indigenous communities.

The issue of mental health and, all too often, its end result, which can be an attempted suicide or a suicide completion, was never more poignantly driven home for me than in the last federal election campaign. I was there when more than 500 people crammed into the community centre on 19 May, a cold Friday night, to a town hall meeting in Woy Woy on the Central Coast at the Everglades Country Club. And I thank them for their wonderful hospitality. They provided great community service and a point of connection for many people in our community. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Shorten, was visiting the seat of Robertson in support of Anne Charlton, our amazing candidate who ran a great campaign for the seat of Robertson. The room was abuzz, and the locals were firing question after question at the Labor leader. A question came from a young local woman by the name of Bronte. She posed the question to Mr Shorten that not enough attention was paid to mental health issues by politicians. Mr Shorten responded by explaining Labor's policy on mental health and its target for a national approach to halving the suicide rate in Australia over the next 10 years. Then Mr Shorten asked the audience a question. He simply said: 'If I were to ask people in this room to put up their hands, how many of you know someone who has attempted suicide? How many of you know of a family where suicide has occurred?' There was a pause and then the vast majority—and I am talking way over 90 per cent—of people in the room put up their hands. His response was, 'That's amazing.' The sense of being in a moment—in a community where something that is not often talked about suddenly became a very publicly acknowledged and deeply demonstrated physical and common reality—became extremely obvious to everyone.

To put the figures on the record: each day in Australia seven people die by suicide and 30 attempt suicide. Suicide is the leading cause of death for men and women aged between 15 and 44—in the period that we often think is the peak of peoples' lives, suicide is the leading
cause of death. There are problems with the statistical collection: the numbers vary from 2,500 to 2,800, but often that is considered to be under-reporting. The estimate is that in Australia 65,000 people per year will attempt suicide. To compare it to another issue that we are a lot more aware of: the suicide toll is now twice the annual road toll.

This means that far too many families, friends and colleagues are left dealing with these incredibly traumatic losses. There are too many children in this country who have had to take days off school to attend the funeral of a classmate. But it is not just the day that they are absent for that matters; it is the memory, the questioning, the personal anxiety and the risk to mental health that flows on from that experience that we have to deal with—the exaggerated, expanded and exponential effect of losing someone whom you love, whom you work with, whom you go to school with or who is your neighbour and to feel that personal loss: 'Why didn't I notice? What didn't I see?'

Just in the last month, there was a report put out about the underestimation of the ongoing and expanded impact on the broader community from loss through suicide. There are far too many parents—parents of young and vibrant people—who are sitting at their tables across this country every year shattered, exhausted and grieving, trying to write a eulogy for their son or daughter, something they should never have to do. We really need to address this burgeoning and continuing problem of mental health. Labor wants this reality to change, and we are determined to make this an issue that stays in the public imagination. There are an amazing number of great organisations that are doing work in this area.

The theme set by the World Federation for Mental Health for this year's World Mental Health Day is 'Dignity in Mental Health—Psychological and Mental Health First Aid for All'. In its manifesto for World Mental Health Day, the federation seeks to contribute to the goal of taking mental health out of the shadows so that people in general feel more confident in tackling the stigma, isolation and discrimination that continue to plague people with mental health conditions, their families and their carers. At its core is the objective to educate the general public about the developing concept of 'psychological and mental health first aid'. After all, when we go to a hospital emergency department with a broken arm, we are given physical first aid, and that is quite an acceptable thing to do. But, as the President of the World Federation for Mental Health, Professor Gabriel Ivbijaro, states, many people suffering from a mental health difficulty 'will receive little or no help when they present in an emergency'. Indeed, in the evidence given to the select committee in the 44th Parliament, we heard nurses talking about concern with regard to the quality, frequency and updating of their training with regard to mental health, when people present with mental illness. Again, there are issues of professional identity and comfort in dealing with huge physical trauma, because of frequent and excellent training, contrasted with inadequate training around mental health and their own professional and personal anxieties about dealing with that.

So this is a very significant structural problem we have to deal with in our hospitals. The British Professor Ivbijaro points out:

Since the introduction of Basic Life Support (BLS) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) without equipment in the 1960's many people have benefitted from the intervention of a passer-by, and lives have been saved—
as we developed a community capacity to deal with that reality. We have the reality of mental health and ill health in our community. Just as on some days you are fit, training and well—
you might have had a great summer holiday and you know that you are in physically great shape—throughout the year our mental health waxes and wanes. Sometimes we are in great shape; sometimes we are not so. The problem with pathologising so much of this—and I think there is a bit of resistance to the pathologising of mental health—is that, as R U OK? indicates to us, we can have very simple human conversations with one another that help us register our mental health and wellbeing, and that could then encourage us to seek more specialised care to help us with the genuine issues of mental illness that we need to attend to. Mental health crises and distress are viewed very differently for a range of reasons, but we cannot allow this crisis to continue.

In the time that remains to me, I would like to acknowledge a number of very important people on the Central Coast. I would like to acknowledge the great success of an amazing woman by the name of Liesl Tesch. Many of you might have heard of her recently. She was part of the Paralympic team in Rio, and she was the athlete who was training when she was knocked off her bike and attacked at gunpoint. She came back from that, did some more training and went back, and she has gone on to win once again. She is just the most remarkable Central Coastie. We are so proud of her. I think she has now competed at her seventh Paralympic Games. She is retiring with a number of amazing accolades, including gold and silver medals—two golds in sailing as well as two silvers and a bronze in wheelchair basketball. The reason that Liesl now represents us in the Paralympics is that when she was 19 she was knocked off her bike, and she was so full of resilience that she was able to come back and rebuild a remarkable life. She is an inspirational woman. She is a remarkable person of great personal resilience, and I am very proud to call her a friend. I put on the record here in the Parliament of Australia the Central Coast's deep pride in her being part of our community.

I also want to acknowledge in the closing moments that we have lost a wonderful local member of our Labor Party, a wonderful gentleman by the name of Frank Druery, a proud member of the ALP since 1950, dedicated to the Kincumber Branch in the Robertson seat, and a committed activist. He has made an extensive contribution to the New South Wales Labor Party and was recognised with a McKell award for his service to the party and the local community. He received the Unsung Hero Award of 1999 to 2002, the Environment Award in 2002 and the Australia Day Award in 2003 and 2004. He was much loved and will be sorely missed by all Labor members on the coast. I offer my sincere condolences to his family.

Senate adjourned at 21:28

DOCUMENTS

Tabling

The following documents were tabled by the Clerk pursuant to statute:

[Legislative instruments are identified by a Federal Register of Legislation (FRL) number. An explanatory statement is tabled with an instrument unless otherwise indicated by an asterisk.]


Higher Education Support (Allied Educational Services Pty Ltd) VET Provider Approval Revocation 2016 [F2016L01593].
Higher Education Support (King's International College Ltd) VET Provider Approval Revocation 2016 [F2016L01595].
Other Grants Guidelines (Research) 2017 [F2016L01603].

**Tabling**

The following documents were tabled pursuant to standing order 61(1)(b):
Attorney-General's Department—Report for 2015-16.
Australian Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Authority—Report for 2015-16.
Department of the Senate—
Register of Senate senior executive officers' interests incorporating statements of registrable interests and notifications of alterations of interests of Senate senior executive officers lodged between 2 December 2015 and 7 October 2016, dated October 2016.
Report for 2015-16.

**Tabling**

The following documents were tabled by the Clerk pursuant to order:
Departmental and agency appointments and vacancies—Budget (Supplementary) estimates 2016-17—Letters of advice pursuant to the order of the Senate of 24 June 2008—
Communications and the Arts portfolio.
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Indigenous Affairs Group).
Employment portfolio.
Environment and Energy portfolio.
Finance portfolio.
Immigration and Border Protection portfolio.
Industry, Innovation and Science portfolio.
Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolio.
Office for Women.
Resources and Northern Australia portfolio.
Social Services portfolio.
Departmental and agency grants—Budget (Supplementary) estimates 2016-17—Letters of advice pursuant to the order of the Senate of 24 June 2008—
Communications portfolio.
Department of Employment.
Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development.
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Indigenous Affairs Group).
Environment and Energy portfolio.
Finance portfolio.
Immigration and Border Protection portfolio.
National Health and Medical Research Council.
National Mental Health Commission.
Office for Women.
Social Services portfolio.
Estimates hearings—Unanswered questions on notice—Budget estimates 2016-17—Statements pursuant to the order of the Senate of 25 June 2014—
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
Department of Social Services.
Environment and Energy portfolio.
Health portfolio.
Indexed lists of departmental and agency files for the period 1 January to 30 June 2016—Statements of compliance pursuant to the order of the Senate of 30 May 1996, as amended—
Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio.
Department of Immigration and Border Protection.
Department of Social Services portfolio.
Industry, Innovation and Science portfolio.
Safe Work Australia.